



The Other Side of Luck

Ginger Johnson

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The Other Side of Luck is a charming, adventure-filled fantasy novel centered on a friendship between an alienated royal daughter and the son of a botanical forager.

Princess Una's mother died giving birth to her brother. While Una grieves, her father, the magister, is preoccupied with his new wife. When an uncle invites Una to meet her mother's family, she's eager to do so. She leaves the palace, though the uncle's invitation is later revealed to be a ruse. Meanwhile, Julien lives on the city's impoverished edges with his ailing father, a former gardener.

To celebrate Una's twelfth birthday, the Magister declares that whoever procures a rare silva flower will be rewarded. This grand gesture, which is designed to satisfy his own ideas about her future, sets the stage for a classic quest. Una and Julien join forces and evade marauders.

Una has a hyper-tuned knack for detecting scents, which are linked to people and memories and extend to sensing emotions. Julien is able to identify plants and to pick up on people's personalities according to how they sound. Both children are sensitive and perceptive, and their combined talents lift them out of dangerous situations and guide them toward their goal. Their differences in upbringing fade as the book undertakes a delicate exploration of family ties and belonging.

Life outside of the palace fills Una with curiosity, and she develops humility about her good fortune. It also tests her resolve, helping her to gain self-esteem. She resolves her grief about her mother's death because of her maturing perspective—and because of the hope that Julien inspires.

The Other Side of Luck is a story about how life is dictated by more than circumstances; its lead characters learn to make their own choices.

KAREN RIGBY (July / August 2021)

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