



Pirouette

Kenley Davidson

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A dazzling fantasy inspired by The Twelve Dancing Princesses...

Princess Ilani is an outcast, ignored by her family and the court because of her crippled leg. While her twelve sisters dance and dream of the future, Ilani can only watch in silence and bitter isolation. But when the time comes for their father to choose his heir, it is Ilani whose secrets will haunt their steps, along with a devilishly charming foreigner who seems to know far more than he should.

Lord Kyril Seagrave wishes he had never heard of Caelan. He embarked on a secret mission into the heart of the Caelani Empire, hoping for intrigue and adventure. What he finds is an empire on the brink of catastrophe. Armed with nothing but determination and a set of ill-matched companions, Kyril soon realizes there is far more at stake than his own quest, and one misstep could prove disastrous to everyone he loves.

Words—and sparks—fly when Kyril and Ilani meet and find themselves fighting not only for their lives, but for the future of Caelan itself. Unless these two unlikely allies can prevent the empire from falling into the hands of an old enemy, they could end up on opposite sides of a war.

An enthralling tale of romance, adventure and suspense, Pirouette is the third book of the Andari Chronicles, a series of interconnected but stand-alone fairy tale retellings.

Pirouette Details

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Author : Kenley Davidson

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From Reader Review *Pirouette* for online ebook

Ashley Stangl says

After browsing through the self-published fairy tale retellings available on Kindle Unlimited, I'd started to get a bit depressed. It seems as though anyone with a word processor and a copy of Grimm's can pound out a retelling, filling the world with hundreds of half-baked versions of the same stories.

This book restored my faith in the genre.

"*Pirouette*" is a retelling of "The Twelve Dancing Princesses". That's pretty much all I knew before starting. I love this fairy tale, but didn't have high hopes for the book, due to the "prom dress" look of the girl on the cover. When I started the first chapter, my expectations were blown away. This wasn't a generic, fluffy fairy tale kingdom, and this wasn't a half-baked retelling.

"*Pirouette*" takes place in a Middle-Eastern style kingdom, with a rich culture and harsh realities. In the prologue, our main character, Ilani, encounters these harsh realities at the age of seven, when she goes to dance for her father the malek (the king of Caelan) and accidentally reveals a forbidden magical talent. Due to this, her father orders the death of Ilani's mother and baby brother, and orders that Ilani never dance again. Ilani's leg is badly broken, and she grows up alone and outcast, with no hope for a future, since her culture has no place for a woman who cannot dance.

Meanwhile, a small group of spies from the more British-flavored country of Andar are traveling to learn more about Ilani's mysterious, powerful homeland of Caelan, and to keep tabs on the exiled Andari Prince Rowan, who might be planning further villainy. Lord Kyril Seagrave has a reputation as the court flirt, but as the best friend of the prince, he was placed in charge of this mission, much to the disapproval of Brenna, a fiery lady spy who already hates him due to his reputation. They're joined by the mysterious, magical Alexei (a man with his own agenda for the mission), and the taciturn bodyguard, Quinn. The latter three all have some experience with diplomatic intrigue, but Kyril feels out of his depth, especially since he doesn't know the language of Caelan. Instead of serving as leader, he's barely respected, as has to follow the rest of the group in disguise as the soldier and bodyguard to their identities as foreign merchants.

Soon after their arrival at the Caelani palace, scandal erupts, when the malek's twelve daughters (thirteen, actually, but no one counts the crippled Ilani) refuse to dance the traditional dance that allows their father's chosen heir to choose a wife. The malek orders that anyone who discovers why the princesses do not dance will be able to marry one of his daughters and choose the fates of the rest. The spies suspect this strange contest is part of Prince Rowan's evil plans, and Ilani worries that this contest will only cause her doom. Soon, Ilani and Kyril meet, and work together to investigate the many mysteries behind this strange contest and untangle the political intrigues of the two kingdoms.

This book has a highly complex plot, full of spies and political intrigue and conflicting personal agendas and plans within plans within plans, and takes place within a unique and well-thought-out world. It also has vivid, layered and likeable characters, and is full of sharp wit and humor and just a touch of romance. It leaves out or vastly alters many of my favorite parts of the original fairy tale, but the ways in which it twists the original story are so creative and fun that I can't complain about the differences.

