

**BOOK REVIEW**

# A SURPRISINGLY NOT OVERDONE FANTASY-ROMANCE

SALMA MOHAMMAD ALI

A few weeks ago, flipping through TV channels brought me to Beautiful Creatures. I was about half an hour in on the movie and, yours truly being a sucker for fantasy-romance – it intrigued me. I stopped myself though, because a) I had an exam the next day and b) I hate watching movies from the middle. I'm so glad I did, because a) when I added it to my "watch later list", I discovered it's based on a book and b) I later found out the movie actually sucked. The book on the other hand, didn't, and that is what brings us to this review.

Set in the fictional town of Gatlin, South Carolina, this novel by writers Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl begins with a look into Ethan Wate's life. Ethan, a 16 year old high school student, is trying to come to terms with his mother's death and is counting the days till he can leave this uneventful town. But for once, things seem to be happening in Gatlin, all at once – Ethan starts having a strange recurring dream, and a new girl comes into town to live with her uncle, the "Boo Radley of Gatlin." When the rest of the town treats new girl Lena Duchannes like a weirdo-outsider, Ethan decides to give her a chance – something that could change his life forever. Apart from their ensuing romance, Ethan

unearths things about his town and very own family name that he couldn't have imagined even in his wildest dreams.

Beautiful Creatures puts forth an elaborate and historic world of magical creatures living among humans. This is, as you should have guessed by now, another good vs. evil fantasy piece, but the book shows you that the distinction isn't always that simple. It touches on some relatable themes such as how much we want to explore new horizons or how people are mistreated for being different. Beautiful Creatures has pages of the care-free, light hearted dialogue and non-sappy romance of a young adult novel, and pages of the life-threatening situations of a fantasy thriller. It'll keep you hooked with revelation after revelation, most of which are well-executed except for a few that seem slightly too far-fetched – the only thing I seem to dislike about the book.

This is a first person novel that doesn't keep readers in the dark about the supporting (yet extremely well-formed and unique) characters. Amma Treadeau, Ethan's no-nonsense housekeeper and mother-figure who is obsessed with crosswords and hence has a vocabulary that would put English professors to shame, is my personal favourite.

Beautiful Creatures is first in the four-book Caster Chronicles series, and it pleasantly took me by surprise, especially for something that was written in 12 weeks, inspired by a dare, and wasn't intended to be published.

*Salma Mohammad Ali fears she is becoming a crazy cat lady and uses writing as a means to grasp on to sanity. Send her your views/hate/love at [fb.com/salma.ali209](https://fb.com/salma.ali209)*

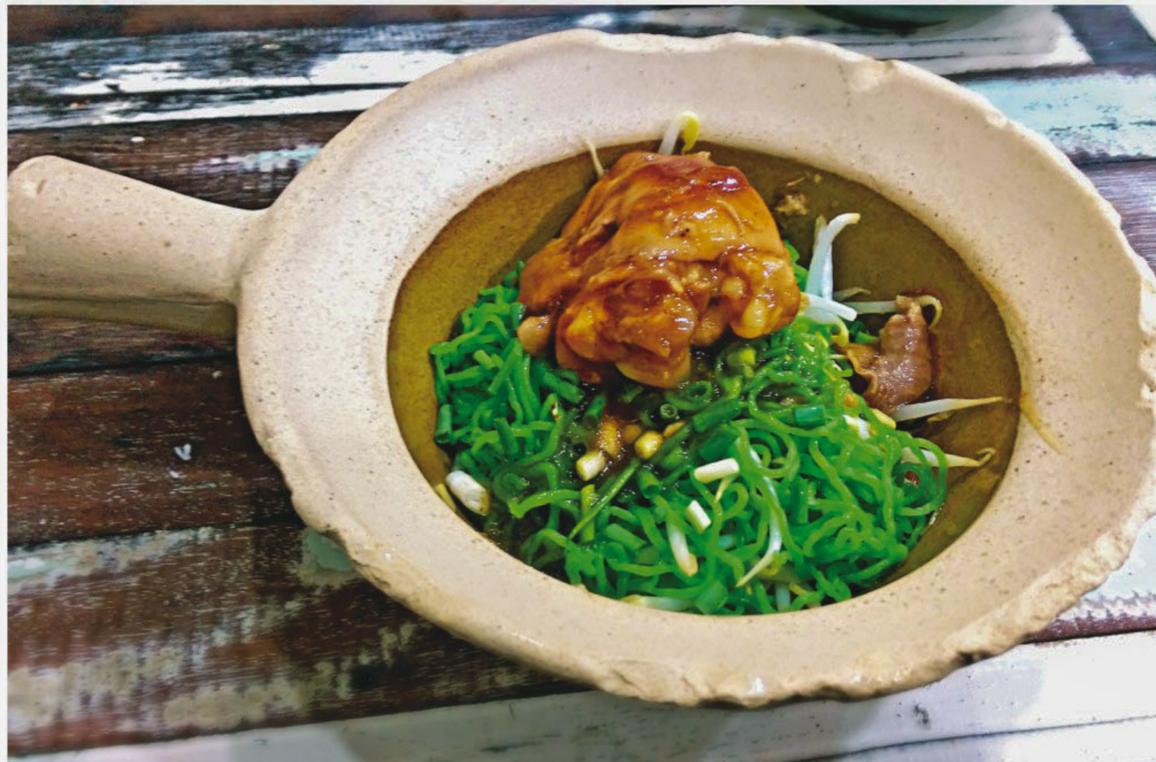
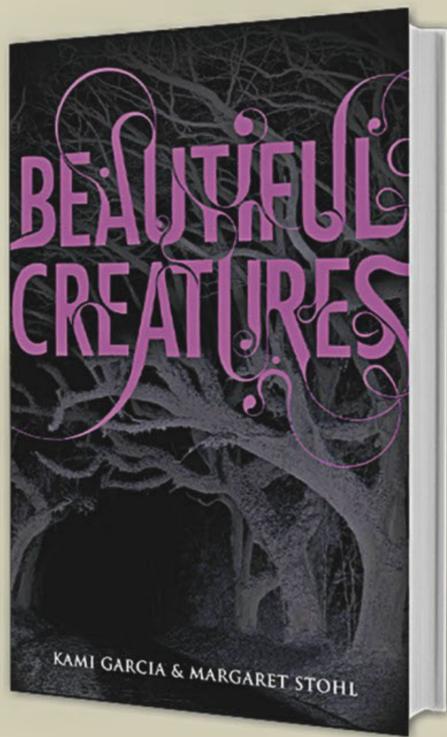


