



Rea and the Blood of the Nectar: The Chronicles of Astranthia

Payal Doshi

Mango and Marigold Press (Jun 15, 2021)

Hardcover \$19.95 (352pp)

978-1-64543-763-5

A twelve-year-old in Darjeeling encounters a magical world when she sets out to rescue her twin in Payal Doshi's original, girl-powered novel *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar*.

When Rea's brother, Rohan, vanishes after a cricket match, she suspects that her mother and grandmother know more than they're saying. She and her new friend, Leela, visit a fortune teller in hopes of finding answers. Deciphering clues from Rea's nightmares, they pass through a banyan tree portal into Astranthia. In this bright, verdant land where the magic is based on a royal blood line, the girls find helpful locals and face a cruel queen.

Rea's sibling relationship is realistic, marked by both affection and jealousy. It grounds the novel, which also covers a family's power dynamics and rift. Rea and Rohan learn their true identities and work to inhabit their new roles; they face tough challenges in doing so. As South Asian earthlings whose hometown backdrop includes work at a tea plantation and Diwali, they're intriguing leads. Leela is a heartwarming character, too: her rational outlook often calms Rea. Friends in Astranthia, including a pari (fairy) whose job is foliage reporting and a boy with his own reasons for wanting to rebel, stand out because of their openminded risk-taking.

The adults' favoritism toward Rohan, the boy in their clan, leads to valuable character growth: Rea acknowledges Rohan's good traits while also claiming more of her own. Rohan's rescue requires both Rea's pluck and aid from loved ones, while crossovers between the children's old and new worlds promise further series adventures.

Rea and the Blood of the Nectar is an extravagant and rewarding fantasy novel involving floral world building and childhood bravery.

KAREN RIGBY (May / June 2021)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.