



## Tiger's Curse

*Colleen Houck*

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**Tiger's Curse** Colleen Houck

Passion. Fate. Loyalty.

Would you risk it all to change your destiny?

The last thing Kelsey Hayes thought she'd be doing this summer was trying to break a 300-year-old Indian curse. With a mysterious white tiger named Ren. Halfway around the world. But that's exactly what happened. Face-to-face with dark forces, spellbinding magic, and mystical worlds where nothing is what it seems, Kelsey risks everything to piece together an ancient prophecy that could break the curse forever.

Tiger's Curse is the exciting first volume in an epic fantasy-romance that will leave you breathless and yearning for more.

## Tiger's Curse Details

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Author : Colleen Houck

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## From Reader Review Tiger's Curse for online ebook

### Sabrina The Trash Queen says

This book just pissed me off.

TWO LITTLE WORDS:

**Love triangle**

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### Inday-Elie says

**WARNING:** This book has the ability to make you succumb to constant daydreams and irregular bouts of hopeless romanticism while reading. So word of advice? grab that pillow and head for your room, cause someone might think you've lost it when they see you squealing around like an idiot. haha!

oh my....is it so wrong to think that Alagan Dhiren would probably look like this?

**or maybe this?**

While I, on the other hand is looking like this...

**Initial reaction.**

**then...**

lol! Im swept all over!! :)

okey, enough with my drooling- I mean ranting. So where do I even begin? Right.

The whole story unfolds when **Kelsey**, the ~~seventeen~~ eighteen year old heroine of this story decides to take a two-week part-time job on a circus. Not knowing that this is the start of a major change in her life when she meets the mysterious white Tiger (**Dhiren**) owned by the circus troupe. Heck, turns out the Tiger is actually a prince from thousands of years ago doomed to take the tiger's form and Kelsey is said to be the one to help

the prince break the curse. Together they fly to India in order to find a way to break the curse. Along their numerous perilous ventures, Kelsey finds something more than she could possibly handle: matters of the heart?. It could have been easy for her not to fall if only Ren wasn't so PERFECT?

*Sigh*

and I'm dying to read the next book woohoo!! :)

*\*runs off with book 2\**

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## **Kogiopsis says**

Edit: 9/27/2014 Retroactively reducing my ratings for these books because when I first read them I did not notice the racism/cultural appropriation.

Okay, I just cannot be bothered to write a long review for this book. I can barely be bothered to write a review at all. The writing was terrible and the pacing painful from beginning to end, but the characters weren't a total waste (well, until Kelsey suddenly and inexplicably decided to be stupid and push Ren away. You know, I was sort of enjoying watching the slow build of her relationship with him and it was kind of sweet, and then - what the fuck, girl, is all I really have to say) even if they were generally cliched and pretty silly. The plot is pretty far from mind-blowing but it serves its purpose. That being said, the writing is really so abysmal that if it hadn't picked up a bit at the end, this would have been a one-star read for that reason alone. There were times, especially in the beginning, when I could barely get through half a page without hitting a sentence that made me cringe.

Anyhow, at this point I really just don't give a fuck anymore. Other than its writing (and really, has this seen the eyes of a professional editor? Because if it has and it still came out this way, they should be ashamed and possibly fired for not doing jack shit) this book didn't really make me angry. It didn't make me happy. Reading it was... not suffering, but *drudgery*. I could not in good conscience recommend it to someone, except maybe on April Fool's Day and then only if I didn't like them.

Two stars for apathy instead of anger. I cannot fucking believe that I'm still going to read the sequel, but it was a gift.

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## **Holli says**

If you are looking for a good YA paranormal romance series, look no further. **SERIOUSLY**. You will read, *re-read*, and then read some more ... until your entire life, lives, breaths, *screams*, **TIGER**, and your family threatens to have you committed. Just start collecting everything Tiger now, and save yourself some time. :)

Now that I've got that out of the way, let's start with the review.

Appearance...

The first thing I noticed when I spotted this book was the detail in the cover. I'm not a shallow woman, but I do admit that a pretty cover will catch my eye. I love that the cover is textured, and that when you turned it in

the light, it picks up multiple colors. The way the design is blended gives it an almost smokey, or misted image, that is haunting.

Which makes it all the more appropriate, because this story sticks with you, long after your finished reading it. It will invade your dreams, your waking thoughts, until you find yourself drawing little hearts encircling the name, Ren.:)))

The second thing that impressed me was the weight of the book. Call me crazy, [If you've made it this far into my review, I'm sure your already questioning my sanity], but when your a dedicated reader, you love the feel of the book in your hands, the texture and smell of the pages. So when I picked up this book to take a peek at the content, I was more than impressed with how solid it felt in my hand.

Content, getting to the story line ...

Colleen Houck did a fantastic job, thinking through the world she created for this series. It is very apparent while reading, the dedication she put into the research supporting the plot. The amount of detail intricately woven into the story, made it easy to visualize what the characters were seeing. It was like sitting front row center of the ultimate movie. [without the stiff neck]. :) FANTASTIC!

The series is unique. We have seen many series based off Angels, Nephilim, Vampires, Werewolves, Fey, Mermaids, Shape shifters, Ghosts, Zombies, ...ext. However, this is the first series I have ever read based on Tigers. It was fresh and took me into uncharted territory.

I really learned a great deal while reading this book. It was laced with Indian culture, history, and religious practices, that were simulated beautifully. I felt like I was vacationing in foreign land while sitting in my living room. Kudos Colleen. You went above and beyond making this story believable to your readers!

I appreciate the balance between the history, action, and romance. It didn't matter which direction the book was taking, I continually found myself turning the pages *needing* to know what the outcome was. Once I started, I found it impossible to put down. Once I was finished, I found myself flipping back to the first page. I promise you, this will be a book you read multiple times!

The characters ....

Wow, where do I begin? ....

Kesley is the heroin of this book. She was well built, and I found it easy to connect with her. I appreciate her strength, and integrity in following through on her word. I also relate to her independent nature, and hesitance in allowing herself to be vulnerable enough to get hurt. Though there were times I was screaming at my book for choices she made, ... I appreciated the suspense it built, which was what kept me diving deeper and deeper into the story.

Mr. Kadam ... how awesome is he? In many ways, Mr. Kadam was Kelsey's rock. He was always there to teach, help, listen, and most of all, support her with the hard choices she faced. He loved her like she truly was his family. Not to mention his devotion to the Tiger brothers. His character is solid, and grounded. He is unwavering and has true integrity. Mr. Kadam is every little girls dream for a grandfather.

The brothers ... [insert dreamy smile here] :) **Ren**, oh Ren, how much I love thee! LOL Tall, dark, handsome, strong, genuine, dependable, determined, HANDSOME, ;) .... those eyes! Sigh\* :) His character also has a high level of integrity that is swoon worthy. Ren is a man of his word! He surpasses all other Princes in

whatever fairy tale happily ever afters you can muster up. You can not help but fall hopelessly in love with his character! **Kishan** ... whew! Kishan is also a man of his word, only he is more hands on. Kishan sees what he wants and he takes the front line. He is also as attractive as Ren, with the bad boy air tacked on. A guilty indulgence. Colleen did not go easy on her readers! :)

There is only one thing I can honestly say about Lokesh. I hope he gets swallowed whole by a dragon in Voyage. The end. :)

Overall .... This book is magical. It is full of action, adventure, true friendship, and a romance so breathtaking, you'll want to revisit it again and again. Have a box of tissues handy! Go get you a copy NOW! You won't regret a minute of it! :) FIVE STARS

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## Clair says

*Tiger's Curse* has to be one of the most embarrassingly incompetent books I have ever read.

When I first read it in February 2012, I railed against its poor quality and abominably ridiculous characters, but ultimately didn't include it in my end-of-year ranking of the worst books I'd read. In fact, I was even generous enough to give it half a star for some modicum of originality.

I'm now prepared to shave off that half a star and promise to kick my paradox self upside the head if I ever get the opportunity to time travel back to that year.

Compared to the stereotypical paranormal romances and dystopias that have characterised young adult fiction for the past few years, the premise for *Tiger's Curse* was downright refreshing. An adventure story in a far-flung country rather than some stationary high school drama? Sign me up!

It's just a shame that what I got was a white saviour story with appallingly bad writing. In fact, the author herself is quite happy to excuse lazy, hackneyed writing as simply following the Hero's Journey boilerplate (a BIG no-no if you know anything about creative writing), and Westernising her mythology and shrugging that you shouldn't use it to pass any 'mythology exams.' Yeah. A living, breathing modern culture with ancient roots, and the author doesn't seem to have bothered to even glance over Wikipedia in some instances.

In fact, there's a scene where Kelsey has an afternoon to herself in a library, and picks out a book on Hindu mythology. One paragraph in, she's complaining about there being 'too many names' (when there are only three or four), and she actually falls asleep before going any further.

That sums up the research process to me. This isn't the work of somebody who had a deep fascination with mythology, took books on Desi scripture and folklore out of the library and read academic articles on the Indian subcontinent's ancient literature.

I also recall Houck jokingly saying that Kelsey is an orphan, simply to 'get the pesky parents out of the way' so she can start along on the Hero's Journey. Well... Why would you even do that? Ignoring the fact that the Hero's Journey is an archetypal story structure and not something you should use as a template, there's pretty much no need for Kelsey to be an orphan. As far as I see it, Kelsey being an orphan was just an excuse

to pad out the story with overly theatrical scenes where Kelsey narrates how she's closing off her heart!! Usually following some sort of relationship drama (also there to pad out the plot) with Dhiren or Kishan, the aforementioned princes.

Why, pritheer, couldn't Kelsey have her parents still alive? Imagine a world where Kelsey wants to study to be a veterinarian, and her parents are ecstatic that a benefactor from India offers her a summer job at an animal reserve. Imagine that this Kelsey also has Indian heritage and wants to learn about her roots, so her parents are happy for her to travel. Rather than the white bread, stale YA heroine that's been used time and time again.

The book kicks off with Kelsey getting a job looking after circus animals (including a motherloving *tiger*), despite a rather huge lack of qualifications. It turns out she has a connection with this mysterious beast, however, and soon she is whisked off to India to accompany the tiger to an animal reserve. This turns out to be false, however, and Kelsey is drawn into a centuries-old curse it seems only she can break.

In fact, Kelsey is prophesied as Durga's chosen one. Admittedly, the story does mention once or twice that it's odd for Durga to choose somebody who has no connection to the cultures that venerate her, but it's always skimmed over. Kelsey is a white American who doesn't even bother to learn about Hindu culture or mythology, yet she's the chosen one. How do you think the goddess' adherents would feel? I'd be pretty annoyed. Being the chosen one to break the curse also carries the implication that only a white person has the power to solve a problem that lies in another culture. And if you can't see how that's problematic, I invite you to walk down to your local library and crack open a few books on cultural imperialism.

In order to find the magical MacGuffin known as the Amulet of Damon (that's supposedly key to breaking this curse but is hardly ever mentioned), it turns out that Kelsey has to solve a few puzzles here and there whilst exploring ancient temples. The book follows the Mary Sue methodology, however – Kelsey is always the first one to come up with the solution to the puzzle. Despite the fact that Dhiren's benefactor, Mr. Kadam, is a scholar who has had three hundred years to start solving the curse, Kelsey swans in and is able to fix things right away.

Which leads us to our talk about colonialism. Kelsey is literally Dhiren and Kishan's saviour, and later, there's something about the holder of a mythical item called the Golden Fruit being the saviour of India's hunger problems. Kelsey is able to solve centuries-old quandaries with very little effort on her part, and as mentioned before, she's the chosen one of a native goddess.

Kelsey is the white person who comes in to 'fix' things for an Indian figurehead, prancing around in culturally-appropriative dress (like henna, a sharara), and always treating the country she's in like it's some wonderfully 'exotic' backdrop rather than an actual nation with a history and an identity outside of: "Ooh, India has pretty architecture/culture/mythology! So pretty! Pretty pretty pretty."

As mentioned earlier, the author doesn't seem to have done much research beyond the first few search results in Google. It never actually feels like we're in India. In fact, all the parts where we're following Kelsey and Dhiren on their quests through ancient temples feel like somebody wrote up a description of the Indian temple stage in *Tomb Raider III*. There's a vague mention of an actual temple once, but it's just in name only.

