



## Wintersong

*S. Jae-Jones*

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*The last night of the year. Now the days of winter begin and the Goblin King rides abroad, searching for his bride....*

All her life, Liesl has heard tales of the beautiful, dangerous Goblin King. They've enraptured her mind and spirit and inspired her musical compositions. Now eighteen and helping to run her family's inn, Liesel can't help but feel that her musical dreams and childhood fantasies are slipping away.

But when her own sister is taken by the Goblin King, Liesl has no choice but to journey to the Underground to save her. Drawn to the strange, captivating world she finds--and the mysterious man who rules it--she soon faces an impossible decision. With time and the old laws working against her, Liesl must discover who she truly is before her fate is sealed.

Dark, romantic, and powerful, *Wintersong* will sweep you away into a world you won't soon forget.

## Wintersong Details

Date : Published February 7th 2017 by Thomas Dunne Books

ISBN : 9781250079213

Author : S. Jae-Jones

Format : Hardcover 436 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Romance, Retellings, Did Not Finish

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## From Reader Review Wintersong for online ebook

### Brittney ~ Reverie and Ink says

I was absolutely hooked from the intro. One of the best openings to a story, in my opinion.

#### THE PLOT

The plot is basically Hades/Persephone meets Caraval. It is not only magical, but mysterious and riveting - exploring so many heart felt topics such as the bond between siblings, sacrifice, and self-acceptance.

Leisl the older "ugly" sister, the overlooked talent, and the backbone of her family. I connected with her and her insecurities/struggles, especially in the beginning. I think you'll either love the book for that - or disconnect from it entirely. We end up so deep in Leisl's issues/emotions and I think if you aren't right there with her emotionally, you'll find this book a bit boring-especially the last half. Additionally, It isn't a light read AT ALL. The writing is so rich and full and it honestly reads more like an adult novel, in my opinion (which I loved.) It didn't feel YA to me in the least. (Not to mention there is adult content.)

I also think this could have been split into two books as the first half and second half differ from each other a great deal. The first half is wild and beautiful and feels like a chase/game. I can't say much about the second half aside from it focuses 100% on Leisl's emotional issues and the aftermath of what happens in the first half. It was quite slow and a bit frustrating at times... but I was so connected to Leisl that it hit me in the feels. I almost feel like I should review the first half and second half in two different blocks of this review- but since it is a new release, I'll let it sit for a while.

#### THIS IS NOT LIKE THE MOVIE.

Supposedly this is a Labyrinth retelling - or was at least inspired by it. **Please do not go into this expecting something even remotely close to Labyrinth.** The only thing that seems similar is the description of the Goblin King - but even that isn't quite the same. When I first read this, I hadn't seen the movie and didn't find it lacking. I recently went back and watched the movie and yeah- it's nothing like it. So save yourself the disappointment and reset your expectations!

#### THE END

Okay, since there have been lots of questions about whether or not there is a sequel, let me clear this up! I asked the author myself (twitter) and she said that there IS a sequel and it IS the continuing story. It is not a novella, nor is it about other characters. And good thing too- because I was pretty much dead inside after that ending and I was freaking out. PHEW.

My Blog ~ Instagram ~ Twitter ~ Etsy

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### Katerina says

*"You are the monster I claim."*

**Dark and poetic.**

Frightening. Seductive. **Beautiful.**

I claim this beautiful tale, I claim the **sorrow**, the **dreams**, the **wildness**, the **magic**, the **darkness** and the **pain** that consumed me.

I loved it.

*“Once there was a little girl who played her music for a little boy in the wood.”*

But the girl grew up, and forgot about the boy. She continued her life as if he never existed, she kept her family together, composed her music in the dark and wished, for attention, for desire, for greatness. For a world where she was the protagonist and not the one hiding behind her siblings. But the boy remembered. He waited in his gloomy kingdom, until he ran out of patience and kidnapped the girl's sister, in order to lure the girl into his cold and cruel domain. They became enemies, friends, strangers, lovers, but their story was not meant to have a happy ending. Unless they made one for themselves.

*“Now the days of winter begin, and the Goblin King rides abroad, searching for his bride.”*

Liesl's story was indeed a Wintersong. A **half-remembered lullaby**, sang softly in a cold, white night that filled you with **longing** and **nostalgia**, a music your mind could not fully comprehend but a part of you recognized. When you dive into Wintersong, reality is not something concrete. Just when you think you finally grasped it, it slips through your fingers. You can't read it with your eyes nor your brain. It tears down the barriers of reason, until you are lost in a **tempest of images and illusions, sinful thoughts and deeds, shadows and light.**

**You read it with your soul.**

*“There is music in your soul. A wild and untamed sort of music that speaks to me. It defies all the rules and laws you humans set upon it. It grows from inside you, and I have a wish to set that music free.”*

Liesl's story was **sheer magic**. Devious goblins, a Lord of Mischief, a kingdom underground, a set of laws that demanded the greatest sacrifices. And this different, mystical world, despite its lack of colour and life, was fully capable of bewitching you. S. Jae-Jones' narration was both raw and lyrical, her characters good and evil, tainted and pure, cunning and innocent. Liesl was a puzzle for me, I liked her and hated her at the same time. She was too selfish, too jealous, too self-absorbed, too shallow, too vain, *too real*. She wasn't a heroine polished by her noble deeds, just a woman who was broken in order to find herself. And the Goblin King? A tragic figure bound by immortality, cruel yet unexpectedly tender, a hero and a villain, young and ancient, pious and sinner.

*“The kiss is sweeter than sin and fiercer than temptation. I am not gentle, I am not kind; I am rough and wild and savage.”*

Liesl's story was a **lament**. An ode to things lost and found, to love, to art, to tears and to laughter, to music itself. Liesl's grandmother advised her to beware the goblin men and the wares they sell, but I say **give in**. Taste Wintersong. Covet it. And let the winds of winter warm your heart.

