



## **The Temple of Doubt**

*Anne Boles Levy*

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“Fiercely original with a capable and plucky heroine, *The Temple of Doubt* rips open a door to a fresh new fantasy world.” —Amalie Howard, author of the Aquarathi series and *Alpha Goddess*

It's been two six-days since a falling star crashed into the marshes beyond Port Sapphire, putting the wilds of Kuldor off-limits to fifteen-year-old Hadara. She feels this loss deeply and is eager to join her mother beyond the city limits to gather illegal herbs and throw off the yoke of her tedious religious schooling. Medicines of any sort are heresy to the people of Port Sapphire, who must rely on magic provided by the god Nihil for aid. And if people die from that magic, their own lack of faith is surely to blame. At least, that's what Hadara has been taught—and has so far refused to believe.

Hadara and her mother have ignored the priests' many warnings about their herb gathering, secure in knowing their tropical island is far from Nihil's critical gaze. Then two powerful high priests arrive from Nihil's home city to investigate the fallen star, insisting it harbors an unseen demon. This sets off speculation that an evil force is already at work in Port Sapphire and brings one of the holy men to Hadara's doorstep. When he chooses Hadara as a guide into the wilds, she sets off a chain of events that will upend everything she's been taught about the sacred and the profane.

*The Temple of Doubt* is the first installment in a series that follows a teenager who is given a greater destiny and purpose than she could've ever imagined.

Sky Pony Press, with our Good Books, Racehorse and Arcade imprints, is proud to publish a broad range of books for young readers—picture books for small children, chapter books, books for middle grade readers, and novels for young adults. Our list includes bestsellers for children who love to play Minecraft; stories told with LEGO bricks; books that teach lessons about tolerance, patience, and the environment, and much more. While not every title we publish becomes a *New York Times* bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

## The Temple of Doubt Details

Date : Published August 4th 2015 by Sky Pony

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Author : Anne Boles Levy

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## From Reader Review The Temple of Doubt for online ebook

### Christina says

Awful writing. Could have used a good editor. MC was annoying. DNF at 35%. Got fed up after reading "I sighed crisply" one too many times. Ugh

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### Hope says

First, I won this book from goodreads first reads. And am thankful for it.

Second there is trigger warnings for this book; mentioned rape and attempted rape, as well as an odd seen where the main character is kind of magically molested. There's also some body horror towards the end if I remember correctly.

This book gets really intense towards the end. In fact, it's a slow build until a little bit past the half-way point. I didn't find anything troubling with the book and I have triggers that are similar to the ones mentioned above but they're fairly brief, can be skimmed over and skipped because they're not mentioned again after they happen or they're just mentioned in passing. Just thought someone would like to know.

Now, with all of that aside, I must say that I adored this book. I found it enjoyable and a nice fantasy story with everything else being applied in a realistic way. I wanted to punch some characters in the face, I wanted to pat some characters on the back, and I wanted to get to know some characters that we only got small glimpses of in the actual story.

It's about a girl name Hadara, that's essentially a black sheep sort of character in her island. She lives in the shadow of her perfect younger sister and even in her own eyes she sees herself as this nuisance that cannot do anything right and I just fell in love with her in the first chapter.

The book starts out with her seeing a shooting star and then does on from there and how her and her family's lives change through this ordeal. I don't want to put too much about the actual story because it's just the story of her finding the shooting star and then helping with the disposal of it with other themes on the sides. It's a lot about Hadara and how others view her as well as how she views herself. It's a lot about the religion of the world and how this shooting star is a threat to that. Then there's the minuscule amount of 'romance' that bugs everyone so much. I don't want to spoil it and lack the ability to properly describe this book's plot to give it justice... So, this is a little bit of a mess. Forgive me.

Since it rubbed a lot of people the wrong way, let me address the 'romance'. This book doesn't really have romance in it. Hadara became infatuated with one of the soldiers. She doesn't fall in love nor does she think she's in love. I feel as if it's extremely important to put the character's age into account when critiquing such things and given that she's fifteen of course even the littlest crush can seem like a big thing.

I mean, some people make it out as if she liked him just because he didn't rape her. This definitely isn't the case. Hadara even said it herself in the book that she didn't know why she cared so much, she just did. It wasn't as if she put him on a pedestal, far from it, because Hadara still saw him as one of those soldiers that raped women and stuff but she didn't want to, she desperately hoped that he wasn't like that. It's a crush but

it's really realistic in the sense that she doesn't know why and she doesn't want to be; she just is. That's just how I see it.

The religion in this book is so frustrating but is also realistic. It was a frustrating religion but I find most religions to be frustrating. It's a religion in a fantasy world and it was that nice mixture of religion and fantasy. It definitely reflected a lot of religions that are in our world today and I it made me appreciate the story even more because of that.

