



## **Handbook for Mortals (Handbook for Mortals #1)**

*Lani Sarem*

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## **Handbook for Mortals (Handbook for Mortals #1) Lani Sarem**

Zade Holder has always been a free-spirited young woman, from a long dynasty of tarot-card readers, fortunetellers, and practitioners of magick. Growing up in a small town and never quite fitting in, Zade is determined to forge her own path. She leaves her home in Tennessee to break free from her overprotective mother Dela, the local resident spellcaster and fortuneteller.

Zade travels to Las Vegas and uses supernatural powers to become part of a premiere magic show led by the infamous magician Charles Spellman. Zade fits right in with his troupe of artists and misfits. After all, when everyone is slightly eccentric, appearing "normal" is much less important.

Behind the scenes of this multimillion-dollar production, Zade finds herself caught in a love triangle with Mac, the show's good-looking but rough-around-the-edges technical director and Jackson, the tall, dark, handsome and charming bandleader.

## **Handbook for Mortals (Handbook for Mortals #1) Details**

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Author : Lani Sarem

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## **From Reader Review Handbook for Mortals (Handbook for Mortals #1) for online ebook**

### **Amber (bookstacksamber) says**

Hard no from me.

<https://twitter.com/stampepk/status/9...>

[http://www.pajiba.com/book\\_reviews/di...](http://www.pajiba.com/book_reviews/di...)

<https://twitter.com/gildedspine/statu...>

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### **Tanya Tate says**

Edit 4: The fact it is now 50 plus new 5 star fake reviews on this book which we as a community squash the drama of it like 6 months ago is mind blogging. Lani dear LET IT GO!! I hope these people are being paying good to do a fake 5 star reviews..

Edit 3: When the author of "My Immortal" comes out of hiding to clear up the rumors that wrote the book and denounce what Lani did , you know you fucked up! <http://knowyourmeme.com/news/my-immor...>

Edit 2: So I read a couple pages to it thanks to Amazon having the first three chapters available on the sneak peak. Honestly I couldn't even finish reading it cause it like a big wall of text that didn't make any sense. So there! I read a little bit of it so my review will stay in the GR guidelines.

Edit 1: I'm just hearing about this but what the everlasting fuck??

You can't buy your way to the best seller list!

<https://twitter.com/stampepk/status/9...>

[http://www.pajiba.com/book\\_reviews/di...](http://www.pajiba.com/book_reviews/di...)

<https://twitter.com/gildedspine/statu...>

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/b...>

Lawd!

I'm breaking my " don't rate a book unless you read it" rule for this!

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### **Melanie Gillman says**

Zero stars for trying to cheat Angie Thomas out of her #1 spot on the NYT bestseller list.

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### **Shannon says**

I read the Amazon preview so you don't have to. In addition to being a scam (see every other legitimate review for details), this book is legitimately god-awful. You can't even escape the (long, rambling) foreword

without encountering glaring punctuation errors.

As for the book itself, well, read the preview only if you want to feel talented by comparison. The book opens with not one but four epigraphs, followed by seven solid paragraphs of absolutely nothing. That's not an exaggeration. You have to endure seven paragraphs of navel-gazing from a protagonist who desperately wants you to know how pretty and interesting she is without directly saying so, before anything comes even remotely close to happening.

Recommendation: Avoid. Unless hate-reading is your jam, I guess.

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### **Bentley ★ Bookbastion.net says**

How did this author seriously think no one would notice her quietly buy her way onto the NYT bestseller's list when no one has actually read the book - if it even exists and isn't a clever plot on her part to jumpstart a career in filmmaking in Hollywood. Shady practices as a creator earns a no way from me, which is unfortunate because the plot might have actually interested me, once upon a time.

Twitter thread here: <https://twitter.com/stampepk/status/9...> for those out of the loop.

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### **Estance Moriarty says**

I never review books without reading them. Some extracts of this book have circulated & had this book found its way into my hands, it would have been a hard pass for me.

- White-slim-pretty-privileged-cis-heterosexual-woman describing herself as "different"? This is not different, this is the same, this is not special, this is what we are told over & over we should conform into. I didn't suffer years of abuse at school because of my difference only to end up receiving this message. This is not different, this is boring.

