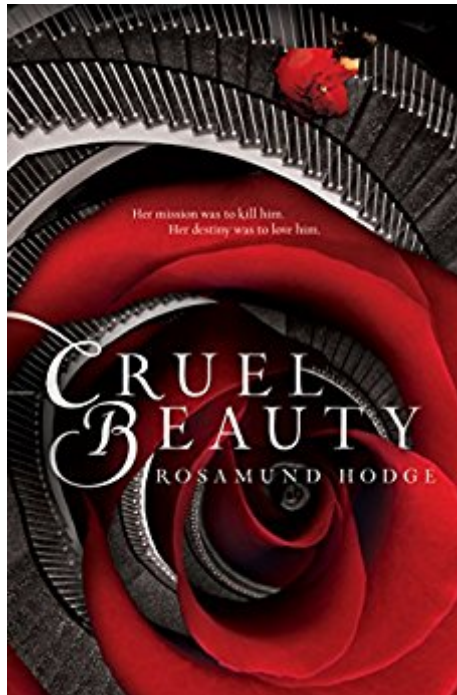




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Cruel Beauty (Cruel Beauty Universe Book 1)



Synopsis

If you're excited about the upcoming Disney film *Beauty and the Beast*, starring Emma Watson, don't miss *Cruel Beauty*. The romance of *Beauty and the Beast* meets the adventure of *Graceling* in this dazzling fantasy novel about our deepest desires and their power to change our destiny. Perfect for fans of bestselling *An Ember in the Ashes* and *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, this gorgeously written debut infuses the classic fairy tale with glittering magic, a feisty heroine, and a romance sure to take your breath away. Betrothed to the evil ruler of her kingdom, Nyx has always known that her fate was to marry him, kill him, and free her people from his tyranny. But on her seventeenth birthday when she moves into his castle high on the kingdom's mountaintop, nothing is what she expected—particularly her charming and beguiling new husband. Nyx knows she must save her homeland at all costs, yet she can't resist the pull of her sworn enemy—who's gotten in her way by stealing her heart.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I came across *Cruel Beauty* in Goodreads.com and saw average ratings from my connections there.

I read the blurb as it seemed really promising even though I'm not really into retellings (I read *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas without knowing that it was also inspired by *Beauty and the Beast*). So when I started reading, it wasn't really a smooth transition. I had to start over a few times as I ended up falling asleep just between the first three chapters of the book. It was a bit slow for me because of all the back stories about the kingdom's history, the town people's beliefs and stories relating to Greek mythology. It was interesting, but it was a lot of information to take right in the beginning. At first I liked Nyx as she seemed brave and feisty, plus she reminded me of Sharzhad's character in Renee Ahdieh's book *The Wrath and the Dawn* because of their situation. Unfortunately, my admiration for her was short-lived. I found her character annoying because of her actions from when she first arrived in the mansion. I get how she was just so hateful because she was groomed by her Father and Aunt only for that specific situation that she was in, to be married with the evil Gentle Lord and destroy him (even if it meant putting herself in danger, so long as she frees the entire kingdom). What disappointed me also was that she started thinking that she loves Shade just after spending a night in the mansion, and on the next one she started lusting over Ignifex. I really don't see that as a development on her character, nor her relationships with the others. I wasn't able to relate to any of the characters, which was a bummer. Putting that aside, the events inside the mansion were enough for me to keep on reading. Nyx discovering different rooms each day, the mysterious shadows lurking, Shade being very enigmatic, Ignifex showing different sides of himself. Overall, it was a good read but I think the world building and execution could've been better.

For the first half of this *Cruel Beauty*, I squirmed uncomfortably, not for anything that was written, but the writing style was elaborate and fanciful and took a considerable time to relax into. I'm also not a huge fan of re-tellings, and this one was a little too close to the original to stop me from pulling comparisons. But this book is a fantastic beast in its own right and I'm glad I gave it a chance. Nyx was a fun character to read. She was hateful and resentful as well as determined and righteous. Not a wilting flower, or a warrior, but a fallible human being, and I really liked that. She wasn't afraid to speak the truth, get a little snarky, or even a bit devious. I did find all the mention of Gods and mythology confusing at times, as I also did with the aspect of the Prince's *cough-Beast's-cough* house. The whole setting was so imaginary and malleable that it was disorientating and difficult to track the nature of the plot. But in hindsight, it exactly does what it is supposed to do for the tale. The narrative has a magical tone to it which reminds me of old Irish fairie tales. The weird love triangle thing between the Prince, the Shadow,

and Nyx felt a little forced and manufactured, and the beginning of the relationships did not feel as if they grew organically. But I do like how, even with teasing of an unreliable narrator, there were reasons not to trust any of the characters in this novel. I was guessing and flip-flopping in opinions on everyone. Which was both a good and a bad thing. I like to be kept on my toes but not so much as there isn't a solid grounding in either the main character or her quest. There was such a feeling of being untethered through most of the novel, that it stopped me from truly enjoying it. Only towards the end, when aspects of the plot started to draw together did I truly revel in *Cruel Beauty*. The novel is beautifully written, completely matching the genre and tone, but not a style I enjoyed reading too much. I felt like I was back at University wading through the works of Chaucer at times. Some readers will love this, but for my personal taste, I found it annoying and slowed the pace of the storyline. It had a strong high-fantasy vibe, rather than nostalgic for the original tale of *Beauty and the Beast*, and is probably why I didn't enjoy it as much as I could have. I really have to be in the mood to digest high fantasy, and like reading my world built, and quest painted out in clear concise language. Even now, after completing the novel I can't clearly define the universe and role of the Gods, or the magic system used. With the over-indulgence in the writing style playing against it, *Cruel Beauty* did a wonderful job at painting a scene, my imagination ran wild with the fantastical places and magical/dream-like elements. On the whole it was an okay read. I loved the last quarter and had an 'aww' moment at the end. The first half needs to drive the story along more forcefully, and the development of the world more concise for me to get into it, which would probably remove about fifty pages from its length and pick up the pacing. I liked this take on the story of *Beauty and the Beast* and have seen the mixed reviews. I guess if you love fairy tales, and high fantasy, *Cruel Beauty* is one for you; otherwise you might be a little confused like I was.

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