

The Nightingale's Tooth

Sally McBride

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Set in an alternate reality medieval Mediterranean city wherein gods and magical beings compete to control the fates of living beings, Sally McBride's fantasy novel *The Nightingale's Tooth* is compelling.

Vara lives a comfortable life with her mother, father, and grandfather in their villa, though the warlord Petru's gods-induced madness casts a shadow over the entire city of Perpignan. But strange visions plague Vara, including one of her own death at her grandfather's hands. These visions prompt the revelation that she is a *resura*: a person who, upon dying, will be resurrected and be able to take on three forms, their original body lost forever. Vara's mother is also *resura*, and is also complicit in the foreboding web of intrigue that may consume their family.

Vara resists this new knowledge: every *resura* is bound to the person who kills them, or the strongest person nearby, and Vara does not wish to be anyone's subordinate. Stubborn and determined, Vara seeks a way out of her destiny, even as the machinations of others threaten to close in on her, stripping away her humanity.

The novel is vibrant in detailing a version of thirteenth-century Europe wherein Christianity never gained a foothold, and where Moorish traders thrive alongside French street entertainers. Vara learns many languages, as well as alchemy and fighting, all in preparation for fulfilling her fate. As disaster looms and war threatens, Vara chooses whether to be like the beautiful and helpless nightingale from a story she heard from a spy—or be willing to do anything to regain the bird's fabled sharp teeth.

The Nightingale's Tooth is a rich, multilayered fantasy novel that contrasts the brutality of greed and fate with the power of family, friendship, and determination to shape the world into a better place.

JEANA JORGENSEN (January / February 2023)

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