



A Thousand Perfect Things

Kay Kenyon

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In this epic new work, the award-winning Kenyon creates an alternate 19th century with two warring continents on an alternate earth: the scientific Anglica (England) and magical Bharata (India). Emboldened by her grandfather's final whispered secret of a magical lotus, Tori Harding, a young Victorian woman and aspiring botanist, must journey to Bharata, with its magics, intrigues and ghosts, to claim her fate. There she will face a choice between two suitors and two irreconcilable realms.

In a magic-infused world of silver tigers, demon birds and enduring gods, as a great native mutiny sweeps up the continent, Tori will find the thing she most desires, less perfect than she had hoped and stranger than she could have dreamed.

A Thousand Perfect Things Details

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Author : Kay Kenyon

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From Reader Review A Thousand Perfect Things for online ebook

Joel says

A well written and creative book that never quite grabbed me.

The Speculative Post says

What really drew me to this book is that there isn't a lot of Steampunk (or even pseudo-Steampunk) that deals with the conflict of cultures of 19th century England and India. Perhaps this is because much of these conflicts are missing from the American consciousness: America is very good about only being aware of what America does and ignoring the rest of the world. The United States didn't have colonies in India, so we don't talk about the British Colonization of India. A brief background for those of you who didn't take too many history classes in college (Wait...can you take too many?): the subcontinent of India has a lot of natural resources, ranging from lumber, cotton, and exotic spices (ex: saffron and pepper), gem and precious metal mines, and more. Before the large advances in sailing technology during the Renaissance (1425-1600 A.D.), luxury goods from India reached Europe primarily through the Silk Road trade networks, which was painfully slow and expensive. Sailing technology added shipping trade routes reaching from India (and China), around Africa, and up to Europe. This was faster and less expensive. The Renaissance also saw a huge jump in weapons technology in Europe, and with that many European countries went on a colonization spree. Why pay for things you can effectively steal with a gun? England targeted India with the East India Company, and set up garrisons and trading houses all over the place. This is not similar to the colonization efforts seen in what we now know as the United States, Canada, and Australia. These colonies were for a small group of British (mostly army and merchants) to subjugate the local populace to further British interests, not to settle, work the land, and become little Englands. As you can imagine, the local populace didn't really appreciate being subjugated to foreign rule by a people who didn't see the locals as equals or really much more than savages. But wait! Couldn't India just kick them out? There are a lot more Indians than there are British, right? Except that at the time these colonizations started, India was subdivided among many different royal families, not a single government like it is today. The East India Company conquered some princes, bribed others, and intimidated more. And so a period of roughly 250 years of European vs Indian tensions boiled away.

The core theme of A Thousand Perfect Things is that cross-cultural tension, with Tori Harding, our protagonist, coming to question what her people, the Anglins, are doing in Bharata (India) and whether her people have any moral right to do what they are doing. Mixed in are the ideas of whether science and magic are polar opposites, or actually two different ways to understand the same world. This theme isn't as well explored as the first, but it leads to a lot of conflict for Tori personally. I don't know about you, but themes that deep and heavy make me excited. Don't get me wrong, I love my fluffy sword and sorcery or paranormal romance, but my true love are stories with some heft to them. There's heft here, although Tori doesn't find any good answers or resolution to her conflicts. This book is messy in the way that life is: no good choices, no good answers, and a lot of things that will forever be left unfinished. So if you like clean endings with a happily-ever-after-ribbon tied into a neat bow on the end...this is not for you.

One of the triumphs of Kenyon's characterizations is the fact that the Anglins and Bharati so clearly see each other as separate, and aside from Tori, refuse to interact with each other as much as possible. They lie to each other, take advantage of each other, and purposefully ignore chances to promote cross cultural

understanding. The Anglcs have been given all of 19th Century Britain's less flattering qualities of self-important perceived superiority. They only speak to the Bharati when they must because the Bharati are so obviously unimportant and uncivilized. Even the sepoys who have chosen to work for the Anglcs and participate in Anglic culture will never overcome their unfortunate birth. But of course, the sepoys and other Bharati will always remain loyal to Anglic rule, as the Anglcs are so obviously superior. Needless to say, the Bharati seethe and chafe under this treatment, and don't trust the Anglcs who are so obviously here to take advantage of the Bharati. And who respects someone who doesn't respect you? The characters in both cultures perfectly encapsulate this. Tori moves between the two because she speaks Bharati, is Anglic, and has knowledge of a mystical flower both cultures want to control.

