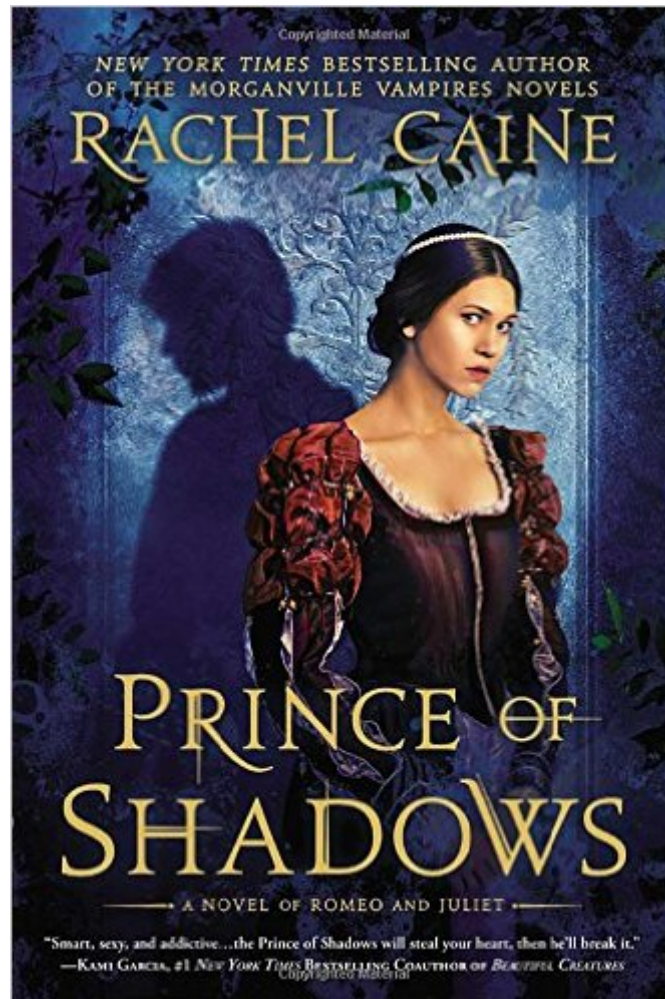


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Prince Of Shadows: A Novel Of Romeo And Juliet



Synopsis

In the Houses of Montague and Capulet, there is only one goal: power. The boys are born to fight and die for honor and "if they survive" marry for influence and money, not love. The girls are assets, to be spent wisely. Their wishes are of no import. Their fates are written on the day they are born. Benvolio Montague, cousin to Romeo, knows all this. He expects to die for his cousin, for his house, but a spark of rebellion still lives inside him. At night, he is the Prince of Shadows, the greatest thief in Verona and he risks all as he steals from House Capulet. In doing so, he sets eyes on convent-bound Rosaline, and a terrible curse begins that will claim the lives of many in Verona. And will rewrite all their fates, forever.

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Customer Reviews

I received this book through Goodreads First Reads. What a ride! I absolutely adored the way that Caine plays with her source material here, making the Romeo & Juliet story a kind of background piece for a much grander story about Benvolio Montague and his navigation of the complex, claustrophobic, and deadly serious world of Veronese clan violence, essentially. As Benvolio's cousin and close friend, Romeo factors far more than Juliet -- a bit player -- and the famous lovers do not even meet until halfway through the novel. But lest anyone think this book lacks female characters: where Juliet is reduced, her own cousin Rosaline is elevated, and we also see plenty of the various Montague women. We also see plenty of Mercutio, here rendered far more tragic to modern sensibilities than he is in Shakespeare's play. A problem that I have with the original play -- a common problem, no doubt -- is that people tend to uphold it as some epic romance, when it is

really about two teenagers who believe they're in love, and thus do monumentally stupid things. (Curious, then, that the former interpretation is pushed in high school classrooms rather than the latter!) But infatuation is not love, and in Caine's story only Benvolio and Rosaline seem to recognize the distinction in their respective cousins' behavior. Here, infatuation is the "curse on both their houses", and invites interesting comparison to real love, in the end. I also wondered, way back in my own high school classroom, why these crazy kids didn't just tell their families about their feelings. I mean, the worst that could happen is their parents would continue to disapprove and Juliet would have to marry Count Paris, right? Wrong.

Originally reviews for Vampire Book Club 3.5 Stars Everyone knows the story of Juliet and her Romeo. Rachel Caine explores further into the world of Montagues and Capulets with Romeo's cousin Benvolio taking up the story from his POV. And what of fair Rosaline, the love that Romeo seemingly overthrew for that of Juliet? Well, she piques the interest of Benvolio, our Prince of Shadows, and together they must try to stop the doom that has labeled both families as victims before everyone, including themselves, suffers. Benvolio, a seemingly Robin Hood-type character stealing from those whom he deems have done wrong, has been told his entire life that he is the "extra" Montague. His job is basically to watch after Romeo, the true heir to Montague. It was an interesting choice I believe for Caine to basically call out how often dimwitted and impulsive Romeo could be from the eyes of his (one year senior) more mature older cousin. There are many people who romanticize the love story of Romeo and Juliet when in truth they were two almost-children. The same can be said for Rosaline being Juliet's more serious mature cousin, sister of the Prince of Cats Tybalt. Ben and Rosaline seem to take up the voice of reason where the warring families are concerned. Both ultimately want peace after seeing so much death and deception already between the houses. What Caine did really well with this story is she fleshed out some of the characters, such as Mercutio, who already commanded attention in the original play, but we find him here a troubled and haunted young man who seeks revenge upon those responsible for his lover's death. This also gives background to Mercutio's famous "a plague on both your houses" quote.

I thought about 5 stars for this one, because it had all the elements of a book that usually really works for me. It was well written, it had interesting, multi-layered characters, it had a compelling plot that was a different take on an old classic, I love Shakespeare, etc. But I ended up on 4 stars. I think that it got a bit repetitive what with all the tragic pining and all. Nevertheless, I recommend it. It's a

retelling of Romeo and Juliet told from Benvolio, Romeo's cousin's point-of-view. It fleshed out some of the well known characters from the play such as Mercutio as well as defined its own story. I felt myself wishing there was a bit more of Romeo and Juliet and the lines from that beloved play. As it is, I think we're only afforded a glimpse of Juliet. Really the story centers around Mercutio and Benvolio, and Romeo and Juliet's tale is but a sub-plot. I also thought it brave to keep the important religious and cultural contexts; I thought for sure that Rosaline would be made out to have modern-day sensibilities which might have been satisfying but is ultimately false and therefore annoying to me. Women of this era were oppressed. They were cloistered away for their own "protection" but really were often abused and neglected at the hands of their relatives. They were often forced into ignorance by withheld education, and were often used as pawns to gain wealth or prestige. I'm not a fan of revisionist history. Bound to repeat it and all that. So, to sum up--Likes: Benvolio is a likable character. The thief/Prince of Shadows aspect of his character was interesting and entertaining. I liked Mercutio and thought the whole idea of his homosexuality and the cultural response to it as an explanation for his going off the deep end interesting.

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