Characters never really explain why Kelsey is special. She just is. Scarce to say, I have never come across such a bland protagonist in my life. Kelsey has pretty much nothing going for her – no education outside of her high school diploma, and pretty much nothing interesting going for her. There's no mention of her having any friends in the preliminary chapters. All she does is live with her foster family, read, and attend school. You'd expect a 17 year old to be somewhat well-rounded and have more to their personality than that, but no. Well, actually, Kelsey does have a personality. If making corny jokes and speaking like a PSA

narrator from the 1940s is a personality. Later on, Kelsey becomes bitterly sarcastic (even though her fluency in sarcasm is utterly pathetic), and it's an utterly jarring shift.

But yes, Kelsey is told by an Indian medicine man in the middle of the jungle that she is the chosen one of Durga. The medicine man speaks like Yoda and paints the magical henna on Kelsey's hand that glows when she finally gets to meet Durga in the flesh.

Enough about Kelsey, though – Dhiren (nicknamed 'Ren') also had a vacuum taken to any interesting facets of his character. He is basically the archetypal prince. Gorgeous, regal, and a bit of a spoiled brat when things don't go his way. The latter aspect results in several instances of him being horribly possessive over Kelsey, even when she tries to break things off with him. In fact, his brother Kishan is the safer bet, but he's so rarely in the plot.

Which brings us to Mr. Kadam, the man-at-arms from back when Ren and Kishan were the princes of the Mujulaain Empire. Mr. Kadam was also cursed by the evil wizard who usurped the kingdom, but he retains his human form. Somehow, despite the fact that he's immortal, all he really needs to do is just contact one of his descendants every once in a while, fill them in on the curse, and expect them to help out. That's... awfully convenient.

In fact, in the Tiger's Curse drinking game I have planned, there's a rule where you take a shot every single time something terribly convenient happens in the plot.

\* Kelsey's foster parents are awfully okay with her going to India simply because they're liberal health food hippies and not subject to social workers who would like to keep tabs on Kelsey? (No, I don't care that she turns eighteen in the story. My foster sisters were considered the responsibility of not only my parents, but the social care system up until they were *twenty*.)

\* Dhiren the tiger has been passed around various circuses worldwide for hundreds of years, and has never had any paperwork following him around, and he can be sold on to different circuses or travel the world with no problem despite being appearing to be a member of an endangered species? Ren tells us at one point that if he ever wanted to move on from a circus, he'd just act aggressive and the circuses would sell him on to another owner. Awfully convenient, considering that violent circus animals tend to be killed rather than sold on.

You can also take a sip every time there's some bastardised mythology. Particularly in chapters 21-22, where kappa – traditionally Japanese monsters – show up in a mythical realm as an obstacle for Kelsey and Ren to pass through. Eh, who cares, right? It's not like the author could have done research or asked her editor in India if there are monsters in Indian folklore who dwell in bodies of water. "It's Asia! Who cares!" The next book she's writing has Mongolian sand-worms showing up in Egypt, of all places. "Eh, they're desert regions. Who cares!"

Speaking of Asia, there's this weird part in the book where Ren and Kishan's mother is brought up. Her name is Deschen, and it is never ever told to us what country she comes from. They mention all the time that she's 'Asian', but that means nothing. India is a part of Asia. Everything east of the Ural mountains is Asia. Deschen could be from any Asian culture if you're just going to call her 'Asian': Chinese, Cossack, Korean, Desi, Mongolian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Indonesian, Malaysian, Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Tatar, Turkmen, Turkish, Japanese, Kyrgyz, or their equivalents from three hundred years ago. Simply describing one character as 'Asian' makes as much sense as calling Prince William the Prince of England, but only ever referring to Duchess Catherine as being 'European'.

But, Deschen taught the princes everything they know; such as the fact that Kappa must be bowed to in order to defeat them. Somebody with a vaguely Chinese sounding name, living in a period where Japan is

completely isolated and isn't involved in any cultural sharing, knowing about kappa. Hello!

One of the biggest mythological stinkers is the scene where Mr. Kadam and Kelsey get on an airplane (by the way, Mr. Kadam manages to sort out Ren and Kelsey's travelling papers in lightning-fast time) and he quotes a teaching from the Qu'ran that says Allah would send down a tiger to protect his adherents. A Muslim friend of mine told me that in most translations, it's a 'beast' and not a tiger. Plus, Islam's roots took place somewhere that isn't really known for an abundance of tigers. Lions, maybe. Not tigers.

I'm sure that throughout literature, people have taken folkloric elements from other cultures and slightly switched them around a little to their writerly ambitions. But the way the kappa just show up in Hanuman's realm is completely bizarre. They're not the toad/duck hybrids who love cucumber, they're bleach-white aquatic vampire creatures who have a thirst for blood. But also cucumbers. The kappa scene is ridiculous in that to begin with, they are perfectly harmless. Kelsey and Ren cross a narrow chasm with bodies of water on either side filled with kappa, and not once do the slimy, dangerous man-eating monsters swim close to the bank and pull our heroes in by the ankles. They just tread water and watch. They don't try to set a trap for Ren and Kelsey when they're trying to fix a drawbridge. They just bob about in the water and watch.

But, later on they actually get out of the rivers and chase after Ren and Kelsey... just to up the ante, I presume? Kelsey gets bitten by one and nearly dies, and honestly, I was hoping she'd stay dead. But nope, the universe hates me.

Another part of the drinking game involves Mr. Kadam. Simply take a sip every time he info-dumps as if his dialogue is copy-pasted straight out of Wikipedia, and every single time he adulates Kelsey. This man is supposed to have been a scholar of mythology, somebody who wants the curse lifted and will do anything to help Ren and Kishan, even following Ren around the world when he was sold to a circus. But Kelsey makes observations that he seems to have never thought of, and by golly, isn't the white woman from the privileged background so much more wonderful and more observant than me? Ugh.

I can't quite get a grip on what inspired this story. I mean, there's a patchwork of derivative elements here and there. One moment, it's a *Twilight* rip-off with a were-tiger instead of a vampire, then it's sort of *Beauty and the Beast*, and then it's every single YA paranormal romance you have ever read, so much so that you can play bingo with every trite thing that shows up. Heroine with a lack of self esteem? Check. Heroine who is tailored to look like the author? Check. Paranormal boyfriend with possession issues? Check. Second corner of a love triangle showing up and actually seeming like a decent person in comparison? Check. Love interest has emotional baggage? Check. You could get a full house with this book, I tell you.

The writing is absolutely pants at times, needing several more revisions before it was due to hit the big time. Characters often speak completely robotically as if the author was never told you should read your dialogue aloud, and was also told that it is much more imperative to describe clothing and facial features, or the luxurious furniture in the room than the exciting adventures our protagonists embark on to break the curse. In fact, early on in their private jet, Kelsey takes the time to detail just how the shower room has pumps with equal amounts of soap and shampoo, the shower has copper detailing, et cetera. Do we ever return to this amazing bathroom? No? Then why would you detail it so much?

Speaking of over-describing faces and clothing choices, there's this odd preoccupation with beauty in this book. The two princes are the most handsome men you will ever meet and 'any girl would be an idiot to turn them down.' Yesubai, the two princes' love interest from back in the day is only characterised by how pretty she is. Durga is only ever referred to by how beautiful she is, rather than being a benevolent, wise goddess. I wouldn't normally care to point this out, but the fixation is rather odd.

Back to the writing; the pacing is all over the place. Kelsey zooms through her life in America before managing to travel to India with documents so quickly obtained that I'd be wondering if Mr. Kadam had

committed forgery. There are several plodding times where Kelsey does nothing but sit around in the exquisite McMansion in the middle of the jungle (seriously, the hell?) that Mr. Kadam owns. Even when Kelsey and Dhiren have to sneak into a temple, there's no tension whatsoever. In one (guarded) temple, Kelsey hits the nearby musical columns to make an offering, and yet no guards come to check out the noise. Even though there's no way she could have hit a giant musical instrument 'gently', as the book states. Ever tried banging a gong gently? People in the nearby vicinity are still going to hear it, no matter how softly you hit it.

Let's not forget the final chapter, which nearly had me clawing my eyes out just so I would have something to do. Basically, Ren and Kelsey escape Hanuman's realm, and spend the rest of their time recuperating in the mansion. No revelations about the plot are made, except for Kelsey to discover that the Golden Fruit MacGuffin grants food-based wishes. (By the way, Houck – writing a character with a magical food-granting item and only ever using it to wish sandwiches and fruit juice out of thin air, and to wish for a food she doesn't like so she can throw it in the waste bin, whilst staying in a country which has a high rate of absolute poverty and malnutrition? Really not a way to endear her to readers.)

Oh, and Kelsey has to go through this painfully-written, plodding relationship drama with Ren. I couldn't believe at some points that I was about six or seven pages from the end and yet Kelsey and Mr. Kadam go to a swanky restaurant so that more relationship drama can be shoehorned in? Really?

The ending is pathetic. It just ends with a poorly thought out ellipsis that's supposed to function as a cliffhanger. It's like when you read fanfic and the author just randomly ends their chapter because they feel they've been going on for too long. There's also an epilogue tacked on, and it's utterly terrible. Some rich, clearly evil guy stands in an office in a skyscraper, and his assistant walks in to tell him that they have found somebody. To which the clearly villainous fellow does everything but twiddle his moustache before we fade into the Acknowledgements. My god, what a genius sequel-grab!

There are several spelling and grammar mistakes, and if I told you to take a shot every time a painfully clunky run-on sentence reared its ugly head, I'm afraid you'd be in hospital by the fourth chapter. What I find utterly bizarre is that in between its popularity on Amazon's self publishing programme, and the physical publication, no edits were made to it. I bought this e-book in 2012 and yet there's so many mistakes. Did nobody at Hodder & Stoughton or Sterling care?

So... what does this book really have going for it? Nothing, really. Nothing at all. I don't know why I ever thought to even slightly praise it for originality when it's just a *Twilight* knock-off. Stephenie Meyer may not be the greatest writer of our time, but she's Ernest Hemingway in comparison to Colleen Houck.

The characters are bland, lacking personality and obsessed with looks. Kelsey's narration over-describes everything except what we actually paid admission for – the frigging adventure quests to break the curse.

The book has a colonialist subtext which really should have been brought up by at least one editor. You've got a white woman coming in to India and effortlessly saving them from a problem that they have been struggling with for years, and treating Indians like caricatures as opposed to people from a modern country – Mr. Kadam is always willing to please, Ren and Kishan are the hunky exotic princes, and then there's the Master Yoda character who speaks broken English and does nothing else except tell Kelsey how special she is for being the chosen one. Gag me with a fork.

I started blogging chapter reviews of this book in May, and I finally finished in December. Much happened during those six months, but the fact remains that this is one of the worst books I have ever dedicated half a year's worth of blog posts to, and I know what's going firmly on my worst book list this year. 1/5.

(This review is also available on my blog: <http://nessasky.wordpress.com/2013/12...>)

## Zuleeza says

This review is also available on my blog, Qwerty

I had a high hope. A very high hope. As high as Charlie Sheen on crack.

Yup, you got the idea.

I like how the overall concept based on an Indian myth. Hmpphh...I just like stories from India in general. I can watch Hindi movies without subtitles.

I kid you not.

I like cats. Tiger, leopard, cheetah, puma, they are ALL cats to me. I'll risk my life just to pat their heads.

Unfortunately, I had risk my sanity because this book has ~~eats~~ tigers.

It wasn't plain bad. Fallen was plain bad (Hmm...I never get tired of making fun of this book). In fact, I should give the author credits for doing an extensive homework on the background of the all the legends and myths and the elaborated descriptions on each settings.

One thing for sure. This book has a plot.

Well, I would say that the editor did a terrible job because the first three chapters and the last two chapters were just a waste of papers.

Seriously. Who wants to read this? *"There were mounted pumps full of shampoo, conditioner, and soap"*

Here we got two well-characterized male leads, Dhiren and Kishan and we, the readers had to read the story based on the most annoying female lead I ever came across in my whole reading life!