There was one downside to this book for me: it's a little odd. We have England...but not. We have India...but not. Both are still very true to their counterparts in our own history, which played out very nice in terms of worldbuilding. However, the rest of the world is functionally missing, which was strange. There are things that don't match our own world. For example: while it is technically possible to ride an ostrich, it's not something you're going to do for long periods of travel. Ostriches also don't natively appear in India, but in Africa. Which doesn't exist in this alternative world! This bothered me to no end. Horses are more native to India than England, so why do the Anglcs get horses but the Bharati don't? (I may just be odd that such things bother me.) As we start moving toward the climax of the book, the plot hits a number of points where it could go one way...but it doesn't. It even knew it could go that way, but some small pebble in the stream diverted the flow just enough that the plot missed a way for it to resolve. There's also that the magic system here is deliberately left almost totally unexplained. You get the basics of it...and literally nothing else. The Bharati would get upset with Tori for not understanding, and I wanted to shout at them, "But I don't understand, either!"

That being said, this downside was far outweighed by the fact that *A Thousand Perfect Things* is a masterfully written work. Kenyon's prose is beautiful, her worldbuilding fantastic in every sense of the word, her characters fully fleshed out and real, and her willingness to take chances (and make those chances succeed) admirable. This is a relatively small book at 292 pages, but Kenyon covers a lot of miles very well in that time.

For traditional book shoppers, this book has one major flaw: it's not published by a traditional publisher. Premier Digital Publishing specializes in e-books and print on demand. While *A Thousand Perfect Things* is available in trade paperback, it's going to be easier to find online than on the shelf in your local indie store. Happily, the print version is priced competitively at industry standard prices, not the upcharge many small digital publishers charge for print copies, and most local stores are happy to special order books for you.

You can read this review and more at our website,

Jenn Kaufer says

I'm not entirely sure what I was expecting when I read this book, but it certainly isn't what I got. Kenyon's writing was extremely enjoyable -- she is very descriptive, and paints a gorgeous picture for the reader. However, that's about as far as I can praise this book.

While I understand this is meant to be an "alternate history" it seems as if Kenyon used the term in order to get away with her lazy concepts of Anglic (England) and Bharata (India). I found myself constantly rolling my eyes at the stereotypes Kenyon employed as a way to add an exotic flair to the Bharatais. When I think of

alternate histories I think of authors like Harry Turtledove who skillfully balances historical fantasy and historical reality. All in all I honestly feel this is more of a fantasy book than an alternate history tale, and should be marketed as such.

In addition the plot suffers from Kenyon's attempts at providing Tori with romantic interests. Both Jai and Edmond seem aloof suitors at best, and I never was really sold on their romances. It detracted from the story and from Tori's character who is otherwise this really intelligent and brave young woman whose true love is her scientific research. I wish Kenyon would have focused on one genre (either romance or alternate history) rather than providing the reader with a poor blend of both.

Dee says

A little slow to start but well worth the effort. Kay Kenyon has wowed us all again with her vivid world that could have been with a twist! Please take the time to read this lovely tale!

emily says

Review abridged from Plenty of Pages.

I want to start by saying that this book surprised me. I've never read anything by Kay Kenyon before, so when I got the ARC of her newest book I didn't know what to expect, and my reaction was mixed.