*“Once upon a time, there once was a great king who lived underground...”*

**\*ARC generously provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review\***

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## **Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says**

Instagram || Twitter || Facebook || Amazon || Pinterest

You could say that I'm a hardcore Labyrinth fan girl. I love the movie, Labyrinth, and have seen it many times, glitter-dappled set and cheesy puppets aside; it's an interesting story that's clearly inspired by Celtic faerie lore, and (you could argue) the allegorical tale of a girl's coming-of-age through the use of symbolism. In fact, many of the reasons I love the movie are less because of what's *in* the story and more of what's explicitly left *out*.

Because of that, I was a little skeptical when I heard that there was a book coming out that was inspired by Labyrinth - skeptical and also bouncing-off-the-walls excited. Because another book came out this year that was also inspired by one of my favorite stories: RoseBlood by A.G. Howard, **which turned one of my favorite antiheroes into a psychic vampire who owns a rave club.**

I was not pleased with these developments.

WINTERSONG starts out okay. It takes place in historical Bavaria, and is about a selfish brat named Elisabeth who only cares about music. She spends most of the book whining, feeling sorry for herself, and being jealous of her siblings. Then one day, her sister, Kathe, is kidnapped by the Goblin King, and Elisabeth is forced to go Underground to save her because if she doesn't succeed, her sister will be gone forever. The integration of *The Goblin Market* and *Der Erlkonig* were interesting, but I've seen Labyrinth fanfiction writers run with this concept before. In fact, one of my favorite authors, Subtilior, has a Labyrinth fanfic called **Erlkönig** that runs with this concept beautifully. Likewise, Viciously Witty has an excellent Labyrinth fic set in Ireland that is based off and called **The Goblin Market**.

I get that there's only so many famous works of faerie lore, so the possibility of overlap is high, but that just makes it even more important to set your work apart from others' and go the extra mile to make the story interesting and the characters compelling. The Goblin King in WINTERSONG was not compelling. He did not feel like the King of Mischief; he felt like a nervous guy at prom who is afraid that his mean girlfriend is going to embarrass him in front of all his friends. He even blushes and stammers. He's also apparently a christian, or follows christian tenets, since he goes to chapel in his free time and talks a lot about God (especially in the last quarter of the book). This was really jarring to me as a reader, because many of the faerie lore is based on Celtic mythology that predates Christianity by centuries, so it doesn't really make

sense that the "Elf King" would go to church....

I looked on the author's profile, and in one of her "Ask the Author" questions, when answering how she was inspired to write this story she says she "decided to write 50 Shades of Labyrinth." So I don't think that it's a stretch to say that WINTERSONG reads like Labyrinth fanfiction, and not even particularly *good* or original Labyrinth fanfiction, since it primarily relies on ideas that have already been explored by many others in the fandom. Even the sex in this book - arguably the selling point of the premise, since I'm sure many of the hard-core fan girls of Labyrinth wish that there was an alternative telling of the tale when Jareth and Sarah really did end up together - is uninspired and whiny. Elisabeth whines about the sex, that there isn't enough of it, that he doesn't really *want* her. There are some truly well-written passages in here, but then you also get ridiculous passages like these: "I dip my quill into the inkwell once again, and join up my teardrops into a song" (204).

If this book is 50 Shades of anything, it's 50 Shades of a Whining Heroine Who Never Shuts the Hell Up. She is one of the most unlikable protagonists I've encountered in a while because all she does is complain and whine and cry and talk about how ugly she is. The only thing that sets the heroine apart are her musical abilities (a similarity it shares with RoseBlood), and she's even a brat about this. She sets her brother's face on fire out of jealousy because he is able to study music because he's a boy and she isn't and gets mad at the Goblin King for obtaining her a klavier because - she says - it's too beautiful for her and that makes her feel bad, basically. I'm sorry, you want me to root for this twit?

This was a huge disappointment for me. The only upside is that it made me want to go watch Labyrinth again and revisit some of my favorite fanfic to read when I was in college.

1 to 1.5 stars

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**Mikee Andrea (ReadWithMikee) says**

*“I am the Lord of Mischief, the Ruler Underground,' he said, mismatched eyes glinting. 'I am wildness and madness made flesh. You're just a girl'—he smiled, and the tips of his teeth were sharp—and I am the wolf in the woods.”*

Thank you to St. Martin's Press for providing me with an ARC!

Wintersong was a work of art. S Jae-Jones's writing was breathtakingly poetic and I found myself whisked away by the first page. The storyline was seductive, passionate, and heartbreakingly beautiful. In a way, it reminded me a bit of Rosamund Hodge's Cruel Beauty and Roshani Chokshi's The Star-Touched Queen. Wintersong was a retelling of Labyrinth but I also found pieces of Beauty and the Beast weaved into the story. The Beast, in this case, took form as the infamous Goblin King and Elisabeth as our Beauty. Beauty

not in appearance but in her music.

Although Wintersong has its ups, just like any book, it does have its downsides. The pacing of the story moves very slowly, which proves to be more of a con to a reader who loves action-driven storylines. The plot starts off strong but the momentum dwindles and slows down a bit about halfway through up until the very end. Wintersong is no action-filled fantasy so don't expect there to be any sword fights or magical spells.

One thing I enjoyed was the fact that our heroine, Liesl, wasn't the typical beautiful, jaw-dropping, beauty that we're accustomed to seeing in almost every young adult novel. HOWEVER, it did get overdone a tad bit too much. We just kept hearing about how plain she was throughout the whole book which was just as bad as hearing how beautiful these YA characters are.

I expected to be swept away by The Goblin King, and for the most part I was. He wasn't as swoonworthy as I was hoping he would be but he turned out alright. He was probably the one that saved this whole story for me. I was just so intrigued with his character and I really wanted to know more about him and the person he was before he turned into the ruler of the Underground. The scene in the chapel during his prayers absolutely broke my heart. Even though he was one of the main characters of the story, I really wish we could've gotten more out of him.

