

A Fierce and Subtle Poison

By Samantha Mabry



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In this stunning debut, legends collide with reality when a boy is swept into the magical, dangerous world of a girl filled with poison.


Everyone knows the legends about the cursed girl--Isabel, the one the senoras whisper about. They say she has green skin and grass for hair, and she feeds on the poisonous plants that fill her family's Caribbean island garden. Some say she can grant wishes; some say her touch can kill.

Seventeen-year-old Lucas lives on the mainland most of the year but spends summers with his hotel-developer father in Puerto Rico. He's grown up hearing stories about the cursed girl, and he wants to believe in Isabel and her magic. When letters from Isabel begin mysteriously appearing in his room the same day his new girlfriend disappears, Lucas turns to Isabel for answers--and finds himself lured into her strange and enchanted world. But time is running out for the girl filled with poison, and the more entangled Lucas becomes with Isabel, the less certain he is of escaping with his own life.

A Fierce and Subtle Poison beautifully blends magical realism with a page-turning mystery and a dark, starcrossed romance--all delivered in lush, urgent prose.

“A breathtaking story in which myths come to frightening life and buried wishes might actually come true. This is a hypnotic debut by a remarkable talent.”
—Nova Ren Suma, author of *The Walls Around Us* and *Imaginary Girls*

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A Fierce and Subtle Poison By Samantha Mabry Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #201325 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-04-12
- Released on: 2016-04-12
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up—This first-person murder mystery is set in Puerto Rico, where Lucas, a biracial 17-year-old with blond hair and blue eyes, finds himself the prime suspect in the murders of two young women. It doesn't help that his hotel-developing American father is wealthy or that he enjoys frequenting parties. Even some of his local friends doubt his credibility given that he discovered the body of one of the victims, the beautiful Marisol—and his latest fling. Despite his shock, Lucas continues to be magnetically drawn to the ominous home of the American scientist Dr. Ford with its supposed wish-granting ghost. When he finds the man's spirited daughter Isabel instead, Lucas begins to understand the cause of recent bizarre events, and the two work together in a race against time to prevent further killings. Yet proximity to the girl results in physical illness, as well as a fatalistic attraction despite plagues of mosquitoes and even a hurricane. The magical realism in this book draws heavily on themes related to science and scientific research evidenced in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Rappaccini's Daughter," intertwined with references to legends of Dominican ciguapas—beautiful mythic female beings that lure men to their death. The "exotic" foreign setting includes suspicious, gossiping locals; lush landscapes; and extreme weather, together with eerie romance and unexpected perils requiring superherolike resolve and physical stamina. This book will appeal to teens, particularly fans of romance and murder mysteries; however, Lucas's outsider perspective toward the island, particularly at the beginning of the text, tends to mask critical themes of race, power, and identity, as well as the impact of U.S. control in Puerto Rico. VERDICT A complex text best used in book clubs or classrooms where teens can discuss the dominant monocultural readings of the book, as well as the tourist perspectives of Puerto Rico.—Ruth Quiroa, National Louis University, ILα(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Review

“With its sparkingly sinister blend of natural history and magic, of themes that seem both modern and timeless, *A Fierce and Subtle Poison* gets under the skin.” — *Chicago Tribune*

“A breathtaking story in which myths come to frightening life and buried wishes might actually come true.” — **Nova Ren Suma, author of *The Walls Around Us* and *Imaginary Girls***

“Samantha Mabry’s magical debut is both a chilling mystery and a heartbreaking meditation on love, longing and sacrifice...*A Fierce and Subtle Poison* will get into your blood.” — **Laura Ruby, author of *Bone Gap***

"Mabry cultivates a rich setting, offering lush descriptions of the island, its stories, and the sharp divide between the old world and the incoming new one, characterized by swift modernization and the careless destruction of history. Perfect for fans of Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s atmospheric *Marina*." — **Sarah Hunter, *Booklist***

"[Mabry] steeped her debut novel in compelling Caribbean folklore and a lush, evocative setting...Fans of open-ended, atmospheric stories will enjoy the chilling suspense." — *Kirkus Reviews*

"Inspired by Hawthorne’s ‘Rappaccini’s Daughter,’ debut author Mabry blends magical realism with mystery in the story of Lucas Knight, the 17-year-old son of a hotel developer spending his summers in San Juan. Mabry smoothly joins dreamy, fever-induced scenes with the lore of “la ciguapa,” a beautiful creature that leads men to insanity or death with a kiss, and her atmospheric ending guarantees goose bumps."

—*Publishers Weekly*

“*A Fierce and Subtle Poison* is a great doorway into magical realism; it uses many of the genre's tropes in a way that feels both modern and self-aware...It's an impressive work; Mabry manages to combine a very romantic view of Puerto Rico with a critique of the poison that is sown by objectifying indigenous peoples and places. The book approaches its themes thoughtfully and with a visceral sense of place: Hurricane winds and the patter of rain against thick leaves are the driving rhythms at its heart. Readers looking for a different kind of fairytale and a sensuous setting will enjoy this foray into a strange and troubled garden.” — **NPR.org**

From the Back Cover

“A breathtaking story in which myths come to frightening life and buried wishes might actually come true.”
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“How would you describe your condition?” I asked. Isabel didn’t respond. Instead, her eyes landed on a wasp, possibly the same one that had been buzzing around my ear earlier.

Isabel turned her chin slightly in its direction. She blew out as if extinguishing a candle flame.

For a split-second the wasp hovered in the air. Then it dropped dead to the ground.

“Samantha Mabry’s magical debut is both a chilling mystery and a heartbreaking meditation on love, longing, and sacrifice . . . *A Fierce and Subtle Poison* will get into your blood.” —Laura Ruby, Printz Award–winning author of *Bone Gap*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Irma Patterson:

The book *A Fierce and Subtle Poison* gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting stress or having big problem along with your subject. If you can make looking at a book *A Fierce and Subtle Poison* to get your habit, you can get far more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about some or all subjects. You could know everything if you like wide open and read a publication *A Fierce and Subtle Poison*. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science e-book or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this guide?

Stuart Rosado:

The ability that you get from *A Fierce and Subtle Poison* could be the more deep you rooting the information that hide within the words the more you get serious about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to understand but *A Fierce and Subtle Poison* giving you thrill feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their point in specific way that can be understood through anyone who read the item because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your current vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having that *A Fierce and Subtle Poison* instantly.

Lucy Nelson:

A Fierce and Subtle Poison can be one of your basic books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that can increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to get every word into delight arrangement in writing A Fierce and Subtle Poison however doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource data that maybe you can be one among it. This great information can certainly drawn you into brand new stage of crucial imagining.

Sue Joseph:

Many people said that they feel bored stiff when they reading a book. They are directly felt the idea when they get a half parts of the book. You can choose often the book A Fierce and Subtle Poison to make your reading is interesting. Your skill of reading skill is developing when you similar to reading. Try to choose straightforward book to make you enjoy to see it and mingle the sensation about book and reading especially. It is to be first opinion for you to like to wide open a book and learn it. Beside that the e-book A Fierce and Subtle Poison can to be a newly purchased friend when you're feel alone and confuse in what must you're doing of these time.

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