The Amaranth Enchantment by Julie Berry

Short Of The Mark

A delightful fairytale by a lyrical new voice.

When Lucinda Chapdelaine was a small child, her parents left for the royal ball and never returned. Ever since, Lucinda has been stuck in perpetual servitude at her evil aunt’s jewelry store. Then, on the very same day, a mysterious visitor and an even more bizarre piece of jewelry both enter the shop, setting in motion a string of twists and turns that will forever alter Lucinda’s path. In this magical story filled with delightful surprises, Lucinda will dance at the royal ball, fall under the Amaranth Witch’s spell, avenge her parents’ death, and maybe—just maybe—capture the heart of a prince.

My Personal Review:
My 15-year-old daughter, Bailey, recently wrote this review of The Amaranth Enchantment:

By R.Bailey Scott

Original, relatable, humorous, and fantastic do not begin to describe the fresh, yet masterful, prose of Julie Berry, author of The Amaranth Enchantment. The story grabs you within the opening lines:

`Someday, Lucinda, she says, these jewels will all be yours.

They smile, kiss me and hurry down the hall warning me to be good for Nurse. Papa so tall and handsome. Mama sparkling and trailing perfume

They leave for the ball.

But, they never come back.

When it ends 306 pages later, you will find yourself asking for more.
The Amaranth Enchantment follows the captivating story of fifteen-year-old Lucinda Chapdelaine as she struggles to find herself and replace the sense of family she lost when her parents died.

Sent to live with an evil aunt, Lucinda works as her house servant until one day when a mysterious stranger arrives at her uncle's jewel shop and sets her off on a magical journey full of astonishing twists and turns, temporary disappointments and joy.

The storyline is fast-paced and exciting, and the plot unique and intricate, something rarely found in fairy tales. While headed toward a happy-ever-after-ending, the book entertains and amuses with many laugh-out-loud moments, while still revealing a depth of understanding about loneliness, home, and discovering one's sense of purpose.

While the focus is on Lucinda's adventures and victories, Berry inserts the character of a predictable prince, for, as she puts it, What's a fairy-tale without a prince?

However, Berry deliberately did not let the prince get in the way of developing the female protagonist, Lucinda, who is both strong and independent. It's not like other fairy tales where the heroine is destitute until the prince comes to save her. Lucinda's victory did not depend on the prince, Berry said.

I saw Lucinda as having a lot of strength, character, and grit, which she uses to reclaim her home and identity. I hope that upon reading this girls will know that they have the ability to build their own future homes and identities by choosing the life they want to live and pursuing their dreams through education and experience. Love, while wonderful, doesn't have to come along to achieve happiness.

Along with creating a strong and independent character, she wanted to develop a heroine whom adolescent girls could relate to. Berry insists that that Lucinda could be any girl, for she is neither excessively brave nor exceptionally brilliant. She is a very believable person whom I hope girls can see themselves in, she said.

As Lucinda searches for self and home, Berry breathes life into fantastical settings, people, and creatures. Many female Mormon authors who write for teenagers -- Shannon Hale and Stephanie Meyer, for example - create worlds within best-selling novels, leaving teenage girls hungering for more.

Such electrifying fantasy added great strength and originality to their works. Now, The Amaranth Enchantment takes magical imagery to new heights. She paints settings so vividly that readers will find themselves entering her imagined world instantaneously.
Berry said, my religion has given me perspective of life and love stretching beyond this world to the afterlife and really helped in shaping my creation of Lucindas world.

I hope that young people will think of me as someone who produces works that are exciting and fun, she said. But The Amaranth Enchantment, while amusing, also beautifully illustrates and brings insight to complex themes and emotions such as loneliness, home, and identity.

Berry says: It is my hope that at least one girl will read The Amaranth Enchantment, love it, and be swept away by the fantasy and adventure.

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