



The Natural Order

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This is an alternate cover edition for ISBN10: 1511770481 (ISBN13: 9781511770484).

Tristan Fairholm is one of 15 juvenile delinquents selected to learn magic...for a purpose that is kept secret from them. When they at last learn that the magic they have harvested causes death and ruin in a bid to keep the world from collapse, they must make a choice: do they fight it? Or do they use it?

The Natural Order Details

Date : Published June 2nd 2015 by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (first published April 18th 2015)

ISBN :

Author : R.J. Vickers

Format : Paperback 313 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Magic

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From Reader Review The Natural Order for online ebook

Daniel says

I would like to think that I am a hard critic when it comes to books. My girlfriend buys me these things because she hates me playing video games and would prefer that I do something less mind-rotting. Or at least that's how she puts it. Anyway, because she's gone to the effort of buying them for me I am obligated to give them a read. Generally out of rebellion I try to find all of the faults that I can (something that gives me great joy).

However, as much as I hate giving my girlfriend the satisfaction, this one was actually really good. I pray to god she never reads this post, as I'll never hear the end of it, but I really liked this one. It's got a great plot, a creative world that you can really visualize, and brilliant characters. The only fault that I can find is that there is no sequel written yet (R.J. Vickers get your ass into gear already!!!)

The Natural Order leaves you guessing all the way through, and unlike most books I've read, you're puzzled right up until the very end. That is until all of a sudden everything comes together with the most Holy Mother of epic revelations I've ever seen.

A really good read; I liked Harry Potter but to be honest I prefer this one.

Amy says

Great read!

I rated this book 5 stars because it was a unique story with well developed characters. There is a Harry Potterish feel to the story and I'm looking forward to reading book 2. Kudos to R.J. Vickers, on a job well doneI will definitely explore more of her work after this series is complete.

Angela Oliver says

Do not be deterred by the apparent plot similarities to Harry Potter - "The Natural Order" may be a magic school-type novel, but it is a wholly original take on the genre. The protagonist, Tristan, is serving time as a juvenile delinquent, accused of manslaughter. As he mourns the brother whose death he caused, a stranger turns up and whisks him away, along with 14 other students, to an obscure location. Here he is thrown into a school unlike any he has ever known - a school with an entirely unique array of subjects. Here he makes friends, and a few fiends, and begins to unearth the dark secrets behind the Lair.

Well written, and enjoyable, R.J. Vickers has designed a magic system that is uniquely her own. She has created a believable cast of troubled teens, sprinkled in a generous amount of typical High School drama and

insecurities and added a dusting of magic. Her concepts are well considered and should lead into a promising series as Tristan and his friends discover more of what their future entails.

Samantha Markham says

This is a fantastic book. No where near Harry Potter (sorry), but still fabulous. It was interesting and kept me wanting more the longer I read it. The only thing that bothered me is the fact that Marcus' death is never explained. There was some kind of accident and an earthquake, and Tristan was there. But that's it. Tristan doesn't talk about it ever and it's only ever hinted at. I need more information. You can't hint and not clarify. Tell me why it's torturing Tristan!!!

Janine Lattimore says

Tristan believes he killed his brother. So do his parents and the system that has sentenced him to be locked away in Juvenile detention. But not everyone believes he was the cause of his brother's death. When a stranger appears at his brother's grave and offers him an alternative to penitentiary imprisonment he takes it. At first the alternative seems to be an isolated school for other criminals like him but then a strange student floats out of the lake mist and their first lesson is on 'magic'. Tristan seems to have a natural affinity for this 'magic' but he fears it is part of a growing madness on his part that will see him locked away for life. "I trust you", Tristan's brother's last words echo hollowly in his head. Marcus trusted him – why? And who can Tristan trust? Everyone and everything in this disturbing school known as The Lair seems to be surrounded by secrets and mystery: what is hidden in the tunnels? What is threatening the school? Why were mainly young criminals selected to be students? And why will Tristan never be allowed to leave?

The Natural Order has a raw, suspenseful energy running through it from beginning to end. Like Tristan, the reader is never quite sure who to trust or what is going on beneath the surface. I got to the end with a few questions still swirling in my head, but I hear this is to be the first of a series of books so hopefully there is more to come.

An intriguing and original story with relatable characters that kept me engaged and entertained throughout.