- It's plain bad writing. This is the writing on the first draft you've ever written at 12 that you end up scraping entirely because you can't believe how badly your writing was when you first started. It okay to write this. It's not okay not to question yourself, maybe ask around for opinions & amend your work in order to make it better.

- If you announce in the summary on the back cover that your book has a love triangle, what I hear is, the life of the character is so easy, what with them being white, allying with people with money who don't really have much to complain about, that you made up some fake emotional storyline so the book isn't just a bad description of the dream life you made up for yourself in your head.

- In France, the Rrom community is the most persecuted, overtly hated & discriminated against. In the past, after centuries of persecutions, Rroms were targeted by the Third Reich & thousands of them died in an orchestrated genocide. Lately, the dormant racism faced by Rroms has picked up, in part due to a written police ordonnance asking cops to specifically target Rroms which led to thousands of Rroms being deported. The life expectancy of Rroms girls is the lowest of all in the whole of Europe.

It's not okay to appropriate an ethnic origin & a culture, it's never okay. Attributing a mysticism & giving "magic powers" to Rroms aggravates a context already filled with bias against Rroms by othering them.

- Everything is political. Stumping on The Hate U Give, a well-written, deep, riveting, smart & complex book about racism written by a black woman, by using influence & money your white privilege gives you access to is disgusting. The book whose place you stole isn't just any book & it matters that THUG is the book whose place you stole.

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### **S.K. Gregory says**

I have read a lot about this book in the last few days, but I'm going to ignore it and base my review on the book itself. I was given a free copy for an honest review. The idea of someone with magic, working on a magic show seemed like an interesting story.

There are many issues with this book. Over looking the issue of copyright infringement through the use of several song lyrics, the main character is quite unremarkable. In fact she seems quite conceited at times, but because she stammers when nervous she is supposed to be relatable.

The love triangle doesn't hold up well. Obviously drawing from other books, the author tries to create tension between Mac and Zade, but it is completely unfounded. He becomes angry and rude for no reason. There is no chemistry between them. Then there is the 'nice guy' Jackson. It doesn't hold up.

The book is repetitive to the point of being condescending to the audience. It states a point, then again, and then a third time in a couple of sentences. Along the lines of - he was short. I couldn't believe how short he was. Looking down on him, because of his height... It made it very tiresome to read.

A dramatic event such as one of the performers needing CPR from Zade is poorly handled. Zade starts CPR, then it jumps to Mac arguing with another guy. Then the woman is being taken away by paramedics!! No description of what is happening, of she revived her or anything.

I tried to give this book a chance but two thirds of it could easily be removed as repetition and still have a story. Not recommended.

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### **? jamieson ? says**

if I ever die in suspicious circumstances, please get YA book twitter to investigate because they cracked the case concerning this book (IT BOUGHT ITS WAY ONTO THE NYT BEST SELLER LIST LMFAAO) in under an hour and that's the kind of investigation I deserve

everyone talking about the author & this book

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### **Mari says**

Thoughts while reading here: #snarkformortals

Video review with lots of spoilers and feelings about why this is the worst.

I'm only giving this 1 star because I give *everything* at least one star. This was without a doubt one of the worst things I've ever read. To give you context, it's less harmful than Fifty Shades, but probably worse in terms of writing. I hated Bella more than Zade, but this has even less plot than Twilight, if you can imagine.

That said, apart from anything you've heard about Lani Sarem and the release of this book, Handbook for Mortals is unquestioningly awful. There is no plot, it's terribly written, I refuse to believe an editor even looked at it, and I would go so far as to say that some parts read like even Sarem never read them back to herself.

It's obvious stand-in fic and of the bad kind, because the entire plot really and truly is, "everyone tells the author stand-in how beautiful she is." The rest of the "plot" is the set-up with no payoff. The rest of the plot is in the damn blurb because it's that light. It's also terribly transparent, from how the MC is described (exactly like Sarem), to the inclusion of "celebrities" or references to the same. I mean, the author stand-in is caught in a love triangle with a man named Jackson (as in Rathbone because twilight 4 eva) and a man named Clark Kent. I wish I were making that up.

Add to all of that the author's behavior, as if people owe her or her story anything, and hot damn. She gamed her way to #1 with a book that could be easily bested by the fanfiction you wrote in middle school. Hate it.

