



# The Orphanage of Gods

*Helena Coggan*

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**The Orphanage of Gods** Helena Coggan

**Twenty years ago, the humans came for their gods.**

In the bloody revolution, gods were all but wiped out. Ever since, the children they left behind have been imprisoned in an orphanage, watched day and night by the ruthless Guard. Any who show signs of divine power vanish from their beds in the night, all knowledge of their existence denied.

No one has ever escaped the orphanage.

Until now.

Seventeen-year-old Hero is finally free - but at a terrible price. Her sister has been captured by the Guard and is being held in a prison in the northern sea. Hero desperately wants to get her back, and to escape the murderous Guardsmen hunting her down. But not all the gods are dead, and the ones waiting for Hero in the north have their own plans for her - ones that will change the world forever . . .

As she advances further and further into the unknown, Hero will need to decide: how far is she willing to go to do what needs to be done?

## The Orphanage of Gods Details

Date : Expected publication: February 21st 2019 by Hodder & Stoughton

ISBN :

Author : Helena Coggan

Format : Kindle Edition 416 pages

Genre : Fantasy

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# From Reader Review The Orphanage of Gods for online ebook

## BookSteff says

I was given an eARC of this book through Netgalley in exchange for my honest review. All opinions are my own.

The concept of The Orphanage of Gods sounds great, and really it sounds like something I would normally adore. That being said, I really struggled to connect with the characters and their motivations. I wasn't captivated enough to continue reading, and it has actually taken me three attempts at reading it to get through; that was due to personal perseverance rather than my overall enjoyment of the book. If I'm completely honest I can't say why it didn't suit me. There was action, and there was suspense, but I just didn't enjoy the characters enough to care about their goals etc. I'm so sad, because I really wanted to love it, and it seemed from the synopsis that I would. I regret to say that I have to give 2.5\*, but this just wasn't for me.

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## SummerBlue says

Sounds like a discount 'Strange the Dreamer'

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## Michaela's Journey into Books says

\*I would like to thank Netgalley and the publisher for providing me with an eARC in exchange for an honest review\*

DNF @ 40%

I really wanted to love this but sadly it just didn't pull me in. The concept and plot are full of potential however, the execution just didn't appeal to me. I couldn't connect to any of the characters and struggled to become invested in the story. I also got quite confused at times about what was actually going on and it wasn't always clear who's point of view we were reading from at times.

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## E L E A N O R (bookishcourtier) says

**This book actually really surprised me.** It wasn't quite what I was expecting when I read the blurb, but I liked it a lot more than I thought I would. I started out feeling quite neutral about it but as the book continued I started to get really invested in the story. The blurb did remind me a little of Strange the Dreamer, but it did not end up being at all similar.

**The book is set in a world where there are humans, and gods (people with silver blood who have magical powers called a 'demesne').** You can also be a half god, meaning you only have some of the attributes of a god. This was an interesting concept and I was pretty intrigued by it. The world it is set in is

more modern, however, which threw me a little, because I thought it was going to be more archaic. However, I soon became used to it and I think that made it a little more unique. I thought the world-building was well done, although it would maybe nice to learn a little more about the geography of the world and where the gods came from and why people hate them etc. But aside from that, I thought this was a really strong element of the book.

**I liked the characters a lot.** I didn't realise at first, but the book is told in three perspectives. Part One is told by Hero, a seventeen year old girl who has escaped from an orphanage (where children are kept in case they are gods) with her brother Joshua. She herself is half god. I enjoyed reading from her point of view. She seemed clever and resourceful, and she cared a lot about her brother, and her sister who they were searching for, and I thought she was a very solid character. Part Two; we switched to the point of view of a ten year old girl called Raven. I found this first POV change quite abrupt, but I did end up liking Raven in the end, although she wasn't my favourite perspective. Finally, Part Three was told from Kestrel's perspective, who is Hero's sister. I really liked her, she was very complex and her character was quite different to the other two. I loved the bond she and Hero shared, and it was refreshing to see two girls not pining for a boy who had discarded them both. I was very happy to see the representation of a female/female romance between Kestrel and Eliza (who was also a very complex and interesting character).

