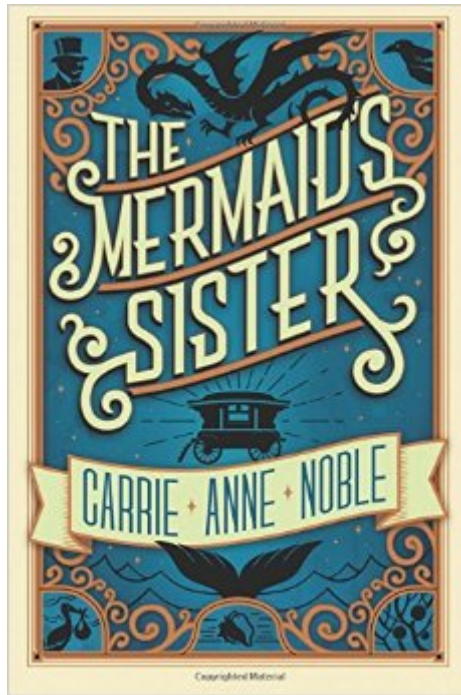


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The Mermaid's Sister



Synopsis

Breakthrough Novel Award Winner for Young Adult Fiction, 2014
Realm Award Winner for Best Speculative Fiction of the Year, 2016
There is no cure for being who you really are... In a cottage high atop Llanfair Mountain, sixteen-year-old Clara lives with her sister, Maren, and guardian Auntie. By day, they gather herbs for Auntie's healing potions; by night, Auntie spins tales of faraway lands and wicked fairies. Clara's favorite story tells of three orphaned infants: Clara, who was brought to Auntie by a stork; Maren, who arrived in a seashell; and their best friend, O'Neill, who was found beneath an apple tree. One day, Clara discovers iridescent scales just beneath her sister's skin: Maren is becoming a mermaid and must be taken to the sea or she will die. So Clara, O'Neill, and the mermaid-girl set out for the shore. But the trio encounters trouble around every bend. Ensnared by an evil troupe of traveling performers, Clara and O'Neill must find a way to save themselves and the ever-weakening Maren. And always in the back of her mind, Clara wonders, if my sister is a mermaid, then what am I?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I chose this book as my Kindle Firsts selection for the month of February. Here are my notes from the book.
General notes:
* The text is clean and well written. I sense no textual issues and my grammar/spelling radar is not getting tripped so that's good. I would say that the writing lacks any real style or flair. It's all very straightforward and not terribly unique. Nothing reaches out to grab you about this.
* Pacing is average to slow. The story takes a while to develop in any meaningful way. It's not action packed by any means.
* Not terribly original either; as I said, rather faerie tale like.
* One of

my pet peeves in YA fiction is the presence of sex or drugs. This one has none of the above unless you count magic potions; it's got lots of those!

Detailed Reading Notes: * Starts out in Pennsylvania in 1870... well, but there's a blue wyvern and a sister who is slowly turning into a mermaid. At the end of chapter 1 we've got two girls, both foundlings with oddly magical backgrounds adopted by a single woman with faerie blood. My very initial impression of this is that it's not just young adult, it's YOUNG adult. Almost pre-teen but we'll see how it develops. * By the end of chapter 3, we've got yet another foundling, this one a boy. Adopted by a traveling peddler and friend to the other two female foundlings. Can nobody in this story take care of their own children!?!? With this, I think the introductions are over and the story is ready to begin so no more spoilers. I don't know about you but I see NO potential for romantical anything. None at all. OK. Maybe a bit. * As chapter 7 closes, our dramatic pitch inclines.

I got this book for free through Prime, and I couldn't resist a novel about a mermaid. What I got was a fun little fairy tale that I enjoyed, but which is not without its problems. I greatly enjoyed the world it created, which was one that did not require a lot of exposition to understand. Rather, most of it was implied. The idea of magic in the real world hidden from normal humans is common enough that it's easy to pick up. And it's always fun to think that there might be magic lurking just around the corner, out of sight from our mundane eyes. So while a lot of the more mystical elements seem to flit by with nary a mention or explanation (elven shoemakers, witches, faeries, wyverns), most of them work as simply accepted parts of life as told from Clara's perspective. I suppose my largest problem, overall, with the book is how long it takes to really get going. I ordered this book exactly a month ago. I read the last 70% of it in the past four days. It was the first 30% that kept me slogging through for the rest of that time. Don't get me wrong. It's not unenjoyable. There is quite a bit of characters suddenly and formally breaking into long bouts of storytelling. To a certain extent I found it charming. It fit well with the idea of the old-fashioned fairy tale this is trying to be. The problem is that most of it ends up having little to do with the main thrust of the narrative, so that the reader is left wondering where exactly this story is going. And since the main goal (of transporting the soon-to-be-mermaid Maren to the sea) is established very early on but not actually undertaken until well past the first third, everything in between those two points feels like the story spinning its wheels.

I went into this book with high hopes. Generally, if a story has elements that consist of something supernatural/magical creature/fantasy/two worlds blending, I'm in. Plus, there's the added bonus that it's a story about transition; human to mermaid, adolescence to adulthood, and I dig a good

transition story. So I wanted to like it. Only I didn't. To sum up, and there will be spoilers: As two sisters stand on the verge of adulthood (they're 16 or 17 at the start of the book) Clara, the narrator, realizes her sister, Maren, is turning into a mermaid. Scales, webbed fingers, etc. Their aunt, who is part faerie, sends Clara and "almost-brother" O'Neill out from their home in the mountains of Pennsylvania to the ocean with Maren in tow, so she can return to the sea and come fully into herself. Nothing goes smoothly and the trio of travelers is kidnapped by a traveling circus. Clara moons over O'Neill, who she believes is in love with her sister and so she will bear her unrequited love in noble silence. Bad things happen. The group gets away from the lunatic circus people and make their way to the ocean in the nick of time. Maren reunites with her true father, the Mermaid King, and goes happily into the ocean. Clara and O'Neill head back to Pennsylvania. On the way home he confesses he has always loved Clara, and they get married on the spot, and all is right with the world. I was initially put off by the stilted flow of the book's language, though I got that the character was writing from the perspective of the impossibly proper main character, Clara, who is stilted (emotionally repressed, really) in her own right. The book's pace, I thought, was steady. And by steady, I mean, it didn't speed up, it didn't slow down. It just plodded along. And the plot...

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