



Manuscript Review

“The Mark of the Tala”
by
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Provided for:
Author

Genre:
Romantasy

The End Book Editors File: SampleMR-002

Editor
The End Book Editors

Thank you for the opportunity of reading your manuscript. My goal with your manuscript review is to provide guidance on how to improve your book and get it ready for editing and publication. It's my hope that these suggestions and thoughts can help both you and your book for the better. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Synopsis and Overall Impressions

"The Mark of the Tala" is a fantasy romance (romantasy) novel about Andromeda, or Andi, the second-born daughter of the High King of the Twelve Kingdoms, and Rayfe, the new king of the Tala. The Tala are shapeshifters and Andi's mother, the Queen of the Tala back then, leaves her kingdom to marry High King Uorsin. Why she does this isn't immediately obvious but later we learn that she did so to prevent war with the Twelve Kingdoms. The Tala are the only kingdom that is not under the High King's dominion, and Salena knew that her people would die if they fought the Twelve Kingdoms and their armies. Before she died, Salena had three daughters: Ursula, the heir; Andi, the middle plain daughter, and Amelia, the most beautiful of all three of them. One of those daughters will be born with the mark of the Tala (the ability to shapeshift) and eventually become the Queen of the Tala. And now, Rayfe has come to the court of the High King to claim what was once promised to him and what he considers is his: Andi, who, like her mother, is a shapeshifter.

This is the backstory of the novel, and the place where Andi's story begins.

What's Working Well

I particularly liked the relationship between Andi and her sisters. Even though each one of them knows their duty to the kingdom, they're steadfastly loyal to each other first and foremost and are there for one another in their personal happiness or tragedy (ies). I also liked how the story is one of self-acceptance, where Andi doesn't see herself as the plain, 'extra', middle sister (which is how her father treated her in an attempt to tame her power, knowing that she will eventually become more powerful than he), anymore but as the beautiful and powerful Queen of the Tala. Another thing I loved about your story is the magic, and how in this first book, it is shrouded in mystery; how the Tala are so protective of it, and do not want the other kingdoms and their respective kings, least of them all, the High King, to get their hands on it. All of this made the story intriguing and kept me interested to continue reading.

However, I do have some suggestions for revision, which I outline below. Please let me know if you have any questions concerning any of them and I'll be happy to get back to you.

Areas for Revision

Like I mentioned before, I really liked Andi's relationship with her sisters, and as I read the manuscript, I realized that this relationship between Andi, Ursula, and Amelia, is very important for the resolution of the story. The reason is that all three of them are as close as they are because they all felt the loss of their mother very keenly (even though it affected each one of them differently) and they each found solace in one another and became stronger in their closeness. In short, Andi's mother, as the story progresses, is very important for her personal journal of self-acceptance. However, not a lot of backstory concerning Salena and her decision to marry the High King is given and I feel that if this were included in the novel, it will enrich it a lot more. From the beginning, we are told that Andromeda is the one, of all three of Salena's daughters, that resembles her mother the most. Yet we are never actually told Salena's story, how Andi resembles her and why. Inevitably, this also leaves Andi's story shrouded in a bit of mystery that I think should be unraveled so that we, as readers, can connect with Andi and actually care about what happens to her in her journey. Given that Andi's character arc in the novel is her finding out who she is, I think it is important to include how her mother's own journey and story will help her do so.

Andi starts to accept herself a little bit more when she understands that she's in love with Rayfe. At this point in the story, however, it seems as if he's the reason that she knows who she is now. Rayfe's introduced as the typical alpha male protagonist. He is the king of the Tala, and that means he's powerful, dominant, successful, and charming. However, his motivations for behaving like he does – The High King promised him one of his daughters (the one with the Mark of the Tala), and hence she is his – aren't exactly clear throughout the entire manuscript (since this backstory is not given anywhere in the story either) and all he does through most of the manuscript is pursue Andi (who is afraid of him at first) and then sleep with her (given that this is a romance, I know that this is expected). But is that all Rayfe is doing? Trying to take what he thinks is his? Trying to make the king give him what he promised him? As a reader, I was expecting Rayfe to be the one to help Andi welcome this other side of herself, her mother's side of her, and to help her understand herself as a woman of the Tala.

But he doesn't do that. And as a reader, I might have expected something different from him than what you intended for him as a character, and that is fine. But I still think there isn't enough character development to make us like Rayfe and root for his relationship with Andi. In the end, we learn that Rayfe's past is also related to Salena's decision to

marry the High King and that too is rooted with what he does and the reasons why he does it, so I think it is important to include that in some way for the reader earlier on.

When Rayfe takes Andi back to the Tala, the pacing of the story quickens. Given that this is a trilogy, the main conflict isn't solved at the end of this novel, but it does do a good job at letting us know, as readers, what's at stake. We also start to see Rayfe differently. And the reason why he was so adamant at pursuing Andi before: Without her, the magic of the Tala will die. He, though their king, isn't enough to keep it alive. He isn't powerful enough. The High King, however, wants his daughter back and makes Ursula, his heir and commander of his army, to go bring her back. When Andi refuses, Amelia's husband (whom she married at the beginning of the novel), the heir of one of the other kingdoms and the High King's ally, decides to kill Rayfe. But when Andi puts herself in between Rayfe and Hugh (Amelia's husband), Ursula reacts instinctively and kills Hugh so Andi wouldn't get hurt. And to spare Ursula having to face Amelia as the murderer of her husband and the High King for the loss of one of his allies, Andi takes the fault. This is the climax of the novel, and I must admit, I did not expect this ending. This was very well done. But what I loved the most was how the sisters took care of each other at the end despite all the politicking.

Final Comments

The love that Andi and her sisters have for each other is the highlight of this book. And this love is forged in the image that all three of them have of their mother. This familial connection and love is what makes us identify with Andi and to like her; we all have a mother and siblings that we love (or want to love) the way Andi and her sisters love each other. However, I think that if we'd known Salena's story or been given backstory about why she left her people and married High King Uorsin, we would not have only liked Andi but also loved her. And we would have been fully on board with her relationship with Rayfe. We would've been hardcore fans of this pairing.

Thank you for trusting me to review your manuscript! Once you've had a chance to consider these suggestions, let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I look forward to speaking with you soon, and good luck on your publishing journey.

Editor
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