



Natural Selection

Malinda Lo

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I was born on Earth, not Kurra. I'm not human, even though I try to be. My people, the Imria, think I'm a little unusual because of that. They call me an Earthsider: as if I've crossed a line, chosen a side. Gone native.

Before she met her girlfriend Reese, before she knew the role she would play in the fate of two worlds, Amber was a fifteen-year-old Imrian torn between two identities. Imrian by blood, Amber was forced to hide her true self to pass as human during the time she spent on earth. And even when she returns to Kurra, her human experiences, including first love and heartache, still separate her from her fellow Imrians. But when Amber undergoes *kibila*, a traditional Imrian coming-of-age ceremony during which Amber will choose her name and identity for the next fifteen years, she will be forced to either accept her role in both worlds or forge her own path.

Malinda Lo's digital exclusive novella companion to *Adaptation* and *Inheritance* takes readers on a journey through Amber's past, giving fans a glimpse into her life on Kurra and a deeper understanding of one of *Adaptation*'s most compelling characters.

Natural Selection Details

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From Reader Review Natural Selection for online ebook

Bella says

I wish there was more in this little book. I would love a series just about Amber.

Sherwood Smith says

This novella fits between *Adaptation* and *Inheritance* (which I have not yet read), giving us Amber as a first person narrator. Readers who haven't tried the first book would not be confused, but certain discoveries would be spoiled.

It's a tightly written story, the structure underscoring Amber's dual nature, as a supposed human from Earth, and as an Imrian. The story steps between Amber's preparation for, and her undergoing, the every-fifteen-years ritual expected of her people, while she reflects on her experiences the previous summer. Amber comes to terms with several important realizations, making a friend as she does. I really enjoyed it.

Debra says

For a more detailed review, please check out my review below:

Debra's Book Cafe

Debs :-)

Icarus says

Probably the best book I've ever read. I don't expect a lot of people to agree with that sentiment, but it's true for me.

Alya Atiera says

[OMG IT'S FROM AMBER'S POV! Though I'm still a bit wary with her for lying.

It's nice to know a bit about her planet, Kurra. It's very different from Earth. I thought they might be more or less the same since they look the same like human.

I'm a bit disappointed honestly. I thought I might be able to read about Amber's thoughts on Reese when they

first met.

(hide spoiler)]

Caroline says

This was a good companion piece to *Adaptation & Inheritance*. It was an interesting short story although it didn't really address the aspects of Imrian society that I was most intrigued by after reading the two full length novels. I would have enjoyed a much further exploration of things like Imrian schooling, food, sports, etc. Basically all the things that make up Earth society, what do their counterparts look like for Imrians? The ritual was interesting but I would have preferred more of that and less of Amber's time on Earth with some shitty teenagers.

Erisel says

Brilliant! I thought I loved Amber before, but this just solidified it for me. And learning more about the Imria was a nice plus as well because obviously *Adaptation* left us hanging on a delightful cliffhanger without much to know about anything. This way, at least, we're a little ahead of Reese in the information game.

Ami says

I was born on Earth, not Kurra. I'm not human, even though I try to be. My people, the Imria, think I'm a little unusual because of that. They call me an Earthsider: as if I've crossed a line, chosen a side. Gone native. (p. 15)

Disclaimer: I have never read the other books in this series and this review was written for an MSLIS project.

Natural Selection is a companion book to Malinda Lo's *Adaptation and Inheritance*, from the perspective of Amber. It tells the story of what happens in Amber's 15th year, when she undergoes Kibila'sa, a journey during which she will choose her identity and true name. It alternates between her current life on Kurra where she is preparing for and undergoing Kibila'sa and her past on Earth, where her sexuality is revealed to her best friend on Earth.

A coming-out and coming-of-age novella from the perspective of an alien who doesn't quite fit in in either society and doesn't understand why humans on Earth have hangups about gender and sex, *Natural Selection* is a quick read—only 80 pages—from a unique perspective. Amber's society doesn't care about gender when it comes to love and she and many others her age have two fathers and a mother. As a companion piece, *Natural Selection* works best when combined with *Adaptation and Inheritance*, but is easy enough to read on its own as well.

