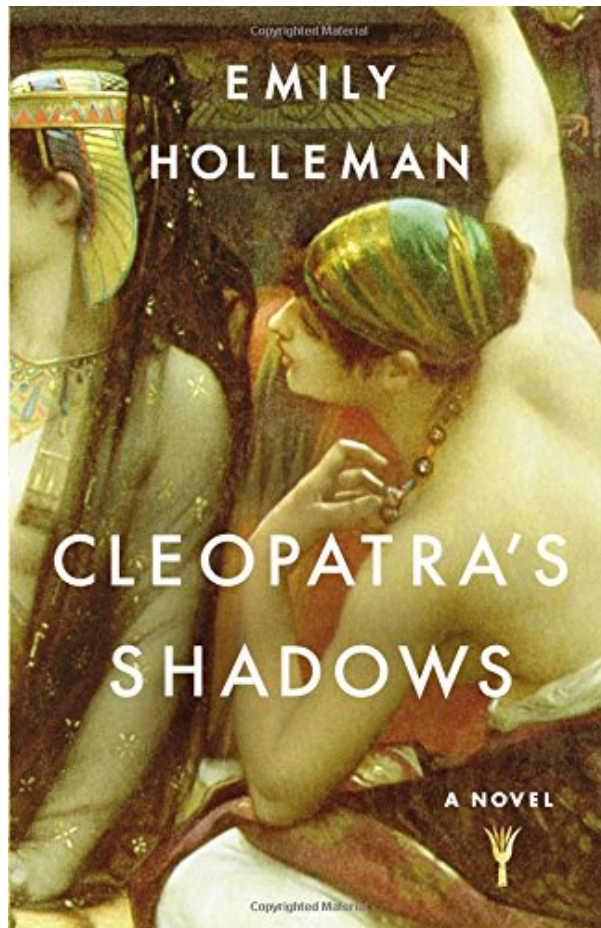
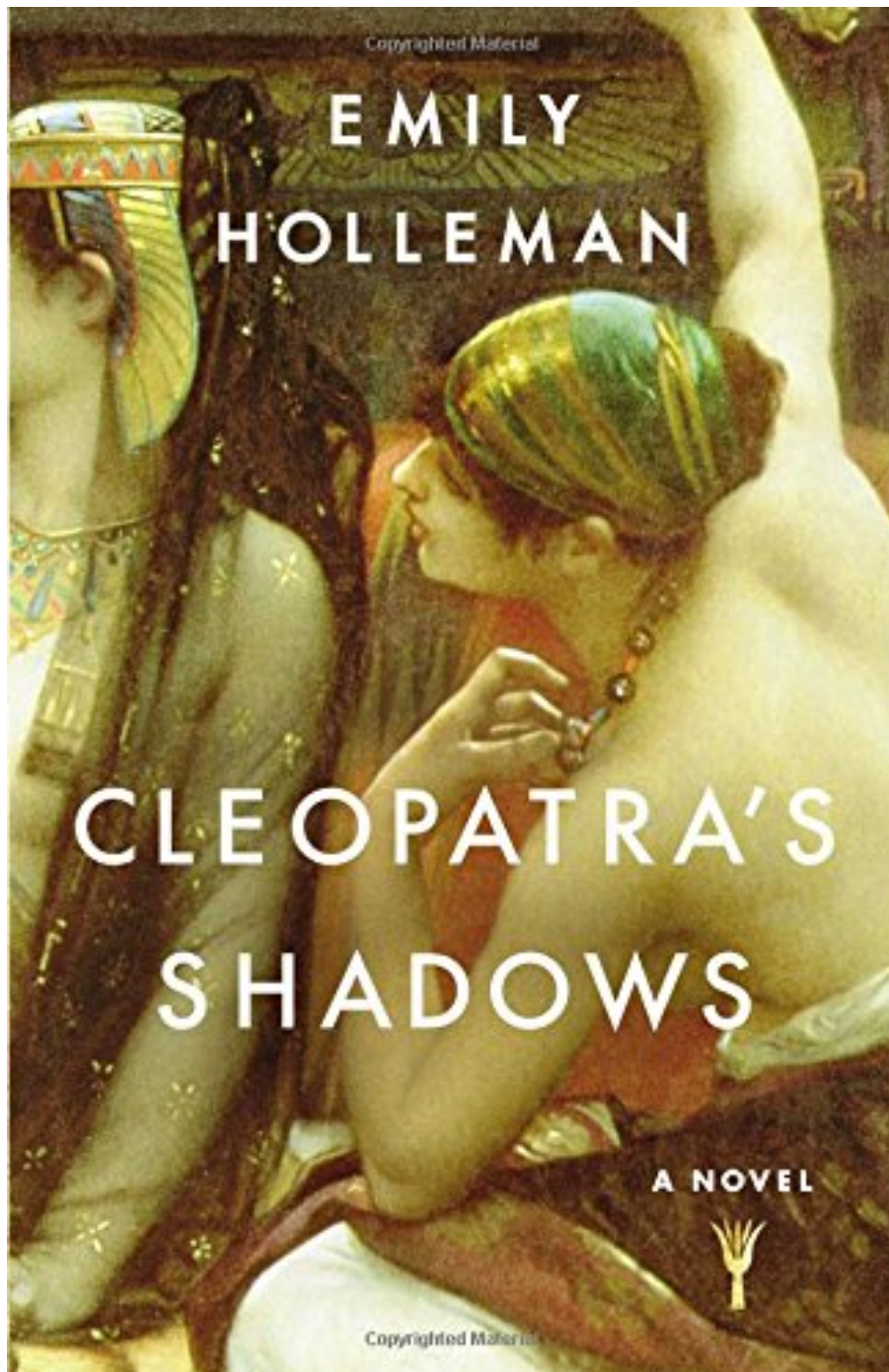