Grief does things to you. It's a weird alchemy that takes root in your mind when you lose someone-- some features of your life become less important, or perhaps only seem to do so as you become listless or depressed or angry. But the opposite can also happen, a calcifying of thought and focus into a diamond-edged intent that takes no prisoners. This is what happens to protagonist Tori in the wake of her beloved grandfather's death: the dross of her life seems to melt away, leaving her with only the truly important things. She's determined never to let herself be trapped into marriage, and she vows she will find the mythical golden lotus, the magical holy flower her grandfather had come so close to finding on his travels abroad many years before.

So I was having feels, as they say, which was half of what kept me reading. The worldbuilding was the other half-- it's strange and whimsical and a tiny bit problematic, all of which made me instantly curious to see where it would go. While this novel reads like many other British Victorian travelogues, A Thousand Perfect Things takes place in an alternate universe with two continents: Anglica, the colonizer, the fantasy Great Britain where science rules all and logic prevails; and Bharata, the colonized, the India allegory where magic and mysticism still hold sway, where ghosts and monsters are as real as lions, tigers and bears. Tori is in some ways a typical quirky heroine-- in a Victorian society, a brainy woman in love with botany (and born with a club foot to visibly mark her as an outsider just in case her intellectual pursuits left any doubts) and in love with her grandfather's idea that science and magic could be studied, not as two opposing disciplines, but side by side in a composite way of understanding the universe. I wondered if she would be predictable, or if the cautious sympathy I felt for her through the first few chapters would remain. Happily, it did.

Now, I'm not saying that Tori is the most original heroine ever, but she's familiar in a comfortable way, and Kenyon mostly sticks to following Tori's emotional journey in her storytelling, pursuing what she sees as the

fulfillment of her grandfather's legacy. But following that path also allows Kenyon to talk about the legacy of racism and cultural appropriation in Bharata. Through Tori being forced to confront the fact that Sir Charles stole the lotus petal from its home in Bharata, and the repercussions that action had on the people who had viewed it as sacred, I couldn't help mulling over the concept of cultural theft and privilege. I thought about *The King and I* and its more realistic and savvy movie counterpart *Anna and the King*. I thought about *Midnight's Children* and that blog post on xoJane where the comments blew up over who's allowed to wear bindis. It was weird-- not what I'd expected from a book that looked quite innocent of agenda on the outside.

There's a lot of murky territory in here-- the narrative itself is a good adventure with a lot of food for thought, but in the end what's the message? Tori's foot gets healed by magic and she becomes a mystical "chosen one" when she decides to stay in Bharata-- what does that say about physical disability and heroism, and why isn't the chosen one of Bharata someone who was born in Bharata? And ultimately none of the Bharati were characterized with the same depth and texture as Tori (though if I'm honest, most of the secondary characters were less than vivid) leaving me to wonder why this story was told from the point of view of a white girl. I understand that the thrust of the story, the culmination of that emotional journey, is Tori finding a place where she feels like she belongs, a place she feels safe. It's okay that Bharata is that for her, I just would've appreciated a more nuanced portrayal of how she got there.

On the other hand, I'm always swayed by good writing, and a big part of what made me like this book was Kenyon's language. She writes Tori's voice with that cool ethereal tone I associate with *Jane Eyre* and her contemporaries, noticing every detail of the world around her and her experiences in it, painting a beautiful picture that's just a little bit remote. And in the end I liked Tori herself a lot. She was real and strong and interesting, and vivid enough to carry the entire book, even in spite of the other critiques I have.

This is a book about giving up expectations, and about legacy. A legacy can be physical or intangible, a small object or a big idea, and *A Thousand Perfect Things* deals intimately with both. It was a fun read, and gave me a lot to think about. I'd recommend it with the caveat that if race and cultural appropriation are issues you care about, you might find the book somewhat troubling. But it is a beautiful story, beautifully told. There's something to be said about reading a book that shocks you by speaking to the hard, painful thing you're going through, just when you need to feel like you aren't going through it alone, and if for no other reason than that, I'll always remember *A Thousand Perfect Things* with fondness.

Stacey says

e-Arc provided by NetGalley.