If you are a huge Labyrinth fan such as myself, I do suggest reading Wintersong without having any expectations that it would closely resemble the book. I think having that expectation played a part in my disappointment on how the story played out. It maybe a retelling but it is a very loose retelling. The only similarities I found were a few close lines from the film and the concept of the male character being named The Goblin King. Other than that, it's a completely different story.

Wintersong was good, but definitely not as great as I had hoped it would be in the end. The ending wasn't your typical happily ever after, if even, and sadly I was a bit unsatisfied as far as endings went. All in all, I believe that Wintersong is a great book for fans who enjoyed The Star-Touched Queen or Cruel Beauty. Unfortunately, I wasn't a huge fan of either of those books so Wintersong was probably not the book for me. I do favor Wintersong above the other two. I still loved the concept of the story and the romance between Elisabeth and The Goblin King. And I really looking forward to seeing what the companion novel will be about.

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## Maggie says

*Once there was a little girl who played her music for a little boy in the wood. She was small and dark, he was tall and fair, and the two of them made a fancy pair as they danced together, dancing to the music the little girl heard in her head.*

**I take back what I said about thinking every other 1-star read by me is the most boring book ever, because this was, by far, the most boring book I have ever read.** The fact that I actually finished it is so surprising to me because I thought about DNF it so many times since I was so bored, but I forced myself to finish it for some reason. Maybe because Sana liked it so I thought I would? **Yeah, well, not all things are as you expect.**

Again, this was another 2017 anticipated release. I thank my dumbass brain for allowing me to save money and not buying this book because I was in the process of doing that until I noticed my friend had the book.

For some reason, I've always hated retellings. *The Lunar Chronicles* and *Heartless* by Marissa Meyer are the only ones I've enjoyed so far, and it's no surprise they're by the same author. Maybe I dislike them so much because I'm afraid they're gonna ruin the original story even if and when I haven't seen the original story, but even with that being said, I was so excited to read this, but of course, it was another fail, another 1-star, and another boring retelling.

*Wintersong*. 19-year-old Liesl cares only about everyone else but her. She has a little brother to take care of, a younger sister to look out for, a family inn to clean, and a family to bear. Her grandmother has told her many stories, tales, of the Ruler Underground, The Goblin King, the Lord of Mischief, but Liesl never bothered to care, never bothered to listen. She grew up with him, playing the music she had recently composed and danced with him in the Goblin Grove of his, but that was when she was young. Now, as she's older, she still does the same. She's 19, but still, doesn't care for herself but instead for others. She's still trying to make decisions and care for her sister, protecting and caring for her brother, listening to her grandmother's warnings but not caring, and watching her parents grow old as she too, grows. But when Liesl's younger sister, Käthe, is taken by the goblins, she makes an approach to save her and free her from this Underground ruling by the Underground King himself. The King will let her sister go, but of course, there is a price Liesl must pay. She accepts the games and prices he asks for, which is giving her life up for hers - marrying the Goblin King, just like he had waited for her all those years. As Liesl is living Underground as not only Liesl but the Goblin Queen, she realizes she misses the Goblin King she grew up with, she danced with, she sang with, she played music with, and all this is an emotional, physical, and musical attachment. As Liesl is growing closer to the King, she is also growing closer to death, as her life is slowly leaving her for her price was a big sacrifice for the King. The question is, what must each sacrifice? The music, their love, her life, or the life of the world as it comes to an end as well?

I've seen and been told that this is a retelling of Labyrinth, but I am no one to judge that for I have no knowledge of that, but I do know that this had a connection to *The Goblin Market* by Christina Rossetti. It's funny though, because when I first saw a line of the poem, I had a thought, and it was a coincidence because that poem had to be read by me and my English class last year. It was a poem I didn't understand at first, and the picture of the girl with the fruits and goblins didn't make any sense to me until I asked about it later, and as we came to summarize the whole thing. Reading "*come buy, come buy*" felt as if I was about to read the poem again, but in the form of a book. The goblins and beautiful women being tricked into eating peaches and dripping the juice as if it was blood took me back to the poem, and it all made sense.

First things first: **This was boring. This was the most boring book I have ever read in my entire life. Maybe for now, but this was definitely surprisingly fucking boring.** I kept asking myself how this book is fantasy, if there really, is no fantasy at all. It's a retelling with some pretty heavy YA romance, but what was the fantasy? Was it the goblins? The Goblin King? I'm sure that was it, and I'm sure this is classified fantasy because of that, but this was some **wacky YA fantasy**. Gosh, it was worse than *Air Awakens* and *The Love Interest*, which are my most recent 1-star reads. A lot more happened in those two shitty books than this one. At least in my head, there was no fantasy, and this also leads to me saying that **this is why I want to stop reading YA fantasy and move on to Adult epic/high fantasy, the kind where it's bloody and violent everywhere in the book, from beginning to end.** But instead, I tell myself no, and continue to be the teenage girl that almost always never listens to herself and keeps on reading YA fantasy, only to not be surprised. *What a surprise!*

The writing of this was beautiful, I do admit that, but it only made up for the first 50 pages, then I got bored and kept reading with a serious face. There were many words I couldn't pronounce, but sometimes, when this happens, I always think it's because of my accent, or because I've never heard the words or both. S. Jae-Jones managed to captivate me into this because of her writing - The writing felt dark, but also poetic and beautiful, although I actually hate poetry. It's weird to think about it, but her writing had those beautiful poetic synonyms that were part of the reason why I kept reading. The writing, like the cover, was

sensationally beautiful, and Jones definitely has the skill of that. Talent. Her writing is very unique, and even if I didn't enjoy this one but she wrote another book about something else with similar writing, I would really be up to reading it.

