



The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf

Ambelin Kwaymullina

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“There will come a day when a thousand Illegals descend on your detention centres. Boomers will breach the walls. Skychangers will send lightning to strike you all down from above, and Rumbler will open the earth to swallow you up from below. . . . And when that day comes, Justin Connor, think of me.”

Ashala Wolf has been captured by Chief Administrator Neville Rose. A man who is intent on destroying Ashala’s Tribe — the runaway Illegals hiding in the Firstwood. Injured and vulnerable and with her Sleepwalker ability blocked, Ashala is forced to succumb to the machine that will pull secrets from her mind.

And right beside her is Justin Connor, her betrayer, watching her every move.

Will the Tribe survive the interrogation of Ashala Wolf?

The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf Details

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From Reader Review The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf for online ebook

Liz Janet says

“There will come a day where a thousand illegals descend on your detention centre. Boomers will breach the walls. Skychangers will send lighting to strike you down from above and Rumbler will open the earth to swallow you up from below. And when that day comes, Justin Connor, think of me.”

With a quote like that on the flap how could I do nothing but love it? With a writer that was going to show diversity of aborigines which I have read very little of, how could I not love it? With the abilities described how could I not love it? How wrong was I! I am so glad that I picked this up from the library instead of buying it like I was planning.

This story follows Ashala Wolf, who has been captured by Chief Administrator Neville Rose. Ashala and her Tribe are sort of mutants, with different powers, and of course, they are persecuted. They live in the woods hiding from the rest of humanity. But the Chief is looking to find them, and with the help of a machine that will extract what she knows from her mind, there is little she can do. Justin Connor is there too, a boy she believed to be her friend, sadly he betrayed her and her people.

WHY DID EVERYTHING GO WRONG WITH THIS BOOK? I WANTED IT TO BE GOOD SO BADLY!!!!

The big problem that I found was the lack of world-building, I actually believe that the most building we get comes from that first quote on the top of this review, since it is very easy for us to figure out a bunch of these Tribe members can control elements. Three-hundred years have passed since the flood came, and the small society where the story takes place was created. All we know is that it was an environmental disaster, and therefore the message I got was that we must take care of our planet, “[advanced technology] had isolated the people of the old world from nature, shielding them from the consequences of imbalance, and yet they’d believed, right up until the very end, that it would save them. But...advances in technology could never compensate for failures in empathy.”

People have developed abilities, as well as special connections with certain animals, Ashala is a sleepwalker and has a connection to wolves, Ember is connected to crows and has an ability connected to them, and Georgie to spiders, and I cannot recall what his skill is, consequently, these are the titles of the other two books out so far. There is a strange serpent involved but we barely get any of that. It is basically Ashala in prison, and a few flashbacks. For a book that involves Australian/New Zealand aboriginal mythology, I was expecting a world filled with legend and bewitchment, I got none.

I still have to give it credit for having in this futuristic dystopian world, no sexism or racism. In quite a few books I have read, classic science-fiction or not, the new worlds reverse into an epoch of inherent structure due to religion, sex, sexuality, or racial identity, while also adding to it, the mutants/power-filled people, as second class citizens. This has been done with various degrees of success, luckily, this book managed to bring forth the issue of all these without having them as clearly defined. Mutants have always been a metaphor for marginalized groups, and they tend to be presented in places where they are discriminated for more than one thing (example X-Men), this book managed to bring mutants forth without adding any more discrimination, it felt refreshing to read.

There is also no character development. Only through flashbacks we get to see how undeveloped the protagonists actually were. How am I supposed to enjoy a novel if there are no fleshed out characters with not only complicated or interesting backstories, but also hints at future issues to surface that actually make sense. When I read Vicious by V.E. Schwab, I learned about the background of the characters, and the

motives for what they did what they did, with this novel, it felt as if Twilight's Bella gave her side of the story, instead of us learning from the point of view of all the great side characters.

There is a love story, and luckily it did not take a major part of the novel, like most dystopian-disguised-romances that I have read recently. It is clear who is falling for who, as well as who will end up with who, but it did not feel as pushed. It was however, very rushed, and I am not a fan of instantaneous love combustion.

Another thing added, that I liked very much was the introduction of detention centers where the gifted people were intended to be placed. I have an odd fascination with reading about forced-labor or concentration camps, because they represent a part of humanity that can come out at any moment in history. For this, I am always interested to see how it is that they came to be, again, this was not well done, but at least it was there.

Although unoriginal and severely lacking, I finished it rather quickly (maybe because of the lack of substance), and I still ponder if I should read the second book or not. The one thing I did get out of it was this: "***You can't transform a society for the better with violence, Ashala. Only with ideas.***" Considering what is going on in the world right now, and was happened in history, I am not sure how to feel about the quote.

Read at own caution. It was just:

Sarah says

2.5 stars

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Candlewick Press and Netgalley.)

Ashala has a special ability, and has been on the since she was 12, not wanting to be assessed and detained because of her ability.

Now Ashala has been captured though, and she's about to be interrogated by those who wish to assess and detain those with special abilities.

This book just wasn't for me. I had trouble keeping up with what was going on, and I just didn't find the story interesting.

This was one of those books where the story seemed fractured and disjointed, and I just wasn't interested enough to be able to work out what was going on and stay interested.

