



Truthwitch

Susan Dennard

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On a continent ruled by three empires, some are born with a “witchery”, a magical skill that sets them apart from others.

In the Witchlands, there are almost as many types of magic as there are ways to get in trouble—as two desperate young women know all too well.

Safiya is a Truthwitch, able to discern truth from lie. It’s a powerful magic that many would kill to have on their side, especially amongst the nobility to which Safi was born. So Safi must keep her gift hidden, lest she be used as a pawn in the struggle between empires.

Iseult, a Threadwitch, can see the invisible ties that bind and entangle the lives around her—but she cannot see the bonds that touch her own heart. Her unlikely friendship with Safi has taken her from life as an outcast into one of reckless adventure, where she is a cool, wary balance to Safi’s hotheaded impulsiveness.

Safi and Iseult just want to be free to live their own lives, but war is coming to the Witchlands. With the help of the cunning Prince Merik (a Windwitch and ship’s captain) and the hindrance of a Bloodwitch bent on revenge, the friends must fight emperors, princes, and mercenaries alike, who will stop at nothing to get their hands on a Truthwitch.

Length: 14 hrs and 41 mins

Truthwitch Details

Date : Published January 5th 2016 by Tor Teen

ISBN :

Author : Susan Dennard

Format : Kindle Edition 497 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Magic

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From Reader Review Truthwitch for online ebook

Bookdragon Sean says

No, just no!

This is easily one of the worse fantasy books I've ever read. It does everything so badly; it literally embodies everything that can go wrong with the genre. Firstly, the plot is basic at best. The protagonists are being hunted, that is all. Secondly, the world is barely explained; there is no sense of history or the possibility that this world could have existed before the events of this book. Thirdly, the romance is a crappy case of love at first sight. Personally, I think it should have been excluded in its entirety and the focus been on the friendship between the two girls. It was woefully underplayed; it was a case of the girls claiming to be attached to each other, but never really portraying any realistic behaviour to suggest it. I don't think it worked at all. It could quite easily have done so, but somehow I just didn't feel the sense of attachment; it didn't come across in the story.

I gave up half way through. So here's some more detail as to why this book **ABSOLUTELY** sucked:

1. Action over plot

I love a good chase scene, but in this there is scene after scene of the protagonists being chased by their enemies. Every time they enter a new location, they flee from it. Yes, they are being hunted, but it began to get a little ridiculous. It wasn't just the Bloodwitch they were fleeing from. Iseult returns home after departing six years previously, ten pages later she is chased off by an angry mob. The chapter before she ran out of the city after being exposed by another mob. Meanwhile, Safiya is abducted from a ball in which, you guessed it, another chase begins. So, not only do we have multiple chase scenes, but we also have them happening simultaneously and back to back. I mean, seriously? Where is the pacing? Where is the character development? Where is the chance to understand this world or even see it? So, that leads us on to my next point.

2. No world building

Where the hell is this place? I have no idea about the scale of this world. The first part occurs in a city. That's about all I know. Is it a big city? Is it a capital city? Where does it stand in relation to the rest of the world? I've already mentioned that Iseult goes back home after a six year separation. Her people are hated, and are frequent targets of racist attacks. They are literally hung on sight. Yet, for all this hatred, their settlement appears just to be outside the city boundaries. I mean, it couldn't be far away. Iseult gets there and back within the course of a day. That felt like a bit of a plot whole along with the weird fact that the she's never been attacked before in other parts of the city just seemed like a major oversight. And why are they the victims of racism anyway? That was never even mentioned in the first half. I mean, I need to know these things very early on if I'm going to carry on reading.

We also have an Emperor, but an Emperor of what? The title implies dominion over many lands. I don't know if he is merely in charge of the city or the entire Witchlands, whatever the hell they are. I wonder if they're next door to the Wizardlands or perhaps even the Warlock Empire. The name's terrible, but that's not overly important. What matters is that I have literally no idea about this place. Was the Emperor elected? Did he receive his title at birth? Is he a tyrant or a benevolent ruler? The only thing the author has bothered to tell us is that he has sweaty hands, sweaty hands! Great, so what does he actually rule?

There's a vague magic system. Its functions are graspable but the details aren't. Is everyone born a witch? Does everyone have a special magical power? Has this always been so? Are there other magical gifts? There is no sense of history to it or any attempt of defining it. There is just cheap action layered upon cheap action. Fantasy needs to be more than this; it needs to more than people kicking ass, engaging in sarcastic dialogue, kicking more ass and looking perfect. I really could go on, this book was terrible. And there's only one thing that could make it even worse.

