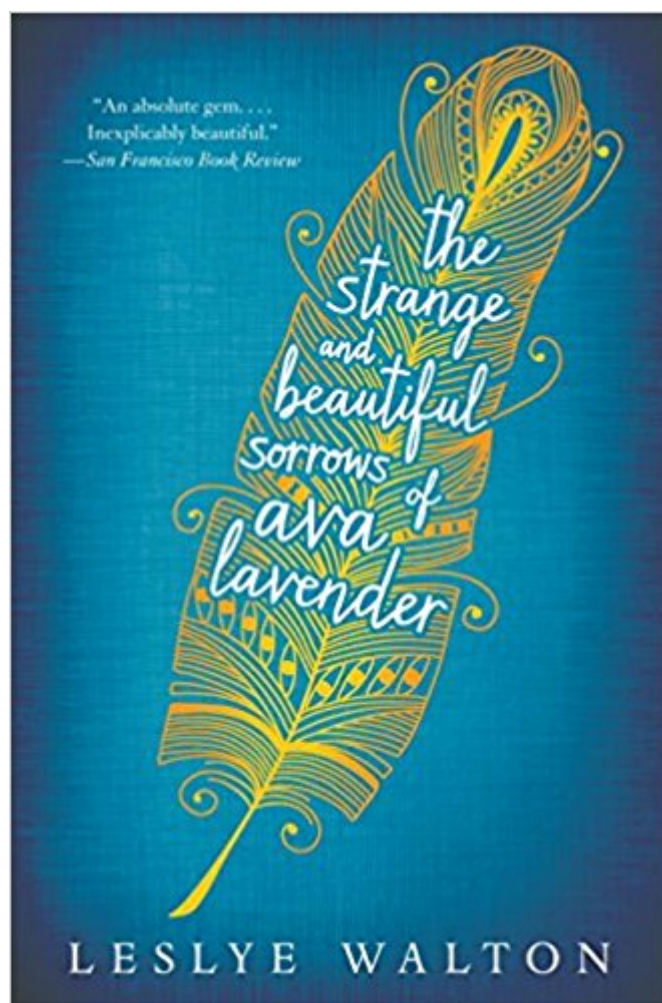


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# The Strange And Beautiful Sorrows Of Ava Lavender



## Synopsis

A 2015 William C. Morris YA Debut Award Finalist Magical realism, lyrical prose, and the pain and passion of human love haunt this hypnotic generational saga. Foolish love appears to be the Roux family birthright, an ominous forecast for its most recent progeny, Ava Lavender. Ava "in all other ways a normal girl" is born with the wings of a bird. In a quest to understand her peculiar disposition and a growing desire to fit in with her peers, sixteen-year old Ava ventures into the wider world, ill-prepared for what she might discover and naive to the twisted motives of others. Others like the pious Nathaniel Sorrows, who mistakes Ava for an angel and whose obsession with her grows until the night of the summer solstice celebration. That night, the skies open up, rain and feathers fill the air, and Ava's quest and her family's saga build to a devastating crescendo. First-time author Leslye Walton has constructed a layered and unforgettable mythology of what it means to be born with hearts that are tragically, exquisitely human.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars See all reviews (220 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

Why I chose this book: Honestly, I knew nothing about this book before I opened the cover. Even after reading the synopsis, I couldn't tell you what it was about. I had no clue why I wanted to read it so badly, but I did. So, I filled out a purchase request at the library, and when it came in--slightly before the release date--I had to sneak a peek. And I almost couldn't put it down.

4 Things You Should Know:

1. This is not your grandma's love story. Ava may be the main character, but the book is about more than just her. The women of the Roux family have a long and sorrowful history of ill-fated love, which Ava catalogues faithfully, beginning with her great-grandmother. Told from

Ava's contemporary point-of-view, she chronicles the lives and deaths of her ancestors, as well as the peculiarly tragic ways in which love made fools of them. Ava herself does not reach the story of her own life until the middle of the book. When I encounter a novel like this, one that reaches far back into the ancestral well of despair, I usually grumble, sigh, and settle in for the ride, prepared to make the requisite investment in past lives and hoping the payoff at the end will be worth it. However, this was not the case. At all. I was as riveted by the three previous generations of Roux women as I was by Ava herself. Each character was so carefully recorded, each taking turns in the spot-light, that my heart was breaking alongside of theirs at every turn of the page.<sup>2</sup> Is this real life? Magical realism--the straight-faced portrayal of events and circumstances so obviously otherworldly--is one of my favorite literary devices, and Walton folds magic into her prose so beautifully, I never question the little oddities that plague the Roux family.

Original Post: The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender at FLYLEAF Book Reviews ([reviews.flyleaf.com](http://reviews.flyleaf.com)) "To many, I was myth incarnate, the embodiment of a most superb legend, a fairy tale. Some considered me a monster, a mutation. To my great misfortune, I was once mistaken for an angel. To my mother, I was everything. To my father, nothing at all. To my grandmother, I was a daily reminder of loves long lost. But I knew the truth -- deep down, I always did. I was just a girl." Ava Wilhelmina Lavender. "MY EMOTIONS ARE raw, and conflicting. On the one hand, I never quite connected with these characters. But on the other hand, the story, this ending, was so gut-wrenching that it ripped me to pieces -- glorious little particles. In The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender (absolutely gorgeous title), first-time author Leslye Walton creates a heartbreaking and heart-healing tale of regret and redemption of characters haunted by their past. The Roux family has experienced more than their share of heartaches. Can their newest members -- twins Ava and Henry -- put an end to their family's tragic legacy? Ava is such a lovely character. The story is told from her POV. I thought it was quite melodic and soothing, even though I didn't always find it particular engaging. For much of the book, Ava takes me on long narratives recounting generations of family history. I drifted from one Roux member to another, and then back again, never staying with one ancestor long enough to develop any solid connections. Sometimes I found them whimsical, but mostly I found them eccentric and unrelatable. It isn't until the arrival of Nathaniel Sorrows that the story finally has a point of conflict. The pious Nathaniel mistakes Ava for an angel.

Yes, I've given this a low star-rating. Yes, I'm also horrified. Yes, I'm also mostly alone in my

feelings of this book (it has a 4.10 average star rating on Goodreads!). And no, I will not be saying the title five times fast while I turn in a circle and pat my head. (But YOU can try it if you like.) The ugly truth is: this book just didn't click with me. And I wanted to like it! I really, really did! I'm utterly in love with the cover and the title. (Ava Lavender?! Isn't that just the most gorgeous name ever?!) It comes out in late March, but I read it on the 3rd of February because I was so excited for it. Writing? Personally, I felt it was written like a very beautiful text book. History. There's hardly any scenes, hardly any dialogue. The first 120 pages are before Ava is even born! That's nearly HALF the book. It's not just about Ava Lavender (and this is where I get annoyed at the blurb, because it really tells you nothing about the book): it's about Ava's whole family history. Which is...interesting. But mildly boring. I like scenes and dialogue and character-driven plots. This didn't have any of that. It's all very tragic and beautiful though. I love the flow of the prose. It feels lyrical, definitely. The description really pops. They don't just say "cake" they say "butterscotch brownies". Every word feels well thought-out. I was just so bored while I was appreciating the gorgeousness. The names are fabulous! Some authors are just blessed with the ability to give the best names. Not only do we have Ava Lavender, we have Laura Lovelorn, Cardigan Cooper, Marigold Pie, Beauregard Roux, Viviane Lavender (that's Ava's mother) and Emilienne Roux. I lovelovelove it.

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