The start of the book was basically Ash being questioned, and then being drugged and having some kind of memory machine used on her. Then there was something going on with a girl that she recognised from the wilds where she lived, who turned out to not be exactly who/what Ash thought her to be. We then had this part where Ash had to go back and relive 5 memories or something, and I really just had no clue what was going on. I kept going back and re-reading bits but it just wouldn't go in, and it really didn't interest me. When I got to the end I really had little idea as to what had happened, and couldn't even say that the book was bad, I just didn't get it, and unfortunately I was just glad that I had made it to the end.

I'm not really sure who I could possibly recommend this to, because it just really didn't work for me.

Overall; confusing, and couldn't hold my interest.

5 out of 10.

Lily says

“People with abilities are not a threat to the Balance”

“I’m afraid you are. You bring forces into being that are too powerful and unstable to be allowed to exist unchecked”

Smart, original and utterly compelling. 'The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf' is the first book in a young adult dystopian series by Ambelin Kwaymullina set in a futuristic version of Australia devastated by ecological collapse. A little bit Alexandra Bracken's 'The Darkest Minds' meets Isobelle Carmody's 'Obernewtyn', this is an unexpectedly unique, complex and thought-provoking addition to an arguably oversaturated genre.

This is a grim depiction of our earth torn apart by environmental destruction. A divided society has risen from the ashes to a new world order, in which people born with strange powers – from the ability to manipulate memories, control the elements or heal physical wounds – are persecuted simply for existing. It is believed that these Illegals are a threat to the balance of the world and they are captured and incarcerated in detention centres to protect society from the supposed danger posed by their abilities.

The start of the story is infused with an almost claustrophobic sense of threat; opening to protagonist Ashala Wolf locked up in a detention centre and facing imminent interrogation by a machine designed to forcibly extract memories, even from an unwilling mind. A betrayal by someone she had trusted, someone she had thought she might even love, led to her capture by Chief Administrator Neville Rose, a man intent on finding and destroying the family she has made for herself from a group of Illegal runaways. These Illegals, known as The Tribe, survive outside of society by sheltering deep within the protection of the Firstwood, at one with the land and its many inhabitants. With her Sleepwalker ability blocked and at the mercy of a machine that will rip her darkest secrets from the depths of her mind, Ashala knows the fate of The Tribe is in grave peril.

But this game of wits and subterfuge will not break her.

I have a lot of feels about this book. Honestly, it is *so bloody good*. Deliciously intriguing and darkly relevant, layered with deeper messages about injustice, intolerance, oppression and discrimination. This is the sort of story that will keep you guessing, filled with unexpected twists and turns and a surprisingly unique plot. The entire novel plays out in the tense and treacherous quarters of a detention centre but is interspersed with vivid memory sequences that are used to gradually unravel layers of deceit and mystery to powerful effect. As past and present intertwine it is clear that nothing is as it seems. I honestly didn't expect this sort of high-stakes, psychological thriller element which really adds to the narrative as Ashala and Chief Administrator Rose do battle in an cerebral game of cat and mouse. This is such a different take on an otherwise familiar concept, and the style of storytelling combined with a sinister and forboding atmosphere just *works*. It is gripping and intense and keeps you so invested in the story and in what is happening to the characters. *I loved it.*

It was also so refreshing to read a book with an Indigenous main character, especially one as strong, smart and tenacious as Ashala. It was impossible not to empathise with her determination to survive, as well as her fierce loyalty towards her family and her deep, almost spiritual connection to the land. And it is this spirituality that is the true heart and soul of the story, blending elements of the post-apocalypse dystopia

genre with Indigenous Australian culture and mythology to create a story with so much depth and nuance. The novel's Indigenous ties are grounded in The Dreamtime and in the forging of this powerful connection with, and sense of respect for, the natural world and all of its inhabitants that captures the essence of Aboriginal culture and spirituality. It is beautiful and powerful and vibrant, adding layers of symbolism to the story and the world-building in a way that ties all the concepts together to form a cohesive and breathtaking whole that is far stronger than the sum of its parts.

I also really appreciated that this story provided only a glimpse into one small piece of the world, a microcosm of a broader construct, and that there was such a strong independent narrative arc and satisfying conclusion. From the fascinating and strong cast of characters to the deep sense of respect for Indigenous culture to the powerful thematic elements woven throughout the story this is a must read for fans of dystopia looking for something new and thought-provoking.

On the whole an exciting opener to a series that clearly has a lot of potential to grow into something much wider in scope.

Actual rating 4.5 stars

Trisha says

Another case of "it's not you, it's me."

This book *should* have been exactly my kind of book. Dystopia, weird mind stuff and "save the planet" kind of kids! YAY!

Instead, it was kind of....boring. Ashala is captured. From there, it's a lot of trying to figure out what on earth was going on. I think it lost me really early on, when the "dog" was leaping in the air in her dream eating "bones."

I don't mind suspense and confusion in a book, but I have to be invested in the character or the story....or the world before you confuse me. Instead, I spent almost the whole book going "wait, what?" and then having to go back and read. And the jumbly memory stuff entirely bored me and from there it was just a push to get it done (since every review talks about how amazing the end is.)

sadly, by the time I got to the end, I was so un-invested I just rolled with it. Not a series I'll be continuing.