There is little to no sexual content or profanity and not much to cause offense in any readers. There is kissing, but nothing more explicitly. *Natural Selection* should be suitable for readers 12 and older.

I liked this novella as a stand-alone piece although I have not read the others in the series. Amber is a compelling character and I liked reading from an alien perspective. Overall, it is a short but engaging read and I would like to read *Adaptation* and *Inheritance* in the future.

Star rating: 3/5

Lena Puro says

Life transactions...gender identification.

Perhaps relevant for YA searching for gender Identity. The idea of extraterrestrial life is fascinating...doubtful they can travel back and forth between galaxies like air travel. But - it's science fiction. I suppose anything is possible in the world of not realistic - or believable.

Taschima says

*If Dean Winchester approves who are we to say otherwise? ;)

This is why novellas are taking the world by storm and have become such an expected thing nowadays. In *Natural Selection* we get to see the world through Amber's eyes. While sometimes the format of the novella itself led to some headache (for some example when Amber was going from telling things from her past and then to the present) the story is one you don't want to miss, not if you plan to read *Adaptation's* sequel *Inheritance*.

"It was horrible at first. I missed my parents and my Imrian friends, and after four years on Kurra, Earth felt like an alien planet. The food was weird, the clothes were strange, and I had to speak English all the time, which meant I had to remember to call my parents mom and dad rather than ama, aba, and ada."

While *Natural Selection* isn't a bridge between novels it is still very much a must read. In *Adaptation* we didn't get to know Amber as much as I would have liked, something I made note of in my review. But with *Natural Selection* I feel like now I can properly root for Amber, I've come to care about her. We get to read about her past, how she was born on Earth and raised half here and half in her home planet, how she is kind of a celebrity but doesn't act like it, who she is and what she wants out of life. We also get to learn more about the planet Kurra. I now find myself appreciating more the kind of story Malinda Lo is trying to tell with these aliens who are not that different from us. Why do we always assume that if it's an alien story they must be extremely different from us (ala *Futurama*), why can't they be alike us but different at the same time?

"Humans were just so incredibly different from the Imria. Their emotions were so volatile that even though I tried to close myself off to them, sometimes they still broke through unexpectedly. At the beginning, it felt like I was trapped in an unending game of dogde ball, and I couldn't keep my defenses up 24/7."

Natural Selection is also really good in that it gives us a lot of information on the planet Kurra and the Imrians. It tells us about their traditions, their way of life, their interactions and their overall stand on visiting

Earth. It shows us the kind of society they are. The only annoying thing I found was in the language- how they call their parents is ama, aba, and ada. Confusing? Definitely. Their family structure is also very interesting—Amber has two dads and a mother—but never fully explained. Has it always been this always? How does it exactly work? They seem to all live together happily, so I am just curious.

Now I am dying to read Inheritance. I want to re-evaluate the relationship between Amber and Reese, and I want to read more about Amber. It's a shame the book won't be written with her POV, I like her now more than I like Reese >.< I also want to see what is going to happen, will the humans embrace or retaliate against the aliens? Will Reese and David tell the press the truth? And yes I don't want to be that girl BUT, will Reese choose Amber or David at the end of the day? DYING TO KNOW!

Gina says

This was such a great look at how the different worlds interact. This also added another layer to Amber and made me love her all the more. This insight in Imrien culture was a great way to explain Ambers background and how she functions.

Beth Mitchell says

This is Amber's coming of age (on Kurra) and coming out (on Earth) story. There are hints as to where the larger Adaptation/Inheritance story will go. Excellent writing. I already adored Amber, and now I do even more. Can't wait for the last book!

