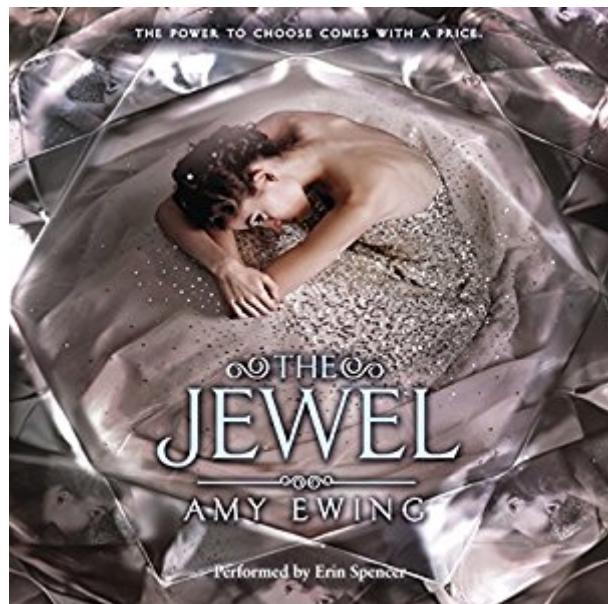


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# The Jewel



## **Synopsis**

The Jewel means wealth. The Jewel means beauty. The Jewel means royalty. But for girls like Violet, the Jewel means servitude. Not just any kind of servitude. Violet, born and raised in the Marsh, has been trained as a surrogate for the royalty - because in the Jewel the only thing more important than opulence is offspring. Purchased at the surrogacy auction by the Duchess of the Lake and greeted with a slap to the face, Violet (now known only as #197) quickly learns of the brutal truths that lie beneath the Jewel's glittering facade: The cruelty, backstabbing, and hidden violence that have become the royal way of life. Violet must accept the ugly realities of her existence...and try to stay alive. But then a forbidden romance erupts between Violet and a handsome gentleman hired as a companion to the Duchess' petulant niece. Though his presence makes life in the Jewel a bit brighter, the consequences of their illicit relationship will cost them both more than they bargained for. Debut author Amy Ewing expertly crafts an enchanting story full of riches, rivalries, and riveting twists and turns that will keep listeners on the edge of their seats until the very end.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

So as I read The Jewel a while back, I couldn't help but think about all the other dystopians I've read with girls in pretty dresses in hopeless situations trying to escape the powers that be. I wasn't wowed by this one like I thought I would be. Okay, yes, I was drawn to the cover. I still am. But Violet, she just wasn't the kind of girl I'd choose as the leader of a rebellion. She does take risks, a

good trait to have for a leader, but they are selfish and she doesn't think about the consequences to anyone else. Every time she did something risky, I didn't worry about her, as a surrogate, she seemed protected. But I worried about the person she was with and if they would get caught. Anyone that she communicated with in any way was at risk. I just never warmed up to her. She seemed to be a nice girl, but she really wasn't nice so much as indifferent. If she had really cared about her friends, others, she would have acted instead of settling into the idyllic and pampered life she had going on. She wouldn't have kept so many secrets. And it cost her. But it cost others more. I don't like the world. Women seem to have the power, but not really. It's pettiness and jealousy and all about who has more and the best. It makes women appear to be exactly what we have always been portrayed to be concerned more about how we look, what we have in terms of jewels, gardens, potential children, clothing, mansions all those things mean power. But, at the end of the day, it's the men that have the power to make the rules. At least, the women have to have the man's name behind them in order to make the rules. So it's nothing really new. Female slavery, female treachery and conniving, it all leads to a very unflattering picture of women in general with men stepping back to allow the women like cats to fight it out for themselves. I don't know what the outcome will be, but with the events at the end of the book I was shaking my head, disappointed, but not surprised by the turn of events given Violet's selfishness. The idea is certainly new to me and horrific, girls are taken at a young age and sequestered from their family to be raised so that they can hone their "gifts" and talents and then go to be auctioned off in a room full of women, known from then on as a number only. Everything is done to make them lose their identity so that they become property, lose their sense of self. What happens to them after they give birth to the precious children is unknown. Each girl is treated differently by the woman that purchases her. Some are pampered, some are treated little better than slaves and none of them are allowed to talk to each other despite having grown up together. The cruelty is endless. Death is not uncommon as the women are cutthroat about having the child that will marry the next ruler. The sooner the child is born, the better. Science and deviousness mix into horrifying experiments until Violet and probably many of the girls fight for their lives. While this wasn't the story for me, I am sure many readers will be intrigued by the story line. Surrogacy and slavery, power and loss of identity and a rebellion in the making. The writing is good and the topic is interesting, give it a try if you find that it is something you want to tackle. Don't be fooled by the cover, though. Much like the dresses, the homes, the makeup and jewels that the women that purchase girls like Violet have, the book cover is just window dressing. It's not telling you what's inside. Read it for yourself.

