



Followed by Frost

Charlie N. Holmberg

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Seventeen-year-old Smitha has the wealth, status, and beauty that make her the envy of her town—until she rejects a strange man’s marriage proposal and disastrous consequences follow. Smitha becomes cursed, and frost begins to encompass everything she touches. Banished to the hills, hunted by villagers, and chilled to the very core of her soul, she finds companionship with Death, who longs to coax her into his isolated world. But Smitha’s desire for life proves stronger than despair, and a newfound purpose gives her renewed hope. Will regrets over the past and an unexpected desire for a man she cannot touch be enough to warm Smitha’s heart, or will Death forever still it?

Followed by Frost Details

Date : Published September 22nd 2015 by 47North

ISBN :

Author : Charlie N. Holmberg

Format : Kindle Edition 256 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Romance, Fiction

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From Reader Review Followed by Frost for online ebook

Johanna says

So, the last couple of days I felt pretty crappy. I felt lonely and depressed. Since I'm not the greatest at expressing my feelings to my friends and family, I occasionally need another outlet. So, I was looking for a book that would make me cry but have a happy ending. Since I had already read the Paper Magician Trilogy by the same author I decided on Followed by Frost and boy did it deliver!

Followed by Frost is a first person narration by Smitha (not a great name choice, but there are always nicknames). She is a selfish, arrogant young girl who gets herself cursed. Said curse forces her to leave her village, her family, all human contact behind. All that is left to her is snow and ice ... and her only companion is death himself.

The parts of the book that dealt with her loneliness and suicidal thoughts made me cry so much! It was exactly what I had wanted and needed at that moment. I really felt her devastation and helplessness.

Followed by Frost is in essence a fairy tale about a selfish girl redeeming herself and finding happiness. So, yes, there is a happy ending. And it's all about forgiveness and selflessness. It's cheesy as hell and certainly has some problems, for while Smitha finds her redemption and happiness the one to curse her basically gets away scot free. And Death isn't unproblematic either. But I just didn't care. I wanted to cry and smile by the end, I wanted tons of angst and romance that defeats everything and that's exactly what I got. It's not a masterpiece by any means, but it is a short and sweet read that made me happy ... by making me cry. Yeah, I'm slightly emotionally repressed.

Katie W says

I'm always curious as to how authors come up with different ways to spin such a beloved classic and in this case, it's Beauty and the Beast, but opposite. This story is definitely different and every enjoyable and I love that it has those few familiar components.

Smitha is the one who is cursed and her curse of being as cold as her heart is placed on her by a spurned magician. Can you imagine? Of course, it takes some time to humble Smitha and her journey is both heartbreaking and enlightening. I had so many questions while reading this and the outcome left me with even more (hence, the 4 stars). Death is an interesting aspect and her desire to live, even in a miserable and cursed state, is heartening.

This is my first book by Holmberg and I have to say that I was entranced by the imagery that popped into my mind through her vividly descriptive words. She can really tell a tale and paint mental pictures that explode off the pages.

Content: mild romance (passionate kissing, some light innuendo); mild language (2-3 words); mild violence.

Bonnie Shores says

What a difference a chapter can make! I did NOT like this story at all in the very beginning. The protagonist, Smitha, was an unlikeable bitch (sorry, but that's the best way to describe her) with no heart and I was ready to throw this one in the DNF pile.

But then...

...her curse ended up being her blessing. And I ended up **LOVING** "Followed by Frost". Live long and prosper, Charlie N. Holmberg.

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

AUDIO READ # 1

My worst fucking nightmare

Cursed with a life of constant cold, the elements of snow and ice to comfort my icy soul. Smitha is cursed to roam the land in a blizzard of her own making for rejecting the love of a wizard. Death hounds her repeatedly and she mocks him. Finally she is welcomed by a country that sees rescue and healing in her powers.

I admit I was a bit bummed with the relationship with Death. I mean if Death asks, don't you gotta be friends??? But the narrator did a mediocre job of expressing distance and frustration. Smitha is a determined spirit with a strong will to live. She has her moments of depression (who wouldn't when your every touch turns people into popsicles), but honestly she shows the reader that it doesn't matter the obstacles in one's path. Just don't have a heart three sizes too small.

Also, I just realized this was written by the author of *The Paper Magician*, so there's that.

Cee (The Mistress Case) says

3.5 Stars!

THIS. This is the book I've been waiting for.

A book I want to stay up all night reading.

A book I want to gush over as my chest burst with feelings.

A book of vivid settings and rich storytelling.

A book full of quirky and beautiful dialogs.