As a first, Liesl's name was hard for me to pronounce. I had to ask here on Goodreads how her name was pronounced because up to page 50, I kept pronouncing her name as "Lysol", which is a cleaning product, which is the one my mom uses to mop the floor, and I kept laughing at myself because I thought it was really that. Other than that, her character was **annoying, bland, and dull**, common and typical descriptions for a dry character. On the second hand, she was another one of those characters I've read about that is not described as **perfect, along with perfect shining skin, luscious and silky hair, curvy and beautiful in any describable way** just like Em from *Avenged by Amy Tintera*. Instead, she was the "ugly" in the family, the self-conscious and envious one. She was jealous of her sister and mother, but especially her sister: the girl who had a heavy and glorious laugh, the one with shining beautiful eyes, a beautiful body that any man would want to wrap their arms around with, the one with perfect features in her face and skin, but even with that, Liesl's character didn't grow on me. I could relate to her self-consciousness on so many levels, completely, but her being so envious and jealous of her mother and sister was what I did **not** like. I'm not a person who likes people who are jealous of other people's appearance because it always makes me think back to the "love yourself" bullshit I get and hear all the time. Although I don't have self-love for me, **I so wish that I did, that I loved myself for who I am and for what I stand for, not for what others want me for and what they want me to be. I wish I had self-love for myself.** I was okay with her being insecure, but I was not okay with her fawning over how perfect her sister was and how grateful she even was to have a beautiful and young sister who looked more like a woman, who got all the attention, but instead I wished she was trying, at least *trying* to put more self-love and care to herself. Knowing she was the love interest of the Goblin King, *the ruler himself*, I expected her to think more highly of herself, but she never did. She always thought of herself as a lower person.

This was, for sure, a **forced romance retelling**. The romance in this felt forced, at least how I saw it, and I didn't like it one bit. I can see why the sequel is shelved under New Adult since this doesn't have the typical YA romance; it wasn't steamy, but it went on other levels than most fantasy books. It almost went to SJM level, except her books are considered to be both YA and NA in romance. The romance between Liesl and The Goblin King felt rushed and felt forced. I understand he's known her since she was young and he was, older, and has since then been asking her to marry him, but I still felt like everything was rushed. The romance felt forced to me because she had to give up her life for her sisters and give her hand to the Goblin to get married and was suddenly wanting him for *him*, even when he responded with "no, not like this." It made me feel uncomfortable because the scenes they had together made me question love. Coming from a teenager who's never felt love before in her life, I felt like this was **not love**. The Goblin King kept saying he wanted Liesl "*Her, entire.*" and I just did not know what that meant, but she thought it meant her, as in **she gives him HER as she is, the 19-year old teenager gives herself TO him**. I can't believe I'm saying this, but the love in this **felt too passionately fake all the time**. The romance in this hints sex in the other, since she basically wanted him naked and just wanted to see **him**, so I'm sure they'll be more of that in the next book. Liesl kept telling herself she hated the Goblin King, but then when he was close to her, she *ached and craved* for his touch, feel, warmth, kisses, and all that stuff.

I don't know anything about The Goblin King, so I can't say much about him. I remember when I first heard about this book and read the description, I looked up "Goblin King" and it gave me photos, videos, and gifs of David Bowie, since he played his character in the movie *Labyrinth*, which I'm guessing is why this is supposedly a retelling of that film. The character though was not the best male lead I've read about. I hated him at times and found him to be rude, but I guess that's who he is right? I felt no chemistry between him and Liesl, and I thought it was unfair of him to treat Liesl how he treated her at times, although sometimes, it was her fault for being a stupid idiot. Although he played fair at his games, I still thought it wasn't fair of him to look through Liesl's stuff - her music - and play it as if it meant nothing to her. His relationship with Liesl

didn't feel healthy to me, but it also wasn't unhealthy in any way, but the chemistry between them was just **not there**. The romance didn't feel real to me in any way, and I just thought the whole romance thing between them was just bullshit after.

I don't know what to think of the sequel, but I'm not gonna be buying this duology. I'll just be patiently waiting for my library to receive *Shadowsong* like it received *Wintersong*, and I'll try it out to see how different it is. \*Sigh\*. The covers for both books are so breathtakingly beautiful. Too bad the book and characters aren't. This is why you can't judge a book by its cover.

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## Sana says

You know what, waving a red flag in front of a bull, getting slammed to the wall by the bull and dying would hurt less than reading the words in this book. Writers like S Jae-Jones need to be illegal because THEY ARE SO EVIL AKDHSF.

*Wintersong* is a painfully beautifully written book about nineteen year old Elisabeth (Liesl) who has always been a responsible and caring older sister to her siblings Joseph and Kathe, sacrificing her future and dreams for her brother Joseph. She's always lived in the shadow of her brother's music and no matter how much she wants, she can't reveal her musical talents for the sake of her family.

When Liesl and Kathe decide to visit the market, something happens that causes Kathe to disappear to the Underground and she is suddenly forgotten by everyone. Liesl has to journey into the Underworld and rescue her sister,,,,, but sacrifices must be made because nothing is eVER FAIR.

Honestly, I can understand why some people wouldn't like the second half. While the first half is catchy and interesting, the second half reads very slow. In order to enjoy the second half of this book, you need to really like Liesl's character because it's all about her.

\*get ready because this is so shocking\* I LOVED everything in this book. I loved the pacing, plot, characters and the gorgeous writing. The writing is so hauntingly beautiful. It's like quick sand. It pulls you in and your just unable to get out of it.

Liesl is a character I really loved. Many people might find her annoying as fuck and I get it, but??? in a way she's so selfless and brave and beautiful in her plainness and I love her?? She's talented in her music and sacrifices so much for the people she loves, it makes me cry.

but you know who makes me cry the most??

THE GOBLIN KING.

