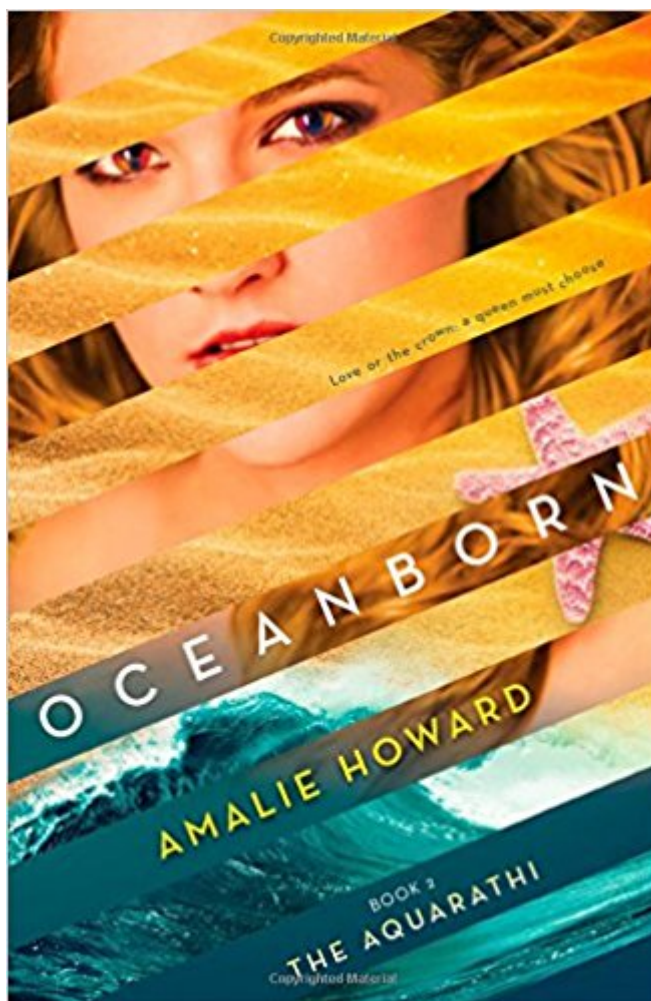


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Oceanborn (The Aquarathi) (English Edition)



Synopsis

The coronation is over. But the battle has just begun. Nerissa Marin has won her crown. But can she keep it? Already, her ties to the human realm are driving a wedge between Nerissa and her people. When word arrives that her part-human prince consort, Lo, has been poisoned, she makes the difficult choice to leave Waterfell and return landside. As the royal courts debate her decision, even more disturbing rumors surface: a plot is rising against her, led by someone she least expects. On land, Nerissa learns another shocking truth; Lo does not remember who she is. As her choice to try to save him threatens her hold on her crown, changing loyalties and uncertainty test her courage in ways she could never have imagined. Nerissa will have one last chance to prove herself as a queen and save the undersea kingdom she loves.

Book Information

Series: The Aquarathi (Book 2)

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Harlequin Teen (July 29, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0373211252

ISBN-13: 978-0373211258

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,314,579 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #74 in Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Paranormal & Urban > Mermaids #3059 in Books > Teens > Romance > Paranormal #34173 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction

Customer Reviews

Seventeen Magazine Summer Club author Amalie Howard spent most of her childhood with her nose buried in a book or running around barefoot, shimmying up mango trees and dreaming of adventure. 22 countries, surfing with sharks and several tattoos later, she has traded in bungee jumping in China for writing the adventures she imagines instead. She isn't entirely convinced which takes more guts. Amalie lives in New York with her husband and three children. Visit her at www.amaliehoward.com.

We are savage. We are proud. We are the dark rulers of the sea. Deep in the ocean near the