A book that is predominantly romance but reserves its right as a fantasy book.

Despite my high enjoyment level, if I look at this book from a critical view, I can't rate *Followed by Frost* more than four stars.

Now let's talk about the characters.

Unlike some people, I was able to tolerate Smitha's bratty and shallow attitude and I quite liked it. I just didn't even know how bad it was until she started describing the kind of person she used to be. Consider she was cursed by a wizard to have frost literally live in her heart and a storm to follow her everywhere, you can trust me that it was pretty bad. Living in years of solitude, she had all the time in the world to reflect on her past while scavenging for food and comfort where she could find it. She did become an insecure, biddable, and mushy girl, but it's reasonable, seeing the dire situation she was in. I can't argue with her character development, even if I don't happen to be a big fan of her character.

Death. From the moment Smitha was cursed, Death had designs on her soul and I got the impression that she would go live with him. However, it isn't the case and Smitha ended up on a journey to a different country; all the while, with Death tormenting her. Oh, what a truly wasted character. He had so much potential to be a great antagonist. Furthermore, his actions felt out of place when he became violent with the protagonist in the spur of a moment, but then in the end, he just happens to "help" save her (and himself) without acting on his desire to hit her again. Talk about getting your priorities straight. He was your typical antagonist who engaged you with charm and honesty but possesses no other dimensions. Maybe it was the author's purpose to keep Death one-dimensional, but I didn't care. I would very much like to get to know book antagonists too.

Smitha's love interest is a likable character. Too likable, perhaps. And guess what? No insta-love! Even though I saw it coming (because let's be honest, it's nothing new to me) the romance still sneaked into the cracks of my doubt and showed me the power of love.

ARC provided by Netgalley in exchange an honest review.

Tanna says

Sooooo good!!!

I LOVED this book!!!!!! I love how it was different than all the other books I've read in a long time. I enjoyed all the characters and how they developed throughout the story. I laughed and cried reading this book and I can't wait to read more from this author.

Kim says

2015 Whitney Award Finalist for Speculative Young Adult Fiction.

Why did I take so long to finally read this? This was one **EPIC** fable!!! There are many titles that I have rated 5 stars that I will probably never reread. This is one that I want to get a hardcopy of to put on my shelf that I will reread over and over again till it is worn down like the books the heroine in the novel has loved and read hundreds of times.

The book description totally does not prepare you for the amazing world building which soars even faster in awesome layout after the first third of the book. The plot turned out to be totally different and original to my surprise and not a retelling of any popular fable or fairytale, as I first thought it would be.

Smitha the heroine was a selfish conceited cruelly clueless teen at the beginning. The character arc transformation over four years to becoming the most selfless young woman willing to give and sacrifice all she possesses physically, psychologically, personal possessions/financially, and even the giving up of her own life if necessary for strangers and acquaintances alike was beautiful and believable. The journey of survival to her happily ever after is extremely physically and emotionally hard and harsh. It sometimes seems too cruel to live through, and not want to quit yet Smitha has a will to live. It made an happily ever after that is earned and deserved instead of just given easily. The additional romantic happily ever after that creeps up so gradually up on you the reader and the heroine during the novel is all the more super swoony and sigh worthy because of transformative journey of the heroine. The love between Smitha and her hero is magnifique and splendorous.

Sensuality content: Clean. The nature of the heroine's curse causing her touch to cause death kept it clean by default. Some kisses and embracing.

Source: My purchased library.

Lillian ? Cloud 9 Books ? says

******* 4 Stars *******

I had a difficult time reading this book in the beginning. The story started with the main character being vain, selfish, and self-absorbed. But all this was necessary to explain how Smitha received her curse.

Snow followed her, and everything she touched would frost. Eventually her curse kicked her out of her village, and her only choice was to live her days alone. For years, she thought about her actions in the past, and regretted some of the things she's done. But one group wants her help, and her decision leads her to an incredible journey.

I loved the overall plot and lesson of the story. It teaches the power of love and generosity. I also appreciated how the romance between the characters grew from just getting to know each other at an intellectual level. I highly recommend this book for young adults, and I can't wait to read more books by Charlie N. Holmberg.

Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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WARNING - SPOILERS AHEAD

I think this is the first story involving a redemption ARC where I actually feel that the character in question didn't need to be punished. Hear me out: yes, Smitha is not a very nice person; yes, she's spoiled and selfish and doesn't help out her family as much as she should; yes, she's vain; yes, she turns down a strange man's proposal in a rather cruel way. Smitha is guilty of being vain and self-centered...*but no more so than most other teenage girls*. Are we bombarded with so many eerily perfect and uncannily nice female characters that we are supposed to riot against the first portrayal of an actual flawed and selfish teenager? I mean, I was no prize when I was a teen myself. I was actually unpleasantly surprised at the harshness of Smitha's punishment - especially since it comes at the hands of a man who is essentially stalking her. Smitha makes every attempt to avoid Mordan and he doggedly pursues her, approaching her when she doesn't want to be approached, ingratiating himself with her family to get access to her...it made me quite uncomfortable, actually, because I've been in a similar position, and women are told by society that they have to be "nice" and let people down "easy." Well, sometimes that doesn't work. Sometimes you have to be a "bitch" to get the message across. Did Smitha let him down as easily as she could have? No. But then, I didn't really feel like she should have, and if it was mean of her, she certainly shouldn't have been condemned to what should have been death and wasn't only by the force of her own determination.

Apart from that rather bitter note, I really enjoyed FOLLOWED BY FROST. It has an old-fashioned feel to it, more typical of the fantasy novels I read in the 80s and 90s, like Diana Wynne Jones's work or Gail Carson Levine's. Smitha is a teenage girl who is cursed to be as cold as her heart when she unwittingly humiliates the wizard who's been stalking - I mean *courting* - her. She becomes a girl of ice, followed by a savage and violent storm wherever she goes, and is kicked out of her village because of the havoc it wreaks upon their homes. Poor Smitha is doomed to wander in the wilderness, seeking out either the man who cursed her or others like him and capable of removing the curse. She's hunted, chased by dogs, and then condemned to loneliness in an icy cave. Well...not *quite* loneliness. She is followed by the embodiment of Death, a mysterious being named Sadriel who seems determined to have her at all costs, and ends up eventually coming to a kingdom far away. A kingdom that might need her help.

Smitha's development as a character was probably the best aspect of this book. I loved her slow transformation, and felt like all of her reactions to the curse and its effects seemed very real. Character arcs are my bread and butter in fiction; I love complex characterization that develops and changes over the course of a story. And even if she is selfish, it's impossible not to root for Smitha. The story is written in first

person, so we're treated first hand to all of her internal struggles, and how often she just wants to give up and succumb to her horrible fate because simply enduring it is such a trial. Her constant discomfort, her inability to eat or drink solid food (it would freeze in her mouth), her loneliness - all of these things made me feel terrible for her. I think the last book I read that tortured the main character to this extent was Donna Jo Napoli's *THE WAGER*, a dark and Faustian tale about a man who makes a deal with the devil that involves him not being able to bathe for a year (and let me tell you, I have never taken a longer or more thorough shower than I did after reading that book *shudder*). She is the most likable unlikable character I have ever read.

Smitha's love interest was also very likable. I don't want to spoil too much, but I will say that he is kind and sweet and considerate and caring and masculine in a way that doesn't involve being a jerk - a rarity, I think you'll agree. Sadriel, on the other hand, was intriguing but brutal...a real Jericho f*cking Barrons, if you know what I mean. I didn't like how he hit Smitha, or got violent/mean with her. I also didn't like how we never meet Mordan again, because eff that guy - I wanted to see Smitha get her revenge on him. Instead, he gets off scot-free and gets to go back to his own kind and play with magic? What kind of a moral is that? (Part of me was hoping that maybe Sadriel was actually Mordan, which would make Sadriel's obsession with Smitha make sense, and Smitha would get her revenge on them both in the end. I was disappointed. On both counts.) I also thought it was unrealistic how everyone in Smitha's village would be all, "Yay, Smitha, you're back!" They were happy enough to see her go, weren't they? At the very least, there ought to be some guilt, like, "Oh no, she's back - and now she might want revenge because we were a-holes!" I certainly didn't expect Smitha to be all happy to see the people who kicked her out cheerfully enough. Even her own family weren't particularly upset to see her leave. And Smitha's supposed to be the selfish, bitchy one here?

Part of me wants to give this book a low rating, because I didn't realize until now how annoyed I actually was by this book (really annoyed, apparently!), but I really did enjoy the story and Smitha was a great narrator. I guess I will just choose to award my stars based on the heroine and the story alone, and everyone else in the book gets -1,000,000 for being hypocritical jerk-nozzles.

3.5 to 4 stars

Jen (The Starry-Eyed Revue) says

Reminiscent of *Frozen* and *The Snow Queen* -- the book that that popular children's movie is loosely based upon -- and featuring Death personified, I knew I was going to enjoy this novel. And I did...just maybe not as much as her other series about magicians.

