

Title: *The City Beautiful*
Author: Aden Polydoros
Genre: Historical Fantasy

Reviewer Name and Grade: Ashley L., 10th Grade

Date Reviewed: March 15, 2023

This book is a queer, Jewish historical fantasy called *The City Beautiful*. In this universe, the issue is not whether dybbuks exist but rather how to deal with the dybbuk possession. Alter Rosen is working hard and saving money in Chicago in 1893, during the World's Fair, in order to bring his mother and younger sisters from Romania to join him. He leads a lifestyle that is extremely recognizable from Jewish-American fiction: working long hours, living in a room with other males in a similar predicament, dodging the nosy matchmaker across the hall, etc. There are numerous Yiddish jabs and slurs throughout the entire piece. The environment seemed comfortable and authentic. It starts when Jewish adolescent males mysteriously vanish from Chicago's streets in the weeks before the World's Fair. Even when families are certain their son or friend did not simply take off, it is difficult for them to refute the local police's assertion that the young men must have fled because there are no bodies or other physical signs of the missing guys. This is only background information as Yakov works and saves money while attempting to keep a secret whose name cannot be revealed. Yet when Yakov, Alter's roommate, buddy, and possibly more, vanishes one night, Alter is drawn into the investigation. This book is a supernatural mystery with deep magical components from Jewish lore and very real criminals. There is significant tension as Alter tries to piece together Yakov's final days before supernatural terrors and common enemies come for him because Yakov's spirit is determined to exact revenge for his murder, but this revenge takes the form of an angry dybbuk who might bring Alter down with him in the process.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?

The plot mostly kept me interested. The mythology combined with the history of the Jews were very interesting.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was just right.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book is appropriate for grades 9 and up because it mentions rape, homophobia, anti-semitism, and blood.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

Readers who liked *This Rebel Heart*, *The Darkness Outside us*, and *The Heart-Break Bakery* will also like this book.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

Please don't read this book if you don't like rape, homophobia, anti-semitism, and blood.

4 stars: I enjoyed this book and found it worthwhile reading

This book was very interesting and new to me because I've never read a book with Jewish mythology, murder and history all wrapped in one book. I also liked this book because it shows the undeniable loyalty to friends and family the main character had. However this book was very gory, heavy and had a lot of triggering content.