

Aarya's life plan has been set for as long as she can remember: finish high school with a bang, attend the best college she can get into, then land a prestigious biology research job. Her ticket to this dream is a one-year program at the Elizabethan Institute, the preeminent organization for life sciences in the United States, currently on the cusp of revealing a major project that could transform the worlds of biology and medicine.

But as Aarya tries to settle in to a school with sky-high academic expectations and research cloaked in mystery, it becomes clear that someone doesn't want her there. As the scholarship student surrounded by rich, cutthroat peers who seem all too willing to torment her, she never expected to make friends, but the notes warning her to run rattle her to her core. She finds an ally in Sofia, a mysterious girl who claims to be the subject of closed-door Institute experiments and begs for Aarya's help in discovering the Institute's true goal.

As rumors of mutated flora and fauna in the nearby city circulate and a murder investigation rocks the Institute, Aarya must navigate Sofia's growing paranoia and her own increasingly unreliable memory to determine which classmates she can trust—and which would rather see her dead.

S. Hati is a speculative fiction writer currently residing in the Bay Area. She holds a bachelor's degree in microbiology from UCLA and a master's degree in biotechnology from Johns Hopkins University and pretends to use them both while working in health tech. She writes about brown girls in strange worlds that straddle the line between magic and science. She is also the author of *And the Sky Bled* (Bindery Books).

READ BY ISURI WIJESUNDARA



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