**Overall, I really enjoyed this book.** I thought all the characters were very well built. There were a few things that I had a few issues with - namely, the abrupt ending, and also the fact that I think some of the plot was tied up a little bit too fast at the end. But I think it was entertaining while still having a lot of depth, and I would definitely recommend it to others.

*I received an arc via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review!*

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## **Bonnie Evie says**

Fast-paced, packed with side-characters and sub-plots, *The Orphanage of Gods* feels a little like it's trying to cram too much into a single book.

Following three protagonists; Hero, a 17-year-old orphan and self-proclaimed coward with the power to heal. Raven, a 10-year-old shapeshifter with a big responsibility on her shoulders. Kestrel, a human who would do anything to save her siblings of choice.

While the multiple first-person narratives are compelling, many of the subplots feel as though they fall to the wayside, receiving at best a hurried resolution (or in some instances, none).

Despite this, the book does focus on some exciting moral questions, raising thought-provoking topics for readers. The high focus on strong but rounded female protagonists, as well as the divergence from the typical 'love will conquer all' trope do make this a worthwhile read.

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## **Tara says**

The premise of this sounds similar to *Strange the Dreamer* so was a bit hesitant, but other than it's about gods and god spawn it is completely different. I did enjoy this but found it a bit slow to start, although action starts

straight away I found it hard to get into at the beginning. But I felt there was a bit too much action going on for me, needed a bit of a slow down at some points or could have been spread over another book. I couldn't really connect to the characters as much as I'd like, there were no shades of grey in them. It was a good read but I feel could have been better.

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### **Jocelyn says**

This is only barely 3 stars as I tend to not give less than that as I realise what a monumental thing it is to write a book. And I think that is part of the problem here. Orphanage of the Gods is pretty intense with way too much going on and it turned a really promising story into one that eventually became a chore to read.

The premise and cover are amazing. This is the kind of story I like, but as the book progressed it became way too complicated and muddled especially with it being YA. I just couldn't get into it or feel much for the characters past Hero.

What a shame because I had such high hopes for this. I think it could be really good with some more character development, or things being fleshed out and spread over more books. But as it stands it's just not what it (and I) hoped it would be.

Thanks to the publisher and Netgalley for a copy of this in exchange for a review.

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### **Tahlia says**

Blog Post: <https://museofnyxmares.wordpress.com/...>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/museofnyxma...>

4.5/5 Stars

\*I was provided with an ARC by the publisher in exchange for my honest opinion. All quotes used may be subject to change upon publication.

Wow! I definitely wasn't prepared for this book! This was one intense read and I truly loved every minute of it. As soon as I saw that this was about Gods, I immediately wanted to get my hands on it, as I have an unhealthy obsession with mythology and I'm so blessed that we've now got another brilliant YA book about Gods! I normally find that stories with characters that are on journey's can sometimes be hit or miss for me, because there's usually a point where the travelling becomes a bit monotonous. However, despite the fact that Hero is essentially on the run, and consequently, this is what a lot of the novel consists of, I wasn't bored for one single second. I actually enjoyed it quite a lot, because the writing was just so good and it allowed me to focus on getting to know Hero and her brother (by bond), Joshua. It also probably didn't feel like one endless expedition, because the book is split into three different parts, with each part being from a different characters point of view. Each part was fantastic, but the first two parts have a special place in my heart.

