

Uprooted

Naomi Novik

Reviewed by: Joyce Zhang

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For a casual fantasy reader, Naomi Novik's *Uprooted* is entertaining, subverting the cliché concept of a maiden imprisoned in a tower by a dragon. Instead, the captor is a wizard in this version. Called "the Dragon," he takes one village girl to his tower every ten years, and does so under initially unexplained reasons. Agnieszka, a girl living in the nearby village of Dvernik, expects that her friend, Kasia, will be taken. For Kasia exhibits the qualities that the Dragon prefers—beautiful, talented—she has been trained since childhood to be the Dragon's companion. However, when the Dragon arrives, he chooses Agnieszka instead. What follows is an intricate tale about the strength of magic; the power of both old and new bonds; and the ability to flourish, shedding all semblance of passivity for a more empowered stance.

In all, *Uprooted* is an enjoyable read—the relationship between Kasia and Agnieszka is the strongest point of the novel, demonstrating the forgiving and enduring nature of friendship. In addition, the world building is creative, and Novik adds haunting imagery to describe the mundane. This ultimately provides for a strong first half. However, while the plot was kept concise for the first half, the second part deviates from the former, and the interpersonal conflict becomes a more "simple" power struggle between Agnieszka and the threat dominating her society. While this makes for a fast

paced plot, the abrupt turn is a tad jarring and can leave readers questioning the suddenly obscured motivations of the characters.

Due to mature themes, hints of violence, and a significant graphic scene near the end of the novel, I would recommend *Uprooted* for older high school readers.

Book Recommendations

Throne of Glass by Sarah J Maas

The Lunar Chronicles by Marissa Meyer

The Star-Touched Queen by Roshani Chokshi