

Dragonfly

Julia Golding

Reviewed by: Sophia Cheng, Age 16

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In order to seal a royal alliance to face a common enemy prowling along their borders, an arranged marriage between Prince Ramal of Gerfal and Princess Taoshira of the Blue Crescent Islands is set, despite the objections of the two key people involved. With their clashing cultures, resentment towards the marriage, and polar personalities, the two naturally possess a mutual dislike towards each other even before they meet. Then, when a romantic outing turns into disastrous date, Taoshira, deciding it to be the last straw, calls off the marriage entirely. However, before Ramal can react, both young people are suddenly captured and thrust into a circus wagon. At first, Ramal and Taoshira believe it to be a distasteful joke intended to bring them closer together, but they soon realize that they are being abducted and their destination is right in the heart of their enemy's territory.

Ramal and Taoshira understand the horrible implications of their kidnapping for them and for their kingdoms. Thus, they must gradually learn to trust each other, abandoning their previous hostility if they want a chance at escaping. However, trapped hundreds of miles away from home, escape is only the first step to safety. From there, Ramal and Taoshira must endure hardships and travel through inhospitable, unfamiliar lands with the help of a few unexpected friends. And above all else, they must remember their duty to their countries because their failure could cost them a war and their empires.

Golding excels in painting out the scenes in words with the vivid details and skillful word choices that reveals tone, character, and imagery very precisely. Though the story is rotated between a few characters, each character holds his or her distinctive personality, even as they continue to develop. It gives the reader an impression that amidst the action and suspense of the main plot, there are multiple individual stories unfolding on the side as well. Additionally, the personal struggles of the two main characters enhanced the story, giving the reader a deeper understanding of the characters while making their actions more meaningful. If there are flaws in this book, they are nearly inscrutable since aside for a rushed scene or two, there was nothing that could have merited any harsh remarks.

Although *Dragonfly* can be categorized as a fantasy, it has the defining qualities of other genres and also reflects a certain historical and cultural content. Actual cultures have been melded into the story, merged together at times and sharply contrasted at others. The prejudices of the different cultures and religions, which play a significant role in the story, are evident, and along with it, a theme that expresses loyalty, faith, and inner strength. *Dragonfly* by Julia Golding is probably more suited for teens, but I highly recommend this book to anyone with a soft spot for adventures with romance.

Recommended Readings:

If you were just absolutely hooked on this book, don't forget to check out *Gathering Blue* by Lois Lowry, *The Selection* by Kiera Cass, and *Cruel Beauty* by Rosamund Hodge, and *Samurai's Tale* by Erik C. Haugaard.