



Betwixt

Tara Bray Smith

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For three teenagers, dark mystery has always lurked at the corner of the eyes and the edge of sleep. Beautiful Morgan D'Amici wakes in her trailerpark home with dirt and blood under her fingernails. Paintings come alive under Ondine Mason's violet-eyed gaze. Haunted runaway Nix Saint-Michael sees halos of light around people about to die.

At a secret summer rave in the woods, the three teenagers learn of their true, changeling nature and their uncertain, intertwined destinies. Riveting, unflinching, beautiful, *Betwixt* shows a magic as complex and challenging as any ordinary reality.

Betwixt Details

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Author : Tara Bray Smith

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From Reader Review Betwixt for online ebook

scissorstoariadne says

First of all, I read this during a very emotionally tumultuous time and that might colour my experience but Betwixt did absolutely nothing to uplift or sustain my interest. Do not let the sugarcoated synopsis on the book jacket fool you into thinking that this is even a remotely interesting premise. I fell for it and tossed it aside after a few excruciating days of trying to get through it. So what's wrong with Betwixt? Nothing! It's just that there's nothing good or redeeming about it.

- 1) The writing. This was my first encounter with a Smith book and it utterly disappointed me. Her writing has rare glimpses of the macabre, but, more often than not, they are bogged down by an annoyingly heightened sense of pretension that fails to elude the reader. Smith's writing is hazy and disinterested. She describes incidents over and over again, and tries to connect them with the emotional landscape of the characters and fails. The whole premise of kids dealing with magic, or whatever Smith had in mind, and drugs goes awry; it draws attention to itself way too much, yet accomplishes nothing in terms of plot development. The idea, on a whole, seems like a giant vanity project. Although that is how most stories unfold in authorial voice, Smith does little to give three-dimensional heft to the story. She brings up flat incidents involving flat characters and strings them along, but Betwixt has no gravity or ability to enchant the reader.
- 2) The plot development, if you can even call it that, is glacial. Smith belabors the actual rave for about many pages (check the book, if you dare) with alternating descriptions of the characters. However, this did not leave me in suspense or ease with the setting. The incidents are forced and the characters are not even stereotypes. They are bizarre caricatures that gain no bearing with the reader.
- 3) Like I said, my characters are alarmingly flat. Ondine was supposed to be this cool and collected girl losing control of her thoughts and life but she was so boring. She could have been a great character, had Smith developed her and made her interactions and appearances less ornamental and pretentious. One of the most annoying things about Betwixt is Moth. Smith tries very hard to disguise her romanticism of this skeezy, overblown character but it shows very much in the way she chose to elaborate on his shuffling between good and evil. And when I read about the Queen, or whoever, he answers to? I wanted to rip this book into pieces. Morgan (or was it Megan?) was supposed to be beautiful and cruel, and, thus, I was sure she was hiding something phenomenal and there was going to be this gradual development with her. Morgan seemed to have even a little glimmer of hope in the course of Betwixt but when I finally decided to bury this book forever, I hated her as much as the rest of the characters. She was cruel, yes, but not in the twisted villain-you-want-to-root-for way. Even then, she was at the mercy of Moth, and other big mystic goofies in the book. Plus, her aspirations for perfection were, if not cliched in the vein of cruel-and-beautiful, unsympathetic and flat. The worst of all? She kept coming across as wanting to sexually possess her brother, which was just grating and unnecessary at first, then completely boring.

None of the characters are appealing or three-dimensional and the plot goes nowhere. The writing does not incite any interest and just ends up making Betwixt a very confusing, contrived and boring novel.

I would like to apologise if I have upset any sensibilities, especially of those who actually liked this book, and the author. This just did not do it for me.

coconutsnbutts (? ????ι¢α ?) says

I never did finish this book. The cover is absolutely lovely, so I bought it (*bad move? uh, yea*). I got a little past half way through and finally decided there was too much good literature out there to be wasting my time reading a piece of garbage like this.

REASONS I COULD NOT AT ANY COST FINISH THIS "BOOK":

1. The characters were terrible. They were shallow and flat, and they stayed that way throughout the entire part I read. There was no character development **AT ALL**. Like, I kept waiting for one of them to have a epiphany and realize *Hey...I'm a complete bitch. Maybe I should work on bettering myself*. Of course it never happened. Morgan acted all high-and-mighty all the dang time. Ondine was a freaking stupid idiot who thinks she can be an adult at 17. Hahaha...yeah, OOOOKKKKK. And Nix just bugged me overall. He was a loser. The end.
2. The entire idea of the book never seemed to have completely formed. I'm surprised it was even published. The word building, or lack thereof, was terrible. I still don't understand what the author was trying to write about. I think she was trying to represent that teens from different backgrounds face issues that are in some way related? I don't know. Maybe she just wanted to write about teens who go out to a rave, get wasted taking some PCP or LSD or bath salts or whatever, and hallucinate for the remainder of their lives' that they belong to some elite and evil group of sparkling fairies.