In an alternate world where a familiar nineteenth-century England (Anglica) builds a sea-spanning Bridge that makes crossing the kraken-filled waters to a recognizable India (Bharata) safer and more expedient, young Astoria (called Tori) is determined to find the Golden Lotus, a mythical flower that her grandfather discovered in Nanpura, across the Bridge. She is club-footed and scholarly, having spent her time with her grandfather, a student of the natural world. Nanpura, a province in Bharata, is the home of Mahindra, a Bharatan sorcerer who is also determined to find the Golden Lotus - for his own purposes. He harbors hatred for the Anglicans, who have conquered his homeland and imposed their own culture over his. He orchestrates Tori's arrival and subsequent search by arranging for her father to be posted in Nanpura, and to take his family with him. Unknown to Tori and Mahindra, the Anglican government also plans to use Tori to find the mythical flower - in order to further subjugate the Bharatans. And the plot thickens.

Tori, young Captain Muir-Smith, the younger prince of Nanpura, Mahindra, an old gardener who knew Tori's grandfather, and an officer with the intelligence services, all play a role in the story and narrate the plot at different times. Bharata is almost a secondary character, with lavish descriptions of the jungle, of its people, its spirits, and its society.

At times the characters felt a little flat slash uneven - for example, for the entire first half of the novel, Captain Muir-Smith is a one-dimensional Hero. In the latter half, he gains a bit of depth and character. Tori and Mahindra experience dramatic changes in outlook as they learn from each other. As Tori moves in and begins to understand Nanpura, she discovers that the Anglican perspective is and has been harmful to Bharatans, and that she has behaved in the same way. She is also interesting for her unconventional outlook and her bravery.

Tori is really a vehicle for the real story - about two lands and two cultures that clash in the name of "Progress," when Bharata is invited by Anglicans. This tale of colonialism at its worst is also a tale of conflict between magic and science. In Anglican society, science rules, while Bharatan society revolves around magic and spirituality. It is also a tale of independence, as Bharatans struggle to remove the Anglicans from their homes, and as Tori searches for the Golden Lotus and for independence from the restrictive Anglican society that will neither let her be a scholar, nor fully accept her, since her foot is deformed.

The world-building was really a highlight in this novel. The magical India introduced here provides a mystical, lush, and dangerous background for the interpersonal and intersocietal conflict that drives the plot. Magical practices conform to implied rules, making it believable.

At times the plot was thin, and seemed disconnected. So many threads and narrators, loosely woven together, made it difficult to follow the pattern. By the end of the novel, I was unsure why some elements had been introduced, and how others fit into the larger plot. At the end, there is sort of a rash of happenings that drag the tone of the novel into the "dark" category, which was definitely a surprise, given the way it started. Yet, the resolution of Tori's story suits her character and development, and I found that resolution satisfying. Overall, this was an enjoyable read, and I will check out other works by this author. Recommended for fans of alternate Victorian history and magical fantasy.

See my blog for a read-alike.

Bryan Schmidt says

World building and characterization are top notch. The setting jumps to life off the page. Astoria Harding is a compelling lead and she captures you so much for the first 2/3rds of this, that you can't put it down. But when her emotional arc peaks, it seems the book does too. I found the ending to feel like an overly long denouement, even though a lot happens. It just felt anticlimactic to some stuff which came before. That's my only complaint about an otherwise exceptional read.

Kara-karina says

4.5/5

I couldn't help it, guys, I loved this book! It was a little bit strange, atmospheric and at times really beautiful. A bit like *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins?

A Thousand Perfect Things was a curious mix of genres, a little bit of new-Victorian alternative historical fiction with a dash of fantasy, maybe? Whatever it was, if you enjoyed *A Natural History of Dragons* by Marie Brennan and *Pantomime* by Laura Lam, this has a slightly similar feel to it.

What really charmed me is this lush, exotic, full of spice and rich with history and tradition Bharata. Bharata is of course just another name for India, which sluggishly confronts a more upbeat, morally rigid and technologically advanced Anglica (England) with the help of its mysterious powerful magic and religious superstition.