In the opening chapter we are thrown in when Hero and Josh are preparing to have an encounter with the Guardsmen, as Josh has had a premonition that they will come to them. This scene had me on the edge of my

seat, it was honestly so tense. Here we get introduced to Josh's power, which is the ability to manipulate light, for example he can conjure balls of light in his hands and even create lightning, "a spark of sunlight coalesces in his palm into a bulb the size of a pebble. He flicks his wrist and the light soars ahead, illuminating a stone corridor". We're not immediately told what Hero's power is, but it is clear that Josh is much more powerful than she is, in terms of the amount of power thrumming within him and because his power can also be used as a weapon, Josh is also a God, whereas Hero is a half-god. All of the Gods have varying powers, although more than one person can have the same power, but with the disastrous effects of the revolution, it is very rare to find more than one person of the same power. The Gods with more 'destructive' powers and therefore the most powerful, are even scarcer. These powers are called a Gods demesne, their gift. Hero's demesne is the ability to heal others, so it's obviously a very beneficial power to have, but it is no help in a fight and so when they run into trouble, she more or less has to rely on Josh.

Hero and Josh's relationship is strained to say the least, and is growing ever more so, the more days pass and they don't have Kestrel, Hero's sister (by bond) with them. The three of them have always stuck together since they met at the Orphanage, it's been the three of them against the world for as long as they can remember. However, as Kestrel is no longer with them, Hero starts to wonder if she was all that linked them. Josh is in love with Kestrel, whereas he sees Hero as a sister, and although that's perfectly okay with Hero, as she only sees him as her brother, sometimes it hurts just how much more he cares about Kestrel. The longer they spend on the road, the more apparent it is that losing Kestrel has changed Josh, in a way that both bewilders and frightens Hero, but for all of his temper tantrums and distrust of her, she knows she'll never leave him. He is her brother and she loves him. The tension between them builds throughout the course of the book and Hero starts to doubt that he ever even cared about her at all, with him becoming more unrecognisable by the minute, Hero is forced to look at how powerful Josh really is and just what that power could do to her, "Please be alive. I don't know what he'll do if you're dead. I don't know what he'll do to me, if you're dead". I really have to commend the author here, because Josh is constantly acting like a brat and there were more than a few occasions where I would've liked to give him a piece of my mind, but I'd find that Hero was already doing it for me. Or I'd find that no matter how much I wanted to hate him, I found myself almost bound to him in a way, because of how ferocious Hero's love for him is and that's truly remarkable.

As Hero, Josh and Kestrel are no longer at the Orphanage, also known as Fitzgerald's House, everything we learn about the Orphanage is through their memories. And what's weird is, for the most part, it sounds like a regular Orphanage, nothing particularly monstrous happens. And then you remember that all the kids that are at this Orphanage are a by-product of the revolution that happened. These kids are homeless, either because their parents were Gods and therefore killed, or are human and their parents were killed in the crossfire. Again, it appears very run-of-the-mill, and so one could argue that it is therefore, more frightening when the true nature of those who run the Orphanage is shown. For example, some kids just disappear, here one day and then gone the next. Now, these kids aren't just disappearing for no reason, if they show the slightest signs of having Godlike abilities, then they are most likely to disappear the very next day. Some children are lucky and manage to keep their ability hidden, until they turn 18 and they have their final 'finding-day' blood testing, to see whether they are allowed to enter the world on their own or be sent straight to Elida, a colossal black tower in the middle of nowhere, where they hold Gods. The testing involves having to be cut to see what colour you bleed, if you bleed red- human and free to go, grey- half god, more luminous silver – God. If you are one of the lucky ones, who haven't let your powers show or spilt your grey/silver blood, then you essentially have until you are 18 to figure out what you'll do when they discover you. So it's unsurprising that the trio choose Josh's final testing day to try and escape, but the price of doing so, is that their trio is now a forever changed duo, with all the irony in the world, that the only human in their group is now being held in a prison for Gods.