If you think Lucinda Price was annoying, I think this Kelsey was gazillion-fold more annoying.

Like Luce was annoying because she was dumb as soup but Kelsey was just plain annoying, you wouldn't even feel guilty feeding her to one of those bloodsucking monkeys, Kappa.

Here, lemme tell you why:

1. She is useless. She can wield the gada easily (because somehow the gada becomes lightweight in her hands) but not even once, she used that gada to destroy any upcoming obstacles. Like, Ren had to do all the dirty job by himself.
2. She could not even pack for herself. It was Mr Kadam who had to pack her foods, clothes and EVEN shampoo and conditioner. If she is real, I'd lost faith in humanity.
3. She is whiny, pessimistic and ermm..ANNOYING.

*Ren: Are you ready?*

*Kelsey: No! Give me a minute to mentally write a last will and testament.*

*Ren: It'll be fine.*

*Kelsey: Sure it will. I want to make sure I can record every minute of this experience in my journal. Of course, that's probably a moot point because I'm assuming that I'm going to die in the jump anyway.*

Ren, you should just push her off the cliff.

Oh wait, not before you deliver her a good bitchslap first.

Oh dear Ren, why did you have to comb Kelsey's hair and massage her back. You are not her butler or her servant, you are a freaking prince.

Pardon me but I didn't find the combing and massaging as romantic.

*\*sigh\** Why didn't I just give up on Young Adult genre already! I'm sick of all this cheap romance.

Moooooooooving on.

4. Kelsey is a disgrace to the female population as a whole. I'm aware that women can be difficult and complicated. They tell you that they're fine but they're not. They tell you that they're okay but they are jealous.

Why didn't I use we instead of they anyway?

Whatever. The thing is, Ren is treating her well, too well even. At some point in Kishkindha, Kelsey suddenly thought she was no good for Ren, Ren would find other girls once he is free from the curse yada yada. Seriously, Ren didn't do anything wrong and she suddenly broke down and ignored him!

*5. Ren: Faster, Kelsey. Run faster!*

*Kelsey: I can't go any any faster, Ren!*

6. Kelsey's dying thought *'That's okay. Looking at his gorgeous face one last time is enough for me. I'll die a happy woman.*

Me: Die, bi\*ch die!

(few lines later)

7. Ren pulled Kelsey's closer. Kelsey's thought: *I had almost died after all. I deserved some kind of reward for surviving, didn't I.*

8. Kelsey's thought: *My poor, knobby, blistered, sore feet. Oh well, maybe Mr Kadam will spring for a pedicure later.*

My job here is done. *\*Walks away\**

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## **K. says**

Trigger warnings: Basically everything in Twilight is equally applicable here. Except for the chewing a baby out of a uterus part. Thank fuck.

So a colleague told me last year that this series was amaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaazing. Usually I trust her opinion because, like, she reads a ton of YA stuff, but she's a grown ass adult and she's been a high school librarian for about 40 years, so she KNOWS YA. So I figured I'd finally pick this one up and see what the fuss was about, because our students do seem to like it.

This was...I don't even know what this was, to be honest. It was Twilight with tigers, I guess? Let's do this in bullet points because my brain can't handle anything more.

- The main character somehow gets a job at a circus, looking after a tiger. She has zero experience in anything on account of being 17 and giggles through her interview. Still gets the job.
- The job requires her to live at the circus. Her parents are dead and her foster parents - while clearly decent people - are all "BYE, SWEETIE. HAVE FUN BYEEEEEEEEEE"
- After two weeks of doing a super brilliant job with the tiger, a mysterious middle aged Indian dude turns up and is all "Hey, so I bought this tiger and I'm going to take it to a tiger reserve in India. Want to come? You're really good at reading that tiger Romeo & Juliet, so obviously we'll need you around." (No, for reals. She reads the tiger Romeo & Juliet)
- She agrees to this, and is inexplicably allowed to leave the country without a passport????
- She lives in Oregon. They fly to Mumbai via NEW YORK. Like...the fuck. Does Colleen Houck know that you can fly around the planet in the other direction?? (I'm sure in terms of readily available flights, it's easier to fly that way. But they have a private plane. So...?)
- The tiger - obvs - turns out to be a handsome Indian prince who was born in like 1650 and when he was 21, he was cursed and so now he's a tiger all the time, except that for 24 minutes a day, he's allowed to be human.
- Personally, I'd use that 24 minutes to, like, clean and floss my teeth and poop and scroll through Twitter. But noooo, Ren decides to spend that 24 minutes talking to our brainless heroine.
- Kelsey, incidentally, is about as interesting as watching paint dry.
- Much like Bella Swan, she overdescribes EVERY SINGLE THING that she does. I put a pink sock on my left foot. I put a pink sock on my right foot. I put my hiking boot on my right foot. Then I put my hiking boot on my left foot. Then I tied the shoe laces on my right boot. Etcetera. Rinse and repeat for 400 pages.
- Okay, let's deal with the fact that Kelsey - a white, white bread American teenage girl - is, according to this book, the chosen one of an Indian goddess. Like...???? We couldn't have even had an Indian-American girl?? W.H.Y.
- Despite the fact that the love interest is an Indian prince, we're repeatedly told that he's got blue eyes and lighter skin than you'd expect on account of his mother was "Asian". Um. Care to narrow that down to a country?? Also, he turns into a white tiger. And when he's human, he wears all white.
- The whole time that Kelsey's in India, she seems to stay at fancy hotels. Even when she's driving on backwater highways where there's no one to comment that she's driving around with a tiger in her Jeep????
- One of the hotels even manages to rustle up turkey, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, and apple pie for her. Girl. No.
- There's masses of infodumping. Infodumping about the narrator. Infodumping about Indian mythology. Infodumping about tigers. Infodumping about Ren's fucking house. Infodumping about why Kelsey always ties her hair back with a fucking ribbon oh my God why.
- The mythology doesn't make a huge amount of sense. Like, Houck has cherry picked which parts of Indian mythology she'd like to use, and when she can't find anything to fit the bill, she borrows something from another culture (Kappas are Japanese, honey) and claims it's Indian.
- I was pretty excited to read a YA paranormal book set Not In The Pacific Northwest, but this is SO CLEARLY an example of Exotic Location(TM). Probably 80% of the book is set in India, but pretty much all we learn about India is descriptions of food and that the traffic in Mumbai is bonkers.
- As many other reviewers have said, the way that people who don't speak fluent English speak is pretty effing gross. The Italian owner of the circus is very..."it's-a me, a-Mario!". Various people at roadside stalls and hotels in India are all "You want food? Sit! I cook for you". And the most ick-tastic of all is the reclusive monk who lives in the middle of the jungle and speaks like Yoda.

- The antagonist turns up LITERALLY ON THE LAST PAGE.
  - The romance was super boring for the vast majority of the book.
  - Right at the end, Ren got SUPER controlling and jerky and "I'll MAKE you love me!"-y, which made me want to stab him in his stupid tiger face.
  - If I never have to read another description of how perfect Ren is and how good he smells and how warm his body is, it will be too soon.
  - Honestly, I'm kind of skeeved out by the fact that she's 17 and Ren was 21 when he was cursed. Like, I get that it's squicky as fuck anyway because really, she's 17 and he's 350 or whatever. But if he was 21 and romantically interested in a 17 year old? THAT'S FUCKING GROSS, GO AWAY. The fact that he's been a tiger for the last 300 and whatever years makes no difference to how gross it is. Dear authors: please stop telling teenage girls that guys in their early 20s are totally swoonworthy love interests.
  - I honestly could keep going forever because the more I think about this book, the more annoyed I get.
  - To end this review on a positive note, I will say that this book is very readable. It's fast paced and the pages fly by. Largely because NOTHING IS FUCKING HAPPENING.
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°°°.°..°°°.°\_· ????? Ροζουλ? Εωσφ?ρος ·\_·°°°.° ·°°° ★·:~·:★ ?????? ???????  
?????? Ταμετο?ρο Αμ says

Η συγκλονιστικ? κατ?ρα του τ?γρη που σε μαγε?ει και σε ταξιδε?ει σε ονειρεμ?νους κ?σμούς.  
Μια παραμυθ?νια ιστορ?α αγ?πης γεμ?τη δρ?ση αγων?α τρυφερ?τητα ρομαντισμ? και μαγευτικ?ς  
εξελ?ξεις.

Βασιλι?δες παλ?τια ναο? θε?ς πρ?γκιπες μυστικ? αι?νων δυσεπιλυτοι γρ?φοι ινδικ? κουλτο?ρα  
αρχα?ος πολιτισμ?ς κατ?ρες προδοσ?ες και παρα πολλ? αγ?πη ειναι τα στοιχε?α του βιβλ?ου που  
το κ?νουν απ?στευτο συναρπαστικ? τρυφερ? και αξι?λογο σε σημε?ο να κατ?χει επ?ξια μια θ?ση  
στην καρδι? του αναγν?στη.

Απολαυστικ? και τρυφερ? ελαφρ? και αγν? σαν παιδικ? τραγο?δι σαν παλι? παραμ?θι γραμμ?νο με  
?ντονα συναισθ?ματα χρ?ματα αρ?ματα ?χους και γε?σεις της μακριν?ς Ινδιας εκε? ?που ?νας  
αθ?νατος πρ?γκιπας αμφισβητε? το πεπρωμ?νο και αναμετρ?ται με μια αρχα?α κατ?ρα σε ?να  
μοιρα?ο παιχν?δι αγ?πης !!

Καλ? αν?γνωση!!

Πολλο?ς ασπασμο?ς.

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## Ashley says

When I was nine years old, I wrote a story called "The Two Trees," which in addition to being basically plagiarized from a number of sources (most notably *The Ordinary Princess*, but also a smidge here and there from *Aladdin* the film and *The Farthest-Away Mountain*), was obviously written by a nine year old. Like, if you would have picked it up and read it completely out of context and then somebody asked you to list off three things that described it, the list would look something like this:

1. Princesses are neat,
2. Good handwriting,
3. Obviously written by a nine year old.

Unfortunately, *Tiger's Curse* reads like it could fit all three of those descriptors, too. Publishing is in a really sad state if someone who writes like I did at nine years of age can get published, when so many really talented authors receive rejection letter after rejection letter. If the industry was working the way it's supposed to, this book never would have made it to print.

You guys know I mean business because this is a one star review, and I NEVER do that. Pretty much if a book is even halfway competently written and I enjoy myself while reading it, it gets four stars. It's really not that hard to get four stars from me, even three if I can appreciate what an author has done, but it's just not my thing. Two stars is usually reserved for things that I'm morally opposed to or repulsed by (i.e. the anti-feminist awfulness of *New Moon*). But one star? One star means something went wrong on the chain of command. One star means this book never should have seen the light of day.

Let me be clear here: I don't have anything against Ms. Houck as a person. I'm sure she deserves wonderful things. She's a very nice woman. I know this because I met her, and she signed my book. This is actually why I bought the thing in the first place. She happened to be at my Barnes & Noble doing a signing, and I just happened to win a free t-shirt\* in a raffle, so I thought what the hey, let's get a signed copy, you'll probably love this, you big sap. I certainly didn't anticipate having the reaction that I did. Because let me tell you something: this book is worse than *Twilight* on just about every level\*\*, and that is not an exaggeration. In terms of characterization, description, plot development, pacing, and my God, dialogue, *Twilight* looks like Shakespeare in comparison to *Tiger's Curse*.

I mean, where to start with this book? I had such high mediocre hopes. The plot--eighteen year old American falls in love with an Indian prince who's cursed into the form of a tiger--sounded suitably ridiculous, and I appreciated that it was set in India, and that there were no vampires in it\*\*\*. From there, it went downhill fast: The book has no overt structure, scenes do not flow one into the other with any kind of purpose, and there is no regard whatsoever for what I'm going to call "depth of time," for lack of a better term -- events in the novel just happen one after another, because the author needed them to, not because they fit organically in with the story. One minute something is happening, and the next, something else, with no connection in between. All of the characters come off as shallow and two-dimensional. We hear what they're thinking very literally, but we never *feel* it. (This is how I know my issue with this book is the writing, and not the story: good writers are supposed to make you forget you're reading.) Our main character Kelsey is emblematic of everything that is wrong with this book. Ms. Houck seems to think that telling us what color ribbon she ties in her braid every morning is riveting, character-telling stuff. But it just comes off as immature. What eighteen year old ties colored ribbons on the end of a braid? More importantly, what narrative would ever think that was important? But the biggest problem with Kelsey is that she comes off as incredibly stupid, when she's not supposed to. She travels to India with a man she's just met, she gets incredibly close to a dangerous wild animal with almost no narrative justification, and her decision making skills when it comes to prince-in-disguise Ren are non-existent\*\*\*\*.