Shannon (Giraffe Days) says

If, like me, you have a childhood steeped in fantasy and folklore; a love of the natural world and a soul-deep recognition of its greater importance in the scheme of things; a deep fascination with 'misfit abilities' (as in The Obernewtyn Chronicles and The X-Men); and a love for adventure stories involving youngsters outwitting malicious adults, you will, hopefully, love *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* as much as I did. This didn't just hit all my storytelling 'wants', to borrow the analogy; it barrelled into them, knocked them flat, then pulled them up and charged off into the next exciting chapter with me grinning inanely the whole time (except for the times when the tension and anticipation got to me, of course).

Not so very far in our future, the apocalypse wipes out pretty much everything we know. Driven by climate change, what emerges in its aftermath is not only a drastically changed world, but a new mindset too. The new world's ideology follows the doctrine of the revered yet mysterious Alexander Hoffman, a historical figure who guided civilisation back onto the path of survival. The ideology bestowed on this new world revolves around a Balance in nature rather than Gods: the idea that harmony must be maintained or another disaster will occur, and next time it might really be the end of everything. To prevent this, the surviving society implemented the Accords, a set of laws that everyone lives by. One of these Accords, the Citizenship Accords, has in turn created an underclass of exiled Illegals: mostly children and teenagers who fled before they could be detained due to their mutant abilities, which are seen as a threat to this new world order.

One of those Illegals is Ashala Wolf, who fled Gull City with her friend Georgie, also an Illegal, four years ago. Making their way through the grasslands - inhabited by man-eating giant Saurs, the first new creature of this new world - to the Firstwood, a forest of towering Tuart trees, Ashala makes a pact with the land and its creatures. In exchange for making a home in the Firstwood, they vow not to eat any meat. Living a sustainable existence amongst the trees and within the extensive cave networks, Ashala and Georgie are soon joined by other Illegals escaping detention, and the families that would betray them. Together they form the Tribe, of which Ashala is the leader, but they never stop watching and listening to what's happening in any of the eight remaining cities in the land.

Now, everything that Ashala has built seems about to be destroyed. A prisoner at Detention Centre 3 in Gull City, Ashala knows the man in charge, Neville Rose, will use everything he has to get information from her concerning the Tribe, and their rebellious movements. And by 'everything', Ashala knows it means facing the machine. It's just a ghastly rumour, but Ashala, Georgie and Ember know that Neville Rose and Miriam Grey have built an interrogation device that goes against the Benign Technology Accords - an accord designed to prevent the kind of technology-driven disaster that befell the world before.

Betrayed by someone she had welcomed into the Tribe, Ashala is now her betrayer's captive. Justin Connor is an Enforcer, and a Citizen. With this enemy by her side, she now faces the next: an elderly, kindly man, the Chief Administrator of Detention Centre 3, who seems incredibly insane but who is no less dangerous to the Tribe for that - or anyone else for that matter. Determined to extract information from her, can Ashala Wolf beat the machine and survive the interrogation? Or will Neville Rose get his way and arrest them all simply for having abilities that some believe could be a threat?

Ambelin Kwaymullina's debut novel is a powerhouse fantasy-adventure story that has invigorated my enthusiasm - previously waning at a dreadful rate - in Young Adult speculative fiction. *This* is the kind of story I want to read, and want more of. Thankfully, it's the start of a series (and because I'm late getting this review up, I've already read the sequel, which I loved just as much, if not more). Kwaymullina has created a strong heroine in Ashala Wolf, who provides a new and engaging voice in the post-apocalyptic dystopian fantasy sub-genre, and an exciting new world.

Ashala is the leader of the Tribe, and her ability is Sleepwalking: when she sleepwalks, she can do pretty much anything. To make her ability do her bidding, she gives herself three very simple instructions in the half-asleep stage, because once she's Sleepwalking she can only hold onto three things. When she Sleepwalks, she can travel vast distances in a single bound, move through objects, fight with superhuman strength and so on. But it has its limits, and Ashala doesn't always feel that it's an ability she can control. Other Illegals can run so fast they're almost invisible, or control the clouds, or control fire, and so on. Some of the abilities really do have the potential to be dangerous, but so far the only Illegals Ashala has ever met have been frightened children, fleeing persecution and a lifetime of detention (something that really resonates in our world today, with our 'detention centres' for 'boat people, many of whom *are* frightened

children - and adults - fleeing persecution in their own lands).

Georgie's ability is to see the possible futures, while Ember - a girl with different coloured eyes and a Citizenship tattoo whom they find in the Firstwood not long after they first arrive - has an ability to do with memories. While these two central characters are mostly on the periphery in this first volume, they come into their own in subsequent books.

One of the pivotal characters in the story is, and must be, the land itself, especially the Firstwood, which has its own tangible presence and almost a personality. The Saurs, too, prove to be more than they seem at first, and a love and appreciation of the natural world is a strongly embedded current throughout the story and this world. It is one of the things I love about it, along with the Australian Indigenous Dreaming mythology woven in (Ashala's grandfather is the rainbow serpent, a spirit being that even I have come across in my readings). It is this lovely balance between an exciting and fresh-sounding take on the classic misfit-fantasy-post-apocalyptic storyline (I hark back again to The Obernewtyn Chronicles - so glad there is another series out now to satisfy Carmody's hungry fans!), and a story with a conscience.