Whilst in the Orphanage the kids are occasionally told about The Resistance, a group of surviving Gods that live in the North, who are trying to fight back against the Guardsmen. They are told monstrous things about these Gods, “brutal in their revenge for all the murdered Gods, that they killed and ate human children, tortured their captives, that they were artists of violence”, but Hero is clever enough to realise that the Guard are probably lying, but because she is shrewd, she still doesn’t trust The Resistance anyway, so it never even crosses her’s or Josh’s minds to seek them out and ask for help. But The Resistance have already been watching them, and after Hero and Josh have a particularly close call with some humans, The Resistance make themselves known. The Resistance offer their help to rescue Kestrel, but both Hero and Josh are adamant that they do this alone and Hero can’t help but notice the almost hungry look in The Resistance leader’s eyes when she figures out what Josh’s power is. It isn’t until they are desperate beyond measure, that Hero gives in and they come to her aid. She does this without consulting Josh and this ultimately becomes the final nail in the coffin of their relationship, on Josh’s end anyway, and for certain this time, Kestrel is the only thing that keeps them from completely cutting ties. But through Josh’s distance, Hero gets to know those around her, this makeshift family of Gods, Half-Gods and their human.

This small part of The Resistance that Hero now finds herself part of consists of Cairn (leader), Mark (human), Eliza (second in command), Luca and Caleb (teenage twins) and their 10 year old sister Raven. Each of them have unique powers, there was someone who could turn their skin rock solid, someone else was a telekinetic, one was a telepath, another a teleporter and last but not least, and probably my favourite, there was a shapeshifter. These powers are extremely varied, but there are seven different things that a God can possess that would signal them as being divine, they could have three or all seven, “There are seven signs that mark a god out from a human: speed-and-strength, premonition, beauty, endurance, the ability to heal oneself, the silver of the blood, and the god’s particular gift, their demesne. I only have the last four because I’m only half-god”. I really loved meeting all of these new characters and exploring their gifts, as many of them didn’t even know the full extent of their powers, or hadn’t disclosed their full abilities to the others. I know that even Hero and Josh were technically new characters to me, but I felt like I truly knew them, not even half way in. These newer characters though, were just as well written as Hero and Josh and I think that this is why I had so many emotions whilst reading this story, my eyes may have welled up with tears once or twice, because the characters all seemed so real to me. And even though I didn’t particularly like certain characters, I could fully appreciate how fleshed out they were, if it wasn’t obvious already, the characterisation in this was flawless.

Hero and Josh’s only goal is to rescue Kestrel, they haven’t even given much thought as to what they plan to do after, if they manage it, and yet they’re now in debt to The Resistance, and find themselves being a part of something much bigger than them. The small group that they were rescued by is not even a dent in the numbers that make up The Resistance, with the rest of them being stationed in this elusive camp. Cairn was an older woman who was in charge of both this smaller group and the camp at large, “It’s a huge camp, they say, full of tents, thousands of people of godly blood, all living in secret, hiding from the Guard. Cairn is in charge of them all”. She was a somewhat distanced leader, who you can never quite figure out if she’s calculating or just removed from others, she says few words, but part of that may be, because the others know that her word is law, “Cairn knows what she’s doing, that’s Rule Number One”. There is always the sense that she’s five thousand steps ahead of everyone else, and due to not knowing whether she can be trusted and just what her motives are, you find her both impressive and unnerving. Mark was 20 and was the only human, he was actually adorable and was the sweetest with little Raven, acting as both her teacher and an extra older brother.

Eliza, 21, was next in charge after Cairn, although, she too was kept in the dark about a lot. She was serious, but kind and proved time and time again, as the book progressed, that there was more to her than she was letting on. The twins, Caleb and Luca were essentially a package deal, as they were so close to one another,

they both would do anything for each other and Raven, Caleb was definitely the friendlier of the two though, as Luca was a very fierce and focused young lady. After describing Luca, I can definitely see who little Raven is most like. Raven is only 10, but she is smart as a whip, extremely brave, loyal and protective, and even manages to more than stand her ground during her training sessions with Mark. Raven is special though, as she is The Resistance's hope for a better future and as things start to unravel, she learns just how far back this plan found its roots and we see her grapple with this information, "I don't understand. What am I to them? What am I meant to do?"

