noses are so sensitive that they can smell lies. This delightful fantasy pits the small but mighty Anya against a sorcerer, Rikard, for control of the kingdom Trallonia. Nine grounds readers with practical asides, such as how to go to the bathroom without embarrassment when there is no toilet. He also has a gift for imaginative names, settings, dilemmas, and resolutions. Best of all, he invites readers to question the adult world along with his protagonist. Ardent, a talking royal dog, is as restless and uncertain as Anya, but he helps guide her. Not that she’s asking for assistance: “I don’t expect to need rescuing,” she tells him once before a particularly dangerous separation.

“I’m not that kind of princess.” VERDICT With wonderfully inventive creatures, challenging vocabulary, and a captivating story, this fantasy is recommended as a first purchase for YA collections.–Georgia Christgau, Middle College High School, Long Island City, NY


Gr 9 Up–In this first book in a new Canadian fantasy series, 14-year-old Jasmine’s twin sister was abducted five years earlier, and her mother has been sick ever since. Things get even stranger when Jasmine is tasked with breaching the divide to rescue her sister. This plot-driven story relies on Jasmine’s powers to observe demons, and it is up to her and the other Seers to save the world from both evil demons and climate change. Raphael, a boy from school, guides her through the parallel in-between world where the demons are starting to enter, and she sees that her sister is not really gone; she is stuck in this same realm, and Jasmine and her new friends are tasked with breaching the divide to rescue her sister. This plot-driven story relies heavily on dialogue to develop the setting. As a result, the world-building sometimes feels insufficient and the characters (and their relationships) two-dimensional. The lack of detail also leaves a lot of unanswered questions: Why do the Seers exist? How is Jasmine’s mother’s illness connected to Jasmine’s abilities? The sequels will hopefully fill in plot points. VERDICT This lacks a well-built world and complex characters, but fans of apocalyptic novels may find this a fast, action-packed read.–Rachel Reinwald, Lake Villa District Library, IL


Gr 9 Up–Redwine’s second installment of the series, which began with The Shadow Queen, will delight fairy-tale fans with its page-turning suspense and rich character development. In this retelling of “Rumpelstiltskin,” Thad has inherited the Sundraile throne after the members of the royal family die under suspicious circumstances. His twin sister, Ari, learns that Thad’s real route to the throne came after selling his soul to a Wish Granter named Alistair Teague to ensure Ari’s safety. In addition to stealing souls in exchange for wishes, Teague also collects debts from the kingdom’s citizens to keep them under his control. Shrewd Ari plots to stop Teague’s violent reign of terror by enlisting her friend Cleo and the palace’s new weapons master, Sebastian, to help find her weakness in Teague’s face magic. Along the way, Ari and Sebastian’s friendship blooms into romance. Ari defies the mold of a “proper princess,” favoring the company of servants over nobles, and she uses her wits to discover solutions to her problems. Sebastian grapples with his father’s severe abuse and his mother’s drug addiction. Raised on the rough side of town, he’s always prepared for danger. Both Ari and Sebastian have lost beloved family members because of Teague’s evil-doing, and they are determined to stop him. Although the action overshadows the world-building, readers will enjoy the plot twists and Ari and Sebastian’s progressive relationship. They save the kingdom together as equals, in a welcome feminist revision of the classic fairy tale. VERDICT Recommended for all libraries where fairy-tale retellings are popular.–Amy Duffy, Chicago Public Library


Gr 9 Up–Margot is disappointed to be spending her summer working in her family’s Bronx-based chain of grocery stores, away from her elite prep school crowd. She is suffering the consequences of using her father’s credit cards to finance her wardrobe and would much rather be partying with her friends and her crush in the Hamptons. Margot is rude to her family’s employees, rejects her childhood friend, steals beer from her family to impress her new friends, and casually loses her virginity (to a guy who clearly doesn’t value her much) after she’s been drinking. Her attempts to redeem herself as she finally sees the error of her ways are effective, though, and over the course of the summer, Margot slowly learns the value of real friendship, navigates some family secrets, and begins to see her Puerto Rican heritage in a different light, culminating in an unsurprising but happy conclusion. VERDICT A fairly standard problem novel, but the realistic Latinx characters make this a welcome addition to YA shelves.–Kristin Anderson, Columbus Metropolitan Library System, OH