It is this element that really connected with me, and I think would with many readers: after all, it seems to me that we are constantly searching for a spiritual connection with the world, and while I'm not religious nor into chakras and crystals, I strongly believe that it is a disconnect with the natural world - privileging a life lived in boxes, amongst concrete, in cars, in front of computers and screens - that has contributed to the high levels of stress and anxiety (not to mention obesity and other health problems) that we see today. Sounds simplistic perhaps but why should it be complicated? I know I always feel more at peace/less stressed after an afternoon in the garden, getting my hands dirty, growing my own food. Adults tend to rigidly adhere to - and expect - the lifestyle with which they're most familiar, but children are less moulded and in many ways, more adaptable. Children's and Young Adult stories are great vehicles for exploring new worlds and new ways of being, as well as engaging with classic and mythological storylines, the kind of age-old stories with which we continue to explore our understanding of the world around us.

Kwaymullina's style is smooth and flowing, engaging and gripping and full of surprises. The romance aspect of the storyline is touching and genuine, to the point that I was biting my knuckles at the end. Race is irrelevant in this new, 300-year-old world, which is also refreshing. *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* reads like a standalone novel, and having finished the second book, I can say that that's a continuing pattern. But there is an over-arching storyline at work here, and some Big Picture issues at play: not least of which revolves around discrimination, persecution and dehumanisation of the 'Other'. Beautifully written and absorbing, *The Tribe* is one series that I whole-heartedly recommend to as wide an audience as I can.

Mandy says

I really really enjoyed this book. I thought I would struggle, there's so many different characters & timelines since the story jumps around between past events. But actually it was easy & engaging. I was invested from the first chapter & I'm definitely going to read the sequels.

ALPHAreader says

Ashala Jane Ambrose is being taken to the machine that will break her. It will use her memories against her,

ripping into her mind and putting the Tribe in danger.

There is nobody to help Ashala. The boy she trusted, Justin Connor, revealed himself as a traitor and is now her guard in Detention Centre 3. The infamous Chief Administrator, Neville Rose, has Ashala in his sights and will do whatever it takes to find the location of her Tribe in the Firstwood.

But within these walls are more Illegals like Ashala and her Tribe members. Illegals that are fighting in their own way. Sleepwalkers, Rumblers, Chirpers, Firestarters, Sky changers, Leafers and Menders among them.

Ashala will not stop, for she is the leader of the Tribe. They can try to break her; they can take her memories and steal her thoughts. But they will not break her, for she is Ashala Wolf – the name she assumed when she became leader of hunted children.

She is Ashala Wolf.
She will not break.
Just let them try.

I bared my teeth at him. “There will come a day when a thousand Illegals descend on your detention centres. Boomers will breach the walls. Sky changers will send lightning to strike you all down from above, and Rumblers will open the earth to swallow you up from below. There will be nowhere to hide, nowhere to run, and no way to stop them from freeing every single Illegal in this centre. And when that day comes, Justin Connor, think of me.”

‘The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf’ is the first book in a new young adult Australian Dystopian series called ‘The Tribe’ by Ambelin Kwaymullina.

Set some 300 years in the future, Ambelin Kwaymullina’s is an Eco-Dystopian, in which the current crumbled world is only just recuperating after mankind devastated it with pollution and disregard, which culminated in a terrible flood, which also shrunk the world’s population. And from these waters another change occurred in the ripples of humanity... when certain people started gaining new abilities. There are Firestarters, with temperamental combustion who can create flame from thin air. Menders lay hands and heal people. And Sleepwalkers, like Ashala Wolf, can be transported when they dream.

And although in Kwaymullina’s future society there is no discrimination of skin colour, these people with special abilities are hunted and caged for what they can do – and their potential for causing natural disaster. That’s where Ashala and her Tribe come in ... because the Tribe believe in The Balance; that just as the earth has had to equalize and harmonize after environmental devastation, so too will the human race have to accept that those with abilities are apart of the same whole – neither good, nor bad, but of this new world order.

There are those who would like to see humans like Ashala and her Tribe locked up in Detention Centres – to be experimented and terminated. But it has become Ashala’s mission in life to give these ‘others’ a fighting chance, and a place to hide in the Firstwood.

I’ve been grumbling for a little while now about the fact that the once hyped Dystopian genre is losing its lustre for me. It seems to be so same-same these days, and while Suzanne Collins’s ‘The Hunger Games’ trilogy had real heart and an interesting social context in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, lately it feels like everything Dystopian that has come since ‘The Hunger Games’ has been lukewarm and simply ticking trope boxes rather than genuinely provoking. A good Dystopian book should use metaphor to correlate what they

write in their war-torn/dictator-led/post-apocalyptic world with what is happening to people reading the book in present day. And, honestly, I just haven't felt that lately (especially not when so many Dystopian's now also think a love triangle is necessary because Katniss/Peeta/Gale had one).

So when I picked up Ambelin Kwaymullina's 'The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf' I felt a wee bit weary, but decided to remain open-minded. But a few pages into this Aussie YA novel and I discovered that there was nothing stale or stagnate in this new Dystopian offering. In fact, with Kwaymullina's originality and breathtaking story, 'The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf' is proof-positive that the post-apocalyptic genre is still a fascinating one, but only if you have as good a story to tell as Kwaymullina does with Ashala Wolf.