I thought I would add more to this review, but there's little else to say, though here is a list of the best worst things that happened:

- On a windy day, Zade wishes there were a photographer around to capture her hotness.
- Everyone grinds their teeth when they are mad.
- The author prints the lyrics to Dixie Chick's Wide Open Spaces and then tells us why they perfectly apply to the scene. Yes.
- The magician's name is Charles Spellman.
- Before someone knocked on a door, she described how he made a fist.
- After saving someone from drowning, Zade decides to grab a guitar and play outside while sitting on a curb, soaking wet.
- Seriously, the main love interest's name is CLARK KENT.
- The other love interest is in the Plain White Ts as in the actual real life band and all the members are name dropped but there is no Jackson in the band but now there is.
- The MC randomly runs into Carrot Top and Wayne Newton at the mall?
- The MC uses her magic against a teenager working at Hot Dog on a Stick.
- She prints emojis in like 72 point font in a scene like a cool person.
- "Make out with tongue."
- David Copperfield-esque character is the MC's dad because that's not creepy.
- The MC tells us about stuff that happened while she was in a coma (or whatever) by magically stealing memories from people.
- The book ends with "And they lived happily ever after. OR DO THEY?"
- The author quotes Stephenie Meyer at the beginning of the book and thanks her at the end, and spells her name incorrectly both times.

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### **Kelly says**

I read it so you don't have to.

I read it to talk about on the Worst Bestseller podcast, coming soon.

It's awful.

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### **Rachel says**

**Edit:** I took the time to read some available excerpts of the book and JEEZ. Can I have that time back? It reads like a first draft. As a YA budding author myself, I recognize the signs of the rough draft where every thought got barfed up onto the page in the heat of artistic pursuit. BUT this thing went straight to print without some very necessary editing. I'm going to try to be optimistic and say that there might be a reasonably okay book buried in there somewhere... but probably not.

**OP:** I just want to know what the HECK is going on with this book?? I'll gladly read it and change my review later on, but there's way too many red flags here for me to have easy feelings about this. Here's the link where I discovered the issues: [HERE](#)

So, someone explain this to me - and see below for the DUPLICATE 5-star reviews..... uhhmmmm, what?

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### **Kerin34 says**

I haven't read this book, but there's a story going around that you should probably read if you're thinking of buying (if you can even buy it):

[http://www.pajiba.com/book\\_reviews/di...](http://www.pajiba.com/book_reviews/di...)

Seems like a d!@# move to me, so here's one star.

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### **Elise (TheBookishActress) says**

AND NOW THERE ARE FAKE RATINGS THIS IS SO... WILD

oh my god. she bought her way to the top of the NYT list.

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### **Beth Cato says**

I received this ebook through the publisher via Netgalley. As a published author myself, I am well aware of the way that author Lani Sarem and her team manipulated the New York Times list. I also know that the Goodreads ratings for the book consist of mostly one-star ratings due to the book's reputation and the sample available on Amazon.

I don't rate or review any book unless I finish it. I wanted to judge *Handbook* with as much fairness as I

could, even knowing its history, so I endeavored to read the entire thing. I finished it.

If this had been any other book, I would have declared it Did Not Finish (DNF) in the first few pages.

*Handbook* reminds me of my first novel efforts, the ones I trunked and will forever more keep trunked. Because of that, I sympathize with the author to a degree. I wish she had had other experienced authors around her to offer honest feedback--or maybe she did, and she ignored their feedback to stay true to her vision. I did that with my first novel attempts, too.

The book reads like a non-reader's mistaken assumptions of what YA is, though this book is not YA (the heroine is about twenty-five). For a proclaimed fantasy book, magic is barely present (and very little of it actually done by the heroine), and doesn't make sense. It's... kind of like a romance, but with no chemistry. The entire middle of the book consists of dating scenes interspersed with clothes shopping.

The first few pages show an ignorance of novels and how they are formatted at a basic level, as it actually has a foreword introducing the author. An intro like this is included for anthologies or collections, not for a debut book. I don't know who the author is and her movie fandom creds aren't relevant. The book needs to sell itself.