I came across this book as an recommended based on my YA purchases so I said why not for \$1.99. Super easy read since I completed it in 2 days. YA trilogy but with some very adult aspects and words that I would be surprised if a YA would know. I mean the book is about rich upper class needing surrogates for their heirs that come from the lowest class. A bit odd for a YA topic, but good enough storyline to perk my interest. Much like any of the YA books involving an utopia society, it's rich versus poor so you know how its going to flow. However, as I read it, I got more intrigued with the story and the characters, with enough drama and surprises around the typical story line to keep me intrigued. The build up is slow, but really hooked me after a quarter into the story and then I could not put it down. It does end with an abrupt surprise that requires the purchase of the second book to know more...which I bought along with the third series ending book that just got released. Sucker...probably but I liked it enough to continue on.

I really enjoyed this book on its own. I found the world intriguing, I loved the mystery of Violet's Augerries and Lucien's place in it all, and I enjoyed seeing a "gender bend" with the male love interest Ash being a prostitute. The world wasn't very developed, but it had potential. Unfortunately once you reach the second book and all is revealed, the series goes sharply down hill. It becomes shallow in its premise and goes mostly as expected. If you're looking for a one stop read (with a cliffhanger ending) then this is a great book, but as a fan of the Hunger Games, the Uglies, and even the sweeter and simpler Selection books, this book ends up in the trash with the Divergent series and many others for series that start well then fail after the first book.

Many people have fertility issues, for some it's a defining part of their lives. They can spend years, decades even, and untold amounts of money simply on the process of procreation. Throughout history we have seen many many examples of stagnant bloodlines because of the general idea that mixing familial blood would create a inferior ruler. Most monarchies have had this problem, it's always been very common in the European Houses for quite close family members to marry. This solved financial and succession issues in a rather easy way. First cousins to cousins, uncles to nieces, related strangers who met at their wedding alter. But in this future, the inbreeding isn't really called out, it's more implied in several small ways that make the reader know without explicit details. As a fan of fiction and historical non-fiction I would have loved a little more insight into this part of the story. There are many references to a slight from this house to another or a falling out here and there but you don't get a good history on the houses and who populates them. The focus is obviously on the main four houses and the, for lack of a better word, queens home. There isn't a

very clear picture painted about who and where with the why's answered. You get some, of course, but you couldn't sit down with only the details given and create a flow chart from one house to another as you could with, say the Districts in the Hunger Games series. I do understand that the HG series is all but required to spell it all out but this story leaves a lot of detail out. That's not to say we won't get more of the histories layer in the series. This is part of the story that interested me in general. The way that the issue of surrogacy is presented is very different here. For whatever reason, girls from the poorest area have an genetic mutation that allows them to do amazing things. It's not explained why or how this has occurred in nature. To enjoy the story I personally had to suspend my logical mind to make this part work for me. Once I accepted that, it was easier to move along in the story. It's stated clearly in one scene by a doctor that they 'simply don't know what it is our why it works'. Well, as long as we have established that we can move on. These girls are tested for the genetic marker after their first menstrual cycle (to be expected, they are needed to carry children, before the menstrual cycle they really aren't useful to the royal families.). If they have the marker they are pulled from their families and sent to what can only be described as a glorified jail. They are raised to be obedient to their mistresses and told that they are special and important to the lineage of the royals. Surprising, the main character knows shockingly little about the entire process of child bearing. You would think in the three years she spent at a holding house for surrogates they would openly teach them about being pregnant. Nope, in our MC that knowledge is severely lacking. The Auction. These young girls are dressed up and paraded in front of the royal women to purchase as property. This is something that they are taught through the years at the holding center, but yet, again our MC is surprised. I won't even get started on the slave trade from history and how very very wrong the buying and selling of human beings is. I'm going to assume we are all on the same page that it's wrong and illegal for a very good reason. There is a character who comes along with their own social issues that touch on a interesting point. I'm hoping we will read more about that in the series. The final paragraph is an amazing plot twist that had me thinking back about a almost non existent and seemingly unimportant character. I do look forward to reading more about this as well. So, sorry for the long review, there are a lot of interesting issues in the book that make you look at larger social issues, historically and in today's society. I say read this book, enjoy it for what it is and let it make you think about some fundamentally right and wrong issues. Very well written, especially for a debut novel. I believe I've found a new writer to follow. ☺

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