I think it's important to note that I'm 100% positive that Ms. Houck did not mean for her characters or her story to come off this way. Unlike Stephenie Meyer--who Ms. Houck not coincidentally lists as an influence--Ms. Houck has no agenda to push, and her characters are attempting to stand for something important. I can tell that she wants Kelsey to be viewed as a strong, independent young woman. She just has no conception of how to WRITE her that way. Or write at all, really. Reading *Tiger's Curse*, I was actually BORED, and there was some *crazy shit* going down. It was like reading a bad fanfic. Description, inner monologue, dialogue, all of it: flat. Immature. Just plain bad writing. I don't know of any other way to convey this without sounding like an asshole.

So how did this book get published in the first place? Ms. Houck self-published it as an e-book on Amazon, and enough brain-dead pre-teens downloaded it to draw the attention of movie studios, at which point Barnes & Noble's new YA imprint, Splinter, bought the rights to what they obviously perceived as their chance at the next *Twilight*, the next *Hunger Games*. And to that I say, good luck to you, but you know what might

actually be a good idea? Publishing someone who can actually write. Also, stop trying to find the next "\_\_\_\_\_". FIND SOMETHING ORIGINAL AND GOOD AND PUBLISH THAT INSTEAD.

There is no next *Hunger Games*. Publishers aren't even going to see that next thing coming, and when it does, they're going to copy the hell out of it, too, because it's easier, less risky financially, than taking a chance on something that might actually be good. At least *Tiger's Curse*, as poorly written as it was, was attempting to be original (as original as the teen supernatural romance genre can be, anyway). There's a lot of good information about Indian culture in here; Ms. Houck clearly did her homework. However, her characters spout it off at the most awful moments. It's never organic -- hello, Expositionville, Expositiontown, located in Exposition-nation. And that's really the biggest problem the book has. It's all concept, but no follow through. Don't even bother trying to read this for kicks, like I did with *Twilight*. It's not that kind of bad. Don't believe me? Pick up the book at random and turn to a page, any page at all. Chances are, you'll see what I mean.\*\*\*\*\*

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\*So I won this t-shirt, and I was like YES. FREE T-SHIRT. And when I went to claim my prize, Ms. Houck asked me which t-shirt I would like: the one with one tiger, or the one with two, and OBVIOUSLY I picked the one with TWO TIGERS, because why would you have a shirt with just one tiger on it, when you could have a t-shirt with TWO TIGERS instead? No brainer.

\*\*No fictional character will ever do as much harm to the cognitive development and cultural landscape of teenage girls as Bella Swann has in the past five years. If this book had been well-written, Kelsey would probably whip Bella's ass five times in a row. As is, she's nothing more than an empty, shallowly disguised author stand-in.

\*\*\*Unless you count kappas.

\*\*\*\*Let's play a game called PREDICT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE NEXT FOUR BOOKS: 1) Each book will involve finding one item to break the curse, 2) Kelsey will become confused and fall "in love" with Ren's brother, Kishan, and Ms. Houck will spend multiple books with her puzzling her way out of this "dilemma," 3) Ren will become either insanely jealous and fight with his brother, or nobly fall on his sword to give his lady love what she wants, or both, 4) Somebody will be coincidentally related to somebody else, 5) Kelsey will coincidentally be the reincarnation of somebody we've heard about, or at least be related to them, 6) Kelsey will save the day, 7) Ren and Kelsey will get together and live happily ever after. See? You don't even need to read the rest of the books. Ten bucks says I'm right on this.

\*\*\*\*\*I feel bad about this review, but I really needed to say it. I'm incredibly frustrated that some editor didn't sit down with Ms. Houck and try to help her salvage something out of this, because I really think it could have been a great story in the right hands.

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## Adriana says

Prepare yourself. This is going to be a long-winded review.

When I think of my experience with *Tiger's Curse*, I think "traumatizing"—among many other words vying for the title, of course. Reading this novel ignites a vicious hatred and an anger within me—the likes of which I have not felt since I mistakenly read *Fifty Shades of Grey* (I don't want to talk about it). Not only is this book written appallingly and not only should it have never even been CONSIDERED for publication, but it is *frightening* that it has sold so many copies and been received so well when it proposes such harmful social norms on top of its horrible writing and construction.

The most disappointing aspect of this novel would be that its initial idea was one that I felt really had

potential and that immediately interested me; I wanted so badly to like this book for several reasons: fantasy writing meets contemporary writing, underrated Indian mythology and fantasy, incredible adventure, romance, et cetera. Needless to say, none of these elements came through in this book—all due to probably the worst writing I've ever read in my whole life. I mean, Colleen Houck makes authors like Stephanie Meyers and E.L. James look like F. Scott Fitzgerald incarnate.

You're probably wondering why I'm making so many *Twilight* references in this review so far and it's because—you guessed it—Ms. Houck was inspired by *Eclipse* and *the whole Twilight series* (or, more accurately, its phenomenon and fame). It was because of my, shall we say, automatic *disdain* towards the writing that I decided to do some background research on Colleen Houck and find out more about who she was as an author. That turned out to be a mistake, because I immediately found a video of an interview she did in which she explained that she wanted to write the next *Twilight*. It was just a downhill plunge from there.

[I would like to take this time to beg any future authors: Please do not try and make the next *Twilight*. It's already bad enough as it is without other authors embellishing on its harmful themes and reinforcing its backwards characterization and relationship "norms." In fact, I would endeavor you to not try and make The Next ANYTHING; be original and save yourself the inevitable comparisons and dislike. Thank you.]

As I said earlier, I was really looking forward to this blend of fantasy-based writing and contemporary, because those are two of my most frequented genres; I really felt that there was a huge opportunity with this book to bridge the colossal gap between the two fields and to create something new and enjoyable. Obviously, I was wrong, because immediately I knew the contemporary voice—the voice that is carried throughout the rest of the novel—was decidedly uninspired, coupled with a steaming side dish of "NO." The contemporary voice actually *took away* from what little the fantasy-infused prologue had going for it.

First off, everything about this book—the setting, the characters, the plot—is written in a way that feels unimportant. By that, I mean that the entire set-up for the plot and the description of the characters and their surroundings were written without consequence. There was nothing in this book that had SUBSTANCE—that encouraged me to FEEL anything—because everything was written so vapidly. Never have settings been so distracting to me, only because they were written so badly. From Kelsey's home to her workplace to the supposed-to-be-incredible-and-fascinating INDIA, everything is just *told* to the audience in the most trivial ways possible.

Everything—and I mean everything—came off as two-dimensional, because almost everything was written as a cardboard cutout. Any details were just mere backdrop to the plot. I couldn't conjure up any vivid images of where Kelsey lived, what her family was like, or even what her work environment at the circus was like, because it was all so generic and what little description there had been was so tired and uninspired that it left me wanting. For instance, Kelsey might say that a house is "big" and "roomy," but there's no substance to those words; it's never clear to the audience what or who is around her. The writing never instills any sense of depth or realness to its audience. To put it simply, there's nothing complex, or even remotely *interesting* about the descriptions.

Then Houck has the nerve to try and throw in bits of Kelsey's backstory as a feeble attempt at characterization, but that really just leave the audience more detached than before. Examples of this would be the fact that 1) Kelsey's biological parents are dead or 2) the unrelated fact that she really digs Shakespeare. The loss of her parents is supposed to give Kelsey "depth" because it allegedly makes her more "worldly" and "wounded," which is supposed to substitute for adequate character development throughout the span of the novel. I also really get a kick out of authors who make their protagonists have a perpetual literary boner for Shakespeare, because it's supposed to tell us that they're "well-read" and "smart;" it's supposed to imply they're "profound for their age" and "have great taste." Being a Shakespeare fangirl is supposed to pinpoint to the audience that Kelsey "isn't like other girls," because reading Shakespeare will

just turn an immature teenager into an established woman and because “stupid” girls would never read or like Shakespeare.

### Not.

I am so SICK of reading about protagonists who do things like *read Shakespeare* and who *think about things more important than make up* and who “don’t do normal girl things.” I’m still not sure why pointing out these things makes any one protagonist better than any other, because, personally, if I read about a girl who wears designers skirts, puts on make up, and gives me strong, enticing narration, then I’m not thinking about “what a girl” she is and therefore what a “fraud” she is; I’m thinking about what she has to offer as far as point of view. Therefore, if there’s a protagonist like Kelsey who reads Shakespeare (and other novels), isn’t concerned about her hair or overall appearance, and who constantly lets me down with her extremely lacking narration and who has nonexistent “unique” qualities to showcase—guess what—I’m not thinking about how “raw” and “real” and “relatable” she is; I’m thinking about how much she sucks as crappy wish fulfillment.

Besides all forms of description and characterization being either too cliché or nonexistent, the other aspect of this novel that drove me crazy was the fact that everything in this book was too *convenient*. Let’s start with the basics: Kelsey is fresh out of high school and she’s looking for a job. So what does she do? She goes to an employment agency where she is seen on the first day after standing in a relatively short line and talking to an interviewer for approximately two minutes. This results in an instantaneous job offer for—what else?—the circus! \*cue fireworks and applauding crowds\*. Introducing: Your Main Plot Point!

At said circus, Kelsey—who, keep in mind, has never worked a day in her life—is instantly successful and she right away befriends the company Tiger by reading him plays. She then feels an immediate “connection” between them and she knows the tiger would never hurt her. (“Why is this?” she wonders. The suspense was through the roof!!!111) In no time, an Indian gentlemen presents himself and he asks her to accompany the white tiger to India, where it will live in an animal reserve—seeing as how she can “handle” the Tiger so well. In a few days’ time, this man has conjured up travel plans, all the necessary paperwork, and has gotten together everything that Kelsey would need to go to India—including gaining Kelsey’s foster parents’ trust and permission for the whole shebang. I could go on sarcastically narrating how easy everything is for Kelsey, but I think you get the point.

In the wild, if Kelsey so much as has a headache, aspirin will magically be provided; if she’s running out of food, someone will get her some more from Mr. Kadam (no matter how far they are from civilization); if she is desperate need of a shower and a good night’s sleep, she and her traveling companion will come upon a mansion. And with that, I think I’ve said it all: whenever anything is needed in this book—including any explanation—the author clumsily provides. After a few chapters, I could feel my eyeballs out of my head. This kind of writing is just plain distracting. The whole time, it felt like Colleen Houck just wrote the entire book from beginning to end, without thinking ahead in the slightest, and that she just wrote in whatever solutions she needed to fill any plot holes, because none of it was thought out or well-constructed. The writing was so transparent that it pretty much insulted me as a reader, but only after it had infuriated me.

To save time, I will just make a list of some of the technical and structural problems this book had:

- There was too much telling (as I touched on earlier)—a key give away being that there were way too many words with the suffix “-ly”; e.g. excitedly, tenderly, angrily, nervously, timidly, hungrily, etc.
- Instead of character development and realization through narration, a lot of the characters just listed each other’s characteristics to one another (“Kelsey, you’re brave, determined, beautiful...”)