I volunteer to grow big, white, fluffy wings to protect this beautiful creature from all the evil things in the world and vow to give him warm, soft hugs and chocolate chip cookies with cotton candy and EVERYTHING PURE AND NICE BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT HE ALL MY LOVE AND EVERYTHING NICE. He's broken™, The Lord of Mischief, Mein Heir, *the monster i claim* (fuck i'm crying ded bye), cruel, cold, but he's got a soft heart underneath all that muscle aND (view spoiler)

Their relationship was so beautiful and y'all I cried more than I've ever cried in my life while reading this book, like goodbye and goodnight.

Like, if you ever want to visit me, visit your local trashcan because that's where I'll be!!!

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Hi, my name is Sana and I love pain. :) And whenever I want some pain, I read this !! Book!! :)

I finished reading it for the second time and I'm! Still! Crying! And! Dead!!!!

review to come once someone CPR's my ghost

-----  
me: okay, today i am going to sit my ass down and review Wintersong.

\*grabs laptop and logs into goodreads\*

\*searches up wintersongggg\*

\*clicks "edit review"\*

uh this book-

i love-

THE GOBLIN KING IS MY HUSBA-

THE CHARACTERS ARE SO GREA-

the writing is gorgeous and-

oh look, i can't write a review. sorry folks. JUST KNOW THAT YOU SHOULD READ THIS. OKAY?  
OKAY, GOODBYE.

----  
\*puts book down\*

\*lies down\*

\*deep breaths\*

\*stares into space\*

\*cries\*

GOODBYE WORLD SANA IS DEAD.

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## Em says

**this book was....** [crowd leans in] **meh** [crowd immediately starts booing]

╰(??)╯

in millions of years, archaeologists will dig up my crystallized body that has been perfectly preserved by the bog of disappointment that I drowned in after reading this book and put me in a museum with a placard 'wintersong did this.'

look, I've already mentally five starred this book because 99% of my friends loved it and honestly *what the fuck* is a certified emotion and it's the biggest mood right now. I genuinely feel like that kid in a party where everyone else is having a good time while she's lamely sitting in the bathroom stall learning german on duolingo.

*“Beware, Elisabeth. You may prefer the pretty lie to the ugly truth.”*

**I'm mostly annoyed.** I've never been this annoyed since 2014 when I watched a cinderella story and Austin didn't recognize Sam in her masquerade mask. are you fucking kidding me.

why? because the first half was actually decent. And then it's like when an actor quits and another one is dropped into their role halfway through the 5th season and I'm having a really hard time to get a feel of their personality because it's just not quite right. I know it and the viewers know it. just tell me who hurt the second half of this book and made it so vengeful??

let's talk about the first half and get the positive out the way so I can fully embrace my inner swamp goblin and rant some more.

the first half was good. and mind-fuckingly weird. I felt like my room was going to fill with fog and the goblin king and his army of goblins were going to walk slowly towards me and I'll be defenseless

*“Sometimes it is easier to pretend.”*

*“It is,” the Goblin King said in a low voice. His words vibrated all the way down my spine.*

*“But aren't we too old for our games of make-believe, Elisabeth?”*

the writing was hauntingly beautiful. you feel like sinking into your mattress, soft sounds flowing around your head and through your body, your bones becoming honey, your skin feels like silk... and I don't know where I'm going with this, I got distracted there for a second.

**.....and then the second half happened.**

(a cryptozoologist voice) and here we have the remnants of everything that was good and pure in this book,

**JUST. WHAT. HAPPENED. EXACTLY.**

it was like when someone tries to tear a page out of your notebook and accidentally rip it down the middle. my interest dropped faster than my battery's life. I just started skimming paragraphs at that point and it's a little like that moment when you get halfway through telling a story then suddenly realize that you're boring yourself so you kind of stop in the middle of a sentence.

in fact, I relate to that station conductor in harry potter who just couldn't be arsed with this kids' bullshit about platform 9 ¾, because that's exactly how I feel about **the romance** which was the focus of attention of the rest of the book.

hoo boy oh HOO BOY I've got 99 problems ans 98 of them could be attributed to this fucking ship.

## **THE ROMANCE**

the way I feel about the romance in this book is a lot like the way I feel when I notice a spider on the wall next to my bed and everything inside me is screaming at me to kill it and make!!! it!!! go!!!

I can't believe it was blurbed as *lush* and *sexy*. well, if you look up those words in the dictionary, there will

be a picture of this book..... right under the goddamn antonyms.

I just don't fucking get it. I know we're supposed to believe that Liesl and the goblin king are so in love with each other and all that magnetism, but they don't even have fun together?? they're not even nice to each other?? do authors realize that you have to actually like your partner?? as in, enjoy them as a person?? am I supposed to ship Liesl with the person who kidnapped her sister and held her captive in a fucking dungeon?? what, from the bottom of my heart, the fuck?? (if the goblin king weren't so /hot/ this would have been the script of Criminal Minds episode, let me tell ya)

don't even get me started on **the sex scenes**. if I were to rate my discomfort on a scale of 1 to adult braces, it'd be a solid 9.5. My brain was literally flicking the lights on and off screaming welcome to hell!!!! welcome to hell!!!! please, if you ever briefly consider writing smut using music metaphors and shit, just do us all a favor and don't. please, I'm on my knees. don't. I suggest arts and crafts, maybe they can spend their energy on something at least slightly more productive and less gross than eating each other's faces every two seconds.

Look. **Liesl** was literally just looking to jump the goblin king's bones and then going on and on about how that would make her a woman and free her magic or some similar bullshit, when she's spent a good part of the book slut shaming her sister - an underappreciated character who supported her sister but was portrayed as the hyperactive overly touchy sibling who exists solely because the main character is too busy being a deep and sensitive introvert to instigate any action \*rolls my eyes so far back in my head i can see my brain\*. I really don't have the energy for girls who 'just aren't like other girls'... like I support your growth, but please do it in another room.

