



The Adorned

John Tristan

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My name is Etan, and I am Adorned.

A living piece of art, I exist to please the divine rulers of Kered. With nowhere to turn after my father died, I tried my luck in the capital city. Little did I know how quickly I would be robbed, beaten and forced to sell myself into servitude. But I was lucky enough to gain the attention of Roberd Tallisk, an irascible but intriguing tattoo artist who offered to mark me with enchanted ink for the enjoyment of the nobles. I was given a chance to better my station in life, and I could not refuse.

But the divine rulers want not only the art but the body that bears it. In their company I can rise above the dregs of society and experience a life most only dream of, at the cost of suffering their every desire as a pawn in games of lavish intrigue. Their attention is flattering, but I find I'd rather have Tallisk's.

Caught between factions, I learn that a revolution is brewing, one that could ruin Kered—and Roberd and myself along with it...

The Adorned Details

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From Reader Review The Adorned for online ebook

M'rella says

Possible spoilers.

There isn't much going on for the the first 60 or so percent. Not much of m/m romance, not much sex (save for the tiniest scene of 3-4 paragraphs), not much angst, love, hate or any kind of feelings for that matter. It's mostly every day life of a tattoo master, his servants and his living art pieces, the outings, feasts, bit of politics mixed in.

However, it was a fascinating tale, unusual, beautiful, exotic, almost hypnotizing. Until the last 20% kicked in. And that's where it turned truly ugly. Sure, that's real life for you. You have overindulging elite and poor, starving masses. Want to guess the ending?

Somehow, this fascinating fairy-tale fantasy slash French revolution did not impress me.

(view spoiler)

A star and a half off, but have no choice but to round it up to four, the book doesn't deserve 3 stars rounded down.

UPDATE GR keeps knocking a star off for some reason down to three no matter how many times I correct it. I am going to take a hint and hope GR won't lower it to two next time.

Cole Riann says

Review posted at The Armchair Reader.

I got this book for review on a whim, and I am so happy that I did because it completely took over my life yesterday. I started reading it in the early morning and I couldn't put it down -- I read all day. And to be honest I was a little worried after I requested it because I had previously read a book by John Tristan that I DNF'ed and I think it might have been his first book. I just couldn't get into the writing and I kinda liked it but also didn't. So I couldn't believe that I had none of the same issues with this book that I did with that earlier book. And if this author keeps writing books like this then I'll definitely stick around and keep reading!

When his father dies with a multitude of debts, Etan is forced to sell his home and all his belongings and travel to the capital city of Kered to look for work. His only skills are his ability to read and write, and while those are rare abilities for a country boy, with no money to garner an apprenticeship, his only choice is manual labor, something he's unable to do because of a sickness as a child that stunted his growth. He's pale and petite, and saved by a man in a rickshaw when beaten in the street. The man offers to send him to a place to stay, where he learns after a few days is a home for indentured servants. His only option thereafter is to sign away his rights and work for this man in trade for a place to stay and food to eat.

When the man sees Etan without bruises and washes he almost doesn't recognize him, but he has an even

better idea of work for him. Etan is introduced to Roberd Tallisk, a tattoo artist whose patron is the head of the Council, run by the Blooded, the ruling class of Kered society who possess magic believed descended from the gods themselves. There, Etan's slave bond is bartered between the two men when Tallisk agrees to take Etan on as his new work of art, an Adorned. The Adorned have always mystified those of the lower classes. They're those of beauty who are tattooed by master tattoo artists with enchanted ink to become living works of art for the pleasure of the Blooded. Their art is not allowed to be seen by those who aren't Blooded or the artist. And no one else but the tattoo artists are allowed to wear ink.

Etan's new life seems wonderful and exciting. He's protected now for life with gifts of riches from patrons and by the ink he wears on his skin. But there is also an aspect of being Adorned that he never expected. He soon learns the hard price to pay when he starts to mingle with the elite of Keren society and exactly what they expect from him. And he finds himself a pawn, a sort of Mata Hari in the political play between two warring factions for the future of the Keren society.