3. A Redundant Romance

It's easy to criticise a book for having a predictable romance, though a child reader could spot this coming a mile off. It just seems to fall into the standard love trap. Safiya dances with a prince. They immediately fall in love. Oh, what a surprise! The love they share is apparently as powerful as the wind. Well, it's as instantaneous as the wind. I think it was so, so, silly, and was the ruination of this story. The focus should have resided on the strong female friendship the author was attempting to portray. There needn't have been a romance to complicate things and allow the book to fall into the most standard of plotlines.

This was just so unbelievably bad. But, even when I hate a book I can clearly see that sometimes the book is still, from an objective point of view, well written. I just personally, and subjectively, dislike it. It's just a matter of opinion. That's what reading is all about. However, with this I felt that it was bad on both levels. It's a complete shambles in terms of character, plot and its world. And I detest it because of it. It's drivel. I honestly think my cat could write a better book.

Do I need to say that I won't be reading the sequel? No. I think not.

C.G. Drews says

I honestly feel like this book **used a lot of words and said basically nothing at all**. AGH. Maybe I'm an epic fantasy snob, but I like my epic fantasy to have a) world-building, b) engaging characters, and c) and interesting plot. **Truthwitch failed at all of these and I'm so frustrated. ARGH.**

I'm also 100% confused why it's so hyped. I feel like this book was slapped in my face MONTHS before release. I couldn't even go on twitter without seeing *so much Truthwitch promos*. And why? What did this book even HAVE to stand out from other epic fantasies? Nada. **It was basically Throne of Glass meets Shadow and Bone**. Literally. the. same.

ALL THE REASONS I AM MONSTROUSLY ANNOYED AT THIS BOOK:

- Let's start off with the biggest problem: **it was hella confusing**. Most fantasies do take a bit to get into, because you have to get used to the world. BUT I NEVER GOT USED TO IT. **It feels like a sequel**. Nothing is explained. There's no history to the world. There are no rules. There's this war looming imminently but a) why, b) who's fighting who, c) why the heck are they fighting after all this peace...just because "contract" ran out so oh-ho now they've got to fight again? NONE OF THIS MAKES SENSE.

breaks a plate

- **It uses lots of complicated words and names to make up for the fact there's no world building**. Having a ton of specialised cursewords and renaming the deities does NOT equal world building.

- **And even when it *tried* to explain stuff, it still didn't make sense.** For instance:

Though no one knew what made a person cleave, Iseult had read theories that linked the corruption to the five Origin Wells spread across the Witchlands. Each Well was linked to one of the five elements: Aether, Earth, Water, Wind, or Fire. Though people spoke of a Void element -- and of Voidwitches like that Bloodwitch -- there was no record of an actual Void Well.

Hmmm....sooooo. Basically wha you're saying is: **NOBODY UNDERSTANDS THIS WORLD. NOT EVEN THE CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK.** (That's on pg 55 in the paperback. By *that point* I should be understanding the lingo.

- And I'll point out how **entirely cliché it is to use a magic system built on the elements.** Let me point out 294829 other books that do this. UGH, PEOPLES.

- Which I have to follow up with a MILLION questions, because this **"Magic System" was never full developed.** Like how does one become a witch? Is everyone a witch? Is it hereditary?

- Okay but back to the actual *story*....**Which is basically just Safi (the Special Snowflake) being chased around because everyone wants her.** That's it. That's the plot. She wants to have a nice HOUSE. But nooooo, she's a Truthwitch and the only one of her kind. So everyone wants her for political reasons. FYI, I would want an actually useful witch if I was an Evil Ruler, or whatever. Like a witch that could blow things up or control the air (the airwitches can cut off people's breath!).

- And for *being* a special snowflake...**Safi didn't even do that much with her witchly powers!** She just...was. Also I found Safi herself rather irritating. She's the typical, headstrong and blazoned heroine who makes bad decisions and never listens to advice. (She is Celaena Sardothien, basically.)

- Also I kept hearing how this book featured a strong female friendship. A BIG reason I wanted to read it! (Seriously why aren't there more female friendship books out there?) **BUT WHERE WAS IT???** Sure Safi and Isuelt are BFFs and "threadsisters" (which I think means they saved each other's lives so now they're buddies forever?)...but they really don't *do* very much or seem powerfully connected. Iseult spends most of the book being wounded or sick or trapped or blah blah. Safi handled things just fine without her? Where is this intense connection?

- (Or am I just an unfeeling grape? THAT COULD BE TRUE TOO. I ADMIT.)