- The little foreshadowing that this novel had was written as if a third grader had come up with the concept; it was too obvious and far too cheesy.
- There was no real plot momentum for a majority of the book (a lot of which could be attributed to the fact that there is no antagonist or force working against them until about the end, so the story didn't have much of a direction.)
- The convenience. Enough said.
- The immense plot holes despite paragraphs of tedious information
- The fact that the parameters of Ren's curse were very poorly explained and extremely inconsistent throughout the book despite what we "know"
- The book being privy to inappropriately timed info dumps about historical background or character backstory—most of the historical information sounding like something copied almost word for word from Wikipedia, or some other generic website
- The whole novel was what I like to call "gimmicky," meaning that most of what was done was probably done to sell books—e.g. Ren's brother coming into the story to complete the "love triangle" (I don't want to talk about it), Kelsey not knowing "who she wanted to be with" because both brothers are so "dreamy" (as if she doesn't have the option to end up with neither), and the multiple parts of the curse that need to be broken, which just screams, "Four more books!" Sorry, I don't think so, Houck.
- The author clearly doesn't know a smidgen about continuity—as evidenced by a scene where Kelsey calls her drink a "smoothie," a "shake," and a "milkshake" all in one page—and a majority of the writing seemed to have syntactical problems
- The dialogue made me constantly cringe because it was cliché, cheesy, out of date, and contained far too many pop culture references for a story that contains a 300 year old Tiger-Man who has not been properly socialized for that same amount of time; it was highly unreadable.
- To give you an idea of how bad the writing was overall, I would like to disclose that Kelsey refers to her attraction to Ren as a "love plant"—repeatedly.

That's all I have to say about any of that.

Let's get to the really scary part: the social context of this "book."

### **An Open Letter to (the Majority of) YA Authors of Paranormal Romances:**

Please stop doing the things that you do. I promise you this: the world does *not* need another story about a meek, insecure girl with absolutely no conviction becoming romantically involved with a controlling, manipulative man/creature who could, at any moment, kill her. Your writing actually takes significant steps backwards in a time where we need Feminist texts more than ever.

I don't want to read about a girl who is enamored and obsessed with a guy who is—literally—a killer. Furthermore, I do not care to read about how said girl is hopelessly attracted to aforementioned guy *because* he is a killer; stop glamorizing and sexualizing killing. You know

that scene you've written where your male vampire/werewolf/beast lead takes down a victim and eats them/sucks their blood/revells in their death and the "heroine" of your verse is watching and consequently thinking about how much watching this guy draining the life out of its vessel turns her on? Delete it. Just do yourself a favor now and scrap the whole thing, because if there's one thing we don't need, it's the desensitizing and normalization of accepted/praised violence within or around romantic relationships.

I will let you in on a little known secret: most people don't want to date someone who can kill them, and, by ornamenting your story with a girl who wants to have sex with a potential murderer, you're contributing to a harmful culture. We don't need more people in this world saying, "I wish I had my own Edward Cullen/Christian Grey/Dihren," because what you're encouraging them to really say is, "I want a guy who can and will hurt me—because I find that extremely sexy." Please think on that scene and any related scenes and choose to omit it/them from your novel. I promise you, the book will be better for it.

Along the same lines, I strongly believe that you should write your female leads better, because, with the current state that they're in, they're written to be less of human beings—especially when pitted against the male leads that you have written. No one—I repeat: no one—is going to thank you for constantly portraying a female as so vapid and unintelligent that, when a man raises his voice at her, she can only think of how gorgeous he is and not about the terrible things he is saying to her; when he is literally in "kill mode," she can only think of how dreamy he is and how she wishes he would "devour" her for a change instead of getting as far away from him as possible; that when he's being angry, overbearing, and downright manipulative, she can only picture herself kissing him in that moment and can only realize how she is "flooded with desire," instead of reprimanding him for mistreating her.

If this sounds like anything your female lead has done or will do, then remember this: you are literally deterring from the development of the human race. You do NOT, under any circumstances, want to hear about how a female fan of your work feels like she "is the protagonist;" you do not want young people relating to the woman you have just written, because she is not worthy of praise or idolatry, though you may have written her that way. She is not the woman that other women should strive to be, because she is not a fully-fledged human being. Rather, she is subservient and written as significantly lower caste than your male lead. Maybe you should rewrite the two of them and put them on a more equal level so that their unhealthy relationship is not misinterpreted as "amazing" and "romantic"—as I'm sure you are aware that it will be.

In addition, I must ask you to stop writing male leads who are, for all intents and purposes, complete assholes. We don't want to read about a man who becomes enraged when a female stops showing him physical affection. Similarly, we do not want to read about girls who truly believe that men have the inherent right to be brutally abusive—whether physically or verbally—when they don't secure the sexual attention of the women they are seeking. We don't need to read about how a girl feels this reaction is "unavoidable." You should be aware that male privilege—and a male character who exploits his privilege—is not, in all actuality, attractive. In fact, I would go so far as to say that he is disgusting, because anyone who assumes that a female is property to own or a "thing" that they "have a right to" as a man is not worthy of even being in a romance novel in a first place. They should probably be in jail—where they no doubt will end up.

Furthermore, we can no longer silently condone female characters who will constantly put themselves down and talk badly about themselves in order to justify a male character's pigheadedness—who is in constant need of a man to define her and to reinforce her character.

We do not need romance characters who solve deeply rooted emotional issues with physical interactions as opposed to words; we do not need girls who will admit to their audience that they wouldn't oppose becoming a "slave" to their love interest. What is there to gain in writing such a strongly anti-woman text that even portrays the SMELL of women as lesser than that of a man's? It is neither interesting nor exciting to read about a female lead who will constantly berate herself for being "a bad human being" while simultaneously glorifying and admiring the "perfection" of her male "counterpart." Let's think about how these men you have written in the past—and that you will, no doubt, continue to write about in the future—are even CONSIDERED "counterparts" to the females. Is it because females make up about 5% of a person and the "perfect" males make up the rest of the percentage?

Authors, if anything I have said reminds you of something that you have written or want to write in the future, I ask that you remember this: you (nor any other content creator) have no right to ever wonder about how society could have ever sunk so low into the cesspit that is rape culture, because you have nurtured and supported it.

In fact, maybe you should just never write. There's not really a high demand for what you can provide.

Signed,

All Concerned Readers

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## Lea says

### **\*\*WARNING:\*\* RANTING AHEAD....**

This one is actually getting 1.5 stars NOT 2-- THAT'S how much I loath you Kelsey Hayes-- you can take your dumb "love-plant" and SHOVE IT.

\*\*\*\*\*

What would you do if someone offered you an all-expenses-paid trip to India with a mysterious white tiger who also happens to be a handsome Indian prince? Eighteen-year old Kelsey Hayes is faced with just this offer after spending 2 weeks working as a hired hand at a local circus one summer-- and her life will never be the same.

Soooo.... I had pretty much been \*dying\* to read this book for ages, and after reading review after raving review, I FINALLY picked it up off the shelves. I was so positively sure that I was going to absolutely love this book, that by the end, I would be in raptures and stumbling over myself trying to say enough good things about it.

I don't know what the hell happened, but this book turned out to be an absolute joke.

*I KNOW*, and I hate saying this, but I have to be honest. There were some things I liked about *Tiger's Curse*,

but they were all completely overshadowed by **some of the worst characterization I've ever encountered in a book**. OK, here we go...

So first, let me talk a little about Kelsey Hayes, the main character. At the beginning, I actually liked her. Laid-back, down-to-earth, and slightly quirky, she was a fun character to follow in the story.

But then things started to go down hill-- *rapidly*.

I noticed about a hundred pages in that Kelsey's way of talking and thinking could be *\*extremely\** juvenile at times-- juvenile and annoying. I don't know if anyone else thought the same thing, but as I made my way through this book, I just didn't feel like I was reading from an 18-year old's perspective. Some of the expressions she uses (my FAVE was when she exclaimed, "You wily scoundrel!" when Kishan tries to kiss her- DUDE. FIND ME SOMEONE WHO TALKS LIKE THIS), the way she addresses people ("oh hey there Mister!" -- seriously? Is your main character from *The Little Rascals*?), and just her whole way of thinking seemed more like that of an immature little kid than an adult...

And things only went from bad to worse when Ren the Prince stepped into the picture. If Kelsey was slightly childish and annoying to begin with, it was *nothing* compared to the infantile monstrosity she turns into in the last half of the book. The immaturity levels reached astronomical proportions. How you ask? Here are a few examples:

1.) She pouted and threw tiny tantrums when she was displeased about pretty much *anything*-- and rather than be an ADULT and communicate with Ren about how conflicted she was feeling, she turned into a cold and standoffish little biotch. Then, when the poor guy asks her what's wrong, she says "nothing" (in that way where it's obviously *something*) and goes right back to being Ice Queen Supreme. Clearly, this is an *awesome* way to treat people.

2.) She had the *\*exceedingly\** annoying defense mechanism of needing to make sarcastic quips *every 5 seconds*, and the more defensive she got, the less likely it became for her to be serious or mature at crucial points in the story. I mean, the girl almost *dies* and the first thing she does upon waking up is crack a few dumb jokes-- well I'm sorry, but I don't want to read about a main character who acts like she's constantly auditioning at a comedy club (and failing miserably, I might add)-- I want her to have a grown-up, serious side too! It was just *too much*. There is no way in hell this chick was 18-- maybe 12? Maybe.... even that's pushing it.

3.) I just love how Kelsey was absolutely shocked and appalled when she sees Ren the Tiger-version and his brother hunt for food. She *does* realize that "hunting" involves killing something right?? And that tigers have a tendency towards being carnivores? And that tasty meat often comes from cute animals? I mean the girl had to actually *sing herself to sleep* to get over it-- no, I'm not making this up, she sings herself to sleep ("happy songs" from *The Wizard of Oz*) because the tigers killed an antelope. Then she has nightmares about it. *And she's eighteen* --

4.) Kelsey just LOVES to continually tell us about her little "love-plant" for Ren-- because you know, normal people talk like this. By the end I wanted to take some pesticide spray and a blow torch to Kelsey's freaking love-plant and incinerate the damn thing into the ground...

(I won't even get into the fact that she was *dumb as a brick* and could barely tie her own shoes without Ren

holding her hand. But wait, you say! The book says she loves reading Shakespeare, well then she **MUST** be a total rocket scientist, no?? Give me a fa-reaking break Colleen- sorry my dear, but saying that your main protag reads Shakespeare does **NOT** make her smart and clever and oh-so-different from everyone else, because she comes across as a complete dumbass in everything else she thinks, does, and says. Need I mention how she nearly gets herself killed near Kishindha? Because she goes to grab a pretty sparkly diamond out of the water, moments after she and Ren *nearly died* because DUH the prophesy TOLD you not to believe your eyes and that things weren't as they seemed! GAWD she's like freaking Abu the monkey in Aladdin, literally *that* is who she reminded me of! **\*\*slaps forehead in total frustration\*\***)

But I think that out of all the things that bothered me about Kelsey, the **VERY WORST** was the fact that she made such a snap judgement about Ren-- *without even giving him the chance to prove that he was a good guy*-- and then proceeded to treat him like total crap for the rest of the book, all for absolutely **NO REASON** other than her own stinking insecurity that "she wasn't good enough for him." Kelsey Hayes, you were to put it bluntly, one of **THE** most immature characters I have ever read about, and you need to go find yourself a therapist. Pronto.

So... Let's just say that by the end of this book, I had never wanted to punch a main character in the face quite so badly as Kelsey "Boo-Hoo I'll Never Be Good Enough So I'll Just Act Like a Bitch 24/7" Hayes.

While we're sitting in on How to Make Your Characters As Unlikable as Possible 101, let's take a look at Ren. Overall, the guy wasn't too bad when you stand back and see him over the course of the book-- but I still couldn't stand him. And the thing is, he wouldn't have been such an unlikable character if the author hadn't *set him up* to be totally unlikable . To prove my point, here are just a few of the phrases used to describe Ren's actions in this book:

- Laughed "acerbically"
- Smiled "mockingly" and "malevolently"
- grinned "maliciously"
- scoffed and smirked
- was "annoyingly happy"

Now you tell me-- would *you* like a character whose behavior is described this way?? The guy is annoying even when he's happy for crying out loud, and the rest of the time he's described as being a total ass-hat, and I'm supposed to be falling in *love* with him?!? I mean he sounds like a complete douche, *amirite??* There's only two explanations for this kind of character portrayal:

- 1.) Ren *is*, in fact, a douche-- in which case I can't stand him and hope he jumps off a cliff, or
- 2.) Ren is actually a good guy and all of this is Kelsey's perception of him-- in which case Kelsey is *\*psycho cray cray\** and I hope *she* jumps off a cliff.

In either case, I'm really not rooting for your characters.

