



Aranya

Marc Secchia

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Chained to a rock and tossed off a cliff by her boyfriend, Aranya is executed for high treason against the Sylakian Empire. Falling a league into the deadly Cloudlands is not a fate she ever envisaged. But what if she did not die? What if she could spread her wings and fly?

Long ago, Dragons ruled the Island-World above the Cloudlands. But their Human slaves cast off the chains of Dragonish tyranny. Humans spread across the Islands in their flying Dragonships, colonising, building and warring. Now, the all-conquering Sylakians have defeated the last bastion of freedom—the Island-Kingdom of Immadia.

Evil has a new enemy. Aranya, Princess of Immadia. Dragon Shapeshifter.

Aranya Details

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Author : Marc Secchia

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From Reader Review Aranya for online ebook

Dusty Holloway says

Aranya is a girl, plucked by circumstances out of her control, into the machinations of a kingdom and king intent on subjugating all of the other kingdoms under one tight-fisted rule. In isolation, she meets Zip, a fiery little thing with more than a little chip on her shoulder, Nak, a lecherous, wily old man that will make you laugh, enemies aplenty, Dragonships that I pictured as the old style Zephyrs that flew the skies, adventure, intrigue, and even a little romance.

Through all of the twists and turns of the story, Aranya handles herself as a girl of strength and courage. Someone that goes out and fights against the injustices that befall her and her friends and family, rather than someone that sits idly on the sidelines hoping some dashing prince will come to her rescue. Don't get me wrong, princes are great, but this girl is a take-charge, kick-butt kind of girl, and she stole my heart because of that.

The actions sequences are unbelievably real, the characters so life-like they seem to spring off of every page, and the imagery and world building just phenomenal. At nearly every turn and page in the book I was astounded at the world that Mr. Secchia has created. It's a very lush, vibrant, REAL world. One that you can see, hear, and almost reach out and touch.

I give Aranya a hearty and well-deserved five stars, and I can't wait to read more of this author's works.

Amanda says

Title: Aranya (Shapeshifter Dragon #1) **Author:** Marc Secchia

Publisher: CreateSpace Independent

Review Cross-posted on Amazon, Goodreads and personal blog @ <http://nihilsedtempus.wordpress.com>
Amazon

Author Website: @marcsechhia

Goodreads:

Type of Book: Fantasy

Book Summary: Aranya is to be executed for high treason against the Sylakians Empire. Her sentence: falling to her death into the deadly Cloudlands. It's not the fate she ever envisioned, neither was her rescue. Evil has a new enemy...Aranya, Princess of Immadia.

First off this story has dragons, an evil empire and kick-ass princesses. So once I knew those things it was love at first read. Second, it has dragons. Say it with me DRA-GONS! If you can't tell I really love stories with dragons. The piece de resistance is shape shifting princess dragons. Secchia is on my list of authors to watch for this! I was enthralled from the minute we meet Aranya.

This story is good book to get lost in. Secchia entwines enough world building and back story so intricately into the fast paced present. He does it so you stay informed and intrigued. Each Floating island had its own culture, history, and of course alliances.

Not to mention Secchia can write some really awesome princesses. They are strong, capable and definitely my type of princess. No hero needed, these princess will not only rescue themselves but also will take on the injustices of the world. In this story the Sylakians' are a slowly taking control of the islands and forcing

complacency. They do this by taking the island's princess and locking them up in a tower. Yup you read that right; there are princesses in a well-guarded tower. Lots of them, some giving into their fate and others like Aranya and Zip railing against it. Which is how Aranya and Zuziana (Zip) meet and it is dislike at first sight. But soon they are close friends after a few thrilling adventures. After an incident, Aranya is sentenced to death for treason. Plunging many leagues into the cloudlands, dense clouds of deadly gases, she changes...literally into a fire breathing flying dragon. Although Aranya is going to have to work on that. When she crash lands on a nearby island she meets a former dragon rider. They help her learn how to be a dragon and to come to terms with her dragonequese figure... Once she has that down it's off to take up the fight and protect the islands from a coming evil and against the Sylakians Empire. She just needs to go rescue her rider. Because a princess dragon needs a princess rider.

I love that each new character that is introduced is well fleshed out and makes them leap off the page. This fantastically created world that you can see and almost feel! I am also glad that while there is a bit of romance, it's not the main plot. There wasn't much that I didn't love. The only thing that comes to mind is I would have liked more information of regarding the Sylakians Empire. I like to know about the so-called enemy.