I really, truly don't give a crap either way. Please don't read this book.

Rachael says

I finished this nearly 500 page book in little over one day. And let me tell you, it was amazing.

Three teens, Ondine, Nix, and Morgan, are thrown into a world they never imagined could exist. They always knew they were different. They always had strange habits or characteristics, such as purple eyes, the inability to cry, never getting sick, sleepwalking, and visions.

All three make it to a mysterious concert called the Ring of Fire and discover that they aren't human; they're changelings and they belong in Novala, another dimension. They have to learn in order to be able to complete the exidis and join the fay in their dimension.

However, there are always the evil ones, and here they are called Cutters. The Cutters want to stay on earth and stay human, instead of becoming fay. They are power hungry. Unfortunately for Ondine, Nix, and Morgan, there is one Cutter who is endangering them.

Bewtixt is very fast-paced; it is crucial to read carefully otherwise key details will be missed. Sometimes,

there is so much information jammed into one small section that the book can get confusing. The novel is told in alternate narrations by the main characters, and some parts can get boring. However, the last third or so of the story is jam-packed full of action and details, which make up for the uninteresting parts before, not that there were many.

The ending of Betwixt is very vague and confusing, and I need to reread it to understand it better. There is plenty of room for a sequel, which I am looking forward to. In my opinion, the creative storyline makes up for the sometimes overwhelming details and confusion, and Betwixt has become one of my favorite books.

reposted from <http://thebookmuncher.blogspot.com>

mimi ? says

WHAT THE FUCK WAS THIS BOOK ABOUT???

after reading this stupid 500 page book i literally have no idea what happened

it was like these 3 'special teenagers'. i don't even remember their names because they were weird but
girl 1: split personality or shapeshifting monster (never specifically stated...) BLACKS OUT AND WAKES
UP NEXT TO DEAD POEPLE AKA SHE KILLED THEM

girl 2: hallucinates pictures coming alive which is the most USELESS THING EVER???????? WHY????????

guy1: hallucinates auras TRES COOL~~~

i have no idea if they were actually supernaturally or were just on drugs the entire book...be cause they did
some trippy shit O.O BY THE WAY, THE CLIMAX

OH MY GOD THE CLIMAX WAS THEM GOING TO A RAVE. AND THEY FOUND PEOPLE WERE
LIKE ON DRUGZ AND KILLING PEOPLE and some other stuff

and then the book ends

HUUUUUUUUUUHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH?

DID I REALLY JUST READ THIS???????????

p.s wordy as hell and with way too much metaphorical description...first 10 pages was like this girl waking
up

p.p.s the 2 girl characters were total bitches and the guy suffered from no personality syndrome

Laura says

This book made no sense and didn't really seem to go anywhere. I kept reading because I kept thinking that
something of interest would happen-- it didn't so don't bother.

Grace says

Yes, this book was just a partial read for me, but having gotten to page 230 before I closed it and gave up, I
think I'm justified in saying a few words.

The book is set in Portland, Oregon...the city I'd love to live in more than any other, so it had that to its advantage. Some authors have the gift for writing a book that teens can relate to long after their own teen years. This author isn't one of those gifted few. I grimaced or rolled my eyes numerous times as she had the teens speaking in outdated slang ("man, dude"...I half expected someone to say "totally righteous" or "totally tubular") and referenced teen culture that was also very 90s (Rock the Vote?? C'mon, I know it still exists, but that was a 90's thing). Nothing in the book indicated that it was set in the 90s, but the author seemed stuck in an outdated view of teens.

Then there was the subject matter. The author kept things intentionally vague at first to keep you curious, as the teens discovered strange things about themselves and anticipated a big rave going on in a few weeks that promised to give them answers to their questions. I stuck it out until the end of the rave, when we found out (SPOILER) that the kids are really fay changelings. Ok, I'm with you so far. But the way she describes it from there sounds like something out of a Scientology cult, with the changelings being referred to as if they are aliens in a host body preparing to ascend to a higher plane. Uh uh. Nope. You lost me. I'm gone. I tolerated the outdated slang, I tolerated the Francine Pascal-esque High School gossip book constant descriptions of what everyone wore and how gorgeous they looked, but changeling fay who are aliens trapped inside human bodies? Goodbye, Tara Bray Smith.