Then there's the fact that Ren is-- according to the story-- hundreds of years old. And it seems like in every YA story where one of the characters has been around for a long time (Twilight, Fallen...) we're just supposed to forget this fact and think it makes total sense for them to act like immature teenagers and have character dialogue that's somewhere along the lines of "Ohemgee totally!!" I mean here we have this 300-year old Indian prince and he's referring to Kelsey as "Kells??" *Are you freaking kidding me???* So yes, this

made Ren even MORE obnoxious as a main character, if that's even possible.

(And oh, hey-- let's not even get into the glaring "ick" factor that this kind of plot point brings up: *a 300-year old guy is flirting and trying to get with an 18-year old girl.*

Really. THINK ABOUT IT.)

I also felt like the pacing of the plot was slightly off. Overall, I thought that the story itself was pretty good-- I loved the Indian setting and the adventurous element it had going on-- but there was just a *lot* of superfluous description that got in the way for me. For example, when Kelsey gets on the plane to go to India, I thought we were never going to hear the end of all the luxurious details of the plane's interior and the food they ate. Don't get me wrong, I think that adding vivid description to your story is wonderful and sets the backdrop for all the action, but I also think there is a way to describe a scene while still leaving something up to the reader's imagination! I mean, do I *really* care what color hair ribbon Kelsey ties in her braids every day? And by the by, how many 18-year-olds do YOU know who tie hair ribbons in their braids? Or walk around with their blanket like they're freaking Linus from Charlie Brown?? *JUST SAYING.*

Besides plot pacing being off, many parts of the plot made ZERO SENSE. Tell me, how many foster parents do you know, who seem to be fairly sensible and, oh I don't know, *\*\*SANE\*\** let their foster-daughter go off on a trip to INDIA with a strange older man and a tiger, after meeting said man ONE TIME?? This is basically how things played out:

- 1.) Kelsey works 2 weeks as a hired hand at a circus (WHICH she got from some super-shady work placement company)
- 2.) Kelsey reads Shakespeare to the tiger at said circus (Hmm yeah, that's totally normal) and then a strange Indian man shows up and tells Kelsey she is PERFECT for taking care of the tiger, if she can only GO TO INDIA to put tiger in a nature reserve (*\*\*\*RED FLAGS GOING OFF HERE\*\*\**).
- 3.) Kelsey's parents AGREE TO LET HER GO TO INDIA with strange older man after meeting him once, and within a WEEK Kelsey has all her documentation, passports, vaccines, etc. taken care of and is on a plane to India to take care of a rare white tiger species because 2 weeks of sweeping up crap at a circus has turned her into an animal GENIUS.

*\*\*Insert dumb-founded expression HERE 0\_o\*\**

Also-- and this is something I didn't even fully realize until awhile after I finished reading it-- but this book is BEYOND RACIST. It basically portrays Indian people as pathetic simpletons with horrible broken English (Ummm guess what Colleen? Many Indian people know how to speak English, and those who don't aren't idiots who you can write about as though they're incoherent monkeys...) Mr. Kadam, the Indian man employed by Prince Ren, basically spends the entire book kissing the ground Kelsey Hayes walks on, waxing eloquent about how amazing she is. WHY?? What the flying you-know-what is so awesome about Kelsey Hayes?? She's a vapid, lazy and stuck-up wish fulfillment device who is glorified by everyone for no good reason. Pretty much *everyone* in this book who is NOT WHITE AMERICAN is ignorantly and disrespectfully portrayed like a cartoon, exaggerated to the point of being comical-- except that it ISN'T FUNNY because it's straight-up RACISM. Then we have Kelsey- the White Girl Who Saves the Day- someone with absolutely no qualifications or connection to Indian culture, who we find out is actually the "Chosen One" of the Indian goddess Durga. YEAH YOU HEARD ME RIGHT. Kelsey, the most ignorant and brain-dead character ever conceived for YA fiction, the lazy American white girl who acts like a spoiled whiny little brat for 400+ freaking pages- is the savior of the Indian people. Excuse me while I very loudly

exclaim:

WTF?!?!?

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As far as the romance goes, well if you're a fan of train wrecks, you're going to be in 7th heaven because this was just about as dysfunctional as they come. It was like watching two cars heading for a straight-on collision, and not being able to do a damn thing about it, so you just sit there with the same horrified expression on your face that you'd have if you accidentally swallowed a mouthful of spoiled milk. *Three-month-old spoiled milk*. I've already described Kelsey's emotional constipation and total lack of ability to do anything remotely mature, but I also didn't like how possessive Ren got of Kelsey as the story went on. Protective tiger-- awesome, Possessive love interest-- HELL to the NO. Not a fan. I was also pretty annoyed at the good ol' YA ploy of presenting the main character as Ms. I'm-Totally-Average-But-Every-Guy-Who-Sees-Me-Falls-Inexplicably-Yet-Madly-In-Love-With-Me-Tee-Hee!-- because it's been done SO many times. In fact, it's gotten to be about as cliché as being Disney-Princess-Perfect. Which brings me to...

\*\*\*\*\* **My Brief Bookish Rant** \*\*\*\*\*

Yeah so after all that, you're probably wondering what the heck else I have to rant about. (Do not underestimate my ranting skills *\*whahahaha!\**) So here is my totally random gripe-- and trust me, this is random-- that I have to get off my shoulders. And I'm not trying to pick on this book specifically, it's more of a general trend that I see again and again in YA books-- and my slightly annoyed question is this:

**WHY do authors always make a *POINT* of telling us that their main female characters never or seldom wear makeup?**

I know, I know, this is *such* a dumb thing to rant about, but for *\*some reason\** it bothers me. I mean, is there something bad about wearing makeup or doing your hair on a regular basis? Do they think that makeup makes their protagonist seem stupid or fake? Do they assume that readers won't relate to a character who wears makeup because... I don't know, people who read don't wear makeup? Like *why* does it even need to be mentioned? It's like they expect me the reader to go, "Ohh, she doesn't wear makeup! Well I can respect her a *lot* more now!" And then on the other side of things, the "mean girl" or the bitchy back-stabber is often described as wearing makeup or being super tan or having the latest fashions. *WHY??* Is it a given that if a girl cares about her appearance she must be less of a person? If the main character is a frumpy Plain-Jane who's never worn heels and who thinks at best she's "average," am I supposed to like her more? *What exactly* are you trying to convey to me the reader when you tell me that your main character doesn't wear makeup? I just don't see what the heck this has to do with the characterization of someone, and personally I couldn't care less whether the main character wears makeup or not, so *stop* bringing it up like it's a determining factor in whether or not I'll relate to/like/respect that character more!

(I will mention that Kelsey does get dolled up a few times in the book, but what irked me was her complete inability to see herself as being attractive, no matter what. This is *not* a good character trait. Insecurity and false modesty are NOT attractive in anyone-- it's extremely immature and I CAN'T STAND characters that constantly use self-pity and self-deprecation to excuse themselves from acting grown-up. *SO STOP IT RIGHT NOW!!*)

OK, rant over. I feel much better now!

~Final Thoughts~

*Tiger's Curse* is one of those books that I think appeals to a large group of people because it has a lot of great things going on-- romance, adventure, travel, mystery, an ancient curse-- I mean, what's not to love about that? BUT-- and this is a big but-- none of them, in my opinion, were executed well. The romance devolved into two spoiled teenagers acting like juvenile brats, the adventure and mystery were bogged down by way too much description, and honestly, by the end I was so fed up with the main characters that I really couldn't care less about where the story was going-- I just wanted it to end so I didn't have to constantly fight the temptation to throw the book out the window of a 50-story building.

So my final word with this one is- proceed with caution. While I can see the appeal for many readers, if you are like me and can't stand pointless drama, immature dialogue, and characters who act much younger than their years, you might want to think twice before picking this one up. On the other hand, the ratings overall for *Tiger's Curse* are extremely good, so this may very well be a case of me just personally not liking it.

Read what other people had to say about this book, you might end up loving it-- I, unfortunately, was not one of those people.

~Lea @ LC's Adventures in Libraryland

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### **Erica (daydreamer) says**

NO! No no no no! Kelsey, go back, go back!

Oh my gosh, this book, this breathtaking, thrilling, romantic, utterly perfect book. It swept me away in blissful awe. The India setting, the mythical lure, the enchanting curse, the charmed aura of India's 300 year old prince. I was completely captivated by the story, the characters, the setting, just, everything! And the romance, oh so swoon. So completely gush worthy and butterfly inducing and breathtaking. This book is so original and creative. A 300 year old curse turning bitter brothers into tigers, and one girl, one strong, determined girl who is the only one who can break the curse, and free these two Indian princes back to their steady human form. But Kelsey didn't expect to fall in love, to fall completely in love with her white tiger, the oh so dashing prince, who's love for her is unbreakable. Ren, oh Ren. There is no one more swoon worthy, and so amazingly perfect. They share a connection, they know they love each other, but it's not solid, hence the nerve wrecking, speechless ending. Gahh! Why must authors do this to us? My nerves are all on edge. I turned the last page, silently screaming in frustrated anxiousness. Stupid Kelsey, stupid stupid Kelsey. He loves you! You know it! You love him, you belong together! Go back! I can almost understand her feelings of inadequacies. But if a breathtakingly perfect man loves you, wants you, wants to kiss you and be with you, then there must be something wondrous about you that speaks to him, leaving him in breathless wonder. Perhaps there's more to you than you think, something that others can see, that you can't, or refuse to see because his love for you just seems too good to be true, and you make yourself believe that you're not deserving of it, that he could have any gorgeous woman he wanted, and yet he's chosen you, and you can't understand why. But then I realize that sometimes people need to take a step back to know what they truly desire and need. When it's right in front of you, begging you to acquiesce, loving you utterly, you become lost in the fantastical lure and beauty of it, and you can't see anything else. And then one tiny doubt is seeded in your heart because of the surreal perfectness of it, and you wonder if this is real. If it's just a fabrication of your mind, deluding yourself into thinking that he could truly want you because he deeply loves you. Sometimes, a breather is what you need, to think back of what was, to try new things, make mistakes, and become a better, stronger, more confident person who knows what you want, and when presented with that love again, with the one person you love and thought leaving was better for both of you, you will be able to gauge your true feelings for him, and his true feelings for you. If your love is still there, it will be stronger and deeper, more passionate and beautiful than you thought possible. And there will be no more doubts, just love.

Well, I didn't expect to go so deep, but this story, the ending, Kelsey's choice, it just affected me, and I so desperately wanted her to stay with him, to let him love her. After finishing this book, I am just so anxious to find out what happens. What Kelsey and Ren will do, how they'll grow, how this change could affect them, and I hope bring them closer together.

Tiger's Curse was breathless and beautiful. I was captivated and thrilled through the whole story. I am so glad I read this, and I cannot wait to read the next two books. Thank you Colleen for such a perfect, romantic, amazing story.

**Edit 6/2/11** It's going to be made into a movie! <http://www.ineffablepictures.com/> That just made me so incredibly excited! If done right, it will make an incredible movie, with some *fine* men in it ;) \*swoon\*

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## Muse-ic ? says

2.5 ( *minor rant alert: proceed with caution.....* )

Nah.

**I really wanted to love this. I mean, with a beautiful cover like that, I had high hopes. How can you *not* fall prey to those encahnting blue eyes?! And it has good ratings so I gave it a shot.**

**It half delivered.**

I found the idea quite intriguing. But it was the idea alone that kept me going.

**The other half fell so flat it's flatter than a sheet of printer paper.**

First of all, the pacing, especially in the beginning, just did nothing for me. It was fast, but not in a good way. It was fast in a way that seemed **rushed** with little good development. I also wasn't feeling the writing style. It was very cut-and-dry and a little too straightforward for my taste. And I like neither Kelsey nor Ren. I don't hate them by any stretch of the word, but I can't bring myself to root for them.

**Kelsey is so immature and such a simpleton that half the time, I was thoroughly annoyed by being in her head.**

Allow me to present you with an example:

When she first arrived in Mumbai, India on page 69:

"The men began talking very fast to one another in Hindi."