All in All, I give this 5 princess out of 5. Aranya put Marc Secchia on my Author Map and once I had finished I promptly went out and got the others that he has written. If you like dragons, awesome princesses you will like this book! Try it for yourself and let me know what you think. This book released on June 13, 2014. You can order on Amazon for kindle edition (\$3.99us) or check the publisher site for other stores to obtain this book! Aranya is 454 pages, and it took me (an avid reader) approximately 4 hours. Depending on your reading speed that time will vary.

Anna (Enchanted by YA) says

3.5 STARS

****I received the ebook free as a review copy from the author/publisher in exchange for an honest review****

Marc Secchia definitely has an eye for imagery. All the locations and battles you journey through in this book are portrayed so vividly that you could reach out and touch the stormy clouds. There was also a great amount of world building - at appropriate times (rather than in big chunks at the beginning) which meant you *knew the world* as well as being able to *see it*.

Admittedly this meant that parts did drag, particularly the scenes in between battles/events where it wasn't filled with dialogue. Being such a long book already, this meant I grew tired on occasion and wanted to put it down: then again I didn't, because I wanted to know what happens next already!

It was definitely the characters that won me over, with two fierce princesses and their interesting companions. Aranya was such a strong person/dragon/whatever you want to call her (so long as it isn't "beast" or she will burn your ass) and was never willing to just sit on the side-lines when she could be making a difference. What's more is that she needed no man to do this. There was a love interest, but after his and Aranya's instant connection at the start they spent the majority of time at a distance and that's where possible love blossomed which I thought worked well!

This book also delved heavily into different types of relationships – not just romantic. You see the importance of friends, family as well as the more unusual beauty of *dragon & rider*. This is something I

often miss in YA novels, and the witty banter made it all the more enjoyable to read about.

Now then, the ending concluded everything beautifully, and that's where my trepidation to pick up the next book lies... I'm satisfied with leaving it as it stays and it's now been a while since I read this first book so I'm not sure how easy it will be to jump back into the world. Nevertheless I enjoyed this book, and whether you read it as a standalone or the start to a series I'd recommend you check it out.

Posted on: <http://enchantedbyya.blogspot.co.uk/>

J.S. Burke says

Aranya by Marc Secchia is an epic adventure that begins with an exquisite map, matching the realistic detail in this unique world of islands with two suns and three moons. Aranya is a fantasy to get lost in with a beautifully imagined world, compelling characters, and a riveting story. It's the type of story where you have to turn the page to learn what happens next.

Princess Aranya of Immadia watches her people surrender to the overwhelming Sylakian army, knowing she will be offered to Sylakia as the ritual royal hostage of war. Her island is the last to succumb, and now Sylakia rules the world with a cruel fist. Aranya is a fearless fighter, gifted artist, and secret enchantress. Her forbidden powers grow and she struggles to control them, trying to hide the spontaneous fires and use her healing magic to save the people she loves. Aranya is immensely likable as she matures, finding friends amidst terrible adversity while adapting to her constantly-changing self and environment.

Princess Zuziana, or Zip, is a fellow hostage in the Sylakian tower. Zip is equally fearless but more spontaneous, living in the moment; a deep friendship develops between these dynamic women, with wonderful banter. Yolathion is a Sylakian warrior who begins to question duty versus honor. This is a world of ancient legends, different cultures, deadly creatures, and many kinds of dragons. Rebellion against the Sylakians is inevitable, and the adventure soars on dragon wings. Highly recommended!

Dianne Astle says

Aranya (Shapeshifter Dragons Book 1) was a very enjoyable read. Aranya is the Princess of Immadia. As the story begins she is taken as a hostage by the Sylakians who have conquered most of the known world. Right from the beginning you know that there is something special about this Princess. Aranya is not a sit in the castle and wait to be rescued by Prince Charming kind of Princess. Aranya is a Princess more than willing to fight her own battles, but more than that she is willing to fight on behalf of the oppressed and those that the Sylakians plan to crush and destroy. When the Sylarkians attempt to execute Aranya all they do is provide the key that unlocks some of the mystery of who she really is.