Tori Harding is a young naturalist and adventurous explorer, who is dying to make a name for herself to be admitted in the elite and purely male circle of scientists of Anglica. For this she would have to find a legendary Golden Lotus, which is supposed to gift knowledge to anyone who would touch it.

The gist of this rich and wonderful book is Tori's transformation. Bharata changes her among constant political intrigues, riots, spiritual journeys, sorcery and a lot of violence. Tori starts by selfishly looking for something that belongs to Bharati, and while she is thrown into a deep end of the pond and forced to sink or swim, she frees herself from physical and mental boundaries, and this is why I truly liked this book.

There are secondary stories of Captain Muir-Smith, his sister Elizabeth and of course an ill but mysterious Bharati prince Jai, but they guide and support Tori. Even her feelings for Muir-Smith and her entanglement with Jai leads to it.

I just... *sigh* ...don't want to get into details, but let's just say, this book charmed me in a sly, eccentric and quiet way, and that's why I wholly recommend it to you.

Lauren Scharhag says

Review can also be found on: <http://urbanfantasyland.net/>

“... should a thousand perfect things ever be found, the world would end. Therefore to preserve the world, Rama declared that every manifested thing should have a flaw.”

Such is the crux of *A Thousand Perfect Things*, the latest novel by award-winning sci-fi/fantasy author Kay Kenyon—a sweet irony, since Kenyon has brought us a flawless work. Rich, complex and sweeping in scope, it takes place across two continents and features acts of war, magic, tenderness and revelation.

Chiefly a work of speculative fiction, this is also a study of postcolonialist themes. Kenyon presents a re-imagining of the mid-19th century where only two continents exist: Anglica (England) and Bharata (India). For years, Anglica has imposed western culture on mystical Bharata. That means having the Anglic language, schooling system, Christianity and rationalism imposed upon them, pushing out their native culture. Meanwhile, the Anglics are ruthlessly mining Bharata of its abundant resources. Resentment is already strong among the oppressed people of Bharata. When the Anglics install a bridge thousands of miles long across the sea to link their two continents together, tensions reach the boiling point. The Bharatis launch a series of terrorist attacks against Anglica.

The book opens with just such an attack. Here's where the fantastic comes in—the terrorist attack by the Bharati priests is to magic a bunch of metal lion sculptures into attacking a bunch of Anglican citizens from half a world away. Pretty neat trick, and a mere sample of the Bharati priests' power. The Anglics scoff at the magic of the Bharatis, falling back on the explanation that the Bharati magic is unchristian—unfortunately for the Anglics, that don't make it any less real.

Against this backdrop, we are introduced to a young woman named Astoria Harding. Tori, as she is affectionately called, is in her early 20s, and regards herself as a hideous cripple because she has a club foot. Girls who grew up liking bright, no-nonsense and talented heroines like Jo March, Hermione Granger and even Lisa Simpson should appreciate Tori. Ever since Tori was a little girl, she has assisted her grandfather, Sir Charles, celebrated botanist and a member of the scientific Royal Society, in his greenhouse. Once, Sir Charles traveled to Bharata and brought back a single petal from the mythical nelumbo aureus, a golden lotus of untold power. A single petal does not convince his peers that the flower exists, and Sir Charles is dismissed as a crackpot.

Tori's dream is to follow in Grandpapa's footsteps, to become a great botanist, to be the first woman admitted to the scientific Royal Society. But above all, she wants to prove the golden lotus exists and restore her grandfather's reputation. After her grandfather dies, she sets out on a perilous journey to Bharata to find the lotus.

Meanwhile, a mysterious agent of the Anglic government has also been dispatched in search of the lotus, and the people of Bharata would keep such a treasure secret from the white interlopers.

For me, Kenyon does everything that I think a good author is supposed to do. This book is beautifully written, thrillingly original. The characters are fully developed and three-dimensional. I found the pacing unhurried and deliberate, giving the reader ample time to explore the two factions, east vs. west, mysticism vs. science, though some may find it a bit slow.