Simple quote, right? Why would I have issues with it? Allow me to explain;

**Hindi is not the most spoken language in Mumbai; that honor goes to Marathi. Aside from that fact, there are at least 6 or 7 different languages spoken in Mumbai. From what we've seen, Kelsey has zero**

knowledge of the Indian culture, so how on *earth* was she able to recognize the Hindi language? How on earth did she know that the men were speaking in Hindi of all the options?? There is no way she could have or would have known this based on prior knowledge. Unless she just guessed because "Hindi" sounds like "Indian". That's almost like saying that all Asians are Chinese by default!! Culturally ignorant much!?!

Now in general, this wouldn't be the hugest deal, but why would someone like Kelsey, who knows diddly squat about India, be the key to breaking an ancient Indian curse? Part of me doubts she had even *heard* of India before her stupid quest.

There is nothing great or special about her, not even remotely. She displays no unique qualities, NOTHING to make me root for her.

She is also one of those characters that look down on her physical appearance, especially in the presence of a handsome man.

She's constantly like *oh I have no unique appearance and who me?? Oh you must be mistaken!* whenever someone pays her a compliment. If she is wearing a beautiful dress, she credits the goddamned dress. In fact, she's convinced she can't be with Ren because he'll quickly lose interest in her because she's not supermodel gorgeous!

Like, you poor baby! Here's a troll playing you a violin:

Page 92:

"Who was I to reject a handsome man..."

**What. The. Actual. FUCK!**

If this kind of submissive mentality isn't breeding insecurity in girls and the worship of a man based entirely on his appearance, then I don't know what the fuck is!

She's also naive, and apparently doesn't recognize it, whatsoever!

Page 251:

"Mae West, a famous vaudeville actress, once said, 'A man's kiss is his signature.' I grinned to myself. If that was true, then Ren's signature was the John Hancock of kisses."

Like, dude that was your first kiss. How could you possibly compare his kissing skills to any other?

Then when Kelsey realized that she was falling for Ren (why, I don't know) she decided to put distance between them---in the most immature and bitchy way possible---because she didn't see any way for them to have a future together after having broken the curse.

Is there a legitimate reason for Kelsey to act like such a bitch to Ren??

I mean, I don't like Ren that much; I find him waaaaay too fake to be attractive. But he genuinely has

feelings for Kelsey, even though it's pure insta-love. The "romance" gave me no warm fuzzy feelings.

At one point, Mr. Kadam sends Kelsey a dress to wear to dine with Ren (an event she did not know about at the time). Kelsey immediately put on the dress for no reason. She wasn't confused or thrown off that she received a gorgeous dress and pair of heels from an old-ass man, albeit a good friend. She didn't go ask him what it was all about and she didn't even question how the fuck he just *knew* her size. She just puts it on then says,

*"A dress like this required makeup, so I headed to the bathroom and finished getting ready."* (358)

Bitch, for WHAT exactly?? They could require a virgin-in-a-beautiful-dress sacrifice to a volcano to break the curse for all you know!!

Page 368:

"I can always tell where you are, Kelsey. You smell like peaches and cream."

What the fuck. Bro whatchu smokin'?? No one smells like peaches and cream of all things. Maybe after a shower with specifically scented wash products, but not on a regular basis!

Ugh.

**I didn't realize that I was annoyed as I was until I started writing this review and putting my thoughts into coherent words!**

Although I gave it 2.5 stars, I was going to give it 3 stars on Goodreads, but after writing this review, I'm demoting it to a solid 2 stars.

P.S. I don't know why this irked me so much, but every time she introduced herself she goes:

"Kelsey. Kelsey Hayes."

Like who do you think you are, James Bond??

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## **Colleen Houck says**

Umm, Obviously I've read it since I wrote it. Have most of the lines memorized now.

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## **Vinaya says**

Seriously, GR? I mean, SERIOUSLY? You thought you could just... delete my review and it would be gone forever? I'll take your deletion and raise you one cached copy of my review and one middle finger.

My five year old nephew had to prepare a piece about himself for kindergarten last week. It went something like this: Hi, my name is Manoj. I'm five years old. I like singing. I am also a good dancer. My favourite food is Maggi noodles.

What's shocking is that Colleen Houck's prose bears a startling resemblance to my nephew's. I kid you not. If this story had been written by a twelve year old, I might have respected her acumen. Coming from a fully grown woman, it's just sad. There is literally nothing to recommend this book. The writing style is terrible; whoever edited this book will go to a special hell reserved for bad editors. The research is awful, the

characterisation is complete crap and I am running out of adjectives to describe how bad this book is.

The sad thing is, I was really excited by the premise of Tiger's Curse. There are so few fantasy stories set in India, or around Indian mythology, despite the vast potential for fascinating, or scary, or just plain interesting plotlines to be mined from Indian culture. Ilona Andrews, for example, did a fabulous job with the rakshasas in Magic Strikes. So when I read about this book, about an Indian prince cursed to be a tiger, I couldn't wait to dive into some really fresh, interesting writing. Boy, was I conned.

Kelsey is an eighteen year old high school graduate who takes up a summer job in a small circus in Oregon. She befriends a white tiger at the circus, and when a rich Indian man buys the tiger, she is asked to accompany Dhiren, the tiger, to his new home in a sanctuary in India. Once in India, she discovers that the tiger is actually a prince who was cursed by an evil sorcerer who coveted his fabled amulet. Kelsey and Dhiren begin an epic journey to break the curse and restore Dhiren. Unfortunately the only epic thing about the entire quest was its stupidity.

The only fun I had reading this book was discovering how Microsoft Reader has all these cool colored bookmarks that I could use to highlight the stupidity of the story. I could even add little bitchy text notes on the side! So, let's take my bookmarked bits in order.

*Grinning with a sinister, saccharine smile, Lokesh said...* Okay, what self-respecting editor would actually allow someone to get away with writing a sentence like this? It's as if she swallowed a dictionary and vomited it. You know that episode of Friends where Joey had to write a recommendation to the adoption agency for Monica and Chandler, and Ross showed him how to use the thesaurus function? Yep, that's exactly what this is like.

*"Hmm," I muttered to myself, "I wonder what kind of animals they have there. I'd hate to take care of the elephant droppings." I giggled quietly at my own joke but the lady wasn't paying attention.* Hmm, I wonder why? Could it possibly be because you **weren't funny**?! How is this a joke? It didn't make me want to laugh, it made me want to chuck a book at her head!

*Their example taught me that, "When life gives you lemons make some lemon meringue pie!"* This is just pathetic. She goes on to tell us how lemon merigue pie is her favourite dessert for Thanksgiving. Who Gives. A. Fuck?

*Once, I tried to tell one of the girls I often partnered with in science lab that she was crazy to wear heels to school. I even asked if she was scared that she might fall down and break an ankle or something. The inevitable giggle whisper fest occurred between her and her friends. After that incident, it just didn't seem worth it or important enough to me to try to befriend anyone in high school.* I am sorry to say this, but this girl is a loser. A BIG, FAT LOSER. With a giant L tattooed on her forehead. She had a stupid conversation with a random girl about wearing heels to school, and on the strength of that, decided to never befriend anyone ever again? Good decision there, cause who would WANT to be friends with this moron?

*My skills in sewing, embroidering, cooking, and coloring in a coloring book the fancy way all came from her patient teaching.* Is this girl some sort of throwback to the Quakers or something? Or maybe Amish? Although I would think even Amish grandmoms had something better to teach their grandkids than how to 'color in a coloring book the fancy way'.

*I thought I had a little bit of OCD because my drawers were also meticulously tidy. My socks were all rolled in balls, arranged from the front of the drawer to the back. I usually grabbed the front ones and worked my way to the back. White socks were lined up on the right, black ones in the middle, and colored ones on the left.* This, after she has spent a page describing the rest of her closet. TMI, woman, TMI! What does this have to do with the damn cursed prince story, anyway?

*"At the present, you must respite. Important sunrise is tomorrow. Phet must pray in the dark hours, and you necessity sleep. Embark on tomorrow your traverse. It's hard as difficult."* Who really talks like this, apart from Yoda? And this is not a little green man from another galaxy, this is a reclusive Indian monk who, I am guessing, doesn't know much English, although if he learnt words like 'embark' and 'traverse' and 'respite', I don't see why he couldn't have learnt some grammar to go with them. This is not how Indian people talk. I promise.

This is about the point where even the multicolored bookmarks didn't make it fun enough to keep highlighting the mass stupidity that is this book. Colleen Houck is incapable of telling a story. She spends about three pages, in a question-and-answer session about tigers. If I wanted to know about the eating habits of a tiger, I would look it up on Wikipedia. This is not storytelling, its an INFODUMP. I don't know who told this woman that question-and-answer formats are a good way to fill in the background, because she does it AGAIN, devoting a large amount of unnecessary wordspace to describing the caste system in India. By this point you're already halfway through the book and looking for any excuse to throw it in the trash, so she's not really selling her book with her innovative writing style. And don't even get me started on her research.

According to this story, one can buy a white tiger, an endangered species, ship it on a private plane to India in the same cabin as the humans and then unload it just as if it were a particularly large stuffed toy, and put a collar on it and lead it around. Now I don't know very much about the laws governing the international transport of a protected, endangered species, but a degree in law and basic common sense tells me that there are bound to be tests, quarantine laws, rules governing transportation, etc. before releasing a tiger into the wild. But hey, that's the real world, right?

Also, Kelsey spends a large part of the book running around with a white tiger in the backseat of her Jeep. And nobody notices. Nope, not even when the truck driver who was supposed to be transporting them to the tiger sanctuary offloads the tiger in the middle of the street and fucks off. And this is in a town, not the middle of the forest or anything. So apparently, in addition to talking like Master Yoda and being careless with our endangered species, we Indians are also deaf, dumb and blind.

These are only the major, glaring errors in the book. There are a bunch of other minor irritants too. Functional cellphones in the middle of the forest, for example. Please, sometimes, I don't get cellphone service a few miles out of the city, but this girl miraculously gets it in the middle of the jungle where there are NO CELLULAR TOWERS? She must be using Barrons' magical cellphone! Hey, can I get one?

And the 'chemistry' between our moronic heroine and her tiger-man is non-existent. Dhiren is a badly drawn character with no depth. He apparently reappears after every transformation from tiger to man in the clothes that he wore when he was cursed. These are... wait for it... white trousers and a long-sleeved white shirt. Yup. I am beyond words. A simple Wiki search will tell anyone what the clothing of 16th century India was amongst the ruling caste, and trousers and a shirt aren't it.

Ugh, and when he asks for 'permission' to kiss her, she blathers on about how asking for permission is so old-fashioned, and then berates herself about it forever when he stalks off. I'm embarrassed for this girl, and I think the best thing for her to have done afterwards was to have drowned herself in the pool so that we didn't have to put up with any more of her stupidity. And besides, no 16th century Indian man would dream of kissing a white woman. He'd lose his caste, and that kind of stuff was important to people back then.

And the worst part is, this is the first book in a trilogy. There is plenty more torture to come for anyone who cares to subject themselves to this masochism. Considering I didn't manage to get more than halfway through this book, you can be sure I won't be wasting my money on this shit!

## **Whitley Birks says**

THIS BOOK IS SO BAD IT ACTUALLY MADE ME HATE TIGERS.

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## **Faye, la Patata says**

I TRIED, GUYS. **I TRIED.** BUT I JUST CANNOT FINISH THIS... THIS THING.

**Just look at my status updates to see why I abhor... ABHOR... this book.**

**Exhibit A:**

**Exhibit B:**

**Exhibit C:**

**Exhibit D:**

**Exhibit E:**

**I am *DONE!*. I wouldn't wish this book even upon my worst enemy.**

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## **Ceilidh says**

I'm white. Being white means I have a certain level of privilege that people of colour are not afforded. I've never had to experience racism, I've never been slurred based on the colour of my skin and I don't have to live with the extreme social and economic gap that people of colour do in terms of employment, higher education, sexual assault, health issues, etc. Sometimes when I'm looking at an issue, it can be very easy for me to look over the experiences of others. This isn't deliberate but it is a sign that my race has levelled the playing field in a way that just isn't open for people who aren't white. I make a conscious effort to see the bigger picture, take into account the experiences of others and to check my privilege at every possible turn. Frankly, every white person should do so.