First, I'd like to highlight how wonderful it is to read an Australian young adult novel with an Aboriginal protagonist, and written by an Aboriginal author (Kwaymullina heralds from the Palyku People of the Pilbara region). As I mentioned, in this future world racial discrimination is a thing of the past, but Kwaymullina makes it a point to indirectly highlight that Ashala has a strong connection to the earth, gaining strength from her dreams of Firstwood and always with a deep respect for nature. Ashala's ancestors are undoubtedly Aboriginal; and 300 years later she has inherited their connection to the land.

I've written about how much I loved reading an Australian novel with an Aboriginal protagonist, and how we need more of the like for young readers. My opinion of this appearing on the 'Kill Your Darlings' blog (<http://goo.gl/ChnDr>)

My appreciation of the novel's Indigenous ties goes deeper than merely having an Aboriginal protagonist. It's something that is at the very heart of the novel – indeed, just as Ashala has a connection to the land, so too does this story for being a unique Dystopian with a focus on environmental disaster and mankind's fault in killing the world some 300 years ago with greed and negligence.

It's also the fact that Kwaymullina draws on Dreamtime themes in her book. For international readers, The Dreamtime is the animist framework of Australian Aboriginal mythology, and is a sacred era in which ancestral totemic spirit beings created the world. The Dreamtime is something all Australian children learn about in primary school (but, sadly, seems to drop off the curriculum when you enter high school and the focus shifts to colonialist 'white' history). But reading Dreamtime connections in 'The Tribe' really clicked for me – it's wonderful the symbolism that Kwaymullina explores, in particular with serpent creatures who are another product of 'The Balance' and play a vital role in protecting the children of the Firstwood Tribe. All Australian schoolchildren know the story of the Rainbow Serpent – the serpent Goorialla who travelled the land searching for his tribe, and along the way made gorges and rivers with his body, caves and mountains – shaping the landscape that we now know. The Rainbow Serpent has since become a symbol of fertility and abundance, so having this connection in 'The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf' runs very deep and adds layers to this Dystopian world.

I also can't deny that Kwaymullina being an Indigenous author of fantasy fiction has its own deeper intrigue and authenticity. In an interview I did with Kwaymullina for the KYD blog, I asked her what sorts of books she read growing up, and she replied with a very interesting answer which perhaps reveals why she would go on to write a Dystopian book, particularly one about a band of children with special abilities who are evading capture by those who want them eradicated from society:

Mostly, I read speculative fiction, which were the stories I felt a sense of kinship with. It's not that speculative fiction was ever especially peopled with non-Caucasian characters (unless, that is, you count elves, fairies, or aliens). But they were often stories of the underdog, and of the outcast; of a small group of determined people fighting injustice against impossible odds. My ancestors had suffered under, and resisted,

unjust policies and laws. I could relate.

But above all else, ‘The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf’ is a darn-good yarn. Kwaymullina offers a heartfelt Eco-Dystopian, with a simultaneous guessing-game plot as Ashala’s interrogation reveals the layers of her memory. Then, of course, there’s her tricky relationship with thought-to-be-friend, now foe and prison guard, Justin Connor, which adds even more slurp to an already juicy plot.

Second book in the series is due out in August 2013, and I can’t wait. Kwaymullina leaves Ashala (and readers) not on the precipice of a cliff-hanger, but standing on the threshold of a daunting new world that is so intriguing and dangerous, readers will be counting down the days until they can return to Firstwood and Ashala’s Tribe.

Kathylill says

Reading The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf feels a lot like this.

This book will fuck with your expectations. It’s original, unpredictable and utterly engrossing with its ingenious plot twist, imaginative dreamscapes, nightmares, memory flashbacks and sometimes even the complete loss of reality.

All your expectations and what you thought was true gets turned upside down.

“The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist. And like that, poof. He’s gone.” Verbal Kint, “The Usual Suspects”

You are looking for the something akin to the originality that was Angelfall, for a female Peter Pan and X-Men characters with ethnic diversity set in a creative dystopian world? Look no further. The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf has it all and more; featuring indigenous Australian elements of The Dreamtime, such as the serpent, totems and sacred places.

The debut novel The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf is the start to a four book dystopian series (The Tribe) set several hundred years in the future where the world was ripped apart by an environmental cataclysm known as ‘the Reckoning’. The survivors of the Reckoning live in an **eco-utopia** where they strive to protect the Balance of the world, the inherent harmony. But anyone born with an ability, like Firestarters, Rumbler, Boomers or Waterbabies, is viewed as a threat to the Balance. Any child or teenager found to have such a power is labeled an ‘Illegal’ and locked away in detention centers by the government.

The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf by Ambelin Kwaymullina is a picture-perfect example for the diversity that can be found in Young Adult dystopian literature.