- **Also it suffered from "Let's Have Every Character Narrate The Story!" syndrome.** I hate this because it's unnecessary and I *hate* the unnecessary. We do NOT need to know what's going on in everyone's minds. And I find soooo many YA epic fantasies insist on doing this! NO. STAHF. Mostly we have Safi and Isuelt's (I'm aware I spell her name different every time...idek, dudes) POVs. But then we add in **Prince Merrick** and oh that **Bloodwitch named Aedon**. I think the only reason you need multiple POVs is when storylines aren't crossing. This book could've been FINE with just Safi and Aedon's...possibly Merrick's, but really. No.

- **Plus the evil Bloodwitch was my favourite character.** Despite me having ZERO clue why he was the bad side. I *think* he was being paid to hunt and kill? Hmm. Whatever. I just liked him because he had epic dastardly powers and didn't stand around prattling. NOT that he was very good at killing two teenage girls either...Wait. Maybe I don't even like Aedon very much. (Also he's like a few letters off Aedon from

Throne of Glass. I know these authors are BFFs, but still?????)

- **The romance was equally baffling.** Although I do like the hate/love thing going on between Merrick and Safi, so I SHAN'T COMPLAIN TOO MUCH. I just didn't understand *why* they were attracted to each other particularly? But I *am* rooting for them to get together probably.

- **Plus I was just really bored.** There was action! action! action! but little plot and like a tiny scraping of humour (*cries* I love humour whyyyyyy isn't it here) and just people fighting all the time to achieve...I DON'T KNOW. **I wanted character development but I found none.**

...**Woah, Cait! So much negativity!** I mean, okay I didn't like this book. But **I was disappointed by what it could've been, mostly.** It wasn't particularly witchy (they were just elemental magic people) and the female friendship I'd hoped for was underwhelming. It suffered HUGELY from the Special Snowflake syndrome. And I honestly was so so so soooooo confused.

But good parts? I did like some of the dialogue and I'm a sucker for stoic princes with good intentions. And I liked how big the world seemed to be (although it wasn't really explored). Basically my imagination perked up it's ears. SO YEAH. That is a good thing. Plus it has a map. <3333

I'm definitely a black sheep for this one folks! Sadness. But I'll go back to reading fantasies like The Demon King and The Impostor Queen and The Wrath and the Dawn....which made SENSE. And also didn't seem like they were trying so desperately hard.

Sarah Maas says

Make room on your all-time favorites shelf: TRUTHWITCH is an instant new classic.

It reminded me of why I started reading fantasy in the first place: its fierce and vibrant world, richly-drawn characters, and dazzling intrigue harkens to the best of Megan Whalen Turner, Robin Hobb, and Jacqueline Carey. And while it pays homage to the epic fantasies that have come before it, it also lays the foundation for a bright new chapter in the genre.

I haven't been so enthralled and inspired by a book since I first read Lloyd Alexander's THE BOOK OF THREE. Do not miss out!

Maureen says

I really really REALLY LOVED THIS BOOK. It's probably the first very very hyped book that has gone so far above and beyond my expectations that I can't even DEAL (six of crows is another but this went EVEN ABOVE THAT FOR ME)

I loved all the characters, their relationships, the plot the world building, the magic system, EVERYTHING so much.

It took a little bit for me to get into this (130 pages-ish) but once that mark hit, I was super into it. As my friend Paige said (and so described my feelings entirely...) I didn't realize how invested I was until that point. I didn't realize I loved the characters but then **THINGS GOT CRAY AND IT GOT EVEN BETTER.**

There's so much to love here - a focus on friendships, wonderfully lovable characters, a really interesting magic system (that I wished there had been even more of!), a great plot with fabulous setup for the next books, and a really interesting world.

Time to **IMMEDIATELY** reread this book.

Taneika says

1.5 stars

I haven't felt this let down by a book in a very, very long time. At first, I put this down at about 60 pages because I thought I wasn't in the right frame of mind for it (or something to that extent), however as it turns out, this book was just not for me at all. I really wanted to love this and tried so hard to enjoy it but I just couldn't.

This book was **EVERYWHERE**. I couldn't go on Twitter, Youtube or freaking Instagram without seeing some mention of Truthwitch. **THE BOOK WAS HYPED. I WAS HYPED. I WAS LET DOWN.**

I have many problems with Truthwitch, the major one being the lack of worldbuilding. "But it's fantasy, how can a high fantasy not have worldbuilding?". Exactly. The only reason this felt like a high fantasy was because of the complicated words and names. Like okay, we get this really cool premise with witches and different empires at war with each other and stuff but the execution was so bad. There is just no explanation for anything, just mere mentions. We're told there are different types of witches and we get vague descriptions of what they can do, but where do they come from? Is it genetic? Is **EVERYBODY** a witch? How do witches learn to control their powers? Do they even need to control them at all? Also. Why the fuck is there a war looming just because a treaty runs out?
IT SEEMS LIKE NOBODY IN THIS BOOK WANTS TO GO TO WAR YET EVERYBODY INSISTS A WAR IS GOING TO HAPPEN.