There are some flaws. The characters tend to ruminate repetitively on their insecurities or parts of their history, especially in the first few chapters. I don't find it quite believable that Andar would know so little

about Caelan, since the two countries share a border, and I find it strange (though the author does a pretty decent job of justifying it) that an important point of the magic system is largely unknown to the Caelanis who have lived with it for centuries. Plus, the interlocking intrigues get a bit too complicated near the climax, when setbacks for side characters distract from the buildup of the main plot. But these are small points that barely detract from a rich and enjoyable book.

"Pirouette" is not just a retelling. It's a novel, with a well-built world and three-dimensional characters. It has more depth and scope and a better plot and characters than most of the traditionally published fairy tale retellings that I've read. Though it's the third in a series, I was able to follow the plot just fine without reading the first two. But I immediately rushed to pick up the other books.

Lily says

This book was my favorite in the series (so far, heh heh heh), and was a brilliant twist on the classic fairy tale, that to be honest, I have grown a bit bored with. I think this book has a lot more representation than most in the genre (disability, race), although still no gays (I'm holding out though). Some parts of the plot were predictable, but towards the climax, most things took me by surprise. I also appreciated that the romance wasn't I-just-met-you-now-let's-get-married, and actually built up to love (unlike other books in this series). So good.

Fiorela says

Really nice and an interesting twist on the classic "The 12 dancing princesses"

This book was a bit of a challenge to keep on reading since the first 6 chapters were really boring, becoming maddening, there almost no action and we spent most of the time in the head of the characters, Kyril and Brenna was a nuisance to read.

From the seventh chapter, things became more interesting and easy, so it was pretty awesome.

Lydia Staggs says

I've been delighted with this series, and so far this is my favorite of the three books. I am not familiar with the original story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses, but that did not take away from my enjoyment of this book. Great story telling.

BigComfyChairBookReviews says

This book was my least favorite in the series, by a lot. Which makes me sad/mad because it is the one I was most looking forward to. The *12 Dancing Princesses* is my favorite fairytale and one that doesn't get retold

that often. But getting through this book was grueling. It dragged by at a snail's pace and was way too long. I was aggravatingly waiting for something to take away from it.

Like the 1st two in this series this one is NOT a romance. This one had even less romance than the first two. Ilani and Kyril didn't even meet until over 30% of the way through. They then meet briefly (60 seconds tops), meet for maybe 30 minutes, then maybe 15 and that's it until the end. They don't even kiss at all. COME ON!!! Even Disney gives me a kiss at the end!

There were so many twists and turns it felt like a roller coaster, and while that may appeal to some readers I was so uninvested in the characters that I couldn't care less and just wanted it to stop. It doesn't have to be that complicated! I am all for adding background and plot to fairy tales but it loses its fairy tale quality when you make so complex that you have to get a pen and paper to map out all the plot twists. It also makes it more likely to be contrived and full of plot holes. For example, Ilani is injured for having magic and her sisters completely ignore and exclude her for 12 years because they "think she prefers it that way." What? No.

There is way too much dialogue. Almost the whole story is told through dialogue.

This story, unlike the books 1 & 2, is really more of ensemble cast rather than a story about a Hero & heroine. We get the perspective of several characters throughout the book and almost more of the story focuses on all the surrounding characters than the "main" 2.

I liked Kyrill in Traitor's Mask but didn't feel like he was even the same character in Pirouette. He was weak and whiney. Ilani was a nice character who made me feel something. Brenna was strongly featured in the book, maybe more than the other 2, and really is the hero of the story and the best character.

I really can't figure out who this author's target audience is. I would recommend to YA readers since the romance is so G-rated, but there is quite a bit of swearing and violence. I'm not sure why you would include cursewords but ZERO physical romance. I just can't figure it out, but I have decided after 3 of these that I will not be reading any more.

Davidson's writing is very good, and her character development is well done. And, at least this one was a fantasy. I feel bad for giving 2-stars, I know the author worked hard on it, but I just cannot justify even 1 more star. Others may appreciate this book more than me, I encourage you to read through the reviews and give it a try if you are a fan of the 1st two in the series.

Michelle says

Good story

A different take on the twelve dancing princesses. I really loved this story but I couldn't give it five stars because there is little bit of language in it that I prefer wasn't there.