I could honestly talk about this book forever, because it was just so good, but I want to just mention my favourite thing about it, outside of the Gods, which was the relationship between Hero and Kestrel. I just adore the friendship that these two have, it's always so beautiful to me to see such strong and loving female friendships in YA books, as romance is usually at the forefront, "Kestrel. I close my mind to everything but her, her face. Kestrel is what matters, nothing else." It was also amazing to me how Kestrel loved Hero more than she loved Josh, and although Kestrel's sexuality is open, this is in a completely platonic way. It is very clear that these girls would do anything for each other, and in this very unique case, I think they loved each other equally. They both had to make very hard decisions throughout their lives for the sake of the other and I was honestly just so proud of them, they really did melt my heart.

This book had me from the very first page and took me on a roller coaster of emotions and I'm still not over the fact that it's finished, I would give just about anything for a sequel, I just miss everyone so much. I should warn you that this isn't a 'and everyone survived' book, people die and although I was mad and upset at times, because I truly cared about some of these characters, I kind of respect the decision to do it, because realistically, not everyone is going to survive. This book reminded me exactly why I find the idea of Gods so fascinating, because of their otherworldly abilities and the idea of too much power leading to destruction and consequently, the examination of the thin line between Gods and monsters. This book means a great deal to me and I hope with all my heart that you'll pick it up and meet this cast of characters that I'm so taken with. Helena Coggan has definitely found a fan in me and I can't wait to read more of her work!

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## **Aoife says**

I really tried to enjoy this. It's just the sort of story I like. But the action is so breakneck, and all the characters are so confused all the time, it's hard to keep a handle on what's going on, or who's who, or who's on what side for what reason. Even the (extremely hurried) relationship was hard to follow or believe in.

This could be a great story if it was expanded out, allowed to breathe, given better explanations. As it is, I'm afraid it's just messy. Even in the excerpt included below...taken from the ARC so it might not read like this in the finished book...the nun is described as 'beside the blackboard' and 'beside his desk' without any intervening movement. It's just confusing. There's a great idea here, but I feel like the book missed a round of edits to really bring it out.

I received an ARC from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

*I remember a boy called Janus disappearing from his bed one night when I was younger, long before I met Joshua and Kestrel. We were all curious about where he'd gone, but not scared, not yet, we were too small for that. No one but me was stupid enough to ask. The nurse who taught us arithmetic was young, and had a*



*kind, open face. I asked her in the middle of the lesson, as she stood beside the blackboard. The room was cold, stone grey.*

*'Where's Janus?'*

*I must have been about four. She looked at me with that and empty eyes, so terrible a look I was scared to meet her gaze. Then she just said, with nothing at all in her voice, 'Who's Janus?'*

*She was standing right next to his empty wooden desk.*

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## **Samantha says**

\*\*\*DNF\*\*\*

I had high hopes for this book the synopsis made it sound so good. But I struggled to get into it. At first I thought it was the first few chapters setting the story up, but after a time it started to bore me. I was confused in places, I couldn't figure out who was speaking. There wasn't much world building and so much going back and forth from past to present made me feel dizzy and it wasn't clearly defined that we had switched one to the other. I'm sorry to say I did not finish this I got about half way through when I put it down and haven't had the desire to pick it up again. This book had so much potential, it just needs more depth of world and character buliding, and it would be amazing!

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## **Jessica Gilmore says**

I was really intrigued by the premise of this book. As a Classics nut who wouldn't want to read about gods and demi gods imprisoned in a strange orphanage making a bid for freedom? So I was suitably thrilled when the Netgalley elves agreed to my request for an e-ARC.

