



Tainted

A.E. Rought

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Alex Franks believes the madness is behind them. With Ascension Labs under his direction and the forces threatening Emma's life overcome, they have a chance at a normal life, and keeping his secrets safely buried. But a shadow rises from Alex's past, and she wants him back. Criminally brilliant, Hailey Westmore will stop at nothing to claim the boy she was meant to be with.

Without warning, Emma Gentry finds she cannot trust anything. Not her mind, her memory, not even herself. Tragic events and unexpected deaths stalk Alex and Emma, testing them in ways they would never imagine, and may not survive. Alex carries a new secret, and a horrifying guilt that Hailey uses to her advantage.

Emma's life and sanity hang in the balance, and Alex may have created a monster...

Tainted Details

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From Reader Review Tainted for online ebook

Ashley Ferguson says

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Modern re-tellings of classic stories are my favorites. I love seeing how authors take such well known stories and make them their own. Although this story still has that Frankenstein element to it, I was really pleasantly surprised to find that it also integrated the tale of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde! I loved the way these two stories melted into one, and I think Rought did an excellent job of leaving enough of the originals for the reader to be able to pull out the references but still weaving her own unique, beautiful, haunting story.

When I read Broken earlier this year, my biggest problem was with Emma. Everything about her just drove me crazy, and I think it really took away from the book for me. She was a slow narrator, and I just didn't like her. In Tainted, however, Alex is front and center, and he never slows down. Everything is so fast paced with him, and I kind of loved it. He's always looking for a solution, always trying to right his (and his father's) wrongs, and always doing whatever it takes to keep Emma safe while still wrestling his own demons. I loved him in Broken, and I love him even more in Tainted.

I think seeing Emma from an outside perspective makes her more tolerable. I didn't like being inside her head, but she's not as bad when you see her through Alex/Daniel's eyes. I understand better why he loves her, and I think she's just a better character in this book. I also liked getting to know Bree and Jason better, and Jason quickly became one of my favorite characters. He's an excellent friend to Alex & Emma and boyfriend to Bree, and his story is just so heartbreaking. I would love to have a short story from his perspective, because I think there's so much we don't know about him.

Although Alex's dad is a pretty decent villain in Broken, I think Hailey Westmore is an even better one here. She's cold, calculating, and willing to do whatever it takes to get Alex back. She actually terrifies me. I would NOT want to get on her bad side, because she's really got some major issues going on in that head of hers. At first, I felt like she came out of nowhere, but then I realized that this book is set not too long after Broken and things fell into place more smoothly. I love a well-developed villain, and Hailey definitely fits that bill.

Since Alex is narrating this book, everything feels more urgent and faster paced. I think it worked really well here without being overwhelming. We were still given enough details to figure out what was going on but they didn't bog down the plot or the pacing. I loved all of the twists and turns, and didn't see most of them coming. I think some things were a little unbelievable, but they fit within the framework of the story so it didn't bother me too much.

I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who has read Broken, even if you weren't crazy about it. The sequel is one of those rare gems that's actually better than its predecessor! It's still got that dark, haunting, Gothic feel to it but is faster and will keep you more on the edge of your seat. I couldn't put it down and stayed up until the wee hours of the morning furiously turning pages just to find out how Alex and Emma's story ends. I also recommend this series to anyone looking for a unique retelling of classic literature. You won't be disappointed! 5/5 for Tainted!

Julie says

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

First of all I do need to confess I have not read the first book in the series. I am not sure if that influenced my feelings or not. Normally I like retellings. I will admit that Frankenstein is not my favorite book, but that was not my problem with this one. The Frankenstein aspect of the book was actually the most interesting part.

Of all the characters I liked Jason the best. I liked his attitude about life. By the end his attitude about death had gotten a little morbid, but by that point in the book I felt he was entitled.

I felt like Alex kept running around in circles. He would go try to save the day and put a band aid on the problem. Then go have conversations, with his friends, his mentor and his ex-girlfriend. Then something would happen and he would try to save the day again with the same band aid. The entire book circled around and around until finally the climax at the end.

