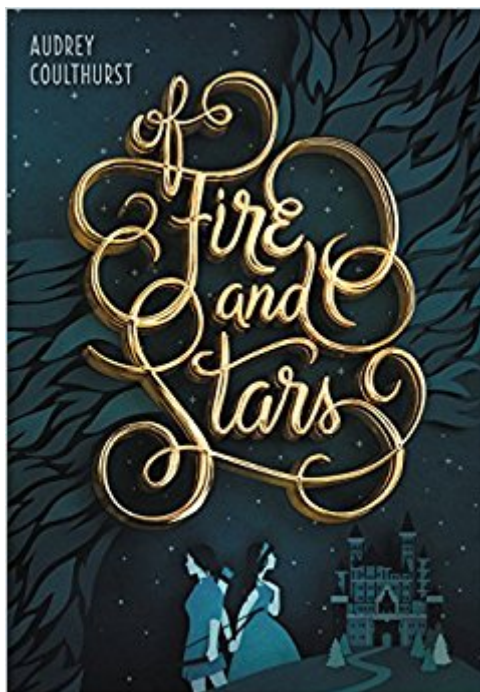


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# Of Fire And Stars



## Synopsis

An atmospheric and romantic debut fantasy perfect for fans of *Ash* and *The Winner's Curse*. Betrothed since childhood to the prince of Mynaria, Princess Dennaleia has always known what her future holds. Her marriage will seal the alliance between Mynaria and her homeland, protecting her people from other hostile kingdoms. But Denna has a secret. She possesses an Affinity for fire—a dangerous gift for the future queen of a land where magic is forbidden. Now Denna has to learn the ways of her new kingdom while trying to hide her growing magic. To make matters worse, she must learn to ride Mynaria's formidable warhorses before her coronation—and her teacher is the person who intimidates her most, the prickly and unconventional Princess Amaranthine, sister of her betrothed. When a shocking assassination leaves the kingdom reeling, Mare and Denna reluctantly join forces to search for the culprit. As the two work together, they discover there is more to one another than they thought—and soon their friendship is threatening to blossom into something more. But with dangerous conflict brewing that makes the alliance more important than ever, acting on their feelings could be deadly. Forced to choose between their duty and their hearts, Mare and Denna must find a way to save their kingdoms—and each other.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up • In this fantasy world of kings and magic, Princess Dennaleia has been groomed for her most important task: to marry Prince Thandilimon in order to solidify the relationship between their kingdoms. It is a future that she fully embraces, hindered only by her secret magical affinity for

handling and creating fire, which she has kept hidden and cannot control. Upon her arrival in the kingdom of Mynaria, Denna is paired with Princess Amaranthine (Mare), who is to give her riding lessons in preparation for the wedding day. Mare's standing in her own kingdom is somewhat tenuous, as she has very little interest in her duties as a princess and prefers to spend her time riding and training horses. The two strike up a friendship amid a series of royal murders and terrorist acts supposedly orchestrated by renegade magic users and separatists. The real focus is on the attraction and love that soon develop between Denna and Mare. As they work to solve the murders and mysteries, the teens fall in love and begin to question their predestined roles. Same-sex love is neither forbidden nor controversial in Mynaria, so the novel's theme does not center on LGBTQ issues. It is simply a love story that just happens to be about two women, and the setting and plot are tangential. Some mild sexual scenes make this appropriate for older readers. VERDICT Those looking for a complex sci-fi/fantasy may be a little unsatisfied with the narrative. However, the gentle LGBTQ romance will win over many teens. — Patricia Feriano, Montgomery County Public Schools, MD

— “A powerful and exquisite love story” (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) — “Reminiscent of the kinds of fantasy books I loved when I was a young teenager, tales of princess angst, horses, and the blossoming of reluctant love. This book is bold enough to create a world that moves beyond the prejudices we are still fighting in our real world.” (Caitlyn Paxson, NPR) — “A deeply romantic, bold, and nuanced fantasy. You will be captivated by Denna and Mare and their star-crossed love for each other.” (Malinda Lo, Author of *Ash and Huntress*) — “Lovely” — “a worthy debut that succeeds as both an adventure and a romance.” (Booklist) — “Murder, mayhem, magic, romance-and horses” — “a romantic fantasy that will appeal to those who appreciate character-driven novels.” (Kirkus Reviews) — “I devoured *Of Fire and Stars* in two sittings; it’s a delightful debut, full of all the things I like best in a fantasy story, including not one but two wonderful heroines. I’m looking forward to seeing what Audrey does in the future!” (Mercedes Lackey, New York Times bestselling author of over 125 books, including the *Valdemar* series) — “*Coulthursts*’ debut is an absolute delight; I loved seeing these smart, fierce princesses fall in captivating, slow-burn love as they investigate political assassinations and unravel magical conspiracies.” (Corinne Duyvis, author of *Otherbound* and *On the Edge of Gone*) — “Romantic, compelling, and bursting with fascinating characters, *Of Fire and Stars* is the fantasy novel we’ve all been waiting for.” (Amy Tintera, author of