Angie says

Betwixt sounded like it was going to be this dangerous, dark tale of the fae, but for me, it was mostly boring and confusing. Ondine's parents have just moved to Chicago, but she wants to stay in Portland for her senior year. Of course, her friend Morgan convinces her to throw a party to start the summer off right. It's at this party that everything changes, thanks to a partycrasher named Moth. Everyone thinks Moth is just a drug dealer who likes hitting on teenage girls, but really, he's a fairy and the one who will guide these girls and a loner named Nik toward their true natures.

I struggled with *Betwixt* from the start. The writing is very formal and stiff, which made me feel like I was being held at arm's length from what was happening. It was also just annoying, since everyone was always referred to by name, sometimes both first and last name. Even when it could have simply said "her parents," it used their full names which made everything awkward. When I think about my parents, I just think "my parents." Not their first names, and certainly not their full names. Locations were also always mentioned. I get it, this is set in Portland. I don't need to be reminded. I also don't care what street Odine lives on, or that Nix is from Sitka, Alaska. WE KNOW!

As for the plot, I have to admit that I didn't always follow what was going on. I loved this idea of changelings being gathered to learn of their true nature, and being guided before their transformations. I also liked that Ondine didn't just immediately believe what she was being told. She believed this was some kind of cult, especially since a drug known as "dust" was involved. Of course, Ondine has to be the most special of the special, much to Morgan's displeasure. And there's an evil fae who wants to lead these teens into evil, and he must be stopped. There's also something about them entering Novala (fairyland), but not being able to, or needing something or something. I don't know. I got really confused about halfway in. I also didn't get why Morgan hated Neve so much, who wound up being an important character, so maybe she was jealous? I don't know. I hated Morgan though.

Betwixt was just strange. Partially in a good way, since I liked some of the ideas here. But mostly it was too strange in a confusing and frustrating way. I wanted to love it, since that description is super awesome, but it

just kind of fell flat.

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Bookwyrm says

You know, the word "betwixt" used to conjure up such enchanting images of old fairytales, like Tam Lin curse by the fairy queen, as some words inevitably carry with them such beautiful associations. NO LONGER! I'm afraid to say I could not finish this book, and that is EXTREMELY unlike me. (I've survived many dross-filled horrors to their sad and unsatisfying ends, let me assure you.) This book, however--though it had a beginning that SEEMED promising--ended up being filled with 2-D characters, exposition cop-outs of the "It's beyond the comprehension of your mere human mind" ilk, many wtf moments, and at one point, a 5 page explanation of the goings-on of the previous 150 that you never really "get" by a character whose role and purpose you will likewise not understand well. Definitely one of the worst books I've ever picked up: possibly THE worst.

P.S. I bought it because the summary on the back seemed somewhat promising, and a critic who reviewed it compared it to Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight." Let me just say, I cannot emphasize enough the gravity of that insult. I shudder.

For the love of all that is holy, do not buy--or read (and by "read" I mean generally to have your brain indelibly injured by)--this book.

Sarahn says

This review is going to be hard to write, mainly because I want to get my points across without sounding like a rabid maniac. *deep breath* Here goes.

I honestly couldn't even get through this book, which really tells you something. Regardless of what I think of a book, I usually (with a few exceptions) try to get through it. Not this time. I got about 50 pages in and decided not to read it anymore. I will list the reasons why:

1. The writing is pretty bad, not to mention boring. Even with stories like Twilight (of which I have plenty of criticism), I at least felt like I was *in* the story with the characters. Not so with this book. It feels too much like someone is just telling me a long, drawn out story that gets nowhere.
2. Drawing on that, it's *booring*. Maybe I have ADD or just suffer from a short attention span, but in those pages that I did read, I was bored basically the entire time. There was WAAAAAAAAY too much vague, monotonous exposition. Again, the writing felt robotic and detached.
3. The characters. While Nix and Ondine seemed kind of like decent (if unintriguing) people, Morgan just plain scares me. And I don't mean in the good way. I mean in the obsessive, needs-to-be-locked-up-in-an-asylum scary. She hangs pictures of Ondine up on the wall??!! What the f? And the way she just goes through friends the minute they challenge her makes her seem abusive, making Morgan unlikeable and unsympathetic in my eyes. And as I said, the others don't interest me enough to make me want to read on, even though Nix's 'power' was pretty unique and interesting.

So yeah. I'm sorry I wasted my time and money on this book, and I suggest any of those reading this review to avoid doing the same.

P.S. Is Moth supposed to be sexy? I certainly didn't find him to be, what little I saw of him. Seems like a pervert to me.

Amelia says

When I saw that the latest book to jump off my shelves at me had only a 2.6 star average rating, I admit I wondered what I was getting myself into. It's taken the best part of two weeks for me to read *Betwixt* and at points it was more a drive to figure out why people hated it so than any enjoyment in the reading that kept me going.

