

The Unbalancing: A Birdverse Novel

R. B. Lemberg

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The first full-length novel in the expansive Birdverse series, *The Unbalancing* is an LGBTQ+ fantasy overflowing with heart—and heartache.

Long ago, twelve stars dropped from the tail of the goddess Bird. They were caught by twelve keepers, and the duty of their care has been passed down ever since. Ranra is the newest starkeeper for the Star of the Tides, a slumbering star deep in the waters under Gelle-Geu. She trained her whole life for this duty, but a secret weighs heavy on her shoulders: the Star of the Tides does not rest peacefully.

Erígra Lilún is a reclusive poet who wants to be left alone with their quince trees, but they are haunted by the spirit of their ancestor Semberí, the first keeper of the Star of the Tides. Semberí urges Lilún to embrace their destiny as the star's rightful keeper, afraid of the fate that may await them all if the star is not healed. Though Lilún refuses to embrace the full scale of their power, they are intrigued. Lilún attends a celebration in honor of Ranra's ascent; their meeting sets in motion the churning waters of fate. They could be headed toward salvation—or destruction.

No prior knowledge of the Birdverse is necessary to appreciate the worldbuilding of this novel; unfamiliar elements, such as the magic of deepnames, are explained through conversations or left to be interpreted via context. In this queer-normative fantasy, diverse representations of gender and sexuality are presented without fanfare; neurodivergence is also present and discussed in world-appropriate ways and terms.

Centered around two people who have little in common other than a fierce love for one another and their home, *The Unbalancing* probes questions of choices, of destiny, and of the intersection between the two.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (September / October 2022)

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