The world building in this book is very good. The characters and creatures you meet along the way are great. The plot is excellent. I loved some of the deeper themes like the importance of knowing who you really are and the value of living a life you can be proud of. I was also very taken by a dialogue around the scars that we carry and the value they can have in making us who we are. One of my favorite things about this book was that it was complete in itself while laying some good groundwork for a sequel which I look forward to

reading sometime in the future.

Dhesan Pillay says

Reviewing Marc Secchia's first installment in the Shapeshifter Dragons series, feels a lot like retelling a beautiful dream and it was a true pleasure reading this gem of a fantasy story.

The story follows a young princess's brave decision to shoulder the burden of exile for the safety of her family and kingdom. Yet Aranya proves an unwilling prisoner to circumstance. There is a fire within her, both a latent power and an unconquerable spirit, which is admirable and intriguing. This is first glimpsed in her courageous fight with the mighty windroc, where she holds her own with the ferocity of a seasoned warrior.

Aranya is as equally gifted with her wit as she is with her twin daggers. This is seen early on in her initially frosty treatment toward Zuziana. However, therein lies another facet to this gem of a tale. The relationship between these two exiled princesses begins with a heated animosity but this is eclipsed by the kindness Aranya shows Zuziana when she is an inch from a broken soul. And from that act of kindness, a friendship develops that you know no conflict can shatter. I especially enjoyed that as their friendship matured with a deepening trust and love through the story, sharing many battles and near death experiences, they retain their witty banter which adds a spice of humor to otherwise dark times as war looms ever closer.

As with any great protagonist the tragedy and conflict they face either makes them or breaks them. Aranya, having been thrown into the great unknown chose to release herself of constraints and relished who she became because of it. However, it was a journey made all the better because of a great ensemble of supporting characters.

Despite Aranya being the main character, the feisty pint sized Remoyan princess Zuziana shines just as brightly. As Aranya eloquently explains, "Being Dragon-sized doesn't guarantee courage," and this was shown continuously by Zuziana's livewire energy that she brings to the story, spear heading the duo in their escapades with a bravado and wit that elevates her to stand beside her friend until her fate takes an unexpected twist and she comes to realize a great many mysteries about herself.

At its heart I feel this story tells the tale of love and friendship and the magic they have in getting us through the trials of life. There are many types of love expressed and they are all heartwarming, from the complex romantic love that Aranya grapples with, the easier accepting and unrequited romance afforded to Zuziana, the surrogate parent love and mentoring provided by Nak and Ody and the willingly sacrificial love of family that cannot be compared. Countless moments shared between Dragon and rider, father and daughter, friends and lovers alike tug at the heart strings and add an emotional depth to this fantasy epic that makes you care for the outcome of the characters. I found myself cheering, cursing and experiencing palpitations as Zuziana and Aranya flouted the Sylakian Empire across the Island Worlds. Personally I feel that this is what made Aranya stand out for me, the fact that Marc Secchia created characters I connected with and I cared what happened to them.

The most fascinating concept in this story was the shapeshifting into a dragon. At the outset I felt this would be one of those ideas which would either fall flat on its face or soar on the wings of a well-crafted experienced, and Secchia surpassed all expectations as he favored the latter. Each transformation, every initial intrepid thought and all the majesty of flying with such powerful grace is so well conveyed that as a reader I felt I was able to spread my wings and fly alongside Aranya as she soared over the magnificent Cloudlands. Secchia builds his readers experience of dragon flight so well that even when Aranya is

weathered, broken by battle and flying on the last threads of spirit with only the need to protect her loved ones as motivation, I could feel her exhaustion, desperation and determination. Again exemplifying her willing nature to tussle with adversity and emerge victorious.

With regards to fascinating magic in the story a shape shifting dragon does tend to steal the spotlight, however, I was equally enchanted by the world building. A reader experiences the world of the story through the eyes of the protagonist, and Aranya's wide eyed wonder as she experienced the vast expanses of the Island World added to the mythical scope that Secchia reaches for and obtains in his story. Each island is unique in culture, topography and a masterpiece in itself reminiscent of the beauty of worlds seen in the Final Fantasy series.

My only criticism of this story was that during some battle scenes, I felt the detailed prose tended to distract from the urgency of the battle at hand but it did not detract from an extraordinary tale.