Some guy: "Oh, the 20 year treaty is almost up, what should we do about it"

Some other guy: "Well we don't want to go to war but other countries will want to, so we'll have to go to war"

Some guy: "Okay, while it's probs bad to assume this, lets just roll with it lol"

Seriously...

Oh yeah, so there is an attempt at world-building. Terminology is thrown at you, while simultaneously failing to actually explain anything and you're expected to understand.

We're told of the Cahr Awen and it's only vaguely described toward the end of the novel (view spoiler). Something called Cleaving is also mentioned, and there is an actual attempt to explain what this is, yet the fucking characters don't even understand what it is so how the reader is supposed to grasp the concept, I'm not really sure. Granted, this topic is a **TEENSY** bit easier to understand by the end of the novel, but even then, it's still not properly explained.

Due to the severe lack of worldbuilding, there is NO PLOT.

Our main character, Safi is a super special snowflake because she is a Truthwitch and can discern truth from lies so everybody wants her for wars or whatever. The plot is essentially a rat race in which people chase after Safi, and by extension her bestie (sorry, Threadsister) Iseult and that's it. Nothing else happens. If this were a character driven novel, I'd be fine with such a dismal plot. But it's not. This is supposed to be a high fantasy yet it lacks in both plot and worldbuilding. You think things are happening because there are some fight scenes sprinkled amongst all the chasing (seriously, this entire book is chasing) but this begins to get pretty old once you realise that this book is 80% Safi/Iseult running away from mobs or people hunting them, 10% fights and 10% witty dialogue. Oh and Merik wants to get his trade agreement (and I wanted Merik to shutup).

Oh yeah, so that brings me to characters. They were so boring. As I've established, Safi is special because she is the only one of her kind and everyone wants a Truthwitch. She's kinda hot-headed and makes witty remarks on the odd occasion, but that's where my fondness for her ends. Also, why the fuck does everybody want a Truthwitch? It sounds lame and useless and I can think of several other witches I would want on my side (like airwitches, bloodwitches - basically everybody has cooler powers than Safi). Iseult is Safi's Threadsister and while I liked her a lot more than Safi, she was still pretty boring. Iseult is a Threadwitch (she sees people's emotions? Auras??? What a Threadwitch is isn't exactly clear either) and she left her tribe at one point because she "wasn't good enough" and essentially, she is the brains to Safi's brawn. Iseult had a really intriguing background in regards to her tribe and I really hope we find out more about this in future installments. I'd also love to know more about her power (view spoiler) and what she can do with it. I think if this book focussed on Iseult, I might have enjoyed it a tiny bit more.

Merik is a prince of one of the empires who wants to make trade agreements for his country. He is irritating, angry and I don't understand why we had to have his point of view in the story as well. He's probably my least favourite character of the novel and is just flat out annoying.

The only character I did love was the villain, Aeudon, who we're supposed to hate because he's a Bloodwitch and is evil, yada yada yada. (view spoiler) I know he spent the majority of the book chasing after Safi and Iseult (sorry, I don't count this as a spoiler because the entire plot is "Safi gets chased"), but I really liked his inner dialogue and his witchery is badass.

I kept hearing about how amazing the friendship was in this book and I was **super hyped about this**. A story with a strong female friendship as a major component? Hell yeah. But surprise, surprise; I didn't like how it was executed and found it kinda forced and not really convincing enough. I know a friendship portrayal shouldn't HAVE to be convincing, but I just expected more in regards to this and found myself let down.

I didn't think there was anything inherently wrong with the writing, I just think it needed a different editor. Typos were EVERYWHERE and every now and then a sentence will be so badly worded, it would throw me for a loop.

"Before Safi's lips could open and apologies scrape out a smile flickered over Iseult's face"

I shit you not, this is an actual sentence in the final copy of the novel. The fuck????

I knowww I've been harping on about how much I hate this book so far, but there were a few things I liked! As mentioned, I found Iseult's witchery and her family super interesting and I really hope we get to know more about them in future books and I am holding out to see more of the world and history in the next book. I just hope this was one big set up for something epic (like how I feel with Throne of Glass and Crown of Midnight - I worship CoM but thought ToG was super average).

I can deal that this book was absolutely riddled with typos, I can even deal with the random, unnecessary

points of view, however I can't express how disappointed I am with the lack of worldbuilding and how lacklustre the plot was.