PHOTO: TANVEER KABIR

**FOOD BLOG REVIEW**

# CULINARY DELIGHTS AND EXOTIC PLACES

SHAHRUKH IKHTEAR

When travelling, we often overlook many of the lesser-known aspects of the destination which are well worth experiencing. It can be an exquisite dish that's found somewhere in a place seldom visited by tourists or it can be a mesmerising destination in our own country.

A lot of people I know will opt for staying in the shopping district all day when they visit a foreign land. Afterwards, they'll call it a night with a less-than-satisfactory meal at the nearby fast-food joint. You can't blame them. A lot of them don't even know about the local delicacies just waiting to be discovered.

Enter, The Gourmet Diary, a food and travel blog by Tanveer Kabir. The blog contains content about must-try food items in Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. They are presented in the form of well-articulated photo stories, articles, and vlogs. Tanveer hopes to add more countries in the future.

When asked about where he got the inspiration from for the project, Tanveer said, "When I was in the second grade, one of my text books at school was called 'Seeing the World' where a little kid rides on the back of an owl and journeys around the world. Since then, the idea of travelling to different countries, mingling with people of different cultures and trying out delicious food from all around the globe seemed fascinating to me.

Over the past couple of years, I have been documenting my thoughts on my food and travel experiences. That's the story of the inception of 'The Gourmet Diary'."

If you're ever spoiled for choices in

Penang, Malaysia, The Gourmet Diary has you covered. If you've been wondering where you could get the best lasagne in Dhaka or the best choi jhal dish in Khulna, the blog will help you find it. What makes the blog stand out more than the other ones around the internet is the presentation and interface. Tanveer is a person who is passionate about food and it shows with how he writes his points of critique and how he takes glamour shots of food that is served to regular customers. The whole blog feels clean, not cluttered, and the content is delivered in a precise and concise manner.

The journey of The Gourmet Diary is an ever-evolving one, when asked about the future of the blog, Tanveer replied, "I started this blog purely as a hobby. However, when it comes to good food recommendations, I do want the people of my country to refrain from depending on free-for-all social media sources; instead, look for articles/blogs of individual passionate foodies if they require good suggestions on where to satiate their appetite."

He adds, "On that note, I am glad that my post called '6 Burgers You Must Eat in Dhaka', which I wrote back in 2015, got more than 25,000 hits. It shows that more and more people are turning to good writings on blogs for food recommendations. My future plan is simply to keep travelling to new places and continue creating new and exciting travel/food blogs and vlogs on a regular basis."

Website link: [www.thegourmetdiary.com](http://www.thegourmetdiary.com)