There are two things that I love most about this story and they go behind the tattoo art (which is super cool) and a lot of the other little details that made this story come alive for me. First is the epic quality of the story. We really get to see Etan's life played out over a lot of major changes in his life that also herald major changes for the whole world. We meet Etan when he's young, still living at home with his father and before he's had to completely depend on himself and we get to see how he changes over time. I typically prefer characters who are alive, present and very decisive about their lives in fiction, especially in fantasy worlds. Etan is alive and present, certainly, but he's also like a piece of detritus in a massive current once he makes it to the city. He's buffered on all sides by those making choices for him. I can't see him acting any other way certainly, as someone who has very little choices, but he's also very internal and cautious. I didn't see those parts of his personality changing until much later because it was such a slow change, but Etan grows as the world changes around him and as he needs to take more of his own care for himself.

The second thing I really loved was the cast of characters. We meet a multitude of secondary characters, most of whom are a good sort, and a faction of those who are good people who make some bad choices. As the world in the story changes, it reveals the best and worst of the characters and each of them are made to understand their regrets, in particular Isadel and Lord Haqan Loren. All of them, however, are well rounded characters that we get to know rather well. And this was done sometimes in a rather subtle fashion. The writing requires the reader to be present and active in piecing the world together and in drawing connections, and I can't tell you how often I find myself wishing for writing like that.

You might not find this story to be perfect, or it might not impact you as much as it did me. Part of how you feel about it, in the end, will depend on what you like most in your romance books. The relationship between Etan and Tallisk is *very* slow to build and it takes almost the full length of the novel for the two to really come together. The bulk of the story is rather Etan's journey and finding himself, someone who still feels like a country boy, realizing that he's a good person with heart amid vultures who would pick at him until there's nothing left. He has to realize what he really wants out of life, if it is security or love and if those things are separate.

I finished the book wanting more, sad that the story ended and hoping there was a way a sequel could be written, lol. I don't think that's really possible. But I know now that I'll definitely keep my eye on book by John Tristan and I hope that it isn't too long from now that I find another book that I get so lost in.

Mtsnow13 says

Remember...i have not READ this, but listened only [disclaimer]

Well, I think I will identify this as a 3.5 with the narration being a 5 and the story being a 3.. I would have liked to see more of a creative epilogue, as thinking back on it, the story deflated at the end. There was such a beautiful build up throughout the story that the last chapter had a rushed feeling...

I think my review is affected more by the narrator, as it could be considered a slow read, but the world building and details about the tattoo master's role in society touched close to my heart as an artist and someone who has drawn tattoos for my fellow Marines back in the day. Not much sex, and the angst was tear jerking for me in the last few chapters, but Shannon Gunn's narration added so much depth to me. A very lovely story to listen to.

(view spoiler)

I would definitely recommend this story, but more so the audiobook, as you don't see the editing issues, and the narrator adds to the beautiful language, and if you purchase the kindle edition, you can get it at Audible for a steal...

NOTE: After reading Julio's review and having argued with Mamm over some of the points...well, gotta downgrade it at least a star, and I agree, it was a crappy ending for an..up to the last 1/4, a possibly beautiful story... almost like working o a great climax, edging, almost there.... then pffft... mom and dad walk in and ruin the moment...missed it. Hopefully these reviews will be taken by the author as how NOT to end a story...

Elizabetta says

I've been looking forward to reading another fantasy work by this author after having read and enjoyed his Forest of Glass some time ago. I remember that work for its richly descriptive writing and world building and "The Adorned," doesn't disappoint. The story is laid down like a carefully crafted painting as brush stroke by brush stroke, this other world is revealed. Vivid and haunting, more than anything, it is the storytelling that sets it apart.

"When we do our work well, no one sees our bodies as bared flesh. We are moving art."

The Adorned are youths chosen for their flawless, physical beauty. They are blank canvases for master tattoo

artists, known for their exquisite and highly sought after designs. Those lucky enough to become indentured to these masters can also enter into a patronage by members of the ruling class, the Blooded. This mysterious clan, set apart and rumored to have descended from the gods, has an insatiable appreciation for beauty, and their pursuit of decadent pleasure and debauchery can make the reputation of an Adorned.

An Adorned is contracted by these wealthy patrons for display-- as well as other carnal services-- as their body art progresses. There is a mysterious something else that sets their tattoos apart and distinguishes them as 'adorned' but the story must be read to discover what that is. This is an outrageously rarified world these tattooed youths move in. And it's risky stuff, considering the troubled times where many in the populace eke out meager subsistence and often go hungry-- in fact, the story has a feeling of the last days of Marie Antoinette's French court.

Nineteen-year-old Etan Dairan has nothing left in the world. His father has suddenly died and left debts that have eaten up Etan's legacy. He has been softly reared and well educated but his options are limited and he finds himself on the street. Luckily for Etan, he comes to the notice of Roberd guild-Meret Tallisk, perhaps the finest tattoo-master in the country. Etan, becomes Etan writ-Tallisk, and over the course of a five-year indenture, turns his body over to the artist's incredible designs... to become Adorned.

"I was like a midnight garden, my Adornments almost glowing green... here and there a barely-opening blossom in blue..."

Etan earns his keep by display contracts for the Blooded and in particular, Count Helsin Karan, a primary patron.

"There were men in the fine clothes of the Blooded and their companions, and with them were the Adorned, flashes of moving color in the dark crowd... the men laughed, loosened by wine, and their hands were freer with the Adorned than they would have been with ladies... I felt suddenly like a minnow in a pond of sharks, their toothy grins all turned on me... I saw the Count at last, and he—the sleekest, swiftest shark in the pond—saw me."

Even though Etan can also be contracted for sex there is very little of it in the story. The story's sensuality mostly exists in the writing and in the description of this world and the unfolding interaction between Etan, Tallisk and Count Karan. It would seem that Etan is set up for life; he will be well cared for and be able to make a very lucrative living after his service to Tallisk is completed. But these are troubled times and Etan finds himself pulled between loyalty to Master Tallisk and the machinations of the Blooded.

The story moves sedately, carefully building the relationships and tension. There is intrigue, political scheming, and violence. And there is romance. Etan's journey from penniless orphan to courtier and beyond is captivating. This was a treat to read, itself a work of art, and is highly recommended.

For this review and much more:

Ije the Devourer of Books says

The Adorned is sheer excellence!!

This is a beautiful story of a strange and magical tradition in a strange and beautiful land.

Etan a young man becomes an orphan when his father dies. Threatened with poverty, Etan's life changes when he goes to the city to claim some money owed to him. Through some unfortunate events and twists of fate, Etan eventually becomes an Adorned. One of the few chosen ones whose skin is adorned with tattoos which become animated when drawn with the blood of the ruling class - the Blooded.

Not only does Etan become adorned with strange and partly live tattoos, he gets to display these tattoos at rich and decadent feasts thrown by the Blooded. In this world of adornment and display Etan gets drawn into intrigue and circumstances he doesn't always understand.

As we follow the story we are shown how Etan comes to understand his new life, new traditions and the different people who surround him from the Lords of the ruling class to the servants in his own home. We also get to see how Etan finds a deep and enduring love.

The story is written so beautifully with excellent and well paced world building, beautiful poetic language, a fascinating cast of characters and a deep richness which overflows from the telling of this strange land with it's diverse cultures, politics and intrigue.

It is an amazing story with an unfolding but unsuspecting love right at its heart. It is the kind of story that needs to be read several times in order to catch the different directions and the various nuances.

This is the second story I have read from this author and each one has been really good with originality, beauty and a kind of richness that leaves you with a deep sense of satisfaction.

Monique says

This is not my normal type of book... yet I found it compelling reading, this is an excellent piece of fiction, the writing sublime and the prose just... So. Damn. Beautiful. I found the whole experience enchanting, I was transported into a fantasy world that is brought to life by the amazing words and characterisation of John Tristan.

The narrator is Etan and this is his story and when we first meet him I felt all of his hopelessness and despair, his narration was perfunctory... void of emotion and feeling, formal and respectful, resigned to his fate as a penniless orphan after the creditors stripped his house bare and threw him out on the streets after the death of his father.

Etan is a country boy, an illness in childhood leaving him small and frail, he is gentle in nature, a true innocent, and certainly not used to the oppression, filth and stench of the city... neither is he street wise, and before long he is beaten, robbed and left bleeding. Saved by Gren, the rickshaw driver of Maxen Udred a bond broker... he at last has a sliver of hope with which to cling to, that is If selling yourself as an indentured servant for five years is hope! Etan is educated and can read and write, a rare talent but not one that is needed in servitude, neither does he have the build for an apprenticeship... he is however beautiful and when Maxen takes him to Roberd Tallisk a tattoo-master he see's the allure immediately and so Etan becomes a bondservant to Tallisk, an Adorned, a tattooed courtier and a canvas for the living piece of art displaying the intricate designs and talents of his master.

My nerves had carried me for too long. I had lived on an edge, these past few weeks. I had stepped off that edge, now, landing on one side or the other, and marked my choice in a hasty scrawl of ink. That choice, I knew, would be recorded on me forever. Whatever happened here in Tallisk's household would be indelibly inscribed upon my skin

The cordial acceptance and polite manner of Etan's narration and his lack of emotion, rather than distance him from me made me yearn to hug him... I just wanted to see his face light up with a smile. Initially we see him silently allow those around him to take advantage, however I wanted him to get mad and wanted him to stand up for himself but he remains acquiescent... as time moves on and the story unfolds we do start to see some of that fire in his belly, that part of him that no longer wants to live in the shadows, but it is Etan's gentle soul and disposition that sets him apart as a character, he is a beautiful person inside and out and that touches the lives of those around him, as well as carving out a huge slice of my own heart!

Suddenly, I found that my face was wet with tears. They dripped down my chin and into the water. I lifted my hand to my face, touching my wet cheek wonderingly. The tears had refused to come when my father had died, when I'd been turned out of the house I was born in. Now they rolled down my cheeks in slow torrents, and I could not quite tell what I was crying for.

The introduction of Tallick had my heart starting to race in anticipation of more... he is a man of very few words and barely acknowledges Etan, there is an underlying current of sexual tension between them, very subtle as this book is not a sex fest and the what sex there is, is short and quickly described and I wasn't feeling a whole lot of passion from it, but this is more about the romance which is a slow build and actually a small part of this book. Even though Etan is blind to the fact that Tallick likes him, I blame it on his innocence, we can clearly see Tallick's inner turmoil, his battle with his stubborn pride and the hurt he feels at Etan's displays and other services. Etan has no idea the affect he has on others, to him it is the art that adorns him that people are drawn to, he also see's himself as worthless and doesn't allow himself to touch on what is really in his heart. I get the impression as his mother died when he was young and growing up with his father, their love was based more on respect rather than affection.

We only have Etan's view of this world we are visiting and having lived his life in the country his knowledge of the wars that have ravaged the land and those factions involved is limited and sketchy at best, the politics and battles are all fairy tales... So as he is thrown into this world of the blooded, sword nobles, counts, princesses, where beauty is a thing to behold and adored... and as he becomes enlightened, so are we. I was captivated watching this world unfold through the eyes of a nineteen year old boy and I liked that we are not bombarded with facts and lists of information but rather snippets to build a big enough picture to see it as Etan does and in my minds eye I saw it all, the decadence, opulence and grandeur of the Palaces and Manors, the jewels, colour and splendour of it all laid out beautifully by the descriptive prose of John Tristan and his writing is pure gold... but there is also another other side to this tale, and that world is filled with chaos, poverty, filth and the stench of the city inhabited by those fallen victim to the indulgences and

disregard of the rich and powerful.

The Adornment, which is really the heart of the book and what it revolves around, the story behind it, the fact it sustains Tallick and breaths life into his very soul and how it becomes a living piece of art... a spectacle and beauty created to be gazed upon and adored by those privileged was all just fascinating... I loved it! But **beauty is only skin deep** and that part of this book was where the emotion really came into play and what we see is raw, heart-breaking and ugly, yet still so very beautiful.

For the most part this book is outstanding! and I really want to give it 5 stars but the one thing that let it down for me was I wanted more time between Etan and Tallick, more time to see their relationship develop, to really see, feel and hear the emotion between them, I was yearning and desperate for it... pfft, even the lack of sex didn't bother me, I just wanted an extra couple of chapters where they explore what is in their hearts. Despite that I still loved this book and will definitely be reading more from Mr John Tristan, who's writing alone should be worshiped!

Trix says

[Etan was a young boy, thrown out into the world innocent and naive. By luck he ends up being a living canvas for an ink master. There is the veiled jealousy of a painted sister, vying for attention at displays. There is t

Shelley says

The first thing that comes to mind when I think back over this book is the word, admirable.

I can't begin to tell you how much I admire this book: the cover, the premise and the writing with its beautiful descriptive prose is by no means a facet to be disregarded.

The Adorned comes alive when the author describes the artistry in movement, colour and design on a canvas of skin. I love the idea of a tattoo being living art all aided by the infusion of life's blood ...I can see it, the white crest of a wave crashing, the flicker of a snakes tongue, the opening of a rose ...so vivid and awesome on the perfect skin of an Adorned. If this kind of fantastical artistry was around today I would be prepared to sell a little of my own soul for the gift of adornment.