Young Adult classified but plenty of interest for adults too.

Bob Silverstein says

This is a magical adventure story in the vein of Harry Potter. I can easily see it becoming a movie. The story narrative is well told, but sometimes the character's dialog seems a bit "off". There's a couple things about the story that bothers me. (1) Where does the Magic School get all that fabulous food? I suppose it could be produced by magic like at Hogwarts, but it never magically appears on the dining tables. It's always brought out of the very busy kitchen. It's never explained. (2) These are 15 healthy teenagers residing at the school, both boys and girls, yet over the course of a year none of them are the least bit interested in sex.

UPDATE: The author may have also realized the two issues I mentioned above. Both are addressed in Book 2, Rogue Magic.

Alicia says

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

This book reminded me of *The Unwanteds*, if the characters had actually been the deviants they were accused of being. For a story containing fourteen characters straight out of juvenile detention, I expected at least one knife fight, or someone fashioning a shiv.

The pace was somewhat slow, most of the book entailed them working through excess homework. It felt like it was trying to be as iconic as *Hogwarts*, but missed the mark. (Not going to go into the character comparisons, but they were there. Amber *ahem* Luna).

I didn't guess the ending, however, the big reveal doesn't actually make sense. (view spoiler)

There were just too many plot inconsistencies for me to enjoy this, and there didn't really seem to be a point. I'm sure some of my annoyances will be answered in future books, but I wasn't captured enough by the story to invest the time to find out.

2.5 stars.

Alison says

This was a book with an intriguing premise and disappointing execution. Basically, what if instead of lots of excited children getting their letter accepting them to Hogwarts, a bunch of juvenile delinquents whom no one would miss got into a vaguely sinister-feeling school for magic? And what if their isolated school turned out to feel a little like a permanent trap, and the teachers seemed like maybe they'd never taught before and might actually be recruiting magicians for an evil plan? Or I guess -- what if the letter to Hogwarts was replaced by a letter to Durmstrang?

Then it all falls apart.

--- The main character is perpetually carrying the stupid ball, and deciding not to discuss reasonable and crucial questions of his friends, like (view spoiler). Actually, in that second case, he actually FORGETS that he even learned about that crucial piece of info, DESPITE being dramatically punished for helping hide it.

--- There are way too many characters and they are introduced willy-nilly as though the reader should already know who they are.

--- Scene changes are jarring and lack transitions -- characters become lonely before the reader really understands that other characters have left the room, or a scene ends with characters walking out of a room we never knew they were in to begin with.

--- Some of the dialogue is middling-to-stilted, with some real clunkers. For example, "Furthermore, I will now entrust you with a secret."

--- The main character keeps selectively interpreting some of the magic he sees as evidence that he's going crazy -- a plot thread that goes nowhere, because this is a school of magic and that's the premise.

--- The book follows the Harry Potter school of denouement, with crises coming at major holiday feasts and the end of the school year, even though it all should have come to a head much faster, with critical questions left unexplored for weeks and brushed off with phrases about time passing quickly as they study for exams.

One thing in the book's favor: I liked how the characters bonded and had important conversations over holiday food, like roasting marshmallows or icing cookies together. That was sweet and believable.

--- Also as in Harry Potter, there is a magically gifted main character whose core group consists of a goofy male friend and a tenuously bookish female friend, and they get into at least one manufactured fight where they stop speaking to each other. Aside from making the female character a delinquent who frequently hits people, there appears to be no commentary or spin on this copy-cat friend group.

--- The whole thing abruptly turns into (view spoiler), which undercuts the whole Durmstrang vibe ((view spoiler)) and while it opens up a nice can of ethical worms, it really undercuts the premise for me.

--- The characters are warned again and again not to explore the tunnels and that there will be dire consequences, and then they just go live in the tunnels with no repercussions.

--- Finally: magic marbles. To the author's credit, they end up being kind of cool as described, but seriously? Everyone's carrying around pockets full of magic marbles?

I could go on.

In fairness, there were some really cool ideas here. The idea that magic comes from destruction was interesting and well-explained, as was the idea that it could also come from unspoiled nature. I loved a detail at the end of the book, (view spoiler). The idea that (view spoiler) is really intriguing, and is a great way of explaining any inconsistencies in the rules of magic. Making the invitation to magic school sinister instead of a dream come true was also a great premise. But it just didn't come together for me.