I had a problem with Hailey's motivation for everything she was doing. She kept telling us what she wanted, but then her actions did not feel like that is what she was really going after. There was no other motivation given for her actions, so what she said she wanted must have been what she was really aiming at, but it did not feel sincere. I guess that was a problem with my interpretation of the writing.

The relationships within the story felt skewed. Between Emma and Alex especially. Her dead boyfriend hanging around because he couldn't let Emma go just came off creepy. Emma's character was weak therefore Alex had to go and rescue her every time anything happened.

Ellie says

His father may be gone but life isn't about to get any easier for Alex Franks. His ex, Hailey, is in town and determined to get him back, no matter what the cost. When Emma is involved in an accident, he has only moments to make a life-changing decision. There are lines that shouldn't be crossed, Alex knows that all too well.

I loved A.E. Rought's writing in Broken, a wonderful book despite the fact I knew the "twist" from the blurb. So I so wanted to love Tainted, a book that came without spoilers or preconceptions, but it just wasn't to be. Told from Alex's point of view, I found the narrative a bit melodramatic. His strength of feeling is supposedly explained by the chemical imbalance after his treatments but that would make me expect him to be as normal as can be for part the week. His love for Emma is just over the top and distracting from anything resembling a plot for a good third of the book.

I'm getting a bit fed up of blackmail as a plot device, partly from television but it's also used a lot in books. It takes a lot for me to agree with their actions; usually I just want them to own up and/or go to the authorities. Hailey is a stereotypical, manipulative ex out for vengeance. She is a cardboard cut-out villain in a role that could have been tragic if handled with a bit more subtly. It's clear what her agenda is from the

outset and she makes the whole story predictable. And Alex mentions his doubt over Paul so often, it practically proves his innocence.

The romance and blackmail pushed what could have been interesting themes to the sidelines; for example, the reliance on medicine for the rest of your life and worrying about the whims of pharmaceutical companies (and, in real life USA, insurance). Especially with Jason's story added into the mix. Jason probably saved the book for me; I thought his character was the most real and endearing.

Having said all that, the last quarter or so was fairly gripping and improved without so much sappiness. There were a few moments with deer that were perfect when you consider the impacts that deer had on Emma in the first book. I was even quite moved by the end.

Review copy provided by publisher.

Tsana Dolichva says

Tainted by A E Rought is the sequel to Broken, which I reviewed earlier this year. I enjoyed Broken but I have to admit I wasn't sold on the idea of a sequel, in the sense that I didn't really think one was needed. I probably should have paid attention to that instinct, since Tainted was a pile of not for me. Not particularly offensive or anything, just very much not the kind of book I enjoy. **This review contains spoilers for itself and for the first book, Broken. So does the blurb.**

(view spoiler)

Basically, I didn't really like Tainted but it didn't offend me terribly (really, the gender and science stuff could've been much worse). The writing itself wasn't terrible, although I think the beginning definitely could have been more interesting. I won't be reading a sequel if there is one (no idea at this stage). However, if you enjoyed Broken and don't mind lots of kissing and action, definitely give Tainted a go.

3 / 5 stars

You can read more of my reviews on my blog.

Lauren says

Actual Rating: 1.5

I'm not sure if there was actually a story interwoven in all the cheesey romance and tired tropes, but if there was it could have been good. But between the crazy ex, the broody guy, the over the top romance, and pretty much every other YA trope known to man, there wasn't time for anything new.

I have to say I'm not sure how to feel about his publisher in general. I'm not sure how other people feel, but for me they are either total hits(The Assassin's Curse, Pantomime, The Holders), or total misses(this one, Poltergeeks, Emily and the Hollow World, When the World was Flat). I think for the next few I will make more use of the free samples and go from there.

O-well, onward.

Jenni (thebookbonnet) says

Mmmmmkay...

Allow me to begin by saying that romance is okay. I happen to love a good romance story, even when the only story going on is the romantic plotline.

