

Promisero Academy

L.M. Robertson

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(384pp)

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A magical girl transitions from childhood to adolescence while recovering from grief and trauma in the involving fantasy novel Promisero Academy.

In L. M. Robertson's fantasy novel *Promisero Academy*, a teenager contends with losing her parents, prejudice, and a mysterious block on her magic.

All seems well in the lead-up to Ariana's thirteenth birthday, when she is meant to discover what element she has power over. But then her parents die in a house fire, and she herself almost dies from a lightning bolt strike; it melts the shackles around her wrists and blocks her unawakened powers. Ariana is rescued from the suspicious villagers around her by Captain Adrian and is taken to the capital city, Port AuCaul, so that she can have a proper awakening. In Port AuCaul, she also attends Promisero Academy, a selective magic school.

Ariana now has a new guardian, a new life, and rainbow eyes that could mean immense magical power over all the elements—or almost no power at all. She faces prejudice, explores the kingdom, and befriends Prince Kaelen. In addition to navigating her mysterious new circumstances, she has to heal from her survivor's guilt.

Ariana is an engaging heroine as she transitions from childhood to adolescence while recovering from her grief and trauma. At her opposite, Prince Kaelen is mischievous but loyal. And Adrian, who takes on the role of her guardian, is an involved, caring adult who acts without overshadowing Ariana's parents' roles. They and others have clear voices, revealing their personalities and social stations each time they speak.

The book's imagery is evocative, and its descriptions of how it feels to catch magic hold attention. Those who work with air, for example, find it "crisp, bright blue, like a sky on a summer day." Still, the story is told in a straightforward manner, and from Ariana's point of view. She observes new phenomena and hints at the world's history well.

The book moves at a slow pace at first to introduce its bevy of events and people, distinguishing itself from the familiar setup of a school of magic via its detailed worldbuilding and political intrigue. There's classism to the social tiers that Ariana learns about in her courses, and magical differences disadvantage people as well. These elements help to generate interest in what's coming in the rest of the series.

In the sweet fantasy novel *Promisero Academy*, a grieving girl comes into her magic amid new and challenging circumstances.

M. W. MERRITT (November 19, 2024)

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