This book wants to be some sort of middle-ground between the exciting but relatively sanitized world of Harry Potter and the brilliantly sexed-up and clinically depressed world of The Magicians, but because of all the narrative problems and swearing, I still wouldn't even recommend this for young readers.

Karina says

“Magic can easily be used both for creation and for ruin.”

Different persons – delinquents, and an orphan - from different places were gathered to bring in a strange, magical, and mysterious place to learn and do magic. No one knows why they are being trained to do magic. All they knew was at least, they are not in detention or jail anymore.

Tristan Fairholm, is a criminal who wants nothing but to have his brother back. Tristan thinks he doesn't have anything to live for. His brother is dead, he doesn't want to be stuck in this school which is such a huge mystery and he doesn't know if his mother still hates him. So what else is there to live for?

This book gave so much Harry Potter feels. They study magic, their school is like Hogwarts – far from people, fascinating – but less grandeur and it's underground. The main character has a scar on his face, only that it's not from he-who-must-not-be-named, but instead, it's from an accident.

I love books that talk about magic but as the story goes on where all they did was to study magic, I got bored. I started to wonder where will this book go? What is the twist? What else could this book offer aside from teaching us magic? WHAT ELSE?

As the story goes on, the answer to my “WHAT ELSE?” had been answered. The story will not just revolve on studying magic. It will also revolve on finding the answers to so many questions, like...

“Why are they just few? Why only 15 students in this overly huge underground school?”

“Why is their school - the Lair - is on underground?”

“What is the secret of the Lair that their professors had been trying to hide?”

“Who is trying to destroy this place? Who is the vandal?”

“When will they leave this school? or will they ever leave this school?”

“What are they being trained for?”

The journey of the characters especially Tristan on finding answers to these questions is the thing that kept me reading this book. I had a reading slump while reading this book, that’s why it took me 3 weeks to finish it. If it wasn’t for these questions, I don’t know if I can even finish it.

This book doesn’t really have a romantic side. Although I can really feel something fishy about the girls that surrounds Tristan especially his best friend Leila, there is nothing really romantic that happened. Through the end, I was in high hopes that romance will bloom in this book, but nah. **The book one of this series is just focused on magic, mystery, and friendship!** It’s just a little bit disappointing that the book had been finished without even giving me assurance if my guesses are wrong or not. But I have this feeling that soon, in the next book/s in this series, love will grow.

The writing is very good, the emotions are really there. I was scared, amazed, confused and nervous, all while reading this book. I love the plot and characters even though they are mostly like imitation of some characters from different books. Like Tristan, Leila, and Rusty. The main character Tristan is scarred in the face. He doesn’t have “home”. Leila’s character reminds me of Tris in Divergent. She’s fierce, smart, and brave. While Rusty slightly reminds me of Ron. If Tristan and Leila is most of the time serious, of course Rusty is the opposite.

“They want wealth. Long Life. Health. Power. They’re messing with the natural order because they’re selfish. The human race is selfish.”

The ending, I really held my breathe when the questions had been answered, the truth had been revealed, and when the meaning of the title already made sense. Gosh! I really like how things had turned out. I never really thought that this book will be interesting. Frankly, I have no idea what is this book all about. I usually do not read the synopsis or blurb of a book before reading it. And based on the title, the cover, I really have no idea what to expect. I just decided I want to read this because it’s fantasy, and that’s it.

I enjoyed this book, it is interesting but it’s still not enough to get me out of a reading slump. It’s not bad but it’s not that great either. Maybe because I love magic, and I’ve read Harry Potter and Divergent before that’s why I really liked and enjoyed it. It’s like characters from my favorite series had been gathered into a book. Just imagine criminals from different places, who knows nothing about each other being gathered together. Of course the fact that they are criminals will tell what they can do, and that’s the reason why this book gives Divergent feels too. It feels like they are all Dauntless.

“Do you think we’ll forget all of this next year?” he asked quietly.

Amber frowned at him. "When we leave, I mean. Will we even remember that magic was real?"

3.75 stars.

Joy says

I'm a fan of series that can take the idea of magic and root into a connection with nature. The combination of science and magical powers takes fantasy and adds a bit of normalcy at least enough to make you stop and wonder for a moment what if magic does exist. The ability to capture a reader in that moment of questioning the reality of magic makes for great story telling and Vickers is a great storyteller.