Here's the thing though-you have to make me believe that the characters belong together, not just tell me over and over and over and over again. I love you, your my everything, we can't be separated, we're soul mates, I need you, you're my other half, etc. and to all this I say... WHY? No one ever JUST loves someone. There is ALWAYS a reason. Things like compatibility, understanding one another, fighting, making up, growing together, and the list goes on. SHOW me they belong together, give me a reason--even just one--and make me feel it. Don't just force the idea down my throat with nothing to back it up and expect me to swallow, cuz it won't happen.

Do not misunderstand, I don't always expect romance in books to be layered and deep, but when the romance is the ONLY THING going on, then it had better keep mu interest and make me want to invest, and to do that it will take more than kissing, spouting hollow sonnets, and more kissing.

Once again the writing itself was lovely, but that just wasn't enough.

Beth Ortega says

Had to stop just over half way. Couldn't handle the melodrama. Love is great, over the top love is okay too, but when everything else takes a back seat to pages and pages of sappy prose, that doesn't work for me.

Love is fine, but there needs to be plot too.

Christopher Nelson says

TAINTED, Masterpiece of Romanticism's Dark

"Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears."
? Edgar Allan Poe

One of the fundamentals of Romanticism lies in the tragic concept of beauty lost: one cannot fully appreciate love until it is gone forever. E.A Poe understood this all too well, placing him in the unlikely category as a

practicing romanticist.

A.E Rought, then, is no practitioner. She is a master.

An emotionally gripping journey, *TAINTED* transports you to a very dark place of wanton passion and unbearable pain, riveting up to the intense climax. Panting. Gasping for air and then falling back on your bed, arms wrapped tight around you. Exhausted.

Haunted.

When it comes to sequels, I always brace myself, expecting deviant little plot bunnies and character schisms between books. The transition from *BROKEN* to *TAINTED*, however, is seamless, with characters developed smoothly even down to the cat. But what is even more incredible is the shift from Emma's to Alex's point of view. It maintains the story without flaw, adding layers of life to the completed work of both books.

Ms Rought's voice throughout carries the story, from realistic and witty teen dialogue, to her unique style that often delivers a page of detail in a single, powerful word or phrase. The pacing also sings through an ebb and flow that drives with breakneck intensity and then backs down to a little girl's lullaby in all the right places, mesmerizing page after page.

The conflict is on par with a Stephen King nightmare, stacking up first with the inner struggle between Daniel and Alex, then building through the torment of ex-girlfriend Hailey who would scare the hell out of John Carpenter's Michael Myers. That's just the basal conflict. Add overprotective parents, a blizzard, law enforcement, side effects of experimental medical practices, resurrection, teen rivals from other schools, and texting-induced paranoia whilst stuck in traffic with a town on fire. And Ms Rought pulls no punches with her delicious new splatter-factor. Plenty of gut wrenching gore to go around and deviously placed in the most sacred of areas.

Yes! This is still very much a romance! Saving the best for last, *TAINTED* also poses conflict of another kind, more powerful than the blood-spilling variety and the primary force that propels this book beyond a five-star review. Throughout, there is a constant level of sexual tension that teases and pulls reader emotion to the surface and then leaves them exposed to whatever twist may come. Whether sensual moments of completion between Alex and Emma, or the absolute worst heart wrenching loss and despair. From Emma's innocent playfulness to the incredible sense of isolation found in the themes of sacrifice and desire, *TAINTED* slips beneath your flesh, burrows into your heart, and then has its way with you, leaving you laughing, weeping, hope-filled and a little broken. Tainted.

Enjoy!

"Never to suffer would never to have been blessed."

? Edgar Allan Poe

Sam Tess says

I never review, but I feel I ought to explain myself for my rating of both this novel and it's predecessor. It

likely seems odd I would rate the first installment with a one star then read the second, but that is not how it occurred. When I picked up Tainted, I did not realize it was the second in a series. I got a ways through and was not liking it at all. The plot line seemed thin and the characters flat, but when I came to find out I had read it out of order, I assumed the issues I had with it were due to the fact that I'd not read the first book. I got the first book, Broken, planning to read it then return to the second book but I did not make it that far. I did finish the first book but I did not enjoy it, coming to find it had many of the problems the second book had. Beyond that, the first book did not add to the second at all or fix any of the plot and character problems I was having, so I did not return to Tainted. I very much enjoy this genre, but sadly these books do not get my recommendation.