Everyone in the tale has ambitions, and you know what they say—the road to hell is paved with good intentions. There is Tori's desire to complete her grandfather's work. Her sister, Jessa, is in search of a husband and has set her sights upon Captain Edmond Muir-Smith, who, incidentally, is in love with Tori. Muir-Smith has been dispatched to Bharata to help quell the brewing rebellion. Edmond's cousin, Elizabeth, travels to Bharata to open a school, to save those poor backwards coolies from ignorance and lack of hygiene.

In Bharata, the priest Mahindra serves the rana, Prince Uttam, and leads the magical attacks upon the Anglic people. Mahindra dreams of a Bharata free from Anglic rule, as well as all the provinces of Bharata united under a single ruler. The rana has two sons, the ruthless Sahaj, always accompanied by two white tigers, who wishes to ascend the throne sooner rather than later; and Jai, considered the unmanly son because he is afflicted with hemophilia.

No one achieves what they set out to achieve—or, at least, they get very different results than they had anticipated. Our flaws exist to keep us firmly rooted in the here and now, and sometimes, it's difficult to tell just what is our strength and what is our weakness. Had it not been for Tori's club foot, she might have been like Jessa, interested only in catching a husband. Had it not been for Jai's hemophilia, he might have been the one to develop a cruel nature. Furthermore, it is our flaws that teach us to strive at all for something better, and in depicting this, Kenyon's work achieves a sort of allegorical power.

Kurt Springs says

In an alternate world, with an equivalent of the British Empire in India, Kay Kenyon has spun a tail of science and magic. Astoria (Tori) Harding is a woman wishing to be a scientist in a world mimicking 19th Century England, where women are rarely allowed to become scientists. She travels to the Indian realm to find the Golden Lotus and finds a world of intrigue, suspicion, and hatred.

Kay Kenyon has woven a fascinating, magical tale of choices and consequences

Rivalie (Le Petit Photograph) says

I received a copy from Edelweiss for review. All opinions are 100% my own.

Initial Review:

This book is all different types of confusing and fascinating all rolled into one. The story definitely dragged on more than I expected and there were multiple moments where the plot could have just ended but it kept going.

Full Review:

This book was both frustrating and amazing. I talked about how I struggled so much with coming up for a rating for this book in my January Wrap-Up and I avoided writing this review for that reason. When I was reading this book, it felt like the story just dragged on for ages. The plotline is definitely something that takes time to build and before you know it you're completely hooked. The best way for me to describe this is a book with relatively slow writing but a handful of jaw dropping moments that I was not expecting.

As far as characters go, they took some time to get used to. I was just unprepared for the sheer amount of spies and interconnecting plots of politics that occurred so that became a bit confusing. After almost a month of brooding on this book, I still can't say if I love Tori. You learn to admire her drive and curiosity for Bharta but other than that I didn't really connect with her on a deeper level. Jai on the other hand, is hands down my favorite character in the entire book and has definitely made it to my list of book boyfriends for 2016. He's well learned, compassionate, and overall an amazing person.

Unfortunately, this book does contain some sort of a love triangle but it doesn't overpower the storyline which I definitely appreciated. Edmund is a well known captain and originally started off as a suitor for Tori's younger sister, but he became drawn to Tori's passion. I do like the separately as characters, but I'm definitely on Jai's side when it comes to this triangle.

Moving away from characters, I absolutely adored the world. Kay Kenyon has this way of writing that just grabs your attention. I loved the two countries of Anglica and Bharta because they are just so different and it allows you to see how magical Bharta is. Anglica has more of a rigid society while Bharta just overflows with magic and colors. Needless to say, while Bharta definitely seems like the more dangerous of the two, I would choose to visit there over Anglica in a heartbeat.

The writing is probably the only dragging factor in the story, but once you get into the story it just keeps you

interested for the whole ride. I distinctly remember the 65% marking on my Kindle as being one of the most heartbreakingly beautiful scenes ever and I have no doubt it's going to stay with me. This book just has that magical impact that makes it so incredible and mind-blowing.