Tristan has been living in a juvenile detention facility since convicted of manslaughter for causing a tragic accident that resulted in his brother's death. No one believes his story of an earthquake forcing him and his brother to flee their home but even so he feels the pain of not protecting his brother. He bares the scars of that tragedy physically and emotionally. Cut off from family he feels abandoned and alone until one day a mysterious woman shows up and places him on a plane with 14 other teens, most from juvenile facilities like him.

They are taken to a remote school where they begin a strange educational journey into a world where magic exists. Excited and confused they all delve into the mysteries of learning magic until they realize that the knowledge they are gaining comes at a cost and that the school is hiding some sinister realities that will force them to make some difficult and dangerous choices. Magic may be inviting but it does come with consequences.

The storyline is complex in ways that aren't obvious. Every conversation that seems unimportant has a point that intersects with an overall bigger picture and once you get to the ending it all unravels and makes sense. There may be a Harry Potter and Hogwarts feel to the book but the plot takes a different path and produces a unique tale where the line between good and bad is greatly blurred. The characters are all flawed making them far more believable and there are plenty of twists to keep you wondering what will happen next. I've passed this book onto my tween daughter and her friends. They're enjoying it as much as I did and we can't wait to read more about Tristan and his magic school friends.

Copy provided for review.

Reviewed by Joy for Crystal's Many Reviewers

Henry Simpson says

This is a well-written fantasy for young adults about a young male protagonist and his classmates learning magic from a group of eccentric professors in an improbable setting with magical properties of its own. Evil may be afoot, testing the young characters. If this brings to mind the Harry Potter books, it's not surprising. However, this book is no knockoff. The protagonist and his classmates could all be classified as juvenile

delinquents, the school is a sort of reformatory, and the kids don't know what the school is supposedly preparing them for.

The plot, in a nutshell: Tristan, the protagonist, gets in serious trouble at home, is sent to a special school located in a massive underground quasi-palace (the "lair"), joins a group of other delinquents, attends classes about magic and related subjects, and shows a special talent for magic that most of his classmates do not. Interestingly, the tale focuses less on feats of magic than social interactions among Tristan and his classmates. (Sounds a lot like high school.)

Events lead the students to distrust members of the faculty and ask basic questions, such as, what's this school all about? Are the professors up to something? Will we ever get out? What are we being prepared for? Who is the vandal whose mischief is blamed on us? Finding answers to these questions propels the plot along. Suspense builds from the beginning, and all questions are answered before the tale ends.

What I especially liked about this book is the fine writing. The dialogue, characterization, and descriptions are excellent. Vickers has a sizable cast of characters but skillfully makes each a unique individual. Her descriptions make the reader see, feel, and sometimes use other senses to grasp a scene; here's a typical example: Flexing his stiff fingers, he knelt and lowered one foot cautiously over the edge of the ridge. Nudging the snow aside with his toe, he scrabbled his foot against the rocks until he found a solid foothold. He dug his fingers firmly into the snow before lowering his weight onto that foot. In this manner, one tiny movement at a time, Tristan began climbing down from the ridge.

Targeted at young adults, the book should appeal particularly to those who like fantasy.

CATHERINE says

Fifteen juvenile offenders are taken by plane to a remote (Canadian) location where they enter into a magical world.

Little details took me out of the story saying that Canada doesn't have Thanksgiving - we do but it's in October for exaple. There is one important point in the plot that Tristian "forgets" to tell his friends - really? They are all trapped together day in day out I would have thought the slightest thing would have been news. While the pace of life is lessons and homework sometimes the detail of this felt like too much and slowed down the plot.

This is a bit of X-men, Harry Potter and The Magicans, all of which are better than this but I did enjoy this take on a well written path. There were original ideas here - enough to keep you reading and enough to make me seek out the second one in the series.