Now it is a complete mystery to me as to why I struggled with this novel. All I could do is the inarticulate hand waving thing and hopefully wait for something to trigger my understanding and say: 'This, this is why I felt so disconnected'. I haven't quite figured it out, but I have an idea.

I think the problem is that I didn't connect with Etan, our narrator. The story is told solely from Etan's POV: he is young, inexperienced, a lovely creature, extremely naïve and his inherent goodness is his only flaw. I think Etan's singular POV was insufficient not only in delivering a thorough understanding of his world and the dynamic forces of the individuals around him, but of sharing his own emotions. Even his relationship/feelings for Tallisk is unclear to me for a long while. I interpreted most of his reactions as fear,

not lust or wanting or even love ... and it takes a large portion of the book to get to that part.

The story is slow moving, very slow. There is a lot of detail on the (to me) mundane aspects of the plot, and not enough detail on this post war world where animosity grows to the point of anarchy. It all comes as quite the surprise to be honest – but at that point I was still so unattached that I remained unaffected.

I could say that it is a sweet love story and I wouldn't be lying. I could say that it's beautiful and I wouldn't be lying either. I just ...failed at grasping that very important element that makes a novel (as stunningly scripted as this) sing for me. Is it a, me-not-you rating? Maybe, but I don't think so.

I'll recommend it for those who appreciate art and are in the mood for pretty prose and a slow sweet romance.

Julio Genao says

[I'm so angry, I am breaking with pro

Eugenia says

4.5 Stars

Well, if that wasn't one hell of an emotional rollercoaster ride narrated by the one and only Shannon Gunn!

I went into this without even reading the blurb. All I knew was that Shannon Gunn was the narrator and that my friend, Michaelle, loved this book.

Talk about slow, slow, slow, slow burn. So slow you're not quite sure there is anything smoldering. Yes, this took a long time to set up, but like any long con, the bigger and more solid the play, the bigger the pay out. That also means that sometimes you have to lose a little, or a lot.

In this book, after a huge emotional investment, the losses, small and big tore me apart. You may be wondering what the hell I'm talking about. Long cons, pay outs. WTF, Eugenia, what about the book?

OK, so this is a fantasy book. The world building here is phenomenal. This is a world in which the very wealthy have a lot of power. The wealthy in this case happen to be the Blood, and they live for a long time. They have fangs. The word vampire is never used, so I'm not going to either.

The Blood love beauty and in this world, such beauty is seen on the Adorned. These are beautiful individuals, fully tattooed by Masters, and displayed at feasts and parties. Each Master has a Blood patron and infuses the ink with minute bits of their special blood. This blood makes the tattoos come alive. Pretty damned cool, huh? Writhing snakes, crashing waves, etc.

This is a story of one boy who is chosen to be Adorned by a Master. The boy falls in love. Spoiler! So does the Master. Bad things happen. People get hurt. People die. It's a fucking rollercoaster of feelings because,

really, it feels like ANYONE could die. And characters do. They also get HURT.

So remember that slow burn you invested so much time blowing to life while listening to Shannon Gunn's sexy voice? This is where it blows up in your face and you want to run and hide and protect yourself, but you don't. Because you're safe in the land of romance and know that something good has to come at the end of all the hell you just went through. Here's the big payout you've been aching for....

Thank god for romance land, 'cause darling, Shannon Gunn talks you down from the cliff, and holds your hand as he talks to you all the way to HEA.

Sunny says

A beautiful story. I like how we learned about this world gradually, given information only as we need it. The introduction of the Adorned, the Sword and the Blood was subtly done, without an encyclopedia entry. With the characters, though, this type of gradual reveal took too long for me. I got tired of trying to interpret the small hints we were given of their thoughts and feelings. It would have been nice for things to be a bit more clear sooner than they were.

The story is told from Etan's POV, but I didn't get a good sense of him in the first half of the story. With his motivations mostly hidden from me, I didn't connect with him as much as I would have liked. When Etan agreed to (view spoiler) without hesitation, I wanted to know what he thought or how he felt about it. We get a little insight later on, but at that moment, I was in the dark. I did get a better sense of Tallisk's feelings, but even those are kept hidden for the most part. I missed experiencing the characters' emotions and I wanted more romance. I also thought keeping most of the tattoo sessions off page was a lost opportunity to show something develop between Etan and Tallisk.