Jaylee says

Wow wow wow! Malinda Lo's writing tends to be kind of EH, but this was spectacular. This novella tells two different stories in alternating chapters, which was a little bit hard to follow, but both stories are amazing. In one we feel the pain of rejection and an untrue friend, and in the other the discovery of a new friend and finding acceptance. Both are told in the context of a sort of "coming of age" trip - one from earth, and one from her planet. All the parallels and symmetry were fantastic. The pain of the rejection story was emotional but it wasn't too painful because we were hearing it alongside the much more positive story.

I LOVED getting to learn more about her homeworld. She is my favorite character from Adapatation. I loved the naming ritual, the descriptions of her planet, and SHE HAS THREE PARENTS. *weeps with joy* You never see that in books, let alone YA. omgggggg.

I did feel the "It's okay to be gay" was a little heavy-handed and preachy, but that was only a blip in an overall amazing story.

I can't wait for the sequel. :D

Vee ?Under Mountain Books? says

I fell in love with Amber when I first met her in *Adaptation*, and I was really disappointed when she barely appeared in *Inheritance*. *Natural Selection* isn't as bad as *Inheritance* (3/5), but it wasn't as good as *Adaptation* either (5/5). It was literally inbetween. I only dropped a star because there was a little too much rehashing of stuff I've read in previous books, a trend that I've never appreciated.

Natural Selection is set in two places, Earth and Kurra. It jumps to each world each chapter and I definitely found Amber's time in Kurra more memorable. Amber doesn't really fit in in her home planet and feels more at home on earth, where she isn't treated differently. On Kurra, she's the only one of her classmates that has visited Earth and naturally they're pretty curious about it, but still treat her with suspicion as her Earth ways and clothes are different to theirs.

Something I didn't know about the traditions on Kurra was something called *kibila*, a tradition where every fifteen years they er... walk a lot, switch off the telepathy thing and if they want to, select a new name. It's supposed to be a pretty spiritual experience and the person or people you go on this journey with on your fifteenth birthday is the person/people you'll go with on every journey.

If you read *Adaptation*, I'd say that *Natural Selection* is a must read. You get a lot of new information about Amber and Kurra that isn't mentioned in the books, plus it's all from Amber's point of view so you get a new perspective.

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Kalli M.G. says

I've fallen in love with both *Adaptation* and *Inheritance* and I feel slightly ashamed that I didn't hear about this novella until after I finished the second book in the series. I'm not complaining, of course. I've been craving to learn more about Amber, even more so when I finished the second book. But, most of all, I wanted to learn more about her home called 'Kurra' and this would hopefully hold me over until the third book is released.

Natural Selection focuses on Amber before she met Reese- before the events of *Adaptation* even happened. This focuses on a fifteen year old Imerian of her experiences on the planet Earth and her experience of going through *kibila*- as explained in the book description on Goodreads, a traditional Imrian coming-of-age ceremony during which Amber will choose her name and identity for the next fifteen years- side by side. It switches back and forth between Earth and Kurra between each chapter, highlighting just how different and how similar these two places really are.

On Earth we concentrate on Amber (who was known under another name at the time) and her adventure, before she returned back to Kurra, on a school field trip camping with her close friend Morgan. She gushes throughout the story how much she likes Zach although Amber thinks otherwise, but she deals with it... if only if it means she gets to stick close to Morgan herself.

It's a short book but I feel like that I've learned a lot about Amber during this short time with her. She finds herself stuck between two worlds and two cultures. I won't say much about it, since explaining it would spoil

the actual book and it's worth reading about her yourself rather than hearing about it from a reviewer, but it was interesting to see a glimpse on how she tried to handle things and how she tried to remain herself during the trials.

(view spoiler)

I still wonder if she returned back to that place to see Morgan and many of her classmates again. But, still, it's a minor thing and I still loved this little ebook and I can't wait for the third book. If you have read *Adaptation* and/ or *Inheritance* and loved it, I would highly recommend this but it's not necessary to continue the series. If you want a bit of insight on this secondary character, though, this will be more than just a treat.