So it seems I'm in the minority for this one! So many people (even my coblogger) have been shouting their love for this from the rooftops. I so badly wanted to love this too, but I found myself so, so let down.

Emily May says

"I will kill you," he went on.

"No." The girl's eyes thinned; she pushed herself further upright and the moon streamed over her. "I d-d-d..." She coughed. Then wiped her mouth. "I don't think you will."

Ah, this book. I went back and forth on the rating and I do want to say this: unlike the other highly anticipated January novel - Passenger - **Truthwitch is a fast-paced, enjoyable adventure**. However, I know picky fantasy readers will see right through this book.

If you are looking for a light fantasy read with descriptions of dresses, balls, dancing, and an inevitable romance, look no further. Sometimes that's all I want too. There's no denying that this book has a **base, addictive pull** from the opening holdup-gone-wrong to every dramatic twist, turn and action scene after. But if you're looking for something stronger, more fleshed-out and complex, I think Truthwitch could cause you some eye rolls.

I'll break it down.

Characters. There are two central female characters - Safi and Iseult - and only the latter is particularly interesting. Safi suffers from a "specialness" because she is a truthwitch. Though whether the other characters know this or not does not affect their tendency to faint, fall over themselves or otherwise become obsessed with her whenever she enters the room.

And, quite frankly, for the most part she seems to act stupidly, putting herself and Iseult in danger because of her reckless and dumb plans. Like that time she runs away from the people helping her because... who the hell knows? Literally her only real talents seem to be making poor decisions and attracting the attention of various princes.

Iseult, however, is a badass. I liked it when the novel's focus moved to her. I thought she was more interesting, less trope-y than the "special" Safi. I will also note that I like the emphasis put on female friendship before everything else; I was a little disappointed that we didn't get a Safi/Iseult LGBT romance, but I'll settle for the next best thing.

The only other interesting character is the villain - a blood monk called Aeduan. He is probably the greatest reason I am looking forward to the sequel, because fascinating, multilayered (maybe not quite so evil?) villains are one of my favourite things. I hope we get lots of him in the next book.

World-building. This should be a short section because there is none. I've heard early critics praising the unique world, but I am confused. There are some vague mentions of emperors and place names, but very little information is given about these people, their history, culture, politics or anything else. The only thing

we know is that a 20-year peace treaty is soon coming to an end.

Also, these witches all live in a world made up of various lands and the collective name of these lands is... "Witchlands". Now, I don't want to get all nitpicky over little language/name things, but come on, "witches from the Witchlands". Fantastic, that's given me a great idea for a book! It's about vampires who live in "Vampireville".

Instalove.

"Something had happened between Safi and Merik during their dance. Something as powerful as the wind and the music that had gusted around them. A shift in the air that preceded a storm."

Oh, hell, make it stop. Possibly the most eye roll-worthy thing of this book is the budding romance between Safi and Merik. They dance at a ball and it's obsession at first twirl.

I believe you can experience lust from dancing with a hot guy or girl, I even believe a crush can form from dancing with a hot guy or girl, but forgive me if I raise a skeptical eyebrow at "something as powerful as the wind". LOL, get over yourselves already. Also, Merik has no personality beyond his concerns for the wonderful Safi.

Just to conclude... It seems like a lot of negative, but I honestly did enjoy the fast pacing and surprises. I, for one, will be reading the sequel. Though I advise you to maybe think twice about this if you like your fantasy with more substance than mindless entertainment.

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Navessa says

**"Safi acted instantly – as did the monk. His sword swished from its scabbard; her knife came up. She clipped the edge of his blade, parrying it aside.
He recovered and lunged. Safi lurched back. Her calves hit Iseult, yet in a single fluid movement, Iseult kneeled – and Safi rolled sideways over her back.
Initiate. Complete. It was how the girls fought. How they lived.
He was good. The best fighter she'd ever faced.
But Safi and Iseult were better."**

This book, to put it simply, is *wildly* entertaining. I enjoyed the **HELL** out of it.

Honestly, I don't even know where to begin here. Do I start with the setting? Which is loosely based on our own geography, cultures and people, but with twists on each that had my inner geo-nerd going "NEATO!". Or do I start with the lore? Which is so cool I doubt I could really do it justice. What about the characters?

How do I describe such a pair of badass young women? How do I do explain their strong, believable, unbreakable female friendship?

And mother of god. The pacing. This book opens with a highway robbery gone wrong and manages to maintain that frenetic momentum throughout. The pace it sets is relentless, breakneck. There is NO downtime. Not one scene of filler or info dumping. Every single page is infused with energy, action, and emotion.

