



Shadow Weaver

MarcyKate Connolly

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In MarcyKate Connolly's enchanting *Shadow Weaver*, a girl who was touched by the magic of a passing comet is forced to confront her deepest fears and truest self.

People fear Emmeline, the only daughter of a noble family. She is able to form shadows into shapes both useful and magical, but it seems that those around her always get hurt in the process. She lives in terrible isolation on her family's estate—until an emissary comes to offer her parents a cure.

Emmeline's shadow companion, Dar, assures her that the emissary is actually offering something darker and promises Emmeline safety in exchange for a bit of questionable magic. When events go awry, both Dar and Emmeline must escape.

In hiding, Emmeline encounters Lucas, whose gifts with light are like hers with shadows. She discovers through his family a whole network of those touched by the comet's powers. They're all in danger, though, as a viciously powerful presence is bent on gathering them together for uncertain ends.

Emmeline contends with her loyalty toward Dar, the delight of her newfound acceptance, and other unexpected challenges as she learns to harness and share her skills.

Connolly's narrative is full of meaningful moral lessons, including the limits of loyalty, the importance of honesty, and the absolute necessity of trusting others. Dar proves to be a complicated companion whose demands on lonely Emmeline are increasingly costly, while those held apart because of their gifts prove to be the strongest examples of goodness and truth in the story. Acceptance, of both oneself and others, is a key and shining theme.

Chapters trip forward with light suspense, dropping foreboding occurrences along the way but also imbuing Emmeline's story with particular charm: through the quiet of a sanctuary devoted to the comet; in the playfulness of practicing one's skill set with a trusted friend. Settings are sketched with a light but purposeful hand, and penultimate developments open a hopeful door to future series installments.

Drawing meaning from the spaces between one girl's own light and darkness, *Shadow Weaver* initiates an enchanting new juvenile fantasy series.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (Children's SIP 2017)

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