As a YA author, I find an assumption that teenagers are only interested in a narrow category of stories about people who look exactly like them to be insulting to teenagers everywhere. Teenagers, at least in my experience, have all the curiosity about other peoples and places

that some of us sadly seem to lose as we get older. What's more, when I was writing a novel about a girl who would change the world, there was a reason that I wrote about a teenager. My teenager is Indigenous, but many of her qualities are the qualities I see in teenagers everywhere, of all races and cultures – including flexibility of thought; reckless courage; stubborn defiance; and an absolute refusal to accept that injustice cannot be changed or should not be challenged. (Quoted from the blog post: Whitewashing: the disappearance of race and ethnicity from YA covers by Ambelin Kwaymullina <http://www.insideadog.com.au/blog/whi...>)

In most YA dystopian fiction you will encounter the monotonous 101 heroine: the one who painfully slowly discovers the fault in the current dystopian society that makes her doubt all she's been told her whole life, causing her to join in the secret Uprising that exists. But Ashala, young she might be, already is the leader of The Tribe; she doesn't want to fight the system, only to change it for the better through the power of new ideas. I loved the character of Ashala. She was not only a strong female leader but also kind of a mother-figure to her tribe.

The only fault with this book I had is where the fuck to I get the second book now?

Shaheen says

It's hard to believe that *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is a début novel. It's rich prose, brilliantly imagined world, and nuanced characters are sure to impress a wide ranging audience.

There is an inherent Balance between all life, and the only way to preserve it is to live in harmony with ourselves, with each other, and with the earth."

I love the world-building in this novel! It's a dystopian world based on Australia with Dreamtime mythologies - like the Serpent - cleverly weaved into it. Ashala Wolf lives in a world ravaged by the affects of technological mismanagement and neglect for the environment. There's only one remaining land-mass. IT is split up into seven large cities, separated by wilderness, where most of the population lives. The survivors of this catastrophe live their lives to preserve the Balance and some believe that people like Ashala - Illegals, who have strange abilities - do not fit into the Balance. Those with harmless or controllable powers are granted Exemptions from the government and are allowed to live as Citizens in the cities, but many are forced to flee and live in the wild. Ashala is one of the leaders of The Tribe, a group of children who have run away from the Cities before their assessments who now eke out a living in the Firstwood.

When we begin the novel, Ashala has been captured by Chief Administrator Neville Rose: a man bent on wiping out Illegals, who has his sights set on The Tribe. Ashala is quick-thinking, brave, and incredibly smart - everything one needs in a rebellious hero! I love how loyal she is to her Tribe, even the people she really doesn't owe any loyalty to.

Ashala leads the Tribe with the help of Ember Crow and Georgie Spider, and this amazing trio looks after all the younger children who have run away from the Cities. Ember and Georgie are great secondary characters, but I'm really excited that they each get their own books in the series. I really want to know more about both of them! Other secondary characters in the book include Jaz, a cute and super cheeky kid that Ashala has a

soft spot for, and Justin, who captured Ashala and brought her to in to be questioned. They are all well-crafted, believable characters.

The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf is a little unusually structured - large parts of the story are told in flashback form. This is in part because of the Machine - it extracts memories from the person being interrogated - but there's another (spoilerly) reason for it all (by the way, the plotting of this novel is superb!). While some books become confusing when there are time-jumps, flashbacks, and memories involved, I found this novel easy to follow. I think much of the brilliance of the book rests on how the author chose to tell us this story.

This is an excellent novel, one that I think deserves a home on the bookshelves of every reader of dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction. Featuring a brilliant new voice in Australian literature, *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*'s sure to impress. I'll be running out to grab the sequel, *The Disappearance of Ember Crow*, and will be on the lookout for the third book, *The Foretelling of Georgie Spider*, which will be available later in 2015. *The Execution of Neville Rose*, the fourth instalment, is scheduled for release in 2016.

You can read more of my reviews at [Speculating on SpecFic](#).

Jane says

This was so much fun. Ashala Wolf explored themes I love - humanity's relationship to nature, describing fellow humans as 'others' so we can lock them up and mistreat them - without being in the least heavy-handed. The characters were rich and interesting, their 'superpowers' unusual and well-thought-out. And I was particularly impressed by the structure, which allowed the story to completely turn on its axis about one-third of the way in. It was clever, and it worked logically and emotionally. The reader is left to figure things out for themselves, but never left hanging, unsure of what happened. When I finished it I wanted to rush to the library for book two (the library was shut).

Cat says

Today I met Ambellin Kwaymullina and got my book signed! She gave an amazing talk along with Claire G. Coleman and Paul Collis ?

Zaz says

Some good ideas, but a lack of characterization, energy and action.

Ashala is the teenage chief of the Tribe, a group of young people gifted (or damned) with special abilities. They are considered as a problem in the society and are detained in camps. Ashala is captured and interrogated, the bad guys wanting to learn things only she knows.

The book had an unusual setting I appreciated, with wild things communicating with the superpowered kids and a special bond existing between some of them. It gave a nice connected-with-nature touch that worked well with the overall message of the story and how the dystopian society was built. I was a little disappointed that the book was really focused on the events, I would have preferred more time spent on the world

building, but the knowledge was enough to follow what was happening and what had driven the characters to the current situation. I really enjoyed the abilities, some of them usual, others more original and well integrated in the story. Ashala was a nice narrator and it was lucky because all the book was about explaining and discussing stuff, with not enough time actually spent in action. I can't say I found the read boring, but for a dystopia with a touch of fantasy and rebellion, it totally lacked a compelling rhythm and I struggled to finish the last 30%. The characters all looked interesting at first but at the end of the book, I'd the impression I knew none of them, so the character development was obviously lacking, mostly unidimensional, and saved only by the shiny abilities. Also, the male love interest "looked like an angel" which was cliché and boring. At least he made me a little curious, but with the lack of true discussions with Ashala, it felt like another lazy love at the first sight. Overall, there was good stuff (animals, super powers, indigenous Australian setting) and a pleasant writing but the rest was average, so I don't think I'll try the next book.