Gr 9 Up–Lifegiving “current” hums throughout the planets in what Akos knows as “the galaxy.” This includes Akos’s nation-planet of Thuvhe along with planets Zold, Othyr, Urek, Shote, and more. Cyra dwells on Shote, a bitter Thuvhean enemy. Akos and Cyra each have current-gifts, which manifest at adolescence. His gift can provide relief, while hers causes pain for herself and others. In Roth’s military-styled world, battles are settled with current-blades, and victors scar their arms with kill marks, meant both to count the dead and, in some cases, to honor them. The story is told from the perspectives
of both Akos and Cyra. Readers follow a third-person view of Akos, who was brought unwillingly to Shotet and harbors deep resentments, while Cyra, always at the edge of pain and ready for battle, narrates in first person. Gradually, Cyra and Akos move from grudging tolerance of each other to respect and then love. Intrigue, poisonings, and an epic battle in the final chapters set the stage for the next book in this planned duology. Roth’s dark world mixes classic elements, such as oracles and gladiator-style battles, with futuristic bullies who have a thirst for power.

**VERDICT** The author’s name may catch the eye of “Divergent” trilogy fans, but they will find that this book has less romance and more violence. Consider where Marie Lu’s “Young Elites” series, Eoin Colfer’s “W.A.R.P.” books, and Allen Zadoff’s “Unknown Assassin” titles are popular.—Maggie Knapp, Trinity Valley School, Fort Worth, TX

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**Gr 7-10**—Gabi and her father have moved to Alaska, a world away from their lavish, paparazzi-worthy lifestyle in Los Angeles. The anger and resentment Gabi feels toward her mother for ending her parents’ marriage are second only to the isolation she experiences in the remote, cold landscape of her new home. Her father remains emotionally unavailable to her as he grieves the loss of his marriage and his career as a lawyer. Gabi finds solace in her relationship with local guy Kai, who has shared his home, family, and friends with her. But when Kai disappears under mysterious circumstances, Gabi turns to his twin, Hunter, to help her locate Kai before a winter storm hits the area. The effort to trace his route results in a dangerous trek across wild Alaskan terrain during a blizzard. The plot moves at an even pace with bursts of tension as the teens encounter various threats, including wild animals and hypothermia. The supporting characters are well-developed, and the survivalist elements are authentic. Teens may have trouble accepting the premise for Kai’s journey as well as the speedy resolutions to the dangerous situations, and Gabi’s internal monologue, especially regarding her feelings for her mother and Kai, drags at times. Still, the excitement of the expedition may be enough to keep some readers engaged.

**VERDICT** This is a secondary purchase for collections in need of chaste romances with a dash of adventure.—Lynn Rashid, Marriotts Ridge High School, Marriottsville, MD

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**Gr 8 Up**—Shadow, a volatile and dangerous galactic energy sourced from the stars, can be harvested only through risky piloting known as “fishing,” and it seems to permanently affect humans exposed to it. After coming into contact with it, some humans are driven mad, some become gifted, some experience both reactions, but all can expect an early death. Powerful and greedy families are willing to go to any lengths to acquire the key to shadow affinity, as it greatly enhances wealth and authority. Captain Qole Uvgamut is supposedly the youngest and most skilled shadow fishing captain in the galaxy and is also rumored to have a special shadow affinity. Nev Dracorte is posing as a shadow loader, hiding his true identity in an effort to persuade Qole to unlock the powers of shadow. These elements are skillfully combined into a grand space adventure, chock-full of action, battles of good and evil, love, and betrayal. The characters are well-developed; Nev and Qole’s initial antagonism and mistrust are authentic, and their companions are also nicely fleshed out. The characters are diverse as well, including Basra, whose gender is flexible. The world-building is excellent, with a convincingly unique source of cosmic energy that has the potential for extraordinary power. The writing is accomplished; the plot, though familiar, has good twists; and the pace is appropriately fast.

**VERDICT** Fans of the “Lunar Chronicles” by Marissa Meyer and the “Starbound” series by Amie Kaufman will especially enjoy this strong debut in the YA space opera genre.—Gretchen Crowley, formerly at Alexandria City Public Libraries, VA

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**Gr 9 Up**—It is the first day of senior year, and Sal feels as if his life is exactly as it should be. He has always been certain of his place with his adoptive gay father and their loving Mexican American extended family. Sal’s best friend, Samantha, is almost like his sister. She really gets him, and more often than not, she finishes his sentences and knows exactly what he is thinking, even when he won’t admit it. Sal is an inward thinker who struggles with anger that has begun to boil just under the surface. After tragedy strikes Samantha’s life and leaves her reeling, Sal and his father take responsibility for her well-being and bring her into their family circle. At the same time, Sal befriends Fito, a streetwise teen trying to find his place in a world not of his own choosing. Sal and Samantha show Fito that his life has pur-
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