I also particularly enjoyed the intrigue of the last chapters as they concluded the battle but left several mysteries about the origins of the world, the dragon shape shifters and the relationships Aranya and Zuziana would share. A beautiful ending and an enticing lead into the series. If you are a lover of fantasy worlds, magic and realistic emotions with strong female characters all woven together by expert storytelling, then Aranya is for you.

"Go burn the heavens!"

Sue-Ellen says

Read this book as a lover of dragons but had not yet found anyone who was able to combine humans and dragons with shapeshifting (that I liked). I found this book combined the changes well and kept the personality aspects in identifiable contexts. It was fast paced, with the story continually advancing. At no time did I find there was a slow period in the story line and the best part was that there were unpredictable moments where I was surprised by what transpired. This is becoming a more rare thing after years of reading books and especially dragon books.

BookLoversLife says

What can I say about this to do it justice!! I think I'll start by saying that between it's wonderful characters and magical story this was an incredibly entertaining read! I loved everything about it.

Aranya was an amazing heroine. She was strong, tough, brave and well able to look after herself. She resigns herself to being a slave to the Sylakian king and intends to stay true to herself, which she does. She stays her plucky no nonsense self which gets her branded a traitor and thrown off a cliff to her death. But even that won't stop her!! She becomes her true self at her time of need and we get to see the real Arayna!

Zip is another hostage of war and while at start she battles Arayna, they soon become fast friends. I loved her spirit too! She goes through a lot while being a hostage but remains strong and steadfast. I loved her friendship with Arayna, which was solid.

Then we have the war hammer Yolathion, who is the right hand man of the Sylakian king. He is charged with conquering all nations, which he is more than willing and able to do. He captures Aranya and while transporting her to the king, develops a bond with her. He starts questioning himself about his duty or love but when his king demands he throw Aranya to her death, he does. Can Aranya forgive him?

This book grabbed me right from the start. The characters were the first thing I fell in love with but what really drew me in was the incredible world building. The lore and vivid writing made for an unforgettable world and one I will gladly jump right back into. The Dragon ships, the different nations, the different customs and the dragons themselves made me love the book even more. It was amazing.

Anyway, as I said, this was such an incredible read. It was extremely well written and imagined and filled with twists, turns, suspense and action that I flew through it. Once I plugged in my headphones, I couldn't stop listening!! The vivid descriptions and attention to detail was exceptional and it's well worth the credit!!

Shiromi Arserio made for an amazing narrator because with the number of characters in this, I never got confused of who she was trying to portray. She gave a great performance and I will definitely check out more by her.

I received a copy of this for review from AudioBookBlast. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

Terri Wilson says

I received a free copy of this audio form of this book in exchange for a review.

I love dragons, but I haven't read many books with dragons. When I saw this one I knew it was a book I would enjoy. Yes, I know we shouldn't judge books based on covers, but look at the cover! It's beautiful. This story is as beautiful as the cover. The author created a completely new world with such detailed description I wanted to book a vacation to this mysterious land. His combination of Victorian, steampunk, and fantasy images brought the setting alive to the reader. The action was developed in such a way that sometimes I felt like I was watching a movie and not listening to a book.

One of the things that impressed me was his description of Dragon Aranya. I think of dragons as being very masculine. Secchia created a fierce dragon that was very feminine but just as strong as any warrior. All of his characters were such real people I wanted to meet them.

The narrator does a fantastic job with the various voices. Each character had a unique voice and it was always easy to determine the different people. I think her interpretations only added to the richness of this great story. She even did a good job with the sound of arrows and fires.

Punkin says

Wall of text

Sooooo many words. So many new things to try and pronounce. Oldish way of speaking that I sometimes struggled to follow. Lots of telling not much doing. HARD to feel for the characters. And way too long about Dragon basics..

Tammy says

3.8

Aranya is a fun and well written book. The world building is unique and very creative. I like the main characters, Aranya and Zip, they are 2 fierce princess who really kick-ass. There's a lot of action through Aranya and Zip's adventure and journey sprinkle with romance. Overall the book is good but just too young for my liking.

Hoodie_gypsy says

My favorite part of this first book is the unique and new world Marc created for his characters. There's interesting customs, fashions, technologies and histories to bring the setting to life without being overwhelmingly detailed.

I was further impressed that Aranya is not the typical "I'm so small, I hate how tiny I am!" heroine that is always described as and perceived by other characters as adorable and petite. (Although, in all fairness, the character of Zip falls into this category, and to further the spirit of fairness, Zip *is* freaking adorable.) Aranya is tall and athletic, usually taller than most of the other female characters around her. Aranya also has a temper and there's actual negative repercussions to her losing her cool.