I can't say I liked it particularly but I don't think *Betwixt* deserves that low low rating, particularly when you compare it to some of the higher rated but crappy books in the YA genre. I think it's slightly unfortunate that it is classified as YA actually, because I'd say that's partially why it has so much disapproval. There's a sort of surrealism and ambiguity to *Betwixt* that you rarely see in the genre. Plenty of reviewers seem to have interpreted this as confusion/lack of clarity in the writing and they could be right, but I saw this ambiguity more as an expression of the experiences of the characters. They're changelings, but not changelings in any sense that either we, the reader, or even they, the characters, know about. Their lives themselves have been surreal and strange and, at the point in which we join the story, they're becoming stranger by the minute. Some of them have their illusions of almost-normalcy shattered, others get explanations of odd things they've lived with their whole lives... but all of them are having to learn to grasp huge changes. The characters are confused and don't know what's going on half the time - so for the reader not to know what's going on... it may not make for an easy read, but it does give you an idea of how the characters might be feeling.

It's easy to dismiss the writing as bad, but in my mind it's decent writing, just grittier and not in the neat/simple style a lot of people expect in YA.

Actually, the writing style of *Betwixt* reminded me a lot of the two Francesca Lia Block books I've read, though I must admit this is a bit of a backhanded complement, given I hated both of them.

I expect my review is a bit tangled as I'm still muddled about how I feel about *Betwixt* but I hope I've at least managed to give a small idea of what it's like!

Linda says

Don't bother. She develops her characters well, but the plots moved slowly, and there was little original in it. On top of that, for the first quarter of the book, it felt like a teen coming-of-age novel, only with too much sex and drugs to make the young adults' list.

There's better stuff to spend good reading time on.

Paula says

I think that Smith made an earnest attempt to do something different with a "Fairy" book. Some aspects of the plot are genuinely compelling. However, the book feels unfinished.

Clearly she is setting up for a "series." Her publisher is Poppy--the same publisher with which Gossip Girl originated--an organization that is set up to crank out teen series targeted for girls. While it must be wonderful to get a publisher, I think this publisher may have compromised her integrity as an author by encouraging her to create a story that could become a series.

There is an interview with Smith in the appendix of the novel. In it she states that the plot, ". . . most definitely took me by surprise . . . as I wrote . . . the lineaments of the plot had to deepen and expand . . ." This is clearly seen in the story. It is almost as if she had become enamored with each character and was more interested in provided a back story for each than creating a cohesive narrative. And each character is interesting--if I wanted to read character sketches. Smith tried to do too many things in one book. She should have focused on one story line and developed fully, leaving only a few threads that could be explored later in subsequent novels.

I'm not sure where Smith will take this series (if indeed a series is the goal) and I am also not sure there is enough merit to the first book to keep teen readers coming back to figure it all out. It is unfortunate because had the book been reworked a bit, it has some real potential. However, overall it is an unfulfilling novel that leaves you with an ending you wonder why you went through 488 pages to get to.

Debbie Gascoyne says

I enjoyed this a lot. I'm intrigued by the wide variations in responses from other reviewers - so many people found it "boring" or "badly written." Um, no. Not badly written at all. A hell of a lot better than either Stephanie Meyer or JK Rowling, and better than many other YA "dark fantasy" works that I've tried. It's not perfect - I felt that the ending was rushed; maybe she decided that it was okay because she was going to have a sequel, but I thought everything was over too quickly and would have liked a little more explanation. However, it created an amazing amount of tension with atmosphere and suggestion - lots of good "show not tell" - and the characters were quite interesting and shaded.

Misty says

I read this as part of a challenge, and I had to go to the library and pick two books with my eyes closed. The first was excellent (Little Brother, review is here); the second was Betwixt. If I hadn't been reading this for a challenge, I would have put this book down after about 20 pages. Actually, I probably would have thrown it out the window.

Morgan F says

This story was complex, filled with interconnected small details that you really had to pay attention to. The pace of the novel was inconsistent. One minute it would be so slow that you got bored, the next minute it would speed up so suddenly, you felt obligated to go back and see if you missed something. The characters were all over the place. They were supposed to be close, but they hated each other more than they liked each other. I suppose this is the author trying to be realistic, but it just made the reader feel distant from the characters, who were unstable and overall unlikable. The action scenes were confusing, and you had to go back and reread them. The ending is abrupt and inconclusive. In order to read this story, one has to be patient enough to read it slowly and carefully. However, the cover is awesome, but do not be fooled into reading it unless you are willing to commit.
