



Separated from Yourselfs

Bill Hiatt

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Intent on saving the world but still worried about parental consent and agonizing over crushes, Tal and his friends face some formidable enemies, including themselves.

Myths and legends live again in *Separated from Yourselfs*, book six in Bill Hiatt's standout Spell Weaver series, a sci-fi-fantasy hybrid infused with history and lore from around the world.

Sixteen-year-old Taliesin Weaver has a lot on his plate. Not only is the love of his life now dating someone else, but a rash of blood doubles have suddenly appeared, wreaking havoc in his Santa Brígida hometown and across the realms. It's up to Tal and his gang, with a little help from a Celtic ex-goddess and a former shadow assassin, to save the world again, but it's hard to know who to trust when the enemy can wear your face.

Tal and his friends, thanks to an awakening spell, can channel past-life memories, allowing them to take on the personas of some of the most famous and infamous men and women of all time, drawing from Greek, Celtic, and African mythology, Arthurian legend, religious texts, and even a bit of Italian Renaissance poetry. From Alexander the Great and Achilles to King David, each dual personality comes with hidden strengths and weaknesses plus all the insecurities and quirks of a unique teenage boy or girl.

The narrative itself is told using nine alternating points of view, although, aside from Eva, Tal's lost love, who tends to focus on emotional aspects, the voices are all generally the same, recounting the action and conversation as the group interacts. A glossary of names, terms, and places is helpful for matching past lives with present characters and situations, but due to the broad scope of action and intricate relationships, reading the series in order is recommended.

Although action is driven with intense battles and thrilling fights in magical arenas, there is also a thoughtful element to balance each melee with long sessions of strategizing, debating, and speculating, as well as some good old-fashioned teenage arguing at times. Add in some illusionists, sorcerers, ghosts, seers, evil clones, mind control, hexes, double lives, parallel worlds, alchemy, astrology, multiple imprisonments, a friendly hippogriff, and a not-so-friendly chimera, and the plot twists and grows at every turn. As Eva reflects, how many people could honestly put "restoring balance to the universe" as their Facebook status?

With so many fluid components, including unpredictable magic, there are at times some minor plot holes, as when Umbra, a shadow assassin, loses her ability to travel by shadow but later regains it with no explanation.

Followers of the Spell Weaver series will not be disappointed with this latest installment, and newcomers looking for a fresh concept in young adult sci-fi and fantasy will want to meet Tal, in all his incarnations. Intent on saving the world but still worried about parental consent and agonizing over crushes, Tal and his friends, along with a whole new cadre of allies, face some formidable enemies, including themselves, in *Separated from Yourselfs*.

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