

★ **The Dark Tide****Alicia Jasinska**

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An enthralling fantasy drenched in magic, Alicia Jasinska's *The Dark Tide* pushes and pulls its heroines to their limits.

The island city of Caldella is imperiled as the sea claws at its banks. Every year, the tide demands a sacrifice: a boy chosen by the Witch Queen to be chained in the city square and drowned under the full moon.

Lina fears that her brother will be selected. She seeks out the only person to have escaped a witch queen's clutches: Thomas, who was spared when the previous queen chose to sacrifice herself in his place.

Eva, the new Witch Queen, is desperate to quell the tide. Embittered by her sister's death, Eva sealed her heart away and cast it into the sea, determined to never succumb to the same weakness. When she spies Thomas at the festival, she selects him as the sacrifice, holding him responsible for her sister's death.

Out of her love for Thomas, Lina storms the palace, offering herself in his place. Eva accepts the trade, hoping it will make Thomas suffer as she has, but soon finds her heartlessness put to the test. As the moon waxes and the water rises, the young women must decide what their sacrifice will be: each other or their city.

Lina and Eva are perfect foils for one another, gaining and relinquishing the upper hand in turns. Lina is a romantic who fancies herself a tragic heroine; Eva is cold and guarded, placing her duty to her city above all else. Their relationship builds with tension and delight.

Caldella is rich and dark, juxtaposing resplendence with the macabre. A festival to honor the sacrifice is bedecked in flowers and ribbons; magic is strained from blood and bone or woven into knots with strands of hair. Striking the perfect balance, *The Dark Tide* demands to be read in one held breath as its tide bears down on all.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (May / June 2020)

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