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The Rogue Prince (Sky Full Of Stars, Book 1)



Synopsis

Starseer, pilot, and animal lover Jelena Marchenko wants to prove to her parents that she's ready to captain her own freighter and help run the family business. When she finally talks them into getting a second ship and letting her fly it, it doesn't faze her that the craft is decades old and looks like a turtle. This is the chance she's craved for years. But it's not long before the opportunity to rescue mistreated lab animals lures her from her parentally approved cargo run and embroils her in a battle between warring corporations. To further complicate matters, her childhood friend Thorian, prince of the now defunct Sarellian Empire, is in trouble with Alliance law and needs her help. Torn between her duty to her family and doing what she believes is honorable, Jelena is about to learn that right and wrong are never as simple as they appear and that following your heart can get you killed.

Book Information

File Size: 2214 KB

Print Length: 324 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publication Date: April 16, 2017

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B06ZZLH321

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #11,235 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #6

in Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Space Opera #117

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction #179 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Space Exploration

Customer Reviews

This spin-off has a somewhat similar setup as the Fallen Empire series - but with a Starseer slant -

with writing being up to its usual standard. So if you, like myself, liked the previous series, you will likely enjoy reading The Rogue Prince. Alisa Marchenko has obviously succeeded in her goal to impress her own morals on her oldest daughter, Jelena, over those the Starseers that kidnapped her tried to indoctrinate her with. With all the naivety of an eighteen-year-old finally let loose on the universe, she goes on a side mission to rescue abused lab-animals while on her first solo freight run for her parents freighter business. Needless to say, things go wrong almost immediately, and even with all the training her pilot mother, cyborg stepfather, and Starseer grandfather have drilled into her, Jelena and Ostberg (her engineer-on-loan from the Nomad for her first mission), barely make off the planet in one piece. During their escape Jelena insist on picking up one of their pursuers that would otherwise have died within her damaged spacesuit, and with it a load of trouble, as that woman proves herself to be less than grateful to be so rescued. And if that wasn't enough, next she finds out that her Stepfather Leonidas has had a massive heart attack, and that the surgeon qualified to do the heart transplant to save his life might just be the next target on her childhood-friend turned assassin, ex-prince Thorian's hit list. Naturally Jelena decides that the best thing to do is to go after Thorian, both to save him from the elite team the Alliance has sent out to kill him, and to stop him from killing the man that she hopes will be able to save Leonidas life. Hopefully as the series goes on Jelena and Thorian will be able to balance each others attitudes - which are currently at extreme opposites of 'don't hurt anyone' to 'kill them all' - and arrive at more reasonable middle ground. It would certainly interesting to watch.

This story is told from Jelena's point of view. The reader doesn't need to be familiar with the Fallen Empire series to enjoy this book but I feel like having read all of the previous stories of ten year old Thorian has given me a perspective parallel to Jelena's with personal knowledge of just how much Thorian has changed during the time they were apart. We have these vague notions of how he was raised and can understand a lot of what has created the person he is now, but at the same time there are vast differences between views he expressed during his first escape ride with Leonidas and his actions and opinions in Rogue Prince. The internal struggle Jelena experiences while trying to attune reality with expectation in regards to her reunion with her former best friend is refreshingly realistic. Strangely realistic, to the point of reflecting my own feelings from similar life experiences. I love when books are capable of capturing those moments that I otherwise haven't been quite able to describe for myself. I'll admit I was worried going in that this would end up more of a feel-good novella produced to appease the fans of the original series. Don't get me wrong, I would have been happily appeased either way, but I am so thrilled to have what appears to be the beginning of

another great series. I can't wait to get back into it with book two.

Though, there are several other "critical" reviews which have articulately described many of the significant weaknesses of THE ROGUE PRINCE, I wanted to post a review as well because of the astonishing number of glowing reviews for this book, which I don't think reflect a realistic assessment by which potential purchasers should be guided. Lindsay Buroker is a writer with considerable skill (which keeps this book from being, at best, a two-star review) as long as you're not focussing on having a logical, believable plot. Her characters are mostly three-dimensional and compelling ... which means the central protagonist, 18(going on 12)-year-old Jelena is convincingly immature, thoughtless, and careless in any meaningful way of the financial or legal or even lethal consequences of her constant impulsive, impetuous actions. Perhaps this book was written for the 12-to-15-year-old crowd who dream of space adventure without consideration of adult realities. As a grown-up, I had a harder time swallowing various aspects.***SPOILERS FOLLOW*** Jelena's immaturity is apparent right from the beginning of this book. Having been handed the keys to her sparkling new Ferrari by Mumsy and Daddy on her 16th birthday -- no, wait, that's right, it was *captaincy of her own space ship at the ripe, old, mature age of 18*, instead of doing the boring delivery run that she was scheduled to do, she goes to another planet to liberate abused lab animals. Yes, this is admirable; save the horribly abused animals! What's her plan? Well, that's pretty much all the planning she did. Land on the planet, break in, and walk out with those 100+ animals. When it's completely obvious the facility is heavily guarded, does she stop to think, hmm, maybe I should think this out? Maybe I'm going to get my close friend killed? As another reviewer basically said, the author simply writes her characters out of overwhelming, dangerous situations by having them use/discover fantastical Starseer powers. Cool powers, but unbelievably convenient. Jelena's stepfather has a medical crisis and needs a heart transplant, and her mother begs her to come to his hospital bedside. Jelena loves Leonides like a father, but rather than do her best to get directly there, she decides to hare off to find an old childhood friend whom she has not seen for half her life and who has recently begun assassinating people (12 and counting), because she's sure everybody else is wrong and he can't be a killer. Even after he acknowledges that he *is* a killer and intends to keep killing, she shrugs that off and continues to believe talking to him will make all that irrelevant and him the nice guy she wants him to be. In the course of liberating the lab animals and blowing up the lab and destroying androids and wounding and most likely killing several people, Jelena picks up Masika, a woman who has been enhanced and whose employer and employer's rivals want to recover/obtain. As Jelena and her friend Erick and Masika, and later

the assassin/childhood friend Thorian, careen about space from one impulsive, ill-considered adventure to the next, they destroy property on a massive scale and engage in violent maiming/killing of enemies and bystanders, and Jelena's parting thought is basically, oops, another planet I'll not be welcomed back to, and gee, I hope mom doesn't hear about this! The "end" of the book is equally unrealistic. Jelena does eventually make it to her stepfather's bedside shortly after his surgery, but no problem! He's survived so well that everybody (apparently from previous books about the earlier generation) is holding a raucous barbecue and band/sing-along party in Leonides' hospital suite on the day of his surgery. Mumsy and Daddy -- er, I mean, mom and Leonides indulgently and lovingly chide their little girl for destroying so much property and running up so many damages for them to pay (no mention of any pesky legal consequences for killing people!) And then reward her by continuing her captaincy of the ship (not problem, we'll just create a new, false registry!) plus as many new personnel as baby girl wants, though she might want to do her shipping runs out on the rim to avoid all the angry people who are now after her. Jelena pouts, but eventually agrees, even though she's sure it's going to be sooo boring. Why she thinks that, I don't understand, since mom and Leonides allow her recruit the surly childhood playmate turned assassin as a crewmember (since hanging around with him has been so good thus far! (I could go on with even more examples, but I think those suffice.)) ***END SPOILERS*** To be fair, Jelena, like other teenagers, has moments of maturity and insight, but they are few and far between. They weren't enough to tempt me to purchase and read any any more adventures of this annoyingly immature "heroine." I hope my comments help others decide if this is a series worth their money and time. (Edited to correct an "auto-incorrect" error -- grrr!)

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