Oh, and is that swearing in a YA novel?

Is that sex-positivity in a YA novel?

Wait, these female characters actually have...SELF CONFIDENCE?

They don't need men to save them?

They don't let the adults around them dictate their lives?

They put each other above EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE else? Including boys? Including family???

The front door. Go shut it.

So yes. I highly recommend this book. It has singlehandedly restored my faith in Young Adult Fantasy novels, of which I've read many and enjoyed...very few. Aside from the strong feminist themes and subtle fuck you to the usual fantasy worlds that revolve around your typical patriarchy, this book includes LGBTQIA representation, diversity, body positivity, and a whole slew of other themes we need to see more of in this genre, which I would name were I not still slightly dizzy and more than a little frazzle-minded thanks to this epic book-high.

I do not, however, recommend reading this in public. Because it contains numerous passages capable of startling ugly laughter out of even the most restrained readers. You know, the kind that just bubbles up out of your mouth unbidden, and for whatever reason – maybe because you forgot you were in public, and it seems like you've done something to anger the gods, because these embarrassing outbursts always happen to you in public – it doesn't sound like your normal laughter, but more like something that might belch forth from a drunken pilot whale's blowhole?

Yeah, that kind of laughter. Consider yourself warned.

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Lola says

I'm so very sad to have to admit this, but TRUTHWITCH really isn't working for me. The world-building is hazy, therefore, I feel confused and frustrated. I keep trying to make order of things in my mind, and it's exhausting. The writing is not horrible but it doesn't flow. Many have mentioned fast-pacing, but I crazily feel like this is super slow because of how much it asks for our undivided attention and quick

understanding... when nothing is really detailed or explained.

DNF at 25%. Can I blame the hype? I'm blaming the hype.

Regan says

4.25

I love female friendships

Samantha says

Although the world building was a bit confusing and clunky at the beginning, Truthwitch more than made up for that with its characters, twists, and turns. Rarely do I feel so instantly attached to an entire group of characters like I did with this book. Even though I originally got this ARC at BEA, I'm glad I waited to read it because I cannot imagine having to wait over a year for the next installment. A year will be painful enough. I am already eagerly anticipating my re-read of this book so I can catch all of the things I'm sure I missed this first time and to revisit these characters.

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

Susan Dennard trying to make me feel a single thing about the plot, worldbuilding, characters, and romance in this damn book:

This book was so *ridiculously* underwhelming. It's got a lot of series potential, but a lot of it is very Bland Fantasy™. If you want random countries we're not invested in, and characters you'd like to love but truly don't, you'll probably like this.

Mostly, I just felt this was super narratively all over the place because it's trying so hard to be A Cool Fantasy Book – it expects you to enjoy the journey of several characters with several different countries but also doesn't really make you care about this world or, more importantly, *any* of those characters or relationships. The lack of connection to the characters means this **doesn't feel grounded**. It is a dry and lacking-in-humanity read.

And the all-over-the-place feel is fine, but it also feels *manufactured*. One of the biggest problems in YA right now is **too-many-side-characters syndrome**, and holy shit, does this book suffer. And I'm not complaining about the side characters themselves; the issue is how they contribute to a larger narrative problem. This hurts the narrative in that many of the actions of the side characters and villains feel engineered for conflict.

It's an annoying read because on an objective level, the whole thing feels like something I should like... but **the attachment just isn't there**.

Okay, just so this doesn't feel unbacked, let's talk about the characters and why I was not attached.

►Safi - I am so disappointed by this character. Her emotional arc is super shallow and she just fundamentally... doesn't feel very real?

►Merek - the YA equivalent of white bread. I could not get attached to him at *all*.

►Iseult - deliciousfinallysomesogoodfuckingfood.gif. Yes, as expected, Iseult was my favorite. She's the character who reads the most complex. I will say that I was expecting her to be my New Favorite Character Ever and I only Vaguely Like her and that. is disappointing.

►Aeduan - I don't understand this man. Like, I think he has potential, but he currently feels like he's being engineered to scare the shit out of me, and he honestly doesn't because Safi spends so much of her time lacking any fucking common sense and not getting away from him.

I also want to talk about the relationship focus in this, because I feel like that aspect was really disappointing? I do love the lack of love triangles and the strong focus on female friendship. Cool. But y'all, the female friendship often feels shoved to the side by the romance. Like, it's better than a lot of books in the YA fantasy genre, but if you're marketing something off the girl friendship I want 400 pages of them fighting through hell for each other, not driven-by-romance-but-then-sometimes-they-care-about-each-other.