Navessa says

WARNING:

Me, while reading:

I think I like this book. Yup, I really like this book. I totally know what's going on. Wait, what did I just read? Um...okay. I think I still know what's going on though, nice try. Wait...what did she just say? Crap, I have no idea what's going on, do I? WAIT...WUUUUUUT?! FUCK! I have never known what was going on! Damn it.

So touché, Ms Kwaymullina, that doesn't happen to me very often.

Somehow, going into this, I didn't realize that it was a YA book. Or that it was a dystopian. If I had known, I probably wouldn't have given it a chance as I'd previously rage-quit the genre due to the incredibly frustrating repetitiveness I'd been encountering in it lately. Thank the lawd for my mistake because this book breaks the mold, folks.

You know that annoying theme in so many dystopian books where humanity somehow reverts back to racism and sexism after an apocalypse? Yeah, this book doesn't have that in it.

You know that annoying theme in so many dystopian books where the female lead is somehow the ONLY IMPORTANT GIRL in the world? The one where she's the sole female in a male-dominated race or competition or position, etc, etc? And everyone else with tits is "the enemy"? Yeah, this book doesn't have that in it.

You know that annoying theme in so many dystopian books where it's really just a love story? Sure there are some nifty fights and some other stuff but in the end it's about getting Mary Sue and Gary Stu together? Yeah, this book isn't one of those.

You know that annoying theme in so many YA books where the heroine is TSTL? Or worse, the smartest person that ever smarted? Yeah this book doesn't have that in it either.

You know ALL those annoying themes that piss you off? Yeah, this book doesn't have em.

So what IS this book, you're asking? In short, this:

SAVED THE GENRE.

This review can also be found at The Book Eaters.

Phrynne says

This is a very impressive book written by an indigenous Australian author. Set three hundred years into the future, it is a dystopian story of our world after it has been wrecked by all the things our civilisation involves. Some small recovery has occurred and Ashala Wolf is the leader of a group of young misfits trying to survive under the new regime.

The book has a heavy Aboriginal Dreamtime influence to it which fits well with the idea of this new world. People are trying not to make the same mistakes again but of course there are always going to be those who are out to follow their own agendas and cause trouble in what could be paradise.

I was amazed at how much I enjoyed this Young Adult story. The writing is good and the ideas are highly original. There is a major plot twist half way through which is quite fascinating. The characters are well drawn and likeable. Oh and I loved the Saurs who I could not help picturing as very cute dinosaurs although I know that was not what the author was visualising!

Highly recommended.

Skip says

Ambelin Kwaymullina is a breakout author, an Australian aboriginal writer and illustrator, who is part of the Palyku people of Western Australia. This is the story of the rebellious Ashala Wolf, who seeks to thwart the oppressive government in a dystopian society, and is told from her perspective as a captive being subjected to enhanced interrogation. Ashala herself is a idealistic indigenous protagonist, including themes such as living in harmony and tranquility, with respect for all living creatures, and sympathetic with the land. There are some creative connections between living creatures, and some excellent subterfuge. I was disappointed to see that while the sequel was published in 2013, it will not be published in the U.S. until February 2016. Hopefully by then, Ambelin get the publicity she deserves here.

Chiara says

This ended on such a perfect note that I'm wondering how the series will continue...

Naz (Read Diverse Books) says

Full review is up on my blog! [Read Diverse Books](#)

Reasons to read this book.

Stories about kids with powers are always fun.

Are you a fan of X-Men, Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children, Misfits, etc.? Then you'll like this book! Ashala has the Sleepwalking ability, which is the coolest, and allows her to do practically anything while she's in her sleepwalking mode – fight with superhuman strength, travel through objects, or essentially make her dreams come true! Other people can manipulate memories, move at lightning speed, start fires, and do all sorts of neat abilities. I'm eager to learn more about the origin of these powers and how they can be used in the real world in future books in the series.

Twists!

Who doesn't like a good twist in a story? There's a pretty big one halfway through *The Interrogation Of Ashala Wolf*. I'm not going to give anything away and you'll never guess it, but let me reassure you that it was one of the most thrilling "aha" moments I've had reading YA this year and I'm sure you'll appreciate it too.

It's Australian YA with an Indigenous protagonist.

Australia has some notable and popular YA books, but non-Australian YA bloggers probably won't be able to name more than a handful. I am here recommending *The Interrogation Of Ashala Wolf* to you, which is a quality dystopian fiction that also has an Indigenous protagonist! The fact that Ashala is Indigenous is ancillary to the plot, but it does influence some elements of the story. We'll see nods to the Aboriginal Australian belief of Dreamtime and creation stories like *The Rainbow Serpent*. This only makes the story more unique and memorable.

I highly recommend *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* to all fans of Dystopian Fantasy. Now you can't say you don't know any Australian YA other than *The Book Thief*.

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

This review can also be found at [Carole's Random Life](#)

I received an advance reader edition of this book from Candlewick Press and Net Galley for the purpose of providing an honest review.