Moreover honestly, my anti passion is when female characters get reduced to their relationship with men or need to be romantically validated to actually matter. Liesl was acting as if the goblin king's compliments to her were the objective assessment of her worth that she's been waiting for her entire life, it's like there were a shield built around her character and it was being assaulted by acid rain and the only thing she had room to care about is whether or not the goblin king finds her desirable.

I would have been a lot more open to the idea of this ship personally if it didn't almost synonymously mean high level of attachment for Liesl. I wanted to see her invest in herself like she never has before, to realize that her potential goes far beyond her goals (especially for someone who's always been eclipsed by the achievement of others) and to truly believe that she has so much love and tenderness to turn inward.

there should have been more room for her to be fluid and mentally grow and be able to let go than have a manic unhealthy level of attachment for a character who was literally just there to fulfill whatever fantasies she projected onto him, as if he were the culmination of her life's work or the absolute zenith of her emotional labor.

and honestly same goes for **the goblin king**. he was such an interesting character, one facet of an infinitely faceted being and i wanted to learn every seemingly insignificant detail about him but like I said, that didn't happen, instead he was just reduced to a Love Interest

*"If I could lay down my burden as warden of the Underground, I would. If I could wander the world above as a free man, I would. Instead, I am a prisoner to my crown."*

## THE ONLY PART THAT GOT ME LIKE !!!!!!!!

JOSEF AND FRANÇOIS. when will they carry this book away from all of this sap?? they're the only characters I cared about and I'm working towards getting stronger muscles just so I can protect them!!

**all in all... on the whole... it's a thumbs down from me ^\\_(?)\_/'**

? BUDDY READ WITH emma!!

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### Marie Lu says

WINTERSONG is a maze of beauty and darkness, of music and magic and glittering things, all tied together with exquisite writing. This is a world you will want to stay lost in. I had the honor of hearing about this wonderful story in its earliest stages, and I'm so thrilled and excited that S. Jae-Jones' work will soon be out for you all to obsess over. Don't you dare skip this.

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### Lola says

Such gorgeous writing.

Too often authors have incredible ideas of stories to write. So we're excited about them and want only to find a time-machine to transport us into the future with the intention to read said stories.

And then we do, after months of waiting (still waiting on that time-machine, by the way) and we're disappointed because, although the author had a great idea, the execution was so-so or completely mediocre.

Am I right? Which is why I am so extremely happy and proud to be able to say that "Wintersong" is as good as it sounds (and looks—exquisite cover!), because the narration is absolutely captivating.

It's a dark but romantic and magical fantasy poem—I mean novel. But it's so poetic that, at some point, you're going to stop thinking of this as being just another book and look at it with reverence and wonder, "Was this marvel written in another world? Somewhere with real magic?"

Whenever I will feel uninspired or uninspiring, I will read a chapter of this book.

The story is very interesting, especially because there aren't many like this one (that I know of). How often are goblins featured in fantasy novels, anyway? Rarely. And, I don't know about you, but I find love-hate relationships kind of really sexy, especially when there's a touch of mystery and darkness to the romance.

Though, do not expect adventure, action, a large series of events or even elemental magic. There is more showing than telling, but the telling is done so well that I simply did not care for the repetition or slow-pacing.

What I did not like as much was how important multiple characters were in the beginning of the story, but then not anymore as the story progressed. I missed Käthe and I missed Josef. And, really, if you're to include

a gay character in your story, why not actually focus a little bit on their romance story as well, huh?

It is true, sadly, that this book will not work for everyone. If, however, you love lyrical writing and character-driven stories with an emphasis on romance and a dark atmosphere, this may just be your fantasy win of 2017.

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## Yusra ? says

every time Liesl said “wantonness” i thought of wontons and let me tell you, that was the best part of my reading experience.

you know those books that literally reach out with their painfully beautiful covers and grab onto you?? saying “buy me! i’m pretty”?? well that’s what this book did for me, and tbh I don’t even care... I’m returning it.

from the *very first chapter* i was like oh no. this is not heading in a good direction. the family dynamic was so annoying and stupid. Liesl did nothing but whine. Kathe (no, I’m not putting the fancy ‘a’ bc i could care less) was a walking piece of glittery shit and so FUCKin annoying I wanted to stab her (sorry I’m going to sound like a crazy person in this review #noregrets)

let me give you a wrap up.

liesl was like “i wish i was pretty!” and “i want someone to *desire* me!!!” and I was like bitch, how about u just shut ur gobsmacking mouth?? i don’t think i’ve felt such loathing for an MC before. like i felt no ways for her, there was no connection, she could literally fall into a rabbit hole for all I could care. first chance she gets she rides that goblin king like he’s a carousel horse. (i’m sorry, I don’t even know what I’m saying)

where was the intrigue??? where was the... scare?? like the goblin king is supposed to be a scary man, no?? STOP IT THIS WAS SUCH A WASTE OF AN IDEA. like he appears in front of her and she just is nodding to all his terms and conditions like *mm yes fuck me daddy* WE ALL KNOW YOUR REAL INTENTIONS LIESL

my maternal family is all in Norway so I HAVE heard goblin and troll stories, okay? and if you are in the presence of one you are going to be TERRIFIED, no?? why would you be okay with it bc he’s one of your childhood hallucinations ?? lmao goodbye get your brain checked.

nothing made sense. nothing made me feel. this was such a sorry excuse for a hades/persephone novel i skimmed the last 100 pgs. i loathed whatever i read.

no, really?? what was this. everytime i think about it, i get angry and cannot do anything but scream !!!!

someone bring me a match

**buddy read with** Nova ?

if I have to see the words “*mein Herr*”, “*Oh, Elisabeth*”, “*you, entire*”, “*Goblin King*”, or “*Der Erbkönig*”

EVER AGAIN

I will scream.