earth's core, I survey the Aquarathi people; a firestorm of color; as the four courts pay homage to their new queen. Closest to me, the Gold Court stands quietly proud. The Sapphire Court is flamboyant in their tribute. The Emerald Court, more demure. But the Ruby Court, I watch with silent, cautious eyes. Months before, they supported a rival queen in her bid against the High Court, and she almost won. Almost. The great hall of Waterfell is deep and cavernous, with cobbled golden stalactites and stalagmites spanning its entire length to meet in the middle like majestic columns. In the human world, I learned about the marble pillars of the ancient Greeks. Ours remind me of the pictures I saw of theirs, only the ones around me are far older and more forbidding. The floor glitters with all manner of earthly minerals, reflecting off our bodies like prisms. Today we celebrate my coronation as heir to the High Court. In Aquarathi society, it's a pivotal milestone, one made even more momentous by the fact that my father; the last king; is dead. If he were alive, years from now he would be the one to transfer the proverbial baton to me. The endorsement from one ruler to another is a vital piece of our tradition. An Aquarathi coronation isn't the same as humans might expect from what they know of royalty in the media, but power is passed from the old monarch to the new one in a ritual that's just as significant. Aivana, which translates into the human language as beautiful flower, refers to an ancient Aquarathi practice. Like Sanctum, it is a gift born to those of royal blood. In our world, when kings or queens die, they can bequeath their power, should they so choose, to a next of kin. Aivana is not only a transfer of Aquarathi energy from one ruler to the next; it's a transfer of trust; a blessing of sorts from the old to the new. In a parallel world, my father would be alive and standing at my side. I can picture his face, silvery blue and radiant with pride. Everyone would watch with bated breath as he touched his nose to mine and bent his forehead to rest directly upon my brow. We would both glow so brightly that the light would extinguish all colors save ours. Together, we would bestow Sanctum; an ancient Aquarathi practice used by royals to strengthen our people; to everyone in the room, reminding them of our strength and our love. Eventually his bioluminescence would fade, merging into mine and signaling the rise of a new ruler. But my father isn't here, and there's no one to pass along a crown to make this any easier or to make the Aquarathi immediately accept me. I am alone. And I am already a queen. My coronation is but an afterthought. My people watch me in expectant silence, crowding into the great hall of Water-fell like silent luminescent candles flickering in a body of water. A shiver winds through me as I study their faces; my fledgling rule has already raised questions and a near-royal coup. I've had to earn their approval. I still have to. I wish I were back in La Jolla. The thought is errant. And cowardly. I am Aquarathi, not human. And I belong here. I know that. But the truth is, I miss being

human; playing hockey and surfing, lunches in the quad, hanging out with my best friend, Jenna. Being human. But I'm not just a girl. I'm part of an alien marine species living on this planet, and my place is in the ocean, not landside. I almost smile, remembering snippets of a conversation I had with Jenna during one of our sunny lunches in the Dover Prep courtyard, a couple weeks after I'd revealed what I was to her. "So, do you live in a giant underwater castle? You know, like Ariel?" I snorted soda through my nose at the Disney reference. "Um, no. There are no underwater castles in the ocean, Jenna, and I definitely don't sit on rocks grooming my hair in the sunlight waiting to be rescued by Prince Eric; even though he is kind of dreamy." Jenna grinned. "Well, now that you've gone and dashed all my childhood ideals, enlighten me." "Disney version or Jeopardy version?" "Jeopardy." "We live in underwater caves. We hunt, we sleep, we reproduce and we work. As a species, think of us as a cross between whales, dolphins and wolves. No castles, no tea parties, just the occasional sushi brunch. We're just like any other sea creature living in pods; pretty boring really." "Don't you have an economic or political structure?" "An economy of what? Trading in plankton? Our political structure is divided into four courts, as you know, with one high court. Unlike most humans," I said with a grin, "we are a very simple species." "I don't get it. I mean, you're so evolved. Intelligent." "Why? Intelligence is measured in different ways, not necessarily according to human standards or human categories. For us, it's about self-awareness. We exist within the parameters of our world, within our social and cultural structures, living as one with the environment. We don't belong up here, involved in politics and MTV and wireless Internet. A killer whale doesn't just get up and say, 'I want to play some video games and maybe try using a fork,' and neither would any Aquarathi. It doesn't make us any less intelligent." "Yes, but you can transform to be like us. Human." "Not all of us. Most Aquarathi can only exist in human form if they're in close proximity to me. It's not our natural state." She stared at me as if I were an imbecile missing the big picture. "Still, for argument's sake, think of what you could do if you did; I mean you could be a part of the government instead of working policy change from the sidelines. You could make sure we don't do anything to jeopardize your species. You could play an active part. I mean, more than you already do in secret, and you wouldn't have to hide." "If the humans knew about us, it would lead to worse things, Jenna." She was so passionate, and what she said was partially true. We could make ourselves known. But what would stop us from seizing control and overpowering the humans if they didn't like our ways? It would be easy, with all of our abilities. After all, that was what Ehmora wanted. She wanted to control people so that this planet wouldn't face the same brutal end that Sana, our home planet, faced at the hands of the