And then maybe let's talk about the romance itself, because guys, it's soooooooooo boring. Here's the thing about Safi and Merek: we know they're going to be a thing ten seconds in, and though they don't get together for another 300 pages, we are never given any reason to doubt they will. And also, come on, they do *not* banter enough. That's my main thought, and like... yeah, I know this is my constant thing, but this is how I get invested in couples and it is Not There. There's a budding romance I'm maybe more intrigued by, but honestly... eh.

→*overall*← I was just sort of eh on this. I have heard book two has better character dynamics, so I hope I'll enjoy book two more? Watch this space. And I think we can all do to read Melanie's review as a refresher.

Blog | Goodreads | Twitter | Youtube

Katerina says

"If you wanted to, Safiya, you could bend and shape the world."

Dear Susan Dennard,

I love you. Je t'aime. Σ'αγαπ?. Te quiero. Ti amo. Ich liebe dich.

You are the sunshine to my stormy day. The medicine to my flu. The butter to my bread. The Saturday to my hectic week. The oasis to my desert. The strawberry topping to my chocolate ice-cream. The lyrics to my music.

The answer to my prayers. For it was the work of Book Gods that sent you to my life. I am going to celebrate our acquaintance by ~~sacrificing puppies composing a hymn painting your portrait~~ nevermind I'll just dance.

"It was the circle of perfect motion. Of the light-bringer and dark-giver, the world-starter

and shadow-ender. Of initiation and completion.”

The Truce between the nations of the Witchlands is coming to an end. Every player is desperate to find leverage against his opponents. There are nobles who are greedy for more, more power and more blood, and nobles who are searching for a way to protect their people from the chaos and destruction that are about to be unleashed. A Truthwitch would be the best weapon to gain the upper hand and secure their hearts' darkest desires. But Safi doesn't want to be a pawn, nor help the ruthless ruler she despises. She just wants to be free. Iseult on the other hand, her Threadsister and a pariah, wants to find the place where she belongs. Hunted and on the run, they come across allies and foes, they fight sea monsters and corrupted magic and trained assassins, they discover love and make decisions that will eventually determine the outcome of the war.

“Because ‘just me’ isn’t who we are. I’ll always follow you, Safi, and you’ll always follow me. Threadsisters to the end.”

I had a rocky start with Truthwitch. I could sense the potential and the epicness that was about to come, but at first I was **confused** with the world-building, I kept re-reading the pages to finally grasp the history, the politics and the geography of the Witchlands. But like diving into the waters of the Origin Wells, I eventually became a part of this **complex** and **fascinating world** and like a Threadwitch, I can see the Thread that now binds my soul with the very essence of this book. **We're connected. We're in sync. And I love it.**

If I had to describe Truthwitch with only one word, it would be stunning. Susan Dennard's writing was **rich** and **vivid**, I could close my eyes and picture the ocean, feel the breeze caressing my face and smell the saltiness of the sea. I could hear swords clashing and sailors cursing and horses panting from the effort to run away from their pursuers. The **politics** and the never-ending **schemings** made me question everything and everyone, the action and the **fight**s were **mind-blowing** and made my heart race and my breath catch. **Monks, sea monsters, magic wells, prophecies, corrupted witches, untrustworthy rulers**, all of them are part of a marvelous and epic fantasy saga. And don't forget the **characters**.

“It wasn’t freedom she wanted. It was belief in something—a prize big enough to run for and to fight for and to keep on reaching toward no matter what.”

Safi and Iseult are **completely different** but **equally brilliant**. Safi is the hot-headed one, with a short temper and a big mouth that always looks for a fight. Amusing, stubborn and self-centered, sometimes oblivious to the mayhem she creates and the consequences of her actions, she always gets into trouble without thinking, but she's often driven by the need to protect Iseult, the person she loves the most. Safi grew up a lot throughout the story and she atoned for her mistakes. Iseult on the other hand is the reasonable one, who never belonged anywhere, who was never wanted nor needed. She never found her place in the world, but she was always willing to risk and follow Safi's crazy plans because she trusted her. Their **friendship** is one of the things I admired the most in Truthwitch, it's a kind of love you rarely encounter in books nowadays, especially between female characters, but it was strong, pure, a force of nature.

“Safi had only two thoughts: Who the rut is that Nubrevnan Windwitch? And: He should really learn how to button a shirt.”