The Orphanage of the Gods starts in the middle of the action. Hero and her self-adopted brother are on the run, the malevolent and deadly Guardsmen on their trail. And that's kind of where my problem with this book lies. It starts out in the middle of the action and stays there, setting off on a breathless sprint full of fights and betrayals and deaths and twists and turns and revelations and the whole time the reader is jogging along yelling at it to slow down a little. Does anyone ever do yoga with Adrienne? In her deep stretch video (highly recommended) she says 'take a load off, already' and that's pretty much what I was saying throughout this book.

Hero and Joshua are hunted because they are demi-gods and gods (more like superheroes than Olympians, with silver blood and powers including accelerated healing). Two generations ago the gods started to be born from mortal women and soon became so violent and capricious that the people turned using the guardsmen (I'm not quite sure if they are human or genetically engineered, it's not clear) to defeat the gods. The oppressed becomes the oppressor, but at no point do any of the gods try and analyse their violent past and wonder how they can overcome it, even when a woman blames Hero for the loss of her small daughter at the hands of the gods many years ago. Why were they so evil so quickly? I have no idea. There's a theme of power corrupting, for gods and humans alike, but it's not resolved or explained in any way and is partly why the Joshua plot is so very unsatisfactory (no spoilers). Hero is a healer and therefore anti violence, and dreams of moving south to a new life although we never find out if gods live in other countries and if so are they persecuted or persecuting. The world building is a little shaky.

Anyway, Hero and Joshua are off to find the third part of their trip, Kestrel, a human girl from their orphanage who sacrificed herself to find them. She and Joshua are madly in love and her capture by the guardsmen starts to warp Joshua whose temper begins to simmer (literally, he has all sorts of fire power gifts) until Hero doesn't know who she can trust.

The book is written in three parts, each narrated in first person present (when, when will this trend end?) the second by Raven and the third by Kestrel. A lot of YA fantasy presents itself as a trilogy, often with a really good first book, a slow second and potentially redeeming third and the reader wonders if it could have just been one book all along. The Orphanage of the Gods is an exception - it would have made a great trilogy, because each part could easily have been drawn out into a full book (there may be more to come, the ending is ambivalent). Because there is so much crammed in, no characters are really fully formed. People are good or they are bad but there is little in between. Secondary characters are (spoiler) disposed of with red shirt Star Trek efficiency, and none of the narrators really stand out, their voices are the same. If each part was a book then all the characters would have had room to grow, to be more well rounded and the reader would understand their motivations, care about their fates and root for them. Instead we watch almost dispassionately as they rush by from crisis to crisis, place to place, betrayal to betrayal, instalove to instalove. So in conclusion, this isn't a bad book, lots of the target audience will adore it and that's great. But if it had slowed down a little, developed the characters more, been more nuanced and worked on the world building then it could have been a really good book.

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### **Alexis Hilgert says**

If I could give this book more than 5 stars, I would, I enjoyed it so very much! It sucked me in from the start, forcing me up long past my bedtime because I just wanted to keep reading...to stay in their story. I don't think I've read a book this long so quickly in a while, lol. The Orphanage of Gods comes out in March 2019 and you need to preorder it now!! I loved it so much that I'll be buying a copy when it comes out so I can have that cover, too!! A MUST READ. Made me feel every emotion from anger, sadness, worry, happiness...and beyond.

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### **Pauline says**

The Orphanage of Gods by Helena Coggan is a fantasy young adult book. All the adult Gods have been killed and now the guards are trying to find their children to dispose of them. Two of these teenagers are on the run and are trying to stay alive. Plenty of action in this book but unfortunately I did not connect with the characters. Thank you to NetGalley and Hodder & Stoughton for my e-copy in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Rachael Mills says**

This was quite enjoyable but there were too many problems to justify rating it above 3 stars. Full review to come.

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### **Ukgardenfiend says**

I tried very hard to read this book as it seemed like a great concept and storyline. However, in my opinion, the actual writing style and complicated plot lines that confused me, made it a difficult read. I abandoned it

about 50% of the way through as I felt it was not worth trying to complete.

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