Shruti says

I loved Kyril and Ilani's story. And am looking forward to read Alexis's story soon. This series is progressing so well. I author really has a gift of portraying things in a beautiful and devastating manner. With simple words she manages to show such depth and understanding and addresses to so many issues. It is commendable. There isn't really as much romance here as is in the first book but a deep connection and

understanding that binds people more like the kind of companionship that is mostly found in the original fairy tales which is kinda vague and not really descriptive but more perceptive and I very much appreciate it. There is of course love and betrayal and political upheavals and adventuresomething that one can never forget.....something that would truly touch your heart.....you'll be hurt....you'll be frustrated and angry on behalf of the characters..... you'll love them because they just so loveable them.....and you're bound to enjoy this journey. (Or so was the case with me)

This surely one of the best retellings of *The Twelve Dancing Princess* that I have ever read!

I'm very much amazed by how well the author has connected all these stories in the series. And reading the description of the next book, I feel like I'm about to be surprised. I so look forward to it.

Kendra Parker says

In *Pirouette*, we learn more about why there is so little magic in Andar, the main fantasy realm where the Cinderella retelling is set. Along the way, intrigue and mysteries abound.

I enjoyed the slightly middle-eastern flair to the novel, and once again Davidson did a fine job of making the tale rather epic. She truly takes the original as inspiration, telling the story in such a unique way that you may not even recognize the tale.

The depth of the story was very good, but I found myself feeling that some things were repeated a bit much, since she had two characters that had to discover things for themselves due to plot points. It was handled reasonably well, but I think that could be handled differently in some ways.

If you are looking for a uniquely told fairy tale, read these books. I'd suggest reading *Traitors Masque* before this one, but book two would not be necessary.

Christi-Anne says

Now, this surprised me- I loved Kenley Davidson's previous books in this series.

Overall, this book wasn't bad. There were a few things that really, *really* made me have to force myself to finish, but besides that...

So, here they are:

1. the romance was underdeveloped. Ludicrous.
2. There was barely any action, just a bunch of thinking. And I don't mean fighting- I just mean events or acts. This caused the book to drag, and drag, and drag.
3. Lord Seagrave was almost completely pathetic. Which is sad, because he was my favourite.

But besides these harsh, opinions, I enjoyed the character and the intrigue really made on think.

Gabrielle says

Where do I even begin? The third addition to Kenley Davidson's Andari Chronicles was an adventure in and of itself. (Side note: If you've read Shadow Spinner by Susan Fletcher, then this book is going to feel very familiar.)

In Pirouette, I finally got the world-building I was looking for. Caelan is a magical, middle-eastern type country straight from a Scheherazade tale, full of spicy princesses and sultry gardens. I liked the setting a lot, and was intrigued to see how the plot would turn out.

A few rules for reading this book:

Rule #1. Things are never as they seem.

Rule #2. If you're worried things are about to get worse, then you can stop worrying. They do get worse. A lot worse.

Seriously, the plot was full of all sorts of twists and turns that left me mystified, relieved, and worried by turns. Not necessarily in that order. And the author again left me applauding her audacious use of unfamiliar vocabulary words.

The characters were, of course, magnificent. I've come to expect nothing less than well-rounded, complex characters from Kenley Davidson, and she has not disappointed me. There may have been a touch of insta-love (one-sided) from a character in this story, but it fits with his/her character, so I'll let it go. ;) We also saw the return of a much-despised villain (view spoiler)

One thing I have yet to mention about Davidson's style of writing is the way she writes point-of-view. Her books usually feature 2-3 main characters, and we get turns with each to see from their point-of-view. Sometimes we even see the same scene again, but from a different character's pov. Sometimes she throws in an extra scene written from someone other than the main character's pov to add a twist or further muddy the shark-infested waters. It's very unique, given that a lot of YA books are written these days in first-person, or deep pov from only one character.

However, there is a few caveats. Davidson has an unfortunate tendency to sprinkle profanity liberally throughout her books, and this one was no exception. She added in some crude, obscene curses as well, that would have been better left unsaid. (I'm really tired of profanity in books-any books. Writers, you have a thesaurus. Use it. And NOT in an obscene or offensive way! There are lots of better ways to express emotion than turning to crude language-- and most will enhance your writing talent and grow your audience.) A star deducted for language concerns. There was a good bit of violence as well (view spoiler).