Andrew says

Review Taken From The Pewter Wolf

I have been holding out writing this review. I know most book blogger pals have been getting ARCs and NetGalley editions a few weeks ago. But I read Tainted before then. You see, I was one of Tainted's beta-readers. Which, basically means, I read it with some other people and we, not only read the story, but see if we can see any mistakes. And I think/fear, out of all the beta-readers, I was probably the worst. When I read a chapter and sent it back to AE Rought, I would ALWAYS have something in red. Whether that was a grammar, a question, a comment of "I like this paragraph" or basically stating "If you kill this character off, I will never forgive you".

So, why am I telling you this: Well, I am reviewing this book from what I read while beta-reading earlier in the year. So, while I am pretty certain the big events in the book have stayed the same, you will have to forgive me if I make a mistake. (Plus, I want a real book version of Tainted so it goes with Broken.)

Alex Franks believe that the madness and horror he and his girlfriend, Emma, faced in Broken is over. He hopes that he could try and live a normal life. Have a girlfriend, have friends, have a life, have the dark secrets of what his father did to him and countless others. Shame he's ex, the criminally brilliant (yet criminally unhinged) Hailey Westmore, doesn't want to let Alex go and is determined to get him back.

And then something shocking happens that changes everything...

Ok, I really enjoyed this book. If I didn't, I don't think AE Rought would have asked me to beta-read this. But I enjoyed the changes AE Rought made with this book. While Broken was told from Emma's point of view, Tainted is told from Alex's point of view. While Emma was trying to find out what was going on with Alex in Broken, Alex knew most of the dark secrets in Tainted and, because of this, the reader instantly knows that something's not quite right with this book and when things really hit the fan, Alex and the readers were on the same level with "What the heck!"

I wanna talk one big thing. Very early on within the book, there is about 5 chapters that I read with me going "No. No! NoNoNoNo! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!". It really shocked me as I didn't see these chapters coming so I have to praise AE Rought for not only pulling the twist off but suddenly making the book unpredictable, unsafe and addictive. I had to know what happened next once I got over the shock of these chapters.

I have only two small negatives and they both come from the ending. AE Rought knows this and has

explained why both of these happen. Both of which I get, I do. But one of these negatives is the fate of a character that I loved and the other... well... I can sense some of you guys getting really angry over it. If you've read Cassandra Clare's City of Glass, it's very similar to something that happens in that (and that's all I'm going to say).

I really enjoyed reading this book. I liked the fact that this was an re-imagining of two classics (one I was told as The Mysterious Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and the other is a guess on my part) and I kinda want a sequel, even though I am pretty certain this is a duology (don't hold me to this), and me sending little hints that I want a re-imagining of Phantom of the Opera isn't gonna happen (if it is, that would rock!). But I really enjoy AE Rought's writing and I can't wait to see what she writes next.

Jaylee says

Read this and other reviews on my blog - J Reads Ya!

Diversity Ratings: | POC Chars - 0 | Queer Chars - 0 |

Tainted was so much better than the first book, Broken (see my review). Broken was so focused on relationship melodrama, whereas this book is more action/mystery. The main couple's relationship is more stable, and the issues they face are more real (the girl might be going insane, the guy is dealing with the other people in his life) and it was easier to get on board with their feelings. I actually wish some of the feelings had been more explored than they were.

That being said, this still isn't a fantastic book. The plot seems to be really circular - girl freaks out! girl runs off and does something awful! guy must rescue girl! girl cries about what she did! - and after a while it gets really tedious.