This book kept me on the surface...I never felt the pull of the story. The characters and the romance were fine. It's basically the story of Smitha's redemption and it pretty much reminded me of the end of *Frozen* when Elsa realizes that love is the answer to thawing everything out. But this book wasn't nearly as endearing or heartwarming. It has its moments, but Smitha just started out as such a terrible, spoiled, spiteful girl that it was hard to form any attachment to her. Eventually, I did, but it made the first half of the book

very slow. Even the promise of Death as a companion couldn't save it in the beginning, but I'm glad I stuck it out because Smitha's growth as a character is significant and worth the wait.

Followed by Frost was a fast listen and worth a shot if you've enjoyed the previous books by this author. Just don't expect it to surpass them.

Melissa says

I cannot even express how much I loved this book. It has completely stuck with me in the 24 hours since I finished reading it. I keep going over and over it in my head! I have been extremely lucky finding good books this year, and this one is another one to add to the favourites list!

I think the first thing that captured me was the cover. It is beautiful. And having finished and reflected on this book - the cover really captures it perfectly.

I had no idea what to expect from this book, and that made it all the more beautiful. The synopsis peaked my interest - but gave nothing away as to the essence of the book, and I'm extremely glad because it was such a pleasant surprise.

This is predominantly a romance novel, and a beautiful one at that. I don't want to go into the plot much as to give anything away, as the romance somehow caught me unexpectedly and developed so beautifully I was left breathless. I really don't want to spoil it for anyone else by divulging too much, so I will sum it up very briefly. Smitha is 17 years old and is, quite frankly, a bit of a bitch. She is mean to people and thinks herself superior to others in personality and looks. She lives in a small village with her family and conspires with her best friend Ashlan. When a young man named Mordan makes his intentions clear that he wants to marry her, Smitha is absolutely disgusted and is absolutely horrible to him "Surely a toad could hold my interest longer, and be more pleasant to look at". OUCH!!! And turns out she pissed off the wrong man, because unbeknownst to her, Mordan is actually quite a powerful wizard and angrily puts a curse on Smitha, making her the bearer of eternal winter. She is forever cold, everything that she touches turns to ice, and everywhere she goes brings with her a horrible cloud of rain and snow. After people in her village start to die because of the freezing cold, Smitha is forced out to brave the cold alone. However she isn't totally alone, as death has taken an interest in her, and wants her to come with him to reign in the after world.

What a beautiful message this book has! Treat people as you would like to be treated, or perhaps you too will be cursed to brave an eternal winter. Smitha changes so much throughout the novel and it is lovely to see. She morphs from a spoiled brat into a beautiful selfless woman. It is about forgiveness and dealing with the cards in front of you. Not blaming others for the misfortunes in your life.

The writing in this book flows so easily, I absolutely loved it. The romance was just so beautiful. There is always something lovely about a romance where the main character has some problem and is unable to physically touch people. It is impossible, and it makes the tension all the more palpable. I was absolutely SWEPT up in it!

So many young adult novels have let me down lately, but THIS BOOK, *Followed By Frost*, is the reason I persevere. A beautiful book, with an amazingly beautiful message. I already want to read it again!

"For happiness has wings, and when burdened by the things a man should want, Garen could not reach it."

Many thanks to 47North via NetGalley in exchange for my honest review.

Release Date 22nd September 2015

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Alisha-Dear Constant Reader says

Feminist Alert-

A woman who has been asked out repeatedly by an acquaintance finally turns the guy down roughly. His response? He follows her home from a club the next week and stabs her on the sidewalk outside of her apartment. Should she have said yes? Should she have been more polite? Would it have mattered either way?

In *Followed by Frost*, Smitha cruelly obliterates the advances of a young wizard who in his anger, curses her.

Did Smitha's punishment fit her crime? Mordan casts a spell on her that in anyone else should have sent her to her death. Smitha overcomes and lives with her curse by sheer will.

Can you see my problem? I can't separate the headlines that I see every week with the fairy tale. This is the moral we are feeding our girls. No wonder so many blame themselves when they are beaten, raped, or both.

Mordan did what many men do to women. This is the take away from *Followed By Frost*. You'd better be careful with men's feelings, ladies, because they could KILL YOU.

As I'm reading, I'm dealing with this grotesque, out date 1950s moral and then we're introduced the new and improved? Smitha. I am referring to the Smitha who is afraid of her own shadow. This Smitha not just humble, which is what Holmberg was likely going for, but overly apologetic. This is not graciousness, this is pathetic. There's a difference between being a generous and selfless person and being a doormat.

When writing the new Smitha Holmberg rarely gets it right; mostly it's so wrong it makes my head spin.