4 Stars!

This was one of those books that the more I read, the more I liked it. I find myself gravitating towards YA books right now. I found this to be a great addition to that genre. I was first intrigued by the cover of this book which shows a fierce face of young girl. It is a wonderful cover that I would no doubt pick up if I were browsing in a book store.

This book is set several hundred years in the future. The world has changed a lot in this future. Land masses have changed after a great flood. The new focus is on balance. To keep everything in balance, individuals with special abilities are called Illegals and are kept away from the rest of society. Ashala is part of a group of Illegals who live in Firstwood where they live to stay out of the detention centers.

The book opens with Ashala in a detention center. The administrator of the detention center, Neville Rose, is determined to find out all of Ashala's secrets. To do so, he orders the use of "the machine" on Ashala. The machine has the ability to read the memories of anyone unfortunate enough to find themselves in its clutches.

The beginning of the book was confusing at times. As things are revealed, everything starts to come together to form a very cohesive story. The cast of characters were well developed, likeable, and more than intriguing. The world building was well done and I can clearly envision world that Ashala and her tribe calls home.

I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who enjoys dystopian young adult novels. I would feel completely comfortable with my 13 year old reading this book so I do feel that it is suitable for a younger teen audience and above. This book is supposed to be the first in a series. I definitely plan to read future works by this author.

? jamieson ? says

I'm so so so glad I finally read this book, it's been something I've been meaning to do for ages and I really enjoyed it. Although dystopian has kind of gone out of fashion, I thought this one was very well done. It is an Indigenous Australian #OwnVoices piece, and the incorporation of Indigenous Dreamtime stories and Indigenous culture was beautiful. Ashala Wolf was an amazing protagonist, I really enjoyed her arc. I wasn't totally sold on the romance though, I like it at first but then I felt it was too rushed at the end. There was also a bit of ableism.

Full review to come - read for #DiversityBingo and #TheReadingQuest

Amanda says

The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf is the debut novel by Australian author Ambelin Kwaymullina. Set three hundred years in the future, the old world has been destroyed and a new world, much smaller than ours, has risen from the flood water. There are now people with abilities and some people, like Chief Administrator Neville Rose, believe them to be Illegals and want them locked in detention centres. Ashala Wolf is one of these Illegals and is leader of The Tribe that resides in the Firstwood. Ashala, and friends Georgie and Ember, have worked hard to provide a place for Illegals to live. But Ashala has been captured and taken to Detention Centre 3 where Neville has plans to use the machine on her to extract her thoughts and bring about the capture of The Tribe.

The story opens with sixteen year old Ashala Jane Ambrose, better known as Ashala Wolf, being escorted down a long hallway inside Detention Centre 3 by guard Justin Connor. Once we get to know Ashala, it's clear that she is a fierce leader as well as brave, selfless, intelligent and passionate. She will do anything to protect The Tribe and is determined to fight Neville and his machine which could potentially lead to him trapping her friends.

I also liked the secondary characters, especially Georgie, Ember, Jaz and Justin. They are all so unique but function together so well and Jaz was especially entertaining with his cheeky wit and optimism.

The world building was fantastic, Ambelin has created a dystopian Australian YA novel featuring elements of The Dreamtime, such as The Serpent, and I could picture this world so clearly. Three hundred years ago The Reckoning occurred due to the world becoming unbalanced, this came about because of the way humans ruined the earth and their over-reliance on technology. During The Reckoning the tectonic plates shifted resulting in one large landmass to emerge from the flood waters. This landmass is divided into cities and is heavily governed to keep The Balance in order. It's not explained how the new abilities came about but there are a variety of Illegals: Sleepwalkers, Rumblers, Chirpers, Firestarters, Skychangers, Leafers, Menders and many more. Ashala's ability means that when asleep, she can do things that she cannot do in real life, meaning she can do almost anything she wants to, as long as she dreams it. Each person with an ability will also find a strong connection with a type of animal, in Ashala's case it is wolves, in Georgie's it is spiders.

I appreciated the message this book has to share with us, that we should be taking better care of our world. Ashala obtains permission from the tuart trees in order to live in the Firstwood and the trees share with her images of the past, of nature being destroyed. She promises they will not kill or eat any animal and will protect the forest from anyone who comes to destroy it. So essentially we have a vegan, or at least vegetarian, tribe which I thought was a brilliant idea as you really can't be an environmentalist and consume animal products, they contradict each other. And I feel very strongly about the natural environment and at the rate we're going, we're going to keep on destroying it to suit our needs which is sad.

I want to talk more about the plot but there's a big twist and it would spoil the surprise. I found the way everything came together was really clever and I couldn't put this book down, wondering how it would play out. Towards the end I could feel Ash's anxiety and was worried about her and the rest of The Tribe, so I was happy when the ending came because it resolved everything, there was no cliffhanger! Even without a cliffhanger, I am still very keen to read book two and I can't wait to see what's in store for Ashala and the Tribe.

A lot of the characters are Aboriginal Australians, including Ashala, so I was really pleased to see this reflected on the cover. The girl's eye really stands out and reels you in and it suits the tone of the book perfectly.

The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf is a unique Australian dystopian with a thrilling plot and a cast of realistic and loveable characters. I'd recommend this to all fans of dystopian and paranormal YA.

Thank you to the amazing people at Walker Books Australia for organising this blog tour and for sending me a copy to review.

Giveaway on the blog until Sept 9