The characters in this book are also really, really dumb. They were a bit slow in the first book but I feel like it was much, much worse in this one. At one point the six foot tall protagonist hides from the villain by standing behind a curtain like a seven year old. They point out very early in the book that one character is just vindictive and evil and nuts, but then spend the rest of the book wondering who could be doing all these vindictive, evil, crazy things!

The parts of the story I really enjoyed were the relationship between the protagonist and his best friend, and between him and his guardian. They deal with some intense issues and have complicated relationships.

This review is really quick because I don't have a lot to say about this book. It was better than the first but still missed the mark, and I can't recommend this book alone because you won't understand it unless you read the first, which I didn't feel I could honestly recommend to anyone. (I had initially requested this from Netgalley before realizing there was a first book, and would never have picked this one up on my own if I had not already requested it).

Charlotte says

Actual rating: 0.5 stars

This review is also posted at: Thoughts and Pens. And at Amazon.

I highly recommend this book... only if you are determined to remain single for the rest of your life. Tainted is perhaps the cheesiest book I've read in my entire existence. It's not even a novel because it's just a patchwork of mushy romantic lines connected to each other to form something akin to a story.

Tainted immediately picked up where Broken left. But this time, the story was narrated from Alex's point of view. Because Dr. Franks and Josh were already dead, another villain appears in the story in the person of Hailey Westmore, Alex's demented and psychotic ex-girlfriend. I did have a lot of questions about Hailey's existence you know but decided that I am not going to waste any more brain power with this book. I instructed myself to just go on with the flow like a mindless robot.

So Tainted really rocked my world when it started spewing over-the-top romantic lines that almost caused my digested food to go back from where it came. But I immediately stopped and an idea came to mind. Marriage is a scary thing you know and I couldn't picture myself being tied to someone forever. So I think being a spinster would really suit me. But the problem is, how can I scare suitors away? Grumpiness is definitely out of the picture because I am a happy person. Being a psycho is tempting but I don't want to spend my life being incarcerated or have my soul be damned in Hell. All I want is a simple strategy that is powerful enough to make suitors run as fast as light. And this book gave it to me. Hell, yeah. All I have to do is to take note some of the cheesiest lines of this book, memorize them and use them to my advantage. Want some sample?

The truth is, my mom read lullabies to me when I was sick, even as a teen. I think your quiet breathing makes the best lullaby.

Emma: A tornado couldn't keep up apart. I meant it when I said I feel better with you, and I'm sorry I never said thank you. I really do love you, Alex.

Alex: Please don't thank me for something so selfish. I love you too.

Alex: I'm whole with her.

Emma: When I realized I would never breathe again, all I wanted was you.

Alex: Nothing can defeat us. Not the dark my father created. Not the shadows looming over us now.

I cinch my arms tighter around Emma, drag her onto my lap. She's more than my girlfriend, she's my everything. They can't take her away.

Character development isn't important in this story. As long as Emma, Alex, Bree and Jason could throw corny romantic lines or kiss their partners to the point of sucking their saliva dry, it was already good. Even the new villain wasn't doing her part well. Maybe the "doormat character sickness" is extremely contagious.

All throughout the story, instead of getting electrified about what Hailey could do, I was almost killed from the barrage of teenage sexual tensions. Instead of reading action scenes, I was forced to read a lot of lip and tongue action or arm action and how a simple touch or embrace can set someone on fire. I cannot grasp the whole point of this story because it's supposed to be about executing Hailey's master plan. But Hailey came to the game late. She was only mentioned in the first book and never made an appearance there. But the author used her for this book to come into existence. Instead of giving us an explanation of Hailey's motivation for trying to win back Alex or for trying to get the 50% share of Ascension Labs, the story was determined to follow the b-l-lsh-t romance path. Every significant event that happened in this book were all plot devices in a desperate attempt to keep the story going. There's Emma's death and resurrection, there's Jason's sudden terminal sickness and Hailey's out of this world evil scheme. They just fail to connect to make a solid plot. It was like the author does not know what she's doing.

I finished this book with "zero care." It was worse than the first one. Reading the series was a traumatizing

ordeal for me. I think it would leave a permanent scar on my mind.