Taffy says

Magic.

Wizards.

Ice heart.

Love.

All wrapped up in *FOLLOWED BY FROST*.

I enjoyed this book! It was a different read than I've read in a long time. From the beginning I knew how the book would play out but I still liked reading it.

Smitha is not a nice person. She's mean and selfish; she has a cold heart. And that's what gets her in trouble with a wizard in disguise. He curses her to always be as cold as her heart. She cries ice, her spit is ice, and yes, all bodily fluids are ice. She's always cold. In a couple of scenes she plays with hot coals that don't burn or give her comfort in heat.

Wherever Smitha goes, storm clouds follow. If she stays too long in one place, it snows heavily. Which isn't great for her little town when spring is just beginning. After the townspeople talk about kicking her out, she saves them the trouble and leaves. Smitha wanders the woods and tries to stay away from villages and towns so as not to drop snow on them. Every so often a town sends men and dogs to kill her so she has to run away. Again. She has no friends, no home and no bed. Smitha is utterly alone.

This is when Death finds her. Death is also part of the curse. He was an interesting character. That's all I'm going to say about him.

One day soldiers come after her. She's terrified and runs but can't escape them. I can't tell you what happens next because it is an interesting twist and the love interest, Lo, is part of this twist.

While the moral story is obvious and out in front, reading Smitha's story is unique and intriguing enough to keep a reader reading. She goes from cruel to kind, self-centered to thinking of others. But it doesn't happen overnight. It takes her years to change and become a better person.

This is a good, clean read that I would recommend to anyway, especially those who enjoy fairytale type stories.

This story reminds me of Beauty and the Beast meets Winter Queen.

Thank you, Ms. Holmberg for following your passion and writing a great story!

Thanks to netgalley for the read!!

Kogiopsis says

This book snuck up on me. I picked it up because Brandon Sanderson blurbed it, and anyone who knows my reading tastes will know that that's review enough for me. At first, I was feeling a little let down - the book starts slowly and a little unevenly - but by the end of the book, I found *myself* shying away from touching other people *for fear I would freeze them*. That's how far this book got into my head, and that in and of itself is a recommendation for it.

The strongest impression I was left with after I finished, from a writing standpoint, was that this is a fairy tale. It's not a fairy tale retelling, but it has the same resonance as one of those original classic stories. Ultimately, Smitha's story is a coming of age/maturation narrative, with a sidebar of romance as a reward for her personal growth. It makes for a beautiful, neatly wrapped up story and a deeply satisfying ending.

However, most of these elements only really come into play until nearly a third of the way into the book. Packed into that first third we get the cursing itself and its immediate aftermath (several chapters), Smitha

learning to survive in the wilderness (generally skimmed over), and then relatively quickly she's been out on her own for three years. The detail given to some moments makes the abrupt skipping over long swathes of time more disorienting, and it does a particular disservice to her bizarre relationship with Death. They have scenes, and mentions of other encounters, but there's little sense of continuity or development; much of it is told rather than shown. Death himself is almost under-used as a character: he's a threat, but not a consistent one, and his actual impact is minimal. (The most under-used character is also most prominent in the first third of the book: Mordan, the wizard who curses Smitha. Apart from Smitha realizing that she treated him badly, he's not really relevant after casting his spell. On the one hand, fine - why *should* he be relevant, when the book is about her growth? But on the other hand - his pursuit of her was clearly out of line, and his decision to curse her seemed as much about bitterness related to his past as anything she actually did, so that felt like one loop the ending did not manage to close.)

While this book is a stand-alone, I'd personally be interested in seeing more of this world, and I can't help but hope that Holmberg's recently announced sale of *Magic Bitter*, *Magic Sweet* might be a companion novel of sorts. It probably isn't, but my fingers are crossed anyway. In the meantime, I'll settle for tracking down the Paper Magician books at some point, because Holmberg is definitely a writer I want to see more of.

Aimee (Getting Your Read On) says

I really enjoyed this book! The main character, "Misa" went through such a transformation- in a positive way that it felt so redemptive in the end. I was literally on a journey with her. A very cold journey. It brought to mind so many valuable lessons- about having a purpose and being needed, forgiveness, sacrifice, facing your fears, kindness and love.

I loved that this book ended. No next book to keep me waiting, no cliff hanger. Just a good, solid, satisfying ending. I was really glad to have a warm blanket to snuggle into while reading this book. It seriously made me cold.

I picked this one up free on Amazon on recommendation from Kim! Thanks, Kim!

I'm going to check into more books by this author.

Content: some violence, some mild innuendo, kissing