Ruined) – “A slow-burn love story about two unique, brave, and endearing young women. (Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA))

So, the book just came out today, I thought to read the first chapter or three. Eight hours later I finished my 'quick preview'. The book was a little slow starting but meticulously researched and with characters that grew on you. The mystery reveal was barely telegraphed, but looking back was quite apparent. Nicely done. No little flowers of princesses here. We are led to slowly meet and learn the major characters, and by the end, they are dear friends of ours, and I am saddened to see them go. 400 pages, devoured cover to cover, and wouldn't be upset to see more. Thank you.

It's a pretty short book, YA 400 pages only took me about an afternoon to read, so it's great to pick up since it's an adventure without a massive time investment just by itself. I was very satisfied with the storyline of the book and enjoyed the themes and the characters. But the characters didn't develop as much as you saw more of their personality through time. There was a pretty good twist, and it was foreshadowed well without giving it away. I can't really get into it without massive spoilers, but I can say that there were plenty of loose ends and the pacing of the book had a lot to be desired. I kept getting bored in the first half of the book and accidentally skipping paragraphs. Also, the horses were described more than the people, so it's pretty clear that this is a dialogue-driven story. It would translate to a visual medium pretty well, though. The second half is worth the patience but good pacing and would have fixed my antsy-ness. But the pacing did contribute to the tone and 'feels' of the first half of the book so I'm a little conflicted about changing it. If you don't like books that change POV, don't pick this up, as it switched between the two heroines every chapter. Their "voice" of the writing wasn't any different between the two lovely ladies and sadly I was often confused on who I was reading at the time. Being a first person book without writing voice-style change between POV changes is just a bummer and probably the biggest disappointment, especially since the author has a master's in writing. Nonetheless, it was a fun adventure and I enjoyed living it with them. I would definitely pick up a part two if the author plans to make one. If you enjoy royal drama and gals bein' pals, pick it up. but don't expect a masterpiece.

While I think that this book could have benefited from additional character development (in some cases it was difficult to feel sympathetic toward even the two main protagonists, because they seemed immature and shallow) and additional plot development (too many things were rushed or glossed over, possibly in an attempt to keep the page count reasonable), I thought it was excellent,

and well worth the cost and time spent. All in all, I felt that it was far better than many books that are published from far more established authors. The story and the writing put me a little bit in mind of Katherine Kurtz's Deryni Chronicles, which I read and enjoyed many years ago. I hope that this story, like that one, continues for many more sequels to come. If it does, I'll be first in line to buy them.

This book was a joy to read! As a fellow queer author of stories about queer ladies, I'm always on the lookout for queer fiction. I spotted a review for this particular book on a blog (can't remember which) and the description alone had me pressing the buy button. As for the story itself? It was immensely enjoyable from start to finish. The thick layers of political intrigue overlay a very cute but also well-realized romance between the two leads. I found both Denna and Mare to be wonderful characters, both of whom had very well fleshed out personalities and motivations. If you like fantasy, political intrigue, magic, girls who love girls and horses, you'll probably like this book. I recommend it for sure!

I am so happy to have come across this book! It was so well written! The author has created a textured world with two main characters that I connected with. I found myself immersed in the plot line trying to figure out who was behind the murders just like Denna and Mare! I hope a follow up book is in the works, you have such a wonderful writing voice and bringing to life these two characters really made my day to read about. Thank you.

What a wonderful read for young and old alike. The world, with its six elemental gods, and its magical affinities has huge potential for further exploration. I would love to see a continuation of these characters' story or a story with new characters set in the same world. The love story is sweet and well-told, and the author does an excellent job of normalizing same-sex attraction within the world. The problems between the characters have more to do with politics and the circumstances of their situation rather than conflict over them both being women. I also enjoyed the fact that there is a good deal of moral ambiguity in the story, and especially in the antagonists, many of which are not evil, but are working from a flawed set of assumptions and beliefs. Overall an excellent, quick read. It's appropriate for tweens and above, and recommended for all WLW

I haven't read a good fantasy romance in a long time between two women. Even the LGBTQ community is really dry on good stories that can make a good movie in the future. I can actually

picture this story being a movie one day with how great the storyline is. Loved the slow burn romance between Mare and Dennaleia. It takes a bit for the love to develop, but it was so worth the read to get to the magic moments. Classic happily ever after. Thank you so much for 'Of Fire and Stars'. It really inspired my imagination again after a long, long, deadlike sleep.

I absolutely loved this book. I've read a lot of LGBT fiction and I'm not normally impressed by the originality, story, or writing but this book didn't compromise on any of these. The book was beautifully written and was hard to put down the whole read. The characters are loveable and seem real. I love how it ended and look forward to a sequel!

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