Overall, Pirouette was a fantastic story, marred only by the unfortunate choice to include obscenities. A well-developed culture, complex characters, and a touch of magic make this story worth reading. (With a Sharpie handy.)

Rating: 4 stars

Recommended: 15 and up (mostly due to language concerns and violent/disturbing deaths)

Content guide (may contain minor spoilers):

Language: 8/10 (profanity used fairly regularly. addition of crude, obscene phrases)

Violence: 6/10 (violent deaths, a bit gruesome. characters incur serious wounds. murder.)

Sexual Content: 0.5/10 (barely any--only thing that comes to mind was a man thinking he wants to kiss a woman)

Many thanks to the author for providing a copy to review!

For more reviews, see gabriellenblog.wordpress.com and fullofbooks.com

Penny says

I experienced less of a connection to the characters in this book than in the prior 2 in the series. I tried to analyze why: lack of knowledge about the original fairy tale; not being sure whose story it REALLY was; actively disliking some of the characters. Ultimately, I was unable to pinpoint the why for that lack of connection.

I am going on to book 4 though. Overall it is a well-done series.

J.M. Stengl says

Where to begin with this lovely story? Pirouette takes its time to introduce the world, the characters, and the drama, bringing in characters (good and bad) from earlier in the series (which is fun), and introducing a new cast of characters in a previously unseen part of the world. I would advise a new reader to stick with the story and simply enjoy the lovely writing and description--the payoff is coming!

Kai is an unusual hero--charming and intelligent yet filled with self-doubt, particularly after spending the first part of the story horribly seasick! Ilani is sweet and tragic, longing to be loved and accepted. The two of them are adorable together. :-)

I also loved the side characters and look forward to seeing them again in later books.

I thoroughly enjoyed the dramatic climax that tied together numerous storylines and loose ends for a satisfying conclusion. This book, its world, and its characters are complex and beautifully constructed.

Read and enjoy!

The Intrepid Fox says

So, I'll admit it, even though Ramsey was brilliant, I'm pretty sure Kyril caught my attention the moment he

was mentioned. *Pirouette* is set a few months after the marriage of both Trystan and Ramsey, and Kyril has found himself in an awkward position.

The dreaded third wheel!

I KNOW! That's what I said!

Although he is still friends with Ramsey, he finds himself longing for more excitement. Checking out a foreign empire doesn't sound like too shabby of an adventure, right? Right. Especially when some blonde, blue-eyed exile may be there too. However, this is more than adventure to Kyril. This is a chance to prove himself; show that he is capable, efficient, and that his loyalty is unparalleled. Add along a motley crew (Branna, Quinn, and Alexei) and we are all set!

Erstwhile, Princess Ilani is facing her own crisis of another nature (she is most definitely *not* a third wheel because she has no friends and little to no relationship to her sisters). Rather, she is a cripple. Not by accident. She revealed she had magic at a young age.

Nearly immediately when I first met Ilani I was moved to instant sympathy (and of course instant shipping between her and Kyril). Here was a girl who had been stripped of the most important thing in her culture (dancing), and because of her deformity was shunned by nearly everyone. (Despite being the seventh, and thereby, luckiest daughter). Although Ilani is somewhat bitter and prickly (like Trystan), she is entirely her own character.

Pirouette centers on court intrigue, secrecy, and lies as the plot progresses. No character is who he or she says they are. I found all the plot twists enjoyable, and can wholeheartedly say I didn't see any of them coming.

One, especially had me like this:

It was a great addition to the series and I look forward to seeing more of *the Andari Chronicles* in the future.

(view spoiler)

Davidson has done it again!

(My one criticism is the mild curse words that are used in the series, I believe anything can be said without the use of swearing.)

Now I have to wait until the next one comes out...

Michele Pumphrey says

An entertaining book.

The plotline had many twists and was unpredictable in many instances. Also the plotline held a fair amount of suspense which kept things interesting. A very good book.

Suzy says

The world that Kenley has written is so captivating. I'll admit I wasn't sure where things were headed after reading Goldheart, but Pirouette picked up on what was built with Traitor's Masque nicely and it felt like a beautiful flower opening up to see more of the world she sees. The characters are well thought out with their strengths and their weaknesses. I can't wait for Shadow & Thorn, next!