Aranya grows (oddly enough, not referring to the fact that she turns into a dragon) as a person throughout the story, as do other characters. I loved the relationship between dragon and rider and all the discoveries that go went along with it.

I loved this story, it was full of a new take on shapeshifting, had realistic friendships and memorable characters as well as tons of adventure. My one hang-up with the story overall was the romance aspects. It was a little like a Disney movie, one chance meeting and it's a true love to pine and obsess over. But that is a small complaint when put in the light of how entertained I was by this book.

Last but certainly not least was Shiromi's performance. The accents were delightful and she did incredibly well switching back and forth quickly between them. She added an incredible amount of charm to the book that makes me very happy to have experienced Aranya in the audio book format.

--I received a copy of this audiobook in exchange for an honest review.--

Patricia Hamill says

Magic, technology and lots of humor.

Aranya is the story of a young princess who must face a terrible fate. In the Island-World, one country has been systematically taking over island countries, and now it is Aranya of Immadia's turn. Her father wisely decides to surrender rather than face the sure slaughter of his entire kingdom, but Aranya must pay the price. She becomes yet another hostage of the Sylakian Empire. Her entire life to be locked away in a tower with other royal hostages, like herself. Then again, there is the magic and dreams of a black dragon.

There are so many things I love about this story. It was easy to fall into this world, to be engrossed and absorbed by it. I loved the dirigibles, the cloudscape that separates the islands, the technology (and lack thereof), and, of course, the magic. Everything comes together so well and so naturally, even in such a large body of work.

I am a big fan of the epic fantasy genre, and I definitely feel this one counts, but unlike some in that category, this one doesn't plod on or focus too much on details. Yes, there are details and there are elements of history and political intrigue, like in any good epic fantasy, but they are sprinkled in only when needed and in efficient packages that don't detract from the action. And, yes, there is quite a lot of action. I found it incredibly difficult to put this book down, though its size made that necessary.

I also loved the witty banter between the characters and the way relationships developed. Then again, some of the banter lost me. There were at times too many comebacks, and I didn't always realize immediately why the characters thought them funny. Most of this abated by the end of the book. I think upon another reading, I'd probably get more of the jokes. Still, what I got, I loved. I also liked the nicknames. I won't go into those for fear of spoilers.

Overall, this is epic fantasy at its finest. I think that even folks who are intimidated by long stories might find this one manageable because of its quick pace, action focus, and compelling plot line. As the first book in the series, it ends with more story left to tell, but not in a cliffhanger. I do want to read the next, but I feel like I can wait for it. I highly recommend this to those who enjoy fantasy, particularly of the epic variety. This is definitely one of my favorites this year.

I received a free copy of this book in return for an honest non-reciprocal review.

Shoshana Hathaway says

I had read and enjoyed the Pygmy Dragon so much that the author very kindly gifted me a copy of this book. I enjoyed it just as much, and for many of the same reasons. First of all, the world building in both books is superb. The author creates his own world, complete with geographic features, civilizations, and history. It all works together to enmesh and then captivate the reader. Yes, one can trace certain inspirations back to the Earth we know, but those inspirations are merely jumping off points, and by the time the author is finished with them, they are creative and entirely his own, fitting perfectly into his world.

Next, there is the writing, which is vivid and engaging. The author's use of language is admirable, and he weaves his tale with a light but firm hand.

I had noticed, before, the deft way the author has with portraying young people, and that definitely carries on in this book as well. His teens are just that, whatever world they live in. They laugh and play (not always at appropriate times), tease one another, and have the same doubts and fears anyone approaching adulthood have, and they deal with them, with a minimum of angst, which I, frankly, appreciate. These young people are far too busy living to dither and agonize, let alone be self-indulgent or self-absorbed.

The story is exciting, complicated, filled with lots of action, including some incredible aerial battles, the politics of diplomacy, and yes, romance. This is a marvelous fantasy series, and a delight to revisit through the pages of this book.

Nate says

Aranya-Zip banter and Aranya's brooding often made me want to knock a star off the final rating, but that's a bit harsh. There's a lot of solid adventure in this book, it's just a bit immature imho. Shrug, it's YA.