I say all this now because I think it's important for me to put this disclaimer before my piece, wherein I

discuss what I saw as the gross ignorance and cultural appropriation present in the book “Tiger’s Curse” by Colleen Houck, a white American YA author. The novel, which takes place primarily in India, centres on a young white American woman called Kelsey who, through a series of laughable and increasingly convoluted events, finds herself looking after a cursed Indian prince who is stuck in the body of a tiger. She accompanies him back to his homeland in order to accomplish several tasks to break the curse, and through this process finds out that she is the chosen one of the Hindu goddess Durga.

Before I can even tackle the cultural issues of this book, I have to discuss just how terrible it is on a basic storytelling level. The book, which was originally self-published on Amazon before being picked up by a publisher and becoming a NYT best-seller, is abysmal. There’s no other word for it. The prose is childish and juvenile, often reading like an essay by a fourteen year old who has just learned how to speak English. Throughout the extremely padded story, the irritating narrator Kelsey displays the emotional and intellectual maturity of a tween, one who is far more concerned with describing every single meal she eats or piece of clothing she wears over the action packed tasks she is set to accomplish. We are subjected to list after list of every single thing Kelsey does, from her morning routine to her showering. Any potential for excitement in the more action packed scenes is quickly shot down because of the stilted prose. I don’t ask for much realism in my books with cursed tiger princes but when I’m rolling my eyes on page 4 (when Kelsey literally walks into a job centre and is given a job helping to look after a tiger in a travelling circus despite a total lack of qualifications), that’s not good.

Supporting characters make no impact beyond their broad offensive stereotypes (the Italian circus owner speaks like the pizza chef from “The Simpsons” while most of the Indian characters speak in the broken English style reserved for racist jokes – shockingly, people in India can speak English, many of them very well. They’re not uneducated simpletons who need a nice white lady to fix their problems). The romance is essentially insta-love but Kelsey is at least smart enough to acknowledge that an Indian prince deprived of female contact for hundreds of years may just latch onto the first one he sees. Overall, I was actually embarrassed by the quality of the novel. There is basically no villain until the cheap cliff-hanger epilogue, and the story really could have benefited from some actual antagonism beyond “Baww, Ren is so hot and I want to kiss him!” I was dying for the opportunity to find a paper copy and take big red pen to it. I easily could have removed 20% of that padding and it wouldn’t have made an ounce of difference to the story.

Of course, the real issue with this novel is the portrayal of India and its culture, particularly its religious myths. The moments where facts about India are shoehorned in feel like Houck just googled random Indian facts and copy-pasted them into the document. People recite stale facts as part of the dialogue and it sounds as though they’re just reading from Wikipedia. I even googled several passages to make sure they weren’t plagiarised from websites because I just couldn’t be sure otherwise. Whenever Kelsey stays in a hotel in India, she stays in the lap of luxury, conveniently avoiding the poorer areas of the country and even the more middle-class areas. This is tourism for the spoiled White Kelsey. It’s like colonialism never happened.

Then again, these moments aren’t anywhere near as offensive as when Houck just makes stuff up. For instance, a character mentions an Islamic belief that Allah sends tiger’s down from heaven to protect his devotees. That’s completely untrue. No such legend exists. While Islam is one of the main religions in India, its origins lie to the Middle East, and there aren’t a whole lot of tigers there. My GoodReads friend Nessa covers this in more detail, including Houck’s inability to keep the mythology of any country straight (kappas?!). This isn’t Hindi culture, this is Disney’s Hinduism for beginners, completely stripped of all the complexities and less than PG rated aspects.

I really became angry when White Kelsey is declared the chosen one of the goddess Durga. The population of India is over 1.2 billion people, yet the chosen one of Durga is a white American girl. Even she questions whether this is right! This brief moment of clarity only serves to aggravate the sheer insulting nature of yet another appearance of the white saviour. Remember in “Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom” how Indy, the very obviously white guy, was the one the poor helpless villagers said was sent by Shiva to save them?

What about Kony 2012, a white saviour project so smug and misinformed that it went from online sensation to public joke in about a fortnight? Let's not forget every single movie set in an American inner-city high school where the nice white lady/man comes in to teach those black/Hispanic kids how to improve their lives, then she gets down with their urban dancing! And, of course, Bono. It is not the job of white people to swoop in on some moral mission and save the poor unfortunate non-white souls. It's depressing enough that we're still trying this shit in 2013, I don't want to have to see it deployed as a cheap exploitative plot device in order to make an irritating and poorly developed Mary Sue be made even more special.

Two things came to mind while reading "Tiger's Curse". One was "Temple of Doom", since the action scenes and general narrative felt very much like Indiana Jones fan-fiction, only without Short Round, and the other was Selema Gomez. Lately, Gomez has been on the receiving end of a lot of justified controversy for her repeated wearing of the bindi in her performances. Gomez seems to be wearing the bindi for no other reason than it looks "cool". Iggy Azalea's latest music video "Bounce" is set during an Indian wedding for no apparent reason, with Azalea in traditional dress. Gwen Stefani wore the bindi in the past, as have many other white pop-stars. They took something that wasn't their culture, stripped it of its cultural and historical context and made it into a fashion accessory. The Aerogram put it best here:

*"The political context in which cultural symbols exist is important. Cultural appropriation happens — and the unquestioned sense of entitlement that white Americans display towards the artifacts and rituals of people of color exists too. All "appropriation" is not merely an example of cultural sharing, an exchange between friends that takes place on a level playing field."*

"Tiger's Curse" uses Indian culture for no apparent reason other than it's "cool". The food is tasty, the clothes are colourful, the gods and goddesses are interesting and it's all there for white people to cherry pick for cheap artistic purposes. Houck at least doesn't white-wash this version of India, although the two love interests (yes, love triangle) are essentially blank slates who exist to push a plot forward and fawn over the extremely irritating White Kelsey. This should be their story and it's not. It's the story of the white girl. It's yet another tired narrative where the white people come in to save the day from those poor locals with their non-white skin and lack of privilege. Keep in mind just how few mainstream YA novels feature heroines of colour and then look at this book. Why is the supposedly relatable heroine white and why is she so special to an Indian goddess when she has absolutely no connection or understanding of said culture besides the plot telling us she's special? There are many reasons why you should avoid "Tiger's Curse", but if you need to pick one then avoid it because Hindi culture is not Houck's to fetishize.

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<http://www.thebooklantern.co.uk/2013/...>

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## **Emily May says**

If I had to describe Tiger's Curse in one word, that word would be *embarrassing*. I'm not joking.

Have you ever been in the company of one of those people who is not vindictive or mean, but is unintentionally racist in a way that makes you feel really uncomfortable? Maybe they mimic a foreign accent and think they're being funny. Or they make a joke and don't know the history well enough to know how not fucking funny it is. This book is like one of those people.

Let's start at the beginning of this **cringy, offensive, and downright stupid story**.

Small prologue aside, the story opens with Kelsey giggling inanely at a job interview. Despite having no qualifications and obviously being a few brain cells short of an IQ rating, Kelsey gets the job - one that requires her to live for two weeks with the circus.

Right away something seemed a bit off when Kelsey hadn't mentioned to her foster parents that she was going for a job, never mind asking for permission to disappear for two weeks. Instead, she just comes home and says "Yo, I have a job living at the circus for two weeks" and her mom is like "Ok, see ya!" Bit odd.

And it only gets weirder when she tells them she's going to India and they're like "Cool, whatevs!" because they are super liberal hippies so that makes total sense. Again, a bit odd. Or should I say "highly fucking convenient"?

I started feeling uncomfortable as soon as Kelsey arrived at the circus and the Italian owner speaks like this:

*"I like de surprises. It keeps me-a young and a most handsome man."*

Oh no. Something shriveled up inside me as I considered what the Indian people would speak like.

Well... India is not treated as a nation with people, cultures and history, it is treated as an exotic setting that Kelsey can swan about in and play dress-up. The Indian medicine man in the jungle is a caricature of an old Indian person and, as Vanessa pointed out, speaks like Yoda.

But, of course, there's a much bigger problem here. And if you don't think it's an issue, then I strongly encourage you to read books about cultural imperialism or Edward Said's fantastic book about Western attitudes towards Middle Eastern, Asian and North African societies - Orientalism.

Kelsey is an idiotic white american and yet somehow, though the population of India is more than 3x that of the United States, she is the chosen one to break this Hindu curse. Why the fuck would that be the case? Only a white person has the power to solve another culture's problems? Oh, I'm sure the author didn't mean it that way, you say. I'm sure she didn't intend to propagate the age-old idea that brown people need white people to think for them and save them...

And, you know what? I think you're right. I'm also sure the author didn't intend it that way because **I don't think she gave a single fucking thought to how her representation of this culture would look**. She wanted to write about a white girl and use "exotic" but not really Indian mythology, and that - as they say - was that.

Not only is Kelsey the white saviour of the brown peoples, she is also smarter than the smartest Indians (if you can believe it!). Mr Kadam is supposed to be some amazing scholar on Hindu mythology and yet Kelsey the dumb manages to frequently educate him about things he didn't know/never thought of.

A Hindu mythology, I might add, that has been both westernized and mixed up with other Asian mythology. Someone really needs to tell Ms Houck that "Asian" is a very non-specific term and covers a LOT of very different people. Someone also needs to tell her that Asian mythology shouldn't be grouped under one umbrella, and that using Japanese mythology in a book about Indian mythology is just dumb.

Yes, for some reason, despite her lack of qualifications, friends, cultural respect and general brain cells, Kelsey is the chosen one. She is one of those characters that glows with an inexplicable **specialness** and yet never really demonstrates any reason why we should believe she is special. She just is, for fuck sake!

Ren is a gorgeous prince and... that's it. Oh, sometimes he's crazy possessive too. It's not sexy. Though the

obsession with beauty goes beyond Ren - many of the characters in the book are characterised solely by their looks: Ren, Kishan, Yesubai, Durga... they literally have no personality. But then again, neither does Kelsey beyond being annoying and stupid.

This is honestly just a terrible book. Bad writing, bad characterization, extremely convenient events/occurrences propelling the plot... and that's before we even get to the racism. What a mess.

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## Jen says

I'm so mad at this book I'm writing this review before I finish listening to the last hour, which has been torture to listen to.

I started out loving this book which is the only reason it does not have 1 star. I loved the strong, brave, kind main character Kelsey, who got stuff done without whining about it. I loved the Indian mythology and the curse-breaking premise. I was willing to look past the somewhat sappy and cheesy romantic dialogue because unlike certain other books \*coughwilightcough\* this book had an actual PLOT and it wasn't ENTIRELY fluffly bullcrap.

And then halfway through the book, Kelsey starts to shift between nasty bitchface and disgusting lovesick puppy. FOR NO REASON. NO REASON AT ALL. She decides on her own that there is no way Ren will ever stay with her and decides to nip her "love-seed" in the bud. Sure, the plot part is still good, but now this extra crap is making the plot hard to get through.

She actually says that "it's not fair" how hard it is to reject him after talking about how stupid a girl would have to be to do so. Oh boo hoo, it's not fair that a freaking hot Indian prince says he would rather die than live without you but you're too much of a pussy to stay with him.

After at least a week of her being a frigid bitch to Ren in between kissing him passionately when he coaxes her into doing so, she has the audacity to say that she'll just have to tell him "the truth" because she's the kind of person who faces things head on and gets past them. Because yeah, going weeks without telling Ren why you're being a bitch is really facing things head on. What happened to my strong female character from the beginning of the story?

And might I add that she is flabbergasted when Ren says he knows she reciprocates his feelings. Is she a complete moron? She's been obvious about it since even before she started to push him away. Jesus.

I just feel like the book is ruined for me. (view spoiler)

I mean. Okay. Fine, it's awesome that she questions her feelings and how their relationship might work out, but she goes about it the wrong way entirely.

I will likely not pick up the next book in this series. I don't want to see what travesty the author makes of this character I initially loved. I bet she ends up in some sort of weird tryst with Ren's brother or something. There's no reason for Ren's brother to be there at this point other than to screw with Kelsey. Ugh.

Edit: Finally finished the book. Sometimes I hate it when I'm right. (view spoiler)

Also also, how many times are these guys going to "pick up her hand" and "play with her fingers"? Bleh.

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