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pre-reading

so many mixed reviews, but the second book has a beautiful cover & you already know I'm in for it

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### **Cait • A Page with a View says**

Ok so first things first: I didn't realize this was a retelling of Labyrinth when I read it and kept thinking that the story reminded me *so much* of Labyrinth meets Prince Hat Under the Ground, The Goblin Market, and Little Red Riding Hood. So... obviously that worked!

*"Once there was a little girl who played her music for a little boy in the wood"*

The story takes place somewhere around Austria & Germany in the time of Mozart. Liesl played with the Goblin King in the woods as a child, but eventually forgot about him and his game of asking her to marry him because she became more focused on sacrificing everything to take care of her younger sister and brother. She's talented at composing music, but is shoved to the side while the spotlight is on her brother's violin playing. Her attitude is still awesome as she composes for her brother and I LOVED the whole focus on classical music... it just made the setting really vibrant.

**The story gets really cool when the Goblin King shows up, takes Liesl's sister, and alters reality so nobody remembers the sister exists.** Liesl's grandmother is also super ~~creepy~~ awesome with her cryptic warnings. Basically, the Goblin King tells Liesl she has to play his game and bring her sister back to her world by the next full moon. Lots of weird, cool stuff in the goblin world follows and it's clear that if a mortal stays there they basically die and can never return to their own world.

And it's basically impossible to not picture David Bowie.

So I absolutely LOVED the first half so, so much. It's absolutely gorgeous. But the book had a shift around the middle and something just didn't totally click with me in the last half. Maybe I personally wasn't as into the angsty romance, I don't know. But I did enjoy the story overall and totally recommend it!

I really loved how there was a red cloak and the Goblin King even called himself the wolf. And I can't wait to see what else S. Jae-Jones writes because her ability to create a magical, gorgeously detailed scene is amazing: *"A faint mist wrapped the trees along the path into town, writhing their spindly braces into spectral limbs."*

I was a little confused at the ending because it's just... over. It felt like someone pulled the plug on the story. But thank you to everyone in the comments for telling me there's another book coming! If it's really a companion novel about her brother, I am SO excited because he was my favorite character. I definitely want more about him.

Thank you to the publisher for sending me an ARC.

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## Chelsea Humphrey says

Let's jump right in. This is going to be a difficult one to review because I felt like I loved it as much as I didn't. I settled on a 3 star review after wrestling with it overnight; I felt it a good compromise overall as it still reflects that I'm glad I read it while also addressing the issues I couldn't overlook. I'm going to break this up into two sections of likes and dislikes, then you can decide for yourself if it's the sort of read you're looking for. Also, if you've read the book already, maybe we can discuss and compare our likes/dislikes.

*“My life is like a broken bowl,  
A broken bowl that cannot hold  
One drop of water for my soul  
Or cordial in the searching cold;  
Cast in the fire the perish'd thing;  
Melt and remold it, till it be  
A royal cup for Him, my King.”*  
-CHRISTINE ROSSETTI, *A Better Resurrection*

### Things I Liked:

-Can we start with how gorgeous the cover is? From the moment I first saw it, I was drawn in and it landed a place on my TBR shelf on Goodreads. Throw in the fact that it is a YA fantasy involving goblins and I felt I had won the jackpot when St. Martin's Press sent me a widget. The concept, while seemingly similar to many YA books out now, was actually unique and quite different. This is not a fairy tale of mortal girl meets sexy goblin king, falls madly in love, and overcomes all obstacles for an unbelievable (even for fantasy) happily ever after. In fact, this almost has no trace of YA fantasy to it; this is a very grown up tale, but we'll get into that later.

-I surprisingly liked how uncomfortable this story made me. It went against all pre-conceived notions of what YA novels consist of these days. The story revolves around Liesl/Elisabeth, a homely girl who is seen to have no aesthetic beauty (read no value) to anyone in the mortal realm. This fact is constantly ingrained in the reader's brain and isn't changed throughout the book. There is no magical makeover that happens, and even the goblin king admittedly was not attracted to her physical appearance. I'm grateful that there is some YA literature floating around that pushes the fact that beauty is not the end all and other qualities and talents are far more valuable than the fleeting looks of youth and good health instead of consistently filling the next generation's brains with the nonsense that beauty is the most highly valued trait a person can attain.

-Without getting into spoiler territory, I'm really grateful this book didn't have a cookie cutter ending. If you are looking for an upbeat, happy-go-lucky, fairy tale ending, this is not your book. That said, there was a certain degree of closure with a glimmer of hope; there is also much to be said about the value placed on Liesl/Elisabeth due to, not her looks, but her sheer talent. This is encouraged throughout the book and is portrayed as the utmost important sliver of plot through the last page.

### Things I Disliked:

-The pacing was incredibly slow. If I had gone into this book blindly, I never would have guessed this was a YA novel. I would have seen the fantasy element immediately, but I felt a heavy sense of literary fiction of the adult genre by the exquisite prose and classical sense of language used. The writing was beautiful and of

excellent quality; if this had been marketed as an adult story and shaved down to novella sizing, it would have hands down been a 5 star read for me. I just couldn't get past the feeling of burden while reading a 450 page book with no real action or plot progression until the final 15% of the book. There is heavy detail, but it gave a feeling of trying to force a connection with the characters. I felt that I knew about them intimately without feeling like I connected with them, if that makes sense.

-The romance was a bit off for me. Without giving outright spoilers, the connection between the goblin king and Elisabeth was confusing and, if I'm honest, a bit irritating. I'll be the first to admit this irk is clearly personal and I don't expect it to bother anyone but myself. I just couldn't connect with their relationship when I felt I was getting whiplash from their moments together. For starters, there is a traditional feel to their relationship; there was absolutely no romantic contact between the two until after they wed. This was a refreshing change from the whirlwind, unbelievable romances we see in most books today, and I respected what I thought was the author removing the focus off of their physical relationship to focus on other, more important aspects of their union. This was the somewhat confusing part; while there are some descriptions of the few times they come together (not overly descriptive but somewhat), they never seem to follow through. It was confusing to me that this married couple has "partial sex" a few times but always in a negative connotation. I have heard that this was originally intended as an adult standalone fantasy that was heavily graphic in the romance department, but that all those scenes were removed to make this a YA novel, which may explain the awkward flow here.