I cannot even wait for the second book to come out. It makes me so sad that I have to wait basically a whole year for it. Especially because I don't get a lot of books that make me feel like a mess. This one most definitely did.

Ah, I just love it so much. haha

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### **Jessica Zendejas says**

I received this book from a giveaway done by goodreads.

Overall this book was average. When I read the description of the book it left me excited to start the book. I thought it was going to a great addition to my dystopian collection, but I was kinda disappointed. The whole book, for me, was confusing for me ( I am a little slow sometimes) this lead me to not fully enjoy the book. I just couldn't help feeling that I was missing something. I don't dislike the book, its just probably not my style. I don't want to discourage anyone from reading the book because of my review, very read has to discover on their on whether they like it or not.

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### **Elizabeth Drake says**

Quit at 25 pages.

This world is really strange and poorly described. The religion is extremely confusing and I was getting frustrated trying to understand what the heck is going on. Things were not going well but I could have hung in there.

Then I hit a scene that really disturbed me

"He held me by some unseen force, rooted to the spot, angry prickles burning my flesh that didn't spare any part of me, and burned most fiercely between my thighs. I panicked, clenched my legs tighter, and grabbed at Babba's sleeve, furious this Azwan could see what no man should without my permission. He could sense and explore and violate the most sacred and secret part of me, even with my father standing there."

Ok, the writing in this book is not exactly clear but did that religious leader just psychically molest a young girl in front of a huge crowd of people, while she was standing next to her father? This happened on page 25 - that is pretty early in the book, during the first introduction of the Azwan and does not bode well for where the sexual exploitation in this book would go. So, I'm out. I can't handle that crap.

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## **Kirsty (Amethyst Bookwyrm) says**

Thanks to Edelweiss and Sky Pony Press for giving me this book to review.

Hadara's life changes when a falling star crashes near her home in the off-limits wilds, where she and her mother pick illegal herbs to heal people, which is believed to be heresy. Two powerful priests arrive to investigate the star as they think it is a demon come to try and destroy the God Nihil. Hadara and her mother are chosen to be guides in the wilds but Hadara doubts the truth she has been taught about the sacred and profane.

The Temple of Doubt has an interesting story concept but I just could not get into it. It seemed to story moved along slowly which might have contributed to me not getting into it.

Hadara is an ok character as she is feisty and rebels against her way of life. However, I found her crush very shallow and irritating because she hardly knew the bloke and because he did not rape her does not mean that he is a good person and love interest. Most of the other characters I did not feel much for, one way or another.

The Temple of Doubt is an interesting idea but I could not get into it and stopped at 58%.

This and my other reviews can be found at Amethyst Bookwyrm

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## **Luke Morris says**

'The Temple of Doubt' defied any expectations I might have held for it. It's a young adult fantasy, but it gives us no dragons, elves, or wizard schools. The female protagonist doesn't wield a bow and arrow (or any other weapon), and she isn't caught up in an awkward love triangle between handsome but tortured rebels (or handsome but tortured supernatural monsters). Magic doesn't solve all problems, and even seems to create more problems than it solves.

What Ms. Levy's novel DOES give us is a strong heroine in a bad situation - a situation that gets worse by the page, forcing the young lady to use all her ingenuity and pluck to keep herself and her family alive.

From the gods-based magic system of the world of Kuldor, to its theocratic government, to the hidden, non-violent way the people rebel, 'The Temple of Doubt' presents a fantasy tale unlike any I've seen. And the ambiguities and deeper symbolism move the story into the realm of literary fiction.

What is "good" and "evil" in a world where God cannot be trusted? What recourse do people have when they reach the limits of faith, and the use of reason is denied? The priests and their superiors seem to be the "bad guys" here, but they may be the world's only hope of salvation. Hadara, our protagonist, chafes under the moral strictures of her patriarchal society - yet she is not truly a rebel at heart, and wishes to be an obedient and pious daughter.

When high prophets from the Temple of Doubt drop by Hadara's island town to investigate the arrival of a demon, her world goes to hell. Magic is thrown about, lizard-men attack, giants in armor patrol the streets, a

forest burns, the priest's lay down martial law - and Hadara and her family are dead in the center of it all.

Moral questions arise throughout: the tenuous balance between science and religion (and what happens when that balance is tipped too far in the latter's favor); the choice between following one's heart and doing one's duty, and when (and to what extent) it's appropriate to do either; and the ethics of compromise in situations in which there is no clearly correct answer. The paradox of doubt that everyone - even gods - must bear.