hominids there. But that wasn't what my father wanted. And it's not what I want. There are always going to be those who think we are a stronger and smarter species; those like Ehmora who would view humans as less than. Those are the few who won't be happy coexisting. Eventually the humans would grow to fear us and we'd end up in the same place that Sana did; in an interspecies war. No, it's better that we live in secret, affecting change from the sidelines, as we have done for millennia. And now it's my turn to take the reins. My eyes flick to the restless Ruby Court. Those Aquarathi have been the slowest to accept my rule over the past few weeks, especially after the death of their leader. But I beat Ehmora on the sands of battle, and their allegiance has been sworn, if not truly won. I'm still working on that. Some of them still support what Ehmora was fighting for, and they're the dangerous ones; stirring seeds of malcontent. I take a breath and close my eyes. On cue, the crown of bones on my brow pushes forward like a fan of finely webbed coral. I center myself, feeling my core connect with the heart of Waterfell; and the beating hearts of all the Aquarathi within it; until we are one and the same. I am a daughter of the old kings and a mother of the new. Every living creature in this room is tied to me. I exhale, and the whispered breath ripples across the hall from body to body, heart to heart. I open my eyes; the glow in the room is almost blinding, a tumultuous kaleidoscope like the northern lights in Earth's sky. Echlios, my Handler and captain of my royal guard, moves forward to stand beside me, his body rigid. I can see the approval flashing in his bright silver eyes. He nods and arches his long neck, his dark red scales glittering, as he bares it to me in a gesture of submission. Golden-green lights shimmer down the length of my body, mirroring the deep ruby of his, and I click fiercely in my native tongue to my people, calling water-to-water and blood-to-blood. My water is yours as yours is mine, I tell them, whispering the oaths I would have sworn to my father. Power ripples along my spine, making my golden colors flare so brightly that every finned head dips in deferent succession; gold to green to blue, and finally to red in a wave of reluctant molten crimson. I must rule by strength now. Not just by love. Trust is a luxury, and the time for compassion in Water-fell has come and gone. Ehmora planted dark seeds of doubt and confusion. If I don't control my people, all of the humans will be at risk. And everything my father fought and died for will be for nothing. I can never let that happen, even more so now that I am bonded to a hybrid; a halfhuman, half-Aquarathi prince. I arch my neck, my tail curling through the water; and freeze as a violent wave of pain crashes into me like a rogue tsunami, destroying everything in its path. Lo's name reverberates like a hammer in my brain as if the sharp thought of him has summoned his consciousness to me in full force. My lights flutter and die. I can feel the startled pulses and the clicks of the courts, but I can't focus on them. All I know is

Lo's pain; a deep, shattering, all-consuming pain, as if a thousand blades are carving my body at once. The navy swirls on my flanks; Lo's marks; deepen like ink, sinking into me with scorching pressure. Everything disappears and I feel only the pull of the bond; and the one on the other side of the bond; calling to me. And in that moment, I know. The threat isn't here. It's there. In seconds, Echlios is glued to my side, the rest of his guards surrounding us in a protective circle. "My lady, what is it?" "Lo," I gasp. "Something's wrong. He's hurt." "I'll go." "No," I insist, nearly doubling over. "The coronation;" "Can wait." I shake my head, feeling my ties to the Aquarathi start to fade. I swallow. "This is too important." Echlios nods, but I can see the uncertainty flicker across his face. Because of the bond with Lo, I am vulnerable, and if Lo is hurt, I can be, too. Echlios's mate, Soren, joins us, her eyes flashing gold fire. As my Handler, she is so in tune with me that she has felt the fear I'm now trying desperately to conceal. Her voice is gentle, as is the pale green tail fin circling me in a protective manner. "Breathe, Nerissa. Try deep calming breaths. It will help with the pain. Echlios will go. It is his duty to protect you. and the prince regent." I do as she says, letting the salt water enter through my gills and breathing out the sharp, pulsing pain until it becomes a dull throb. Nodding weakly to Echlios, I watch as Soren dismisses the courts that have come to pay their respects to the new queen. I don't know what they're saying, but I have to imagine that seeing their new ruler in an incapacitated state on the first day of her coronation has to be cause for concern. Still, that anxiety pales in comparison to the urge I feel to take off in a sprint for the mainland in response to the pull of the bond. "I need a minute," I pulse to Soren as another wave of dizziness overcomes me. "Go. I'll convene the High Council," she says to me and then frowns, her eyes narrowing in concern. "Not too far, Nerissa." I nod and make my way out of the throne room and into the tunnels beyond. There are two silent black forms behind me; Nova and Nell; twins and two of my royal guard that I'm aching to get rid of. They're young but fierce; Echlios thought our closeness in age would make me less uncomfortable with having permanent shadows glued to my every move. I didn't mind, until now. "Stay here," I click to the twins at the tunnel's exit. "I'm going to be right over there." I swim away from Waterfell with a few short, powerful strokes, but stay within watching distance of the two guards. Their forms are indistinct, cloudy shapes, which means they can still see me and that's all that matters. I close my eyes and stay perfectly still, clearing my mind of everything but the feel of the water against my skin and the soft muted sounds of ocean life around me. I let the sea do what it does best; heal. For a heartbeat, floating in a sea of space and nothing, it's easy to imagine that I live in a world where everything is different. That my parents are alive and together.