-I'm not musically gifted, so the in-depth discussion and explanations involving classical music and musical composition were wasted on me. I wish I could value that piece of the story more, but it's just not in my genre of interest. This is a good 75+% of the story, so for me that made it a bit difficult to entertain that "compelling read" feeling we all treasure so dearly.

I could ramble on, but I think you get the idea. While this didn't quite meet my original expectations, I can easily see the desire for a novel like this and applaud the author for writing a story that didn't revolve around a beautiful young woman and praise only this aspect of her while forcing a love triangle with every male in the book falling at her feet in love with her. I think we need more YA like this; a cleaner, more pure story that values females above solely being beautiful and forces a younger audience to read at a more advanced level. I'm very interested to see what Jae-Jones writes next; I think she has the makings of a longtime, best-selling author that could change the face of the YA genre as we know it.

**Many thanks to the publisher for providing my copy via NetGalley; it was a pleasure to provide an honest review.**

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## **Pouting Always says**

Liesel has always been a responsible older sister, looking after her younger sister Kathe and sacrificing her own dreams for her brother Josef. Liesel will never be beautiful like Kathe is and her music will forever live in the shadow of Josef's virtuoso abilities. Though she longs to give into her own desires, she forces herself to be self sacrificing. Then strange things begin to happen and Kathe disappears and no one but Liesel remembers she even exists. Though her grandma always told them stories about goblins, Liesel never believed in them, even with the uncanny childhood memories of playing the wood with a small boy that she can't explain. Kathe's disappearance brings the truth to light as Liesel must journey to the underworld and save her sister, eventually sacrificing herself to the Goblin King in her sister's place.

Like a lot of people I really enjoyed the beginning of the book but I think that by the second half the pacing got a little slow. The writing was really good but that doesn't help when it starts to feel like the plot is

dragging. Especially when Liesl keep ruminating over how plain she is, which really wouldn't have bothered me if the story moved faster. I think some parts could have been done without in the book like (view spoiler). I understand that the author was trying to build up the relationship between Liesl and the Goblin King but the both were brooding too much and I would rather kept moving forward with things. Also I found the ending sort of unsatisfying though I'm not sure what I would have preferred happen. All in all it was really well written and I enjoyed it but I wish the pacing was better and there was less repetition about certain things like Liesl's insecurities. I really loved the underlying burning desire that Liesl was trying to suppress and the way it's brought out in her, that was really well done I could almost feel it myself.

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## Mischenko says

To see this review and others please visit [www.readrantrockandroll.com](http://www.readrantrockandroll.com)

The moment I saw *Wintersong* by S. Jae-Jones I had to buy it. The cover, the title, the blurb-pretty much everything about the book baited me. First, I must say that I'm a *Labyrinth* freak and I've been highly anticipating reading this. I was under the impression that this was a true *Labyrinth* retelling, but there's more going on here.

I was so taken-back in just the first 70 pages of the book. The authors writing style is so appealing. It's exquisite, dark, and romantic. There were also music elements consistent throughout the entire story which I loved. I truly savored this book and the writing is what I appreciated the most.

"Those icy eyes glittered, and I was afraid. I trembled, but not with cold. I ached, but not with pain. My feet began to move of their own accord, and I followed the Goblin King out of the light and into the darkness."

### **I absolutely loved the way the author added a few poems by Christina Rossetti.**

*A linnet in a gilded cage, -  
A linnet on a bough, -  
In frosty winter one might doubt  
Which bird is luckier now.  
But let the trees burst out in leaf,  
And nests be on the bough,  
Which linnet is the luckier bird,  
Oh who could doubt it now?*

There were numerous parts of the story that reminded me of *Labyrinth*, but some parts led into German folklore like the "Der Erbkönig" which was unexpected considering the "darkness" of the legend involving children.

\*Possible mild spoilers\*

What reminded me of *Labyrinth* was the way Liesl envies her sister for her beauty and the love from Hans she wishes she had. It's similar to how Sarah gets sick of Toby in the movie, yet wants him back once he's been taken, and embarks through the Labyrinth to find him. Also, the description of the Goblin King, the sacrifice, the woods, and the underground, the poison peach, the goblin ball, and even the goblin realm. Liesl the main character has to save herself and her sister from the Goblin King which is similar to how Sarah has to rescue Toby as well, and she is expected to allow the Goblin King to rule her. The Goblin King's ability to change memory and time was similar as we remember the trickery Sarah deals with in the movie. We can't forget the music, sure the music is nothing like the music from *Labyrinth*, but the movie contained a lot of

music, an entire soundtrack by David Bowie and Trevor Jones which included songs the Goblin King sang as he communicated with Sarah throughout the movie, similar to how he communicates with Liesl in the book. This story has romance and different characters, but regardless, there's still a lot of *Labyrinth* here, with character changes and added twists.

I enjoyed all the characters, mainly Liesl and the Goblin King. In the first part of the story I had a love hate relationship with the Goblin King's character because of his unattractive psyche. However, there were many attracting aspects to the Goblin King later in the story as his character develops. You begin to realize there's much more to admire about him as their relationship grows stronger.

There is so much to love even if the story didn't conclude how I wanted it to and I can't rate this book any less than five stars. I'm going to admit, I'm really hoping for a second book!

5\*\*\*\*\*

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### **Renee Ahdieh says**

"Spellbinding and sexy, WINTERSONG is a feast for all the senses. I didn't want this beautifully written book to end."

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