

The Paradise Planets: The Fallen from Paradise

Shaun Barrowes

Shaloor

(584pp)

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Exciting and attention-commanding, the science fiction novel The Paradise Planets: The Fallen from Paradise follows two teenagers through an unexpected interplanetary adventure.

In Shaun Barrowes's meditative dystopian novel *The Paradise Planets: The Fallen From Paradise*, a spoiled teenager grows toward community values.

Kassi is a fifteen-year-old royal. A siren from Nermal, the richest of three Paradise Planets, she spends her days speeding around in her sonoluminescence-powered wet suit with her cousin Amára. But her buoyant days meet an abrupt end when she and Amára are kidnapped by rebels and brought to Earth. They're to be used as pawns in a serpentine game of politics. They are fostered by handlers and are forced to earn their way back home by participating in the Siren Games—a sports competition wherein the Gaians (the people of Earth) win access to the Paradise Planets.

Under constant surveillance, subject to abusive teachers, navigating a color-coded caste system, and separated from everyone she knows, Kassi fights hard to survive. However, she is not alone. She gathers a group of humorous friends whose slang lightens the book's mood; Kassi contributes Evéik terms herself, while the songs that power her society's wet suits are written in both English and Evéik. The high volume of novel words is somewhat interruptive, though, particularly without a glossary.

In this story populated by students, teachers, and parents, the visions of places and people are limited to utility and basic descriptors: people's hair and eye colors are mentioned, but their particulars remain to be filled in by their actions. There are breaks from the established characterizations, too, as with an anachronistic song that's written for Kassi upon her birth that references events yet to come, and with the late introduction of her burn marks. Further, her maturation from a pampered princess to a self-sufficient heroine is too classic, featuring hefty setbacks without casting her eventual success into doubt.

Kassi is subjected to a plethora of wise advice (some self-directed; some from her mentors) about centering, calming, and strengthening herself; she's also encouraged toward forgiveness. She practices breathing and visualization during anxious situations; her coach asserts "I expect you to become the best version of you." With such support, she manages to emerge from the shadows of her great family and blossom into a force of her own merit.

In the science fiction novel *The Paradise Planets: The Fallen From Paradise*, teenagers navigate issues of civics, creativity, teamwork, loyalty, and sports on a foreign planet.

SAMANTHA ANN EHLE (December 20, 2022)

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