Read my reviews at:
<http://extreemeobsessed.blogspot.com/>

Henry Lazarus says

Kay Kenyon borrows from the Sepoy rebellion and of a young Victorian woman who discovers *A Thousand Perfect Things* (trade from Premier Digital Publishing). There are only two continents in this world, England and India and England has built a thousand mile bridge between them. Astoria's Grandfather was a famous explorer who brought back a cutting from a golden Lutus that he and Antonia think will allow the scientific society to consider working the white Magic of India. Her grandfather dies and her parents destroy the manuscript he and Tori were working on. Tori considers herself unmarriageable because of her club foot. Then a series of events including magical attack on England sends Tori across the long bridge to India and the very Provence where the Golden Lotus is hidden. She doesn't know she is being manipulated by the Rajah and his magical advisor. But there's a spirit helping her and her new lover, the rajah's son who has hemophilia. Then the Raja's other son kills his father and sends India to war. The Golden Lotus cures her lover, but nothing goes according to plan and Tori is caught between what she feels her duty to India and her duty to her native country. This is an intense tale about the plight of women in the nineteenth century and conflict between science and magic. It's fun and absorbing.

Review printed in the Philadelphia Weekly Press

Brendan Mancilla says

When a novel like **A Thousand Perfect Things** comes along, it behooves readers to stop and take notice. Kay Kenyon's self-described first foray into fantasy isn't simply an alternate-world take on Anglo-Indian relations, it's a literary triumph that stands upon a dozen universal themes to reach its obscenely successful heights.

At the heart of this book is the theme of duality, explored in the dichotomies of magic and science, white and brown, good and evil. The novel's central protagonist, Astoria Harding is the apprentice to the age's most accomplished botanist—who also happens to be her grandfather. When he dies of an unexpected sickness, Astoria and her family leave their homeland country of Anglica and take up residence in the spiritual and untamed country of Bharata.

Bharata seethes under the yolk of Anglican oppression, and despises the marvel that is the Bridge that connects the two countries. Astoria seeks the legendary golden lotus in hopes of joining the ranks of famed scientist but her journey leads her into the arms of mutiny—both internal and external.

Kenyon is victorious in establishing a world that, while somewhat familiar to our own, is different enough that we readers remain entranced. Astoria's exploration of many challenging questions—who am I? What am I meant to be? Can I change my fate?—leads to as many challenging answers.

This is a novel that celebrates the many; and not the few. It venerates the notion that there are many paths through life and that anyone seeking only one is doomed to fail.

It is my recommendation to anyone seeking quality, fascinating, and transformative literature that this book land at the very top of your list. **A Thousand Perfect Things** is a novel whose ending is one of sweet sorrow—we are saddened to part, but glad for the dalliance.

Patrick St-Denis says

If you have been hanging around these parts for a while, then you know that I'm a big fan of Kay Kenyon's The Entire and the Rose science fiction series. If you haven't given Bright of the Sky, A World Too Near, City Without End, and Prince of Storms a shot yet, you need to put them on your wishlist ASAP!

Hence, when the author's new publisher got in touch with me to inquire whether or not I'd be willing to read and review *A Thousand Perfect Things*, of course I agreed! I was curious to see if Kenyon could somehow imbue a stand-alone work with as much magic and wonder as her latest series.

Here's the blurb:

Kay Kenyon's *The Empire and the Rose* was hailed as "a star-maker", "a magnificent book", "audacious", and "the most ambitious science fiction epic of the current decade", garnering starred reviews and comparisons to Larry Niven and Stephen R. Donaldson.

In this epic new work, the award-winning Kenyon creates an alternate 19th century; two continents on an alternate earth: scientific *Anglica* (England) and magical *Bharata* (India.)

To claim the powers of the legendary golden lotus, Tori Harding, a Victorian woman, must journey to *Bharata*, with its magics, intrigues and ghosts, to claim her fate, and face a choice between two suitors and two irreconcilable realms.