Kayla Tawa says

Usually I don't like fantasy, so I was very skeptical when I started reading this novel, expecting to nitpick every detail about magic; however, I was pleasantly surprised by this novel. R.J. Vickers' narrative style is engaging and nuanced, the story masterfully unfolding, the plot twisting and turning, each revelation as unexpected as the last. And the final plot twist was entirely unexpected, yet extremely fitting. It made me want to re-read the novel to uncover the subtleties and clues I missed the first time around. However, what I

enjoyed most was the humanity she brought to the novel, coupling mystery and action with complex emotions, situations, and characters. Her characters are remarkably human: inherently flawed, yet never one-dimensional. I found myself growing increasingly attached to them and intrigued by them as the story progressed. This is definitely a novel that will spark much needed and crucial debates as Vickers layers important issues within the gripping action of the novel. Like all good stories, I lost myself in the novel while reading, the characters and the plot drawing me in, and I never wanted to put it down. This is a must-read for fantasy and non-fantasy readers alike.

Austin says

I'm a bit hesitant to give this two stars. It had the potential to be three, but needed much more development. I was left utterly detached and empty at the abrupt ending to what had been a convincing, tension-filled build up. I can't quite say "I liked it." but I can easily say it was at least ok.

Fifteen juvenile offenders are thrown into a very original magical world, with destruction being the fuel for that magic. This magic has certain constraints on its use not seen in other systems. A very intriguing premise, and the strongest reason to actually read this book (or a sequel?). However, much of the rest of the story fell flat.

I found the protagonist (Tristan) to be a very confusing and unconvincing character. The writing, which excellently describes scenes but falls far short whenever dialogue is involved, contributes to make Tristan one of the least interesting characters. Not a good thing in your protagonist. There is very little connection to be felt, as whenever a spark of real humanness comes up, his interaction with others (especially anything to do with Evvie) snuffs it out.

It seems that a lot of the interactions between characters merely happen without any kind of justification or depth. One moment I'll be thoroughly engaged in the description of a passageway or feast, and then the sudden and unnatural actions of the students or professors lurches me completely out of my immersion. They, especially the teachers, do not always behave as normal humans would. Admittedly they are not normal humans, but even within the absurdity of some of their situations, it feels as though the entire book is trying to put too many conversations in the same room. It all feels rushed whenever dialogue is present.

The supporting cast of Tristan's friends and enemies make far more convincing people. Perhaps this is exaggerated as each is a bit of a foil of another and some fall into certain tropes which gives them some other unwritten quality of depth. Amber the outsider, and Leila the tough girl, though still underdeveloped, are vastly more convincing as real humans than Tristan. Even at the end of the book, I have trouble describing who Tristan is. He is the generic leader-ish guy. He isn't a fan of the mean people, so he hangs out with the nice people. He has an incredible amount of potential depth from his past, his trouble with the law and his family, but it is barely ever tapped beyond a superficial remembrance of painful words. I need more to care at all about this kid. Even when danger closed in, I was left concerned for the other characters, never him.

With this level of engagement, I was pleased to see that there was still a level of excitement and wonder growing as I read. The world itself is convincing enough, and some of the characters hold enough merit to drive interest in the plot. The headmaster himself was a very satisfying departure from the Dumbledore version of things. He is not benevolent, he does not trust you or help you. He is a wrathful unknown entity, and that is magnificent. The mystery grows to a head shortly before the climax, where the resolution becomes apparent: someone becomes the prime suspect quite rapidly. When they are officially revealed as

the saboteur, any intended shock value is lost. All I felt was a bit of "Ok, so that makes sense. Sure."

Here is where I lose any of that growing good feeling for the book. Everything happens quickly and ends. That should be fine, but we don't even get the full story. We only find out what happens after the fact, as people relay the information to us. Instead of getting any kind of details or closure on the events, the remaining characters move on in only a few pages. The last conjures memories of Harry Potter on the train home after a wonderful adventure. Except the adventure was over in a heartbeat with everything up in the air (which is fine with this designed to have a sequel or be a trilogy or something, but still leaves you feeling empty and unfulfilled). I don't feel connected to Tristan whatsoever, so pulling at the heartstrings for the last bit seems shallow and poorly conceived. The characters I did feel any connection to are barely even covered. It's just a case of ok, story's done, let's all go home and feel good, right guys? No. It feels hollow.

Jennifer Henschel says

Whoever coined this as the "Next Harry Potter", is absolutely insane. This book was horrible. The characters are hateful or worthless. There is not a single character that really has any redeeming qualities.

The plot line was inane.

The point of the magicians is completely horrible.

DO NOT READ THIS BOOK!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