To conclude, this is the third series that I will not finish. Just thinking of the last installment makes me want to weep with fury. It is hard knowing that I will never acquire a closure with this book. But I am doing it for my own sanity.

If there's one thing I've learned from reading Broken and Tainted, it is how not to write a book.

ARC was provided freely by the publisher through Netgalley. Obviously, no money was involved with this review. All quoted lines were from an uncorrected proof and are therefore subject to changes

Cathie Sudder says

1.5

Beautiful writer, but a weak story teller. Hero was self-absorbed and moody, heroine was weak and whiny, and the villainess didn't warrant the title. I would be willing to try a future work from this author so long as it was unrelated to this series.

Jess B. says

I should start this very short review by mentioning that I did not like the first book of this series Broken at all. I initially had no plans to read this second installment, but then I heard that the series was optioned for TV and decided to check out the second one, thinking that there was maybe something I missed. Sadly I was wrong. I can honestly say I disliked this second book even more than the first, as if was filled with even more melodrama and over the top circumstances than it's predecessor. Ms. Rought has a firm handle on the language to be sure, but she doesn't seem to realize that you can't force an emotional response from readers by throwing as many horrible and sad things at them as will fit in one book. It's like writing a story about killing a puppy. That's sad right? Not enough? what if the puppy belonged to a little girl? Sad yet? No? What if the girl watched it die? And... she was an orphan... and she'd also watched her parents die... and it was raining... and her caretaker beats her... Eventually it's like, "Okay, we get it! Tell a story please!" Emotion can't be forced, it has to happen naturally, which is something these books don't get.

Some people may be into it, but I can tell you if you didn't care for the first one, you're not going to like this one.

Cindy says

'Tainted' is a solid sequel to 'Broken', but I did have more issues with it than I had with the first book. For starters, this book reads so differently from 'Broken'. The story goes along at breakneck speed, something huge happening every other page. Mind you, I really enjoyed that for the first part of the book, but after that, it was just a bit too much for me.

This book is told from Alex' point of view, which is quite different from Emma's in 'Broken'. I didn't connect with him, not as much as I did with Emma. He was a bit over the top for me, especially in his love for Emma. Where there was mostly swoony love in the first book, here it seemed suffocating. I get it, he loves Emma and he will do anything to protect her, but at times I just wanted to smack him. Also, I'm not a fan of being all over each other when some of your best friends are standing right next to you. It's awkward for them and I would feel ashamed and awkward too. Alex and Emma did this all the time in front of their best friends Bree and Jason. It bugged me, but that's just because I wouldn't like it if it was me in the story.

The only other issue I had was with the plot. The biggest surprise and actually the best part of the book was in the first half. Jesus, there's one scene there that I really hadn't seen coming, one where I actually muttered "oh my god" without even realizing it. And from there on a lot of mysterious things happen and for the first time this was exhilarating. But then it happened again, and again, ... I'm a bit conflicted about this, because I did enjoy the mystery and although some parts were quite gruesome, it fit right in this book. But I didn't understand it. It was quite obvious to me who was behind it all and I just couldn't understand the extremes this person went through for her goal. I had expected some grand explanation as to why it all happened, but it was just the same reasons that were mentioned before. Not what I would have wanted to see for this storyline.

I want to point out that I did enjoy some of this book and it's definitely a rollercoaster of action-packed scenes with some major twists thrown in there. It was a good sequel to 'Broken', but just not for me. There were too many things that bugged me personally to make it a very good read for me. This isn't the first time I've had this with Young Adult books, it seems I'm pretty picky when it comes to that age category. I'm pretty sure others will enjoy this though, it's good Young Adult, definitely better than some I've read and that are more popular (which I still can't understand, by the way). If you're really into Young Adult, you should read this series. The writing is solid and fluent to read, which makes this a fast read in general. There's enough going on to keep you flipping the pages and if you like a deep romance, than this one is definitely for you. It just wasn't for me.

You can find this review and more on my blog "Draumr Kópa":
<http://draumrkopablog.wordpress.com/2...>