By the second half of the story, though, we get to know them better and my enjoyment rose sharply. Their yearning for each other became more clear, but it was a restrained, almost hesitant desire. (Except when they had sex...not restrained then.) Outside of the bedroom, though, you won't find intense UST here. When they finally admit their love for each other, it was sweet, but almost anticlimactic. I never got a sense of why they were attracted to each other, just that they were. Later on, when tragedy struck, I was glad for the emotional distance otherwise I would have been a sobbing mess instead of just misty eyed.

Overall, a beautiful love story, slowly told but never boring. Frustrating at times, but never boring.

Side notes:

The pervy part of me missed reading graphic sex scenes. The scene where Etan (view spoiler) while oddly intriguing, was just a bit creepy. And we really only get one on page sex scene between Etan and Tallisk. Also, any concern for oddly named boy parts can be laid to rest, they were only alluded to, never directly mentioned. :(

ETC: punctuation

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

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****4.5 stars****

Wow, was this story gorgeous or what!? The writing here just blew me out of the water. My first book by this author and it certainly won't be my last.

I sometimes have a difficult time getting into fantasy books. I often feel like these worlds are thrust upon me and I feel lost for the majority of the story. That was not the case here. I had no trouble following along, and I quickly became mesmerized by the story. I think that is a good word for it, "mesmerizing." Honestly, this story was completely fascinating and enchanting.

I think the strengths of this book lie in the storytelling. The words were rich and full of character, and the journey of Etan really came to life. The concept of the "Adorned" was one that grabbed me immediately. Basically, these Adorned are tattooed, living canvases used in this fantasy world to amuse and delight the elite. Etan's journey to becoming an Adorned and his experiences being one were the highlight of this book. Etan's life-story took over *my* life yesterday- I was fascinated by every nuance, all thanks to John Tristan's incredible writing.

My one issue with this book was the romance. It developed at a glacial pace and was so subtle that I almost missed it. When the romantic aspect of the book finally came to fruition, it wasn't as... fulfilling as I would have liked. The love didn't radiate from the pages, I'll say. I didn't quite get why these characters loved each other, other than circumstance. Tallisk is a tough nut to crack and I didn't feel as connected to him as I would have liked.

Despite my issue with the romantic parts of this book, the phenomenal storytelling abilities of John Tristan made this book incredibly enjoyable and memorable.

****Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review****

Natasha says

4.75 Stars

Surprisingly spoiler FREE!

Since there are a lot of great reviews out there for this book and I generally agree, I'll keep this short and sweet.

What a beautiful, interesting world Tristan created.

Obviously amazing writing from an author I've never heard of before.

I don't think the blurb does this book justice. It's so much more. When you hear "tattooist" or "tattoo artist" you might immediately associate it with something lesser than what tattooists are in this book.

I really appreciated that the book didn't have one 'super villain'. Some characters made bad decisions but I didn't think anyone was necessarily **bad**. The true villain in this book was society as a whole which is rather refreshing in the M/M genre.

Some serious sexual tension between our MCs here. It was driving me nuts, in the best way possible.

What a bittersweet ending. I'm left feeling happyish but with an overall sadness for their loss.

I thought perhaps the book could've ended one chapter sooner.. exactly one chapter sooner. The book read incredibly well for me. I thought overall the pace was fantastic and I was never bored.

Fantastic, unique read. Glad I took the time.

MLE says

I received this story as an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

This was an interesting, and well written story. So many of the ideas that formed the world and it's people seemed complex and well drawn, but I felt like I was dropped into the middle of the story without any sort of idea of what was going on. It felt like book 3 or 4 of a series. The author kept referring to people, and places like I should know who they are and how they related to each other and to the story as a whole. I felt lost, and confused, and that was a shame because I wanted to be more involved, and I wanted to know what was going on. I don't mind a bit of mystery, but there was too much I didn't know in this story, and it frustrated me. I don't see any indication that this is part of a larger world, but if I am wrong about this (and I'd love to be wrong about this) I'd like to know.

Angela Bee Bee says

The first 75% of this is just beautiful, safe, subtle....nothing. Secondary characters fill the pages. But the imagery is beautiful, soothing and pleasant. A false sense of security develops inside the reader. The last quarter becomes incredibly tragic and maudlin. And still beautiful, poetic. I loved it but felt unsatiated at the same time.

So long I had lived on the edges between things. I was rich and poor, canvas and artist, lover and whore. I had built a home there on those boundaries
