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Born Wicked (The Cahill Witch Chronicles)



Synopsis

A gorgeous, witchy, romantic fantasy by a debut author! Perfect for fans of Kristin Cashore and the Beautiful Creatures series! Everybody thinks Cate Cahill and her sisters are eccentric. Too pretty, too reclusive, and far too educated for their own good. But the truth is even worse: they're witches. And if their secret is discovered by the priests of the Brotherhood, it would mean an asylum, a prison ship--or an early grave. Then Cate finds her mother's diary, and uncovers a secret that could spell her family's destruction. Desperate to find alternatives to their fate, Cate starts scouring banned books and questioning rebellious new friends, all while juggling tea parties, shocking marriage proposals, and a forbidden romance with the completely unsuitable Finn Belastra. But if what her mother wrote is true, the Cahill girls aren't safe--not even from each other.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Okay, let me start this review with full disclosure: I really wasn't that interested in Born Wicked. In fact, I only read it because I had the opportunity to read an advanced copy of the book, and thought: Why not? From the very first page I was very pleasantly surprised at this book: start, unique, well-written and honest characters in a truly compelling plot that's unlike just about everything else

in the YA genre right now. Set in an alternative version of turn-of-century New England, Cate Cahill has always known what her future would be: marriage, or a life-long commitment to the celibate, religious Sisterhood. In a world controlled by the oppressive, religious Brotherhood, witches are hunted down and either sent to an asylum, a prison ship, or executed. Cate has been hiding her secret for years - that she and her two sisters, following the legacy of their deceased mother, are witches. Not only must Cate protect her sisters, but she uncovers an unexpected prophecy and learns secrets of the Sisterhood that will challenge the very fabric of the Brotherhood. The first thing that drew me into this story was the elegant writing style and unique alternative history that pulls from America's Puritan period and the Salem Witch Trials to create a lush history that's easy to get lost in. And to top it off, Cate is a down-to-earth, honest character that's well-constructed, realistic and easy for readers to relate to. I thoroughly enjoyed her feisty, rebellious spirit and drive to protect her sisters from anything that would threaten them. It was interesting to see how author Jessica Spotswood handled religion, magic and feminism here, especially since I felt like she did a nice job of juggling these themes without ramming them down the reader's throat. For example, when I first started the book I was a little concerned that Spotswood was going to paint religion in a negative light for oppressing people, especially women. But while the Brotherhood is obviously religiously-based, it was far removed from a recognizable religion (in fact, the Brotherhood felt more like a somewhat corrupt amalgamation of numerous religions) to not feel like some sort of attack on organized religion while still portraying feminist ideals without bordering on the super radical (I would note, however, that this book has virtually no appeal to male readers). It didn't take long for Spotswood to win me over with *Born Wicked*. I was riveted to each page up until the very end, and I can't wait to see what happens next in Cate's story. Unique and unexpected, *Born Wicked* is a lush piece of fiction that's truly a delight to read.

When I started reading this one, it took me awhile to get into the flow of it. The story started pretty slowly, but picked up about a third of the way through. If you find it starts too slowly for your liking, punch through - it's worth it. This world is brilliantly devised and written. It seems to take place in the 19th century, but it's hinted at that this is not the same 19th century from our past. This is a world where witches once ruled, but now the Brotherhood is the authority - seeking to subvert and oppress women. Every single trial and punishment I can recall from the book was a girl or woman - never a man. Women accused of witchery were either sent to an asylum or they mysteriously disappeared. This is the world Cate Cahill and her two sisters have grown up in - as witches. Cate has spent the three years since their mother died trying to protect her sisters and keep their secret,

all while watching other girls from the town be accused, tried, and punished for witchery. I can't imagine the strength of character required for Cate to stay sane while living through the events of this book. My heart aches for her - for the choices she was forced to make, and for the sacrifices she made. My only complaint with the book is that it ends in the middle of the story. I know that it's a series and will pick up in the next book, but it always bothers me when nothing is tied up at the end of a book.