As *Handbook* begins at chapter 0, we meet Zade as she argues with her mother and departs Tennessee for her new job in Las Vegas. The narrative is overwritten--again, a common flaw in early novels efforts and rough drafts, period--and the paragraphs are dense, with the dialogue often buried. Zade's actions here are the only time in the book that she shows agency.

Agency means the character instigates the plot. She/he makes the decisions and carries the book, rather than doing what author-god decrees. Agency within a plot is a tricky thing to master; honestly, my agent and editor still ding me on this during revision stages.

But this point of criticism leads to another issue: there is no plot in *Handbook*. She goes to Vegas and joins an illusionist's show, and starts going on a lot of dates with Mac and Jackson, though all men find her to be incredibly hot and almost all women loathe her. This is explained at one point as a side effect of Zade's immense magical power. At one point, some other magic user attacks her, and makes an odd cameo appearance later; the ending implies a second book is supposed to explain this person, but it has zero bearing on anything in this book.

This book is about dating. And shopping. But for a book that tries to play up the love triangle angle, ala *Twilight*, there is no triangle. Mac has all of the emphasis and character development--actually, he's the only character who has an arc and develops in any way, and he's the only one who acts at the climax. He has many of his own scenes shown in italics (though the use of italics is inconsistent and confusing, as some other characters' POVs are seen through it sometimes). The other character, Jackson, is a musician and good-looking, and has the perk of actually believing in the abilities of tarot readings (one of Zade's skills), but it's pretty clear he has no chance with Zade.

As for the romantic dialogue, it's... George Lucas-esque. That goes back to that matter of agency. As all men love and want Zade, she doesn't need to make any effort to win over Mac or Jackson.

Zade had potential to be an interesting character. The book only expresses vague ideas of what her magic is actually like and there is zero growth in her abilities--the kind of thing an actual fantasy book needs. Zade is perfect in every way, a cliché Mary Sue (again, a new author trait). Everyone thinks she's hot. Compliments

on her hair are a regular theme (it reads like a Sally Beauty Supply ad at a few points, quite literally). She can also play guitar and sing, and she loves "crotch rockets" just like Mac. And as the ending of the book shows, she is morally bankrupt.

I suppose I should get to the ending.

Most books use an ending to show how the hero/heroine has grown throughout the book. It's an opportunity for a grand show of powers, a confrontation with a villain, etc. But this book has no character growth, and while it has a few unpleasant people, there is no villain.

Instead, Zade tries to pull off a grand illusion during the Vegas show that utilizes "dangerous magic." She uses Mac as her anchor for this magic, but he's mad at her, so he steps outside to smoke. (Yes, there are several points like this that make no sense--he could step out for a phone call, or be sick, or go on vacation, etc). Cue her magic going awry. The show ends, and she goes off stage, falls unconscious, and starts bleeding everywhere. At the hospital, the doctor says Zade is internally bleeding and will quickly die.

Zade is rushed back to Tennessee to her mother's advanced magical care, where, as Zade is bleeding to death, her estranged parents reunite and casually tell Mac the story of how they met. There is zero tension throughout this long section. Zade's loved ones are literally at the kitchen table, drinking tea, and reminiscing about the late 1970s as Zade bleeds out in the next room.

How do we know this? That goes to the morally bankrupt part: Zade has ripped memories of all these events from her parents, Mac, and everyone who witnessed her collapse in Vegas. The very end of the book has some vague mention of her getting permission from those closest to her, but she obviously couldn't get this from everyone, as her magical skills are a big secret.

So yeah. She thieved memories from almost everyone she knows, and also rifled through her parents thoughts when they were young and horny, which has another level of violation and squick. There is absolutely no moral consideration of these actions.

Also note that Zade falls unconscious at 67% through the ebook. She wakes up at 91%. The climax, such as it is, consists of Mac plunging a dagger-that's-really-like-an-EpiPen (that's how the book explains it) into her heart.

She recovers, returns to Vegas where everyone greets her with a surprise party (the proper welcome for someone who nearly died), and her estranged parents remarry. The book ends with the promise (threat?) of a sequel to come that will explain the weird magical girl who tried to blast Zade at the mall.

I wanted *Handbook* to be worthwhile of the fuss and effort that went into getting it on the NYT list. It's not.

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### **Kai says**

the drama surrounding this book is more interesting than the book itself

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