That my father is here to watch my coronation with pride. That the one who has my heart isn't a million miles away—and that he hasn't been hurt, or worse. Lo—the prince regent. My mate. We are bonded for life, bound by an unbreakable tie. We belong to each other in a way that only lovers can know. My gaze falls on the bands of navy shimmering through my golden-green scales—the marks of our bonding—and green bioluminescent lights tingle along my sides in automatic response. Fighting another wave of panic, I try to push the thought of him—and the thought of his blue-black eyes, so like the shadowy darkness of the ocean surrounding me—from my mind, but it's like trying to separate my skin from my body. Every breath I inhale, he inhales with me. As if in response, the tug from before becomes more insistent, less painful now but still sharp. I can only hope that Echlios finds him safe. Drifting deeper into the deep blue coldness, I don't resist as the current drags my body with insistent force. I'm not afraid. I can handle the ocean at its worst, control it even, but I let it take me, enjoying the feel of not having to be strong for just a moment. I don't care that I've lost sight of my two guards or that the dim lights of Waterfell have faded. There's nothing around me but pitch-black murky gloom. I'm the deadliest predator out here, so it's not like I have anything to fear—especially with Ehmora dead and her allies in hiding. Those Echlios hunted down either swore fealty to me or were executed. Inexorably, my thoughts return to Lo, the son of the very one who tried to usurp my throne. Ehmora's son. Sure, he killed her—for me—but our relationship is still delicate at best, and even at the core, a lifelong genetic bond wouldn't be the only thing that would hold me to him. At first, being with Lo was an act of defiance and desperation on my part. I wanted to be close to someone, to forget for a while what I was and pretend to be a human girl. But that one moment cost me so much. I bonded myself to the son of my enemy. "Planning to drift to China?"

Perfect for ages 14 to 17. speculative fiction, adventure, thriller romance. Fast paced, kind of superficial, a fantasy 90210. Book #1 *Waterfell (The Aquarathi)* *THE GIRL WHO WOULD BE QUEEN* sixteen-year-old La Jolla, California resident Nerissa Marin hides among teens in her human form, protected by her guardians, Echlios and Soren, and their teenage son, Speio, waiting for the day she can claim her birthright—the undersea kingdom stolen from her the day her father was murdered by Ehmora. Blending in is her best weapon—until her father's betrayer confronts Nerissa and challenges her to a battle to the death on Nerissa's upcoming birthday—the day she comes of age. Amid danger and the heartbreak of her missing mother, falling for a human boy is the last thing Nerissa should do. But Lo Seavon

breaches her defenses and somehow becomes the only person she can count on to help her desperate search for her mother, a prisoner of Nerissa's mortal enemy. Is Lo the linchpin that might win Nerissa back her crown? Or will this mortal boy become the weakness that destroys her?

