



*The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender* by Leslye Walton

Reviewed by Zoe



The genre is Fantasy/Fiction

### **Give a summary without spoilers!**

This lovely and intriguing story revolves around the strange Roux family, moving from Grandmother Emilienne and the tragic stories of her siblings to the unfortunate love life of her daughter, Viviane, and finally the, well, strange and beautiful sorrows of young Ava Lavender. While the Roux family has a somewhat supernatural reputation, Ava was inexplicably born with wings, and this has attracted quite a lot of unwanted attention. When the pious Nathaniel Sorrows mistakes her for an angel, things escalate beyond the predictions of even her intuitively gifted family.

### **What drew you to this book?**

I loved the characters. They are so strange, diverse and wonderful, and the ambiguity of their supernatural abilities is fascinating to untangle. The prose is also beautifully written and quite poetic; I think my favorite line is "They didn't notice how the clouds gathered and the rain fell in such torrents that the rats of the city flipped the cockroaches onto their backs, stepped aboard, and floated down the streets on tiny arthropod rafts." Did that really happen? I have no idea. It's very surreal and fantastical, and I find that style of prose quite lovely.

### **Did it remind you of something that you've previously read?**

It reminded me a bit of *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern, which is written in a similar prose style. *The Night Circus*, which I would also highly recommend, focuses more on poignant details, rich descriptions and plot devices that tend to lean more towards inspiring wonder than anything. This book shares that. The two books also have a very similar style in following multiple generations, developing characters long-term, and committing to making said characters bizarre, distinctive and diverse. Both also take place in this world with elements of what can only be understood as magic. The second book this reminds me of is *The Book of Magic* by Alice Hoffman. That book, like the prior two, followed multiple generations, had a very winding plot, and loved its witchy and magical aesthetics. The magic in *The Book of Magic* was, however, much more explicit- as you would probably expect. All three of these novels lean heavily into romance side plots, many of which are hinted to be doomed. One of the main

protagonists in *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*, Emilienne, also reminded me of the protagonist and titular character of *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue*, by V.E. Schwab.

**To whom would you recommend this book?**

I would highly recommend *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender* to any poets or poetry-enjoyers out there. It is a very character-driven narrative, and might not be great for anyone who likes a faster moving plot or who loses interest in stories that take a while to get to the point. However, it's amazing if you just love to immerse yourself in the lives of strange and interesting people who go to beautiful places and feel beautiful and deep emotions in those places. There's also quite a bit of romance, which could turn off some readers and attract others. As I've already mentioned, it's quite surreal and often ambiguous, and so if you dislike subtlety in magic systems, you may not enjoy this. Generally, I would say it's perfect for any girl (given the number of female protagonists) who feels that they have been rejected by society.

**Overall, did you like it and would you recommend it to others?**

I loved it and I would absolutely recommend it. It's a beautiful book with a lovely message of inclusion, celebrating diversity and being authentic in your love life. It's an enthralling and romantic read.

**Anything else that you would like to add to this review? What made you choose it? Did you like the cover? Was it recommended to you? Did you find it at the library?**

This was recommended to me by a friend, and I'm so grateful I took their recommendation!