But there is also romance, **sweet, sizzling, making-your-toes-curl, giving-you-heart-palpitations**

romance. Allow me to introduce you to Prince Merik of Nubrevna, the Admiral of his country's Navy, the son who wants the best for his people but isn't respected by his family. Loyal and determined, always looking after his crew, he never expected his life to become this complicated when he met Safi for the first time because let's be honest, he's not particularly patient himself and his anger is a being of its own. Their **dance scene** was so hot it practically made me drool! Safi and Merik always bickered, fought, disagreed, irritated each other and each time I swooned more than the previous. **Sparks! Sparks! Sparks! and kaboom! you combust into flames!**

Please do tell me, is there a reason *not* to read this book?

P.S. I just found out that Susan and I have the same birthday! How cool is that?:D

Jesse (JesseTheReader) says

My full review can be found here: https://youtu.be/sFv_OsfgZKY

THIS WAS REALLY GOOD AHHH. I HATE TO ADD TO THE HYPE POOL, BUT IT WAS REALLY GOOD.

Susan built up such a unique world with amazing characters. I even liked the little romance that starts to build in this book! I'm all for books with romances that aren't overwhelming. My one complaint is that I found myself confused at times, because you're just expected to pick up on the different roles that the witches play. Other than that I really enjoyed this story and I can't wait to see what's in store for the rest of this series!

Jessica ❁ ➡ Silverbow ➡ ❁ Rabid Reads-no-more says

5/3/18 - ON SALE for \$2.99:

<https://amzn.to/2HLhMFY>

Reviewed by: Rabid Reads

4.5 stars

I don't know about the rest of you, but when one of my favorite authors recommends a book or another author, I AM THERE.

How much more so when the recommended author is the real life bff of said author? How much more so when the book in question is meant to be (at least in part) an expression of that friendship?

In her acknowledgements, Dennard says:

Friendships can be just as epic as romances . . .

That's lovely, isn't it? It's also true for those of us lucky enough to have found our own Threadsister. *waves at Chrissy*

Safiya and Iseult are Threadsisters, friends bound together more tightly than family. They are night and day, Iseult the frequent victim of hideous prejudice due to her Romany-like background, Safiya an orphaned heiress.

They fill each other's gaps, operating in perfect synchronization with barely a thought: *Initiate. Complete.* They are hilarious and determined and passionate and I bloody love them.

The girls live in a world on a precipice. The twenty-year treaty that has kept a tenuous peace among the various countries is near its expiration date, and while some monarchs are happy to make sure their people are fed, others have conquest on the brain.

In fact, many suspect--*have* suspected from the beginning--that the treaty is nothing more than cover for the emperor to build his armies under the guise of law keeping while undermining any potential threats.

Change is coming, and our girls are at the heart of it.

Enter Merik, the prince of a once world power, now decimated by past wars. The coast of his island home is ash, and he is desperate to secure trade so his people won't starve.

The last thing he needs is a complication in the form of Safiya, but that's exactly what he gets, and with Safi comes Iseult.

It's fun.

The chemistry between Safiya and Merik is WHUH. So WHUH that if this was an adult novel, there'd be a lot more than dancing going on. *waggles eyebrows*

Aeduan and Iseult are a different matter altogether. It seemed obvious from the beginning that the two were destined for coupleness, but their outcome was still nebulous by book's end. One thing I can say for sure is that I NEED more of Aeduan's backstory. Dude is too restrained, too emotionless to have come by it naturally. I see darkness and a lot of it.

Dark is good.

But ultimately this is a story of friendship, of the lengths two girls will go to to protect the other, and how that friendship might shake their world's foundation. The dashing, not-pirate prince (with a TEMPER), who knows scandalous dances and dances them well--I admit it, I swooned--the peril, the secrets, the long-orchestrated political schemes . . . Those are just bonus. *winks*

TRUTHWITCH by Susan Dennard is my first Top Read of 2016. Highly recommended.

My other reviews for this series:

Sightwitch (The Witchlands, #0.5)

Windwitch (The Witchlands, #2)

Bloodwitch (The Witchlands, #3)

Susan says

I saw another author do this--give some insider info on the book via a review--and I thought it was a cool idea.

Basically, the entire Witchlands series will be full of the stuff you've come to expect from me (if you've read the Something Strange & Deadly series or the Starkillers Cycle). There's epic action, really high stakes, diverse lead characters, a huge world, and tense (tense!) romance(s).

On top of that, Truthwitch has elemental magic and a chosen pair (of kickass girls!) who bring balance to the world. There are antiheroes and pirates and dragons and monsters who look like humans...as well as humans who look like monsters. Oh, and did I mention the romance? ;)

At its heart, though, this book is about friendship--the epic friendships that transform your life. The family you choose. The people who always, always, ALWAYS have your back. It's those binding ties that propel everything in Truthwitch and beyond.

So welcome to the Witchlands, my friends. I hope, hope, *hope* you enjoy it.