**READ THIS BOOK.** It's fun, fast-paced, and reads well for the plot alone (if you're not into the deeper literary analysis). The characters are relatable, flawed but efficacious, and I found myself rooting for some and against others at different times. It takes place in a well-developed, self-contained, fully-believable world - a world that might not be as inviting to visit as, say, Hogwarts or Middle Earth, but a fascinating place that we can clearly see and experience, safe in our knowledge that our world is not (hopefully) like that. Yet.

While this story doesn't end on a cliffhanger, per se, it is clearly not over. In fact, the publishers were kind enough to include the first chapter of book 2 at the end, just to whet our appetites. So, I can't WAIT for 'The Well of Prayers'!

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### **Sarah says**

Received A Free Copy From A Giveaway (Goodreads)

This was actually more interesting than I expected! And it made you think about religion, and government, in the process. Maybe it was only me, but the entire issue with control, what you can and cannot do, what is right and wrong..just seemed entirely real to me. I would most definitely recommend this to everyone.

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### **Charlotte says**

The Temple of Doubt introduces one of the most believable speculative fiction teenage protagonists I've read in a long time, a girl named Hadara, who finds herself unwillingly placed at the center of events that not only shatter the pattern of her own life, but will probably change her whole world.

It starts with a shooting star, falling into the swampy heart of her island home. Soon after, two high priests of the god Nihil and their military retinue arrive from overseas, taking over the place, and demanding help in finding what has fallen from the heavens, suspecting that instead of a harmless meteorite it is the vessel of a demon. Hadara and her mother are the only locals familiar with the swamps; they've ventured there often, gathering plants to make forbidden medicine--magic from Nihil, not natural cures, are all that their religion permits. And so Hadara and their mother find themselves guiding the priests and their guards into the dangerous realm of the nonhuman people, the lizard-like Gek, whose make the swamp their home.

And there Hadara confronts the mystery of the fallen star, and the threat it might hold...

And in the meantime, Hadara is very much a teenage girl! Even before the star fell, she was chafing against the strictures of her society; unlike her pious sister, she had no patience for learning religious dogma by rote, but would rather be out and doing, held back by a society that gave little room for girls to do so. She's

a direct sort of person, saying what she thinks even when she shouldn't, and that doesn't exactly go over so well with the priests and their soldiers. Basically, she's in a situation way over her head, that's she's not tremendously equipped to deal with. And to add to the complications of her situation, she's fallen hard for one of the foreign soldiers in a very believable teenage crush sort of way (with indications that it might turn into more).

We see the events of the story unfolding as Hadara does, and this both strengthens the story and limits it. The material details of her world are clear and vivid, and the religion is well-developed, but her somewhat insular upbringing and limited point of view can be frustrating. The presence of two non-human races in her world is something she takes for granted, for instance, but it takes the reader by surprise, and the nuances and backstory of this part of the world is never, in this first book, fully explored. And perhaps because (at least this is my impression of her) Hadara doesn't have the character or education to understand religious/political machinations and manipulations, there was a frustrating sense that lots was happening that the reader wasn't getting told. And the focus on Hadara's day by day experiences, though it did bring her vividly to life, meant that the pacing was somewhat slow--the action and tension are at times overshadowed by her introspection and mundane reality. So it won't be to everyone's taste.

That being said, since I enjoy tight character focus, and since I was fascinated by the religion that shapes Hadara's world, and since I was hooked on the mystery of the space thing, I myself was not slowed down in my reading, but turned the pages briskly and with enjoyment. Even though I wanted to shake Hadara occasionally, or draw her attention to things I wanted her to be thinking more about, I enjoyed spending time with her and look forward to her continued adventures! (and I think readers who are themselves teenage girls will not have the wanting to shake her thing but will simply be able to relate very strongly with her).

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### **Pam says**

Wow. New world. Totally new belief system. Much love.

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### **Rachel says**

I received this book from the Goodreads First Reads program.

An original story with a lovable, if clumsy, heroine. This was only the beginning and I find myself already speculating as to what will happen in the next installment. I am hoping a certain character is not really dead, and that some of the heroines new found gifts will prove their worth in the next book.

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### **Becca W says**

I won this book in a goodreads giveaway.

I give this book 4 stars for creativity and originality. Everything about this book was so different from all the other books I've read. The book was a good read overall, and I'm glad to have been able to read it.

I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a creative read!

I hope you enjoy The Temple of Doubt by Anne Boles Levy!

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## Cathy says

I received this book from entering a Goodreads drawing.

I liked The Temple of Doubt very much. It is well written and the main character, Hadara, is very likable, intelligent and strong. The story flows quickly and it was easy getting absorbed by what was happening. I found it a quick read and am looking forward to book two.

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## Kuzu says

There were interesting elements to the world-building (I picked it up at first because it seemed like the author might have used Jewish inspirations, and that's definitely true, in the naming and the use of the term "dybbuk" to describe a supernatural creature), but nothing comes together at all. If you asked me to trace the protagonist's character arc, I couldn't. I'm not sure she actually learned anything or changed in any way. Similarly the secondary characters, even the villains—at no point was it clear what anyone's motivations were, or why they made the choices they did from scene to scene. Plus the handling of the sideplot with the lizardlike "Gek" people—uncomfortably echoes every colonialist narrative about indigenous peoples. It's also disappointing to find a fantasy world with Jewish elements in which the religion is oppressive, misogynistic and generally lacks admirable qualities. This is not what I meant all those times I cried out for Jewish fantasy!!

Overall hugely disappointing.

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## Christina says

I hate rating books. I didn't dislike it, but I didn't absolutely love it so... 3.5 stars?

As a whole, the concept of this book was interesting. I like the thought of a rebel against religious fanaticism. But the entire society was annoying. They were completely puritanical, and it made reading about certain things almost painful.

### **Things that were awesome about this book**

The Gek creatures. I mean come on. Lizard people? That's pretty cool. The magic that was used was also pretty neat. The overall plot was interesting too.

### **Things not so awesome about this book**

The world as a whole. I didn't like the way the puritanical people acted about everything. I also wanted to punch Amaniel in the face multiple times, but I have a feeling that was the point. One other thing that annoyed me was Hadara's (view spoiler). She thinks she's all grown up and in love, but the girl has no idea what love is.

The end kind of fell flat as far as cliff-hangers go. But at least I was still asking at the end, "Was it a star? A demon? Maybe another god?" What was it that fell from the sky?

Like I said, I didn't love it. But the plot kept it interesting enough for an enjoyable read. Recommended to those who like more fantasy-like dystopians.

**Note:** Received eARC from Edelweiss for an honest review.

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## Pixel says

**With an intelligent protagonist and a fresh take on fantasy, plus a cast of complex and interesting supporting characters on the side, Anne Boles Levy's *The Temple of Doubt* is an intriguing first impression.**

I remember two years ago when I first heard about this book. I also remember how badly I wanted to read it, how badly I wanted to fall in love with it, to fall in love with its heroine. I am so glad that all of those wishes came true.

Just like Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*, this book really makes you realize just how important a story's writing style can be. Anne Levy does something brilliant with this story: she uses Hadara's narration as a means to characterize her. Just from her choices of diction and syntax you can tell that Hadara is a smart girl. Her inner voice is peppered with word choices that make her the kind of person you would want to listen to:

*Several wrists bore telltale welts from that pointer, and all eyes were focused on me, standing useless at the front of the room. Humid air hung tight and heavy in the boxy classroom, though I'd have been sweating in any case. School did that to me.*

This attention-grabbing writing style is not unwarranted, though. Hadara also displays her smarts through being extremely observant - she constantly points out the intimate details about the ridiculousness of her world, where religion appears to be law, even in situations where, as she notes, faith alone might not be the best solution. It is so refreshing to read a fantasy novel where the most notable trait about its lead character is their intelligence. I LOVE IT :3

Another thing I should mention about Hadara is that she has hints of a snarker. And man, if she isn't funny when she snarks:

*"No, please. I'm so sorry. I'm just an ignorant island girl. Can't we leave it at that?"*

*"Or what? You'll crush another of my toes?"*

*"I'm truly sorry I crushed one of your toes. I was aiming for all of them."*

*"You're forgetting where you are."*

*"In my own home?"*

*"You are in the presence of a Guardian of Nihil's Person with a full complement of arms."*

*"If not the full complement of toes."*

I cannot be the only one who almost laughed out loud at that one XD

Now, with all of that said, very rarely does Hadara read like a Mary Sue. Even with all of her intelligence and abilities she is still frequently challenged throughout the book. In fact one of her aforementioned best traits - her sharp tongue - does actually kick off several of her main conflicts. So while Hadara is strong, she is still flawed, making her a very intriguing heroine.

(Warning: light spoilers here) (view spoiler)

The characters are far from the only point of enjoyment here. Kuldor is quite the expansive world, and it is clear that Levy has spent a lot of time developing its more fantastical factors. The plot keeps tossing new and creative elements at the reader. What new and creative elements, you ask? Let's see: a religion that demands that literally everyone have unwavering faith in its god, magical Azwans, and a possessing demon, not to mention a race of lizard people. As someone who always leaps at opportunities for original fantasy content, this planet has quite the satisfying lore.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. If you're someone who enjoys fun, complex characters and is slightly bored with vampires and wizards and rewritten fables, I highly recommend this.

I am Pixel, and I eagerly await *The Well of Prayers*!

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