Born Wicked is a charming and heart-racing story, filled with magic and secrets, sisterly affection and forbidden love, prophecies, romance, betrayal, life changing decisions and absolutely phenomenal characters. Intense, spellbinding, sigh-worthy, beautifully written and thoroughly compelling - it's by far the best witch book I've read. Loved, loved, LOVED it! Set in alternate reality of 1890's New England, Born Wicked tells a story of Cahill sisters: Cate, Maura and Tess. These three lovely girls are not only well educated, bright and financially well-off, but also strikingly beautiful. Unfortunately for them, they live in times when such things as the ability to think for yourself, expressing interest in books or any scholarly pursuits are strictly forbidden. Women are not supposed to be smarter than their "better halves". They should be obedient, supportive and fully devoted to their husbands. Anything other than that is considered going against Lord's will - or should I say Brotherhood's will. Due to their eccentricities (i.e. always visiting the local bookshop, not receiving callers, keeping to themselves and not socializing enough) Cahill sisters have been getting a reputation of "bluestockings". That, of course, makes them suspicious. As in "they-are-surely-evil-witches-and-we-should-arrest-them kind of suspicious. That alone would be enough to get them in trouble, not to mention that if the Brotherhood would discover their darkest secret - that they are indeed witches - they would be sent away to rot in prison or get locked up in a mental institution for life. They would be in even greater danger - possibly life-threatening one - if anyone knew what they've only just learned themselves - that they are the witch sisters from Zara's prophecy. The ones capable of bringing about a new golden age of magic - or a second Terror. With only six months left to choose between marriage and the Sisterhood, Cate must figure out the best way to protect her sisters - from the Brotherhood, the Sisterhood, and from themselves. Talk about a bewitching tale! This book stole my heart. It was a perfect blend of mystery, magic, romance, adventure and twisty plot developments. For me, this was the most delicious witchy treat I've ever devoured. And I did devour it. It took me one afternoon to finish it and I enjoyed myself a lot. I've seen mixed reviews of this book on Goodreads - people either really loved it or just didn't find it captivating enough for their taste. From what I've noticed, the majority of the negative opinions was

based on the first few chapters - apparently those readers couldn't bring themselves to invest any more time to actually finish the book and possibly find out if the whole thing turns out to be the way they assumed it would be after only a couple of pages. Now, I don't want to criticize anyone - I'm in no position to do that. It just saddens me a bit, that people find it so easy to drop a book after reading only the first couple chapters. Yes, the pacing is slow at the beginning. Yes, Jessica Spotswood spends quite some time introducing the characters and the setting, and building the (absolutely phenomenal in my opinion) atmosphere. Yes, it is not what you'd call an action-packed story, full of blasts and fireworks. No, you will probably not feel the need to bite your nails down to the elbow, throw the book out the window (those of you who read *Bloodrose* might now know what I'm talking about), nor ponder the inner working of the universe (although you will probably feel compelled to stroke the cover every five minutes - it's just sooooo pleasant to the touch!). But hey, not every novel has to be packed with breath-taking action right from the very first page. Nor does it have to provide a ground-shaking experience, profound revelations, sparkly eye-openers and gorgeously hot bad guys (who in the end turn out to be just so complex in their evilness, sophisticated and, well, not-entirely-bad-just-misguided). *Born Wicked* is a beautiful book. It has so much to offer! The atmosphere, the setting and the characters - everything is well thought-out, fantastically depicted, rich in detail and flavor. Magical. Most importantly, the plot line is great! The tension never lets up, there's the omnipresent sense of impending doom - we all know something bad is bound to happen (prophecy, duh~!), that there won't be any happy ending (at least not in the first book, obviously), instead there will be disappointment, betrayal, lies, secrets, sacrifices, mistakes and regrets. Add to that Mrs. Spotswoods fabulous writing style and Cate's excellent narrative voice, and what you get is a book you can't afford to miss. Jessica's lush prose and her ability to breathe life into her characters is what made this book a truly unforgettable experience for me. Cate was a great protagonist and even better narrator. I found her very likable, caring and always ready to sacrifice herself for the people she cared about, even if it meant throwing her own happiness out the window. Maura annoyed the living soul out of me! Stubborn, irresponsible, temperamental and quarrelsome, she failed to recognize her real enemies and fell victim to their lies. And when I say that she was annoying, I don't mean it in a bad way. It was an essential part of her character and without it, well, the plot wouldn't make much sense. The romance part is well balanced and subtle. Technically, there is a love triangle, but you don't really feel like it's a truly heartbreaking one. Cate really didn't seem to struggle all that much with deciding which boy she preferred: the wealthy and handsome childhood friend, Paul, or the sexy intellectual gardener, Finn. It's actually the consequences of her decision that she had some trouble dealing with. The

chemistry between Finn and Cate was undeniable. Heart-pounding and electrifying. And the hidden compartment scene? Oh. My. Gosh. I think if I had Cate's magical powers, I would probably be all covered in feathers myself. Then there was the prophecy, which, too, was kind of brilliant - and by that I mean it was rather vague and open to interpretations. Just when you thought you had it all figured out there came another twist in the plot and your jaw would literally drop to the floor. Nothing was obvious or predictable. The story was full of surprises, each of them quite gut-wrenching and exciting. How often do you read a book that keeps you guessing until the very end? It's a true gem among YA books, one that can easily be enjoyed by fans of many different genres - from historical novels, fantasy, romance all the way to dystopian. Like I said at the beginning of my review, *Born Wicked* is by far the best witch book that I've read. I fell under its spell and am now counting days to the release of the second part. I strongly recommend this book to everyone who enjoys historical settings, enchanting atmosphere, smart dialogues and unexpected plot turns with just the perfect amount of swoon and drama. And - OMG! - have you seen that cliffhanger ending?! Never before have I been so eager to get my hands on a sequel!

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