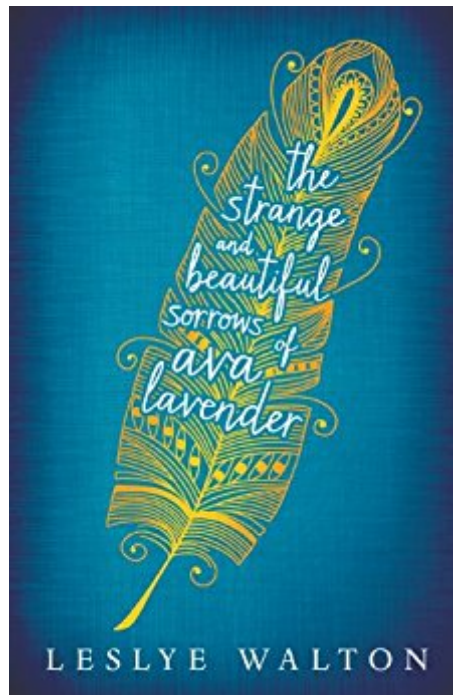




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The Strange And Beautiful Sorrows Of Ava Lavender



Synopsis

Foolish love appears to be a Roux family birthright. And for Ava Lavender, a girl born with the wings of a bird, it is an ominous thing to inherit. In her quest to understand her peculiar disposition and a growing desire to join her peers, sixteen-year-old Ava ventures into the wider world. But it is a dangerous world for a naive girl – a world which may view her as girl or angel. On the night of the summer solstice celebration, the skies open up, rain and feathers fill the air and Ava's journey and her family's saga reaches a devastating crescendo. First-time author Leslye Walton has constructed a layered and unforgettable mythology of what it means to be born with hearts that are tragically, exquisitely human.

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Customer Reviews

The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender has left me feeling much differently than every other book I've read this year. I fought with myself up until the very last sentence, attempting to decide if I loved it or hated it. Walton's writing is beautiful, luring, and haunting. There were times

when I was engulfed by anger and would force myself to look away, to remove myself from the course even I knew it would take. And there were other times when these sorrows took hold so deeply, that I pushed forward, looking for the way out. A push and pull, all surrounding the illogical logic of love. I was initially hesitant about the generational aspect of this, but it soon grew on me and I couldn't imagine feeling the same depth and understanding without it. I did have a few problems with some aspects of the book, and the path our characters took, but perhaps that was the point the author was trying to achieve. After all, as she says, "Love makes us such fools". But should love be used as an all encompassing excuse? If you're looking for something different, a bit of magical realism, and a book about love in a way seen too rarely. . . then don't hesitate to pick this up.

I really enjoyed this book. I was inclined to give it five stars, but I also tend to give anything I like five stars, so I'm trying to make my personal rating system a little tougher and save the five-star ratings for all-time favorites. The prose is lyrical, the plot is interesting (if a little odd, requiring you to stop wondering where it's going and just enjoy it), and the characters are worthwhile and unusual. It took me a bit to get used to the storytelling style, but I wound up enjoying it quite a lot. It's strange and beautiful, so it lives up to its title. I'm really glad I read it. The book takes a lot of very unusual things for granted (people turning into birds, being able to read omens, slowly fading away until turning into piles of ash, etc), which made for a very darkly whimsical read. The weirdest thing about it, which shouldn't have worked but somehow did, is the point of view. It's told in the first person by Ava, the main character. At the same time, she's essentially an omniscient narrator who knows more than it seems like she could about what other characters are thinking and feeling (especially when she's recounting stories that happened long before she was born). I'm not sure why it worked for it me, but it did, and it was lovely. Now for what I didn't like: *spoiler alert* Next paragraph tells the ending of the book, so don't read it unless you've already read the book. I think that the moment that most of the plot builds to (if you haven't read the book and don't want it spoiled, I'm trying to bury this spoiler in a paragraph of text so it doesn't jump out--so stop reading now!) is the violent attack on the main character, Ava. I understand why it happens and it is necessary to the plot. However, I don't love the use of rape and attempted murder as a character development tool: before she's raped and her wings are cut off, Ava cannot fly and feels out of sorts with her life; after the attack, she has a long convalescence, but her wings grow back with pure white feathers (instead of speckled brown) and she is able to fly. It could be interpreted as growth through adversity, but I just think there are a lot of potentially unintended messages being conveyed (e.g. that the rape "purifies" her or is necessary in some way to her development and freedom as a human being). This isn't a huge issue, because I

know this isn't the only way to interpret these events, but it is something that trips me up in books (the same thing happens, at least symbolically, in the Disney movie Maleficent).

I can't explain this story; especially to those of you who haven't read it. YOU NEED TO READ THIS BOOK. I don't care what your usual genre is, or why you feel that this book won't interest you. Once you start it, you will not put it down until the end. 1. You will want to know Ava's story, because as soon as you read the first few sentences, it's a done deal. You will stop at nothing to understand. 2. You will walk away from this with some knowledge that you've never heard before. Something will happen to you, and you will either be happy or sad about the conclusion. Beautiful, sad, strange, hopeful – this book is all those things and more. I couldn't put it down to save my life. Ava Lavender and family are unique. This book is filled with family, love, unrequited love, self-realization, secrets, choices, religion, and friendship. From Ava's great grandparents journey to America, to the day of her birth and beyond; this story will warm your heart and make you realize that life is short – live and love while you can. The ending was perfect, and I was left wanting more but thought better. It's the type of ending you can make up for yourself about what happens next, or what it means. All you need to know is that Ava was born with wings. See, that should make you want to dive right in. I love the arc throughout history here.

There's so much to get to the end of the story. It starts in France and ends in Seattle, WA. Sometimes it feels more paranormal/fantasy-like, than magical realism. I say this because of the obvious – Ava has wings, and there are ghosts. It gets downright creepy at times, because of the religious neighbor who is obsessed with Ava and her wings. Nathaniel Sorrows is definitely a character that will make you shudder. I love most of these characters; especially Ava, Henry, and Gabe. There were moments when I forgot that this book is about Ava. I even forgot that she is narrating this story; that's how deep I was inside this book. To me, that threw me off a little because sometimes it did get a little info-dumpy. I feel some things could have been left out or replaced with something else. Still, great story. I definitely recommend this book!

I liked the LOVE theme that this book based on that overcomes any difficult situations and circumstances. I would recommend this book to the mature young adults. I chose this rating because in the beginning the story was a little confusing and was hard to follow, but later Ms Walton

used her unique and fantastic imagination combining with human love, overall it turned out to be very interesting. I enjoyed it very much.

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