CLEOPATRA'S SHADOWS (A FALL OF EGYPT NOVEL) BY EMILY HOLLEMAN



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Page-turning historical fiction that reimagines the beginnings of Cleopatra's epic saga through the eyes of her younger sister.

Before Caesar and the carpet, before Antony and Actium, before Octavian and the asp, there was Arsinoe.

Abandoned by her beloved Cleopatra and an indifferent father, young Arsinoe must fight for her survival in the bloodthirsty royal court when her half-sister Berenice seizes Egypt's throne. Even as the quick-witted girl wins Berenice's favor, a new specter haunts her days-dark dreams that have a habit of coming true.

To survive, she escapes the palace for the war-torn streets of Alexandria. Meanwhile, Berenice confronts her own demons as she fights to maintain power. When their deposed father Ptolemy marches on the city with a Roman army, both daughters must decide where their allegiances truly lie, and Arsinoe grapples with the truth, that the only way to survive her dynasty is to rule it.

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- 352 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

A fantastic work of historical fiction

By Elizabeth Armet

When more than one friend raves about a book, you are inclined to give it a try even if it's not in your typical genre. While I am not normally a historical fiction fan (though I did love the Red Tent which this book reminded me of both in terms of bringing a period of history back into light as well as the powerful character development), I am very glad I gave Cleopatra's Shadows a chance.

This is a story of Cleopatra's two sisters: Arsinoe ("younger") and Berenice ("elder"). The story begins when Berenice overthrows her father's kingdom and then spins the tale of the aftermath of this coup. Holleman brings to life not just the lead characters - the two sisters - but the various Eunuchs and advisors and even friends who cross these sisters' paths.

Often when a book is told from more than one point of view, you find yourself liking one voice better, or at least eagerly awaiting the sections told from that voice's point of view. The magic of this novel is that I actually found myself a little sad when each section ended, whether it was the elder or younger's voice. At first I favored one sister, then the other....and ultimately Holleman does an excellent job of making both characters not just likable but human and flawed enough to care about their futures. Through careful word choice, much research and an eye for detail, Holleman manages to have each side of the story bring forth its own twists, its own unraveling, its own shadows.

A more subtle brilliance of this book is that it made me want to learn more about a time period about which I knew (and frankly cared) very little. For a non-historical fiction kind of gal, that is saying a lot.

Finally, I must disagree with the reviewer who claims that the title of this book is misleading as it suggests the book is about Cleopatra herself (which it is not). Personally, I found the title to be a spot-on summary of what is to come in the book itself: Mystery, a little-known supporting cast and ultimately the shadowy story behind the more well-known sister's rise.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Historical Fiction Fans Will Love This

By TammyJo Eckhart

Author Emily Holleman has done a decent job of imagining what life might have been like for two of

Cleopatra's sisters while their father, King Ptolemy XII, is away trying to get Roman support of his rule while dueling wife and concubine compete. We see Alexandria through the eyes of Berenice, daughter of his wife, and the eyes of much younger Arsinoe, daughter of his concubine. Holleman follows Strabo's accