



The Perfect Tear

Connie Lansberg

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The Perfect Tear is an interesting take on a familiar tale about a humble girl who saves the world.

Connie Lansberg weaves an intriguing world where music creates life in *The Perfect Tear*. In this updated fairy tale that blends science fiction elements with traditional medieval fantasy, a girl embarks on a quest to save her world but soon discovers that she cannot succeed alone. The fate of the world ultimately rests in the hands of everyone, making this a timely parable for our modern times.

The Perfect Tear opens with the Creators, powerful beings who exist on a higher plane. More akin to gods or angels, the Creators use music to create life, but the application of this ability depends upon the individual. When one of these beings works to unmake Earth, a peer does her part to ensure that he fails. The manifestation of her will comes in the form of Eleanor, a young girl with the mysterious ability to affect nature through music. Thrown into this dangerous game between higher beings, Eleanor must master her strange powers to stop an apocalypse, even if it means sacrificing everything—and everyone—she loves.

This is a sweeping saga that spans dimensions and times. Eleanor is very sympathetic: her mother is dead, her father is missing, and she is a peasant girl. Her background recalls Cinderella: she is a poor girl taken in by strangers who works hard to earn her keep and who falls in love with a prince. Despite these recognizable fairy tale elements, Eleanor rises above well-worn tropes. Rather than waiting for someone to rescue her, she rescues herself. She does not shirk her obligation to save the world and instead seeks solutions, no matter the cost or where in the world her quest takes her.

For all the ways in which Eleanor puts a spin on traditional fantasy heroines, the characters who surround her, from her best friend to her princely love interest, are never quite fleshed out. For some, like the mystical nonhuman Creators, this inscrutability works to great effect. For others, like the prince's father or the nun who takes Eleanor in, characterizations are clichéd.

While Eleanor's world is familiar and needs little elaboration, the Creators' world and the mechanics by which their music affects the natural world are poorly defined. While the novel's blending of fantasy and science fiction puts a refreshing spin on the classic hero's journey, references to vibrations, densities, and helices muddle the world-building and impede understanding.

Although Eleanor's romance with the prince is rote, her relationships with her best friend and a girl she encounters on her journey are fascinating. Those female friendships form the core of the quest to save the world, and they're a rare treat in the genre, especially because they do not avoid occasional contentiousness. In fact, many of the major characters are women.

The Perfect Tear is an interesting take on a familiar tale about a humble girl who saves the world. Although the resolution leaves the door open for future adventures, Lansberg offers a complete story in which imperfection is prized

and, in fact, serves as the foundation for greatness.

VERNIEDA VERGARA (September 7, 2016)

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