I think by now it's obvious that I adore Amalie Howard, her writing style and her unique plots. I absolutely loved Waterfell and I remember being desperate to get my hands on its (untitled, at the time) sequel. And Oceanborn did NOT disappoint! The amount of character growth that I saw in Nerissa from Waterfell to Oceanborn was incredible. She really came a long way from the bratty, snotty, "I'm better than you" character she was in Waterfell. She really embraces her heritage and destiny in Oceanborn at least in the beginning (though I won't elaborate, for fear of spoilers). She's still very stubborn and single-minded in Oceanborn, though, especially when it comes to certain things.. and she refuses to listen to reason on certain things. At times, this got her in trouble. But it also led her to exactly where she needed to be in the end. She also reaches a level of maturity in Oceanborn that allows her to look at things more objectively, to make choices that are for the greater good. She follows her heart, even when it means letting go of certain things. And then there's Lo. He's still just as swoony as ever, that I can promise. But Lo not remembering who Nerissa is, what he is (which, not a spoiler if you read the synopsis!), it just broke my heart. He wasn't the Lo we all came to know and love in Waterfell and it was pretty tough to read. The reasons behind his memory loss were horrifying, but they really played into the overall plot of Oceanborn and led to some startling revelations and shocking plot twists. Jenna was amazing, as always. She truly personifies the role of best friend. She's the voice of reason and Nerissa's confidant. I loved that she could stand up to Cara and her group of mean girls, where Nerissa couldn't and wouldn't. She was fiercely loyal and willing to stand up for herself, for what was right and for her best friend. But she also knew how to push back when she felt excluded, refusing to be seen as weak just because she isn't Aquarathi. Speio is a tough character to talk about. He confused me and annoyed me at times. But he was always so fierce and loyal. One second, he was fighting with Riss like they truly were brother and sister. The next, he was angry and distant for seemingly silly reasons. But what happens in the end. Oh boy. I can't even. It was shocking, unexpected, crazy, insane. Cara, like Speio, was both

confusing and annoying at times. I really wanted to punch her for the majority of the book. But I *Amalie* *is* really happy with the direction her character went in and, if there *is* a third book (FINGERS CROSSED!!!!!!), I *am* *so* interested in seeing where her character goes next, what kind of character development she goes through. We meet a LOT of new faces in Oceanborn. It *is* impossible to talk about ANY of them without spoilers. So I *am* just going to say that one revelation didn't shock me at all, but the other one completely caught me off guard and (as I mentioned above), I *am* STILL trying to process it. The ending was explosive! I mean, I had my suspicions for a good portion of the book, but still. I knew something was up, I just couldn't put my finger on it. I had one theory that was proven wrong, but I was close! All I know is if there isn't a third book after that ending, I *will* throw a temper tantrum! Overall, if you couldn't tell from my gushing review, I absolutely adored Oceanborn. It was amazing, incredible and well worth the wait! I *am* desperately hoping for a third book *so* fingers crossed! And, as always, my parting words to you are this: If you haven't read any of Amalie's books *WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!?!?!?* She *is* definitely an auto-buy author for me, I highly recommend her books and I suggest you go check them all out RIGHT NOW! I don't think I even need to say it, but I DEFINITELY recommend this book!

This book is mostly for the YA crowd which means that it has lusty teenage sensuality and angst, oh and violence, killings, AND mer-aliens. Oceanborn is the second part of the Aquarathi series, and if you haven't read the first one before you read this one you will be lost until you start tying up the threads and getting an idea of what was presumably talked to at length on the first book. Alien sea queen Nerissa has to save her beloved counterpart Lo (short for Lothario, go figure) while trying to reign her undersea alien people. With the help of some trusty humans (Jenna and Sawyer) she navigates the perils of high school, teenage love and arch nemesis Cano. The narration is basic, the setting for the story is in California, La Jolla, so yes there are a lot of ditzzy teens here, complete with eye rolls and dirty blond perfect beach hair. Sigh. Nerissa's kingdom has been beset by unrest and turmoil since she became queen, stemming from her choice of mate, which to be honest would make anyone recoil since the boy sounds utterly daft. Regardless, the story unfolds as she has to battle Cano, a super bad dude who makes crazy experiments with aliens in his basement lab (not kidding). Ah but don't despair her royal powers and

fearless character will save the day and set things straight that is until the very last page when another archenemy surfaces hinting of a third book. Yawn. This book will be appreciated by teens, definitely of the female gender, who will appreciate all the descriptions of hot guys in flip-flops and lusty kissing sessions on the beach. Perfect for a teen summer's reading if she is onto the romance/alien theme. Book's destiny: Will end up at the public library and ultimately somewhere at a sleep away camp doubling as TP.

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