

★ **This Wicked Fate: This Poison Heart: Book Two****Kalynn Bayron**

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The sequel to *This Poison Heart*, Kalynn Bayron's enchanting fantasy novel *This Wicked Fate* subverts hero's journey motifs for a young Black queer woman who is descended from the gods.

Briseis can control plants and is immune to poison, but until learning she is descended from the goddess Hecate and the mythological figure Medea, she thought she had to hide her skills. Now, with her mother's life hanging in the balance and a month to make things right, Briseis embraces her powers and goes on a quest to restore a missing piece of her heritage. As both allies and enemies follow her, Briseis faces her strange origins and decides how far she will go in the name of family. Briseis is also on a journey of self-discovery, trying to understand her identity, even as she is drawn to a mysterious immortal girl, Marie.

Briseis's quest takes her to a Gothic mansion and a Greek island; she encounters gods both benevolent and apathetic. Rich in detail, these locations and figures come alive, as do the plants that Briseis encounters: mundane vines, poisonous flowers, and the mythical Absyrtus Heart, a plant that can make any human immortal. But Briseis's foes are descended from Medea's vengeful spouse, Jason, and they want the Heart for their own purposes.

The book centers Black characters, and its prose sings. It celebrates the resilience of family, too: Briseis has been adopted, but even as she cherishes her adoptive mothers, she learns to accept and love her biological family. Through it all, Briseis perseveres through her mythic and romantic challenges.

This Wicked Fate is a delightful novel about literal Black Girl Magic, found family, and queer love, with adventures and a satisfying twist on Greek mythology.

JEANA JORGENSEN (July / August 2022)

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