It is 1857. After millennia of seafaring, and harried by the kraken of the deep, in a monumental feat of engineering *Anglica* has built a stupendous bridge to *Bharata*. *Bharata*'s magical powers are despised as superstition, but its diamonds and cotton are eagerly exploited by *Anglic* colonials. Seething with unrest over its subjugation, *Bharata* strikes back with bloody acts of magical terrorism.

Despite these savage attacks, young Tori Harding yearns to know if *Bharata*'s magics may also be a path to scientific discovery. Tori's parents hold little hope for her future because she has a club foot. Therefore they indulge her wish to have instruction in science from her famous botanist grandfather, even though, as a woman she will be denied a career in science by the male-dominated scientific societies. Though courted by a friend of the family, Captain Edmond Muir-Smith, Tori has taken to heart her grandfather's warning not to exchange science for "married slavery."

Emboldened by her grandfather's final whispered secret of a magical lotus, Tori crosses the great bridge with her father's regiment and Captain Muir-Smith. In *Bharata* she encounters her grandfather's old ally, the Rana of Kathore, his rival sons, and the ancient museum of Gangadhar, fallen to ruin and patrolled by ghosts.

In pursuit of the golden lotus, Tori finds herself in a magic-infused world of silver tigers, demon birds and

the enduring gods of Bharata. As a great native mutiny sweeps up the Rana's household, her father's regiment and the entire continent of Bharata--Tori will find the thing she most desires, less perfect than she had hoped, and stranger than she could have dreamed.

The worldbuilding is, sadly, a bit generic. The alternate history versions of 19th century England and India are somewhat *déjà vu* and don't capture the imagination the way various locales and concepts did in *The Entire and the Rose*. That was a disappointment, for the inventive worldbuilding was definitely one of the most captivating aspects of the series. I believe that the strictures inherent to the writing of a stand-alone novel precluded the sort of depth that made *The Entire and the Rose* so special. Mind you, I'm not saying that there is no depth to *A Thousand Perfect Things*. Far from it. It's just that the limited page count appears to have prevented Kay Kenyon from opening up and from writing a more sprawling and evocative narrative. As a result, the themes and the concepts often feel quite underdeveloped, which in turn robs many of them of the anticipated sense of magic and wonder we have come to expect from the author.

The characterization also leaves a little to be desired. For some reason, I was unable to connect with any of the protagonists. Which, understandably, made it a bit difficult to maintain interest throughout the book. Tori Harding feels more than a little clichéd, although I must admit that Kenyon has a few surprises up her sleeve where her main character is concerned. In Bharata, Jai, Mahindra, and Dusal are interesting in their own ways, yet they fail to truly convey all the magic and intrigue of the exotic continent and its people. And even when the POV is that of one the characters witnessing the brewing mutiny in Bharata, somehow Kenyon didn't manage to make any of them, on both sides of the conflict, particularly engaging.

The pace is also an issue from time to time. Too slow in certain portions of the novel, while rushed in others. The culmination of the storylines dealing with the search for the mysterious lotus flower is decidedly anticlimactic and subsequently sort of kills the rest of the tale. The resolution takes too much time to transpire, and both the build-up and the ending fail to cap off the book with the sort of aplomb needed to bring everything to a satisfying ending.

The underlying themes of sexism and the emancipation of women were not explored with enough depth to truly flesh out Tori, something that would have added another dimension to this work. In addition, the often heavy-handed anti-colonialism/anti-imperialism spiel can be irritating. Had it been woven seamlessly within the tale itself, it would likely have worked much better in the greater scheme of things. All in all, *A Thousand Perfect Things* is a good read, but nowhere near as fun and fascinating as the four volumes which comprise *The Entire and the Rose*.

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Dee says

I read this book on my Kindle app in late-night-can't-sleep snatches over a three week period. I kept forgetting the characters, but the way I read the book might have a lot to do with that. I never found myself thinking about the story the next day, but there again—late night snatches. Still, if I'd have enjoyed it more it wouldn't have taken me so long to get through it. I did think it was imaginative but it just never really grabbed me. To be fair, I probably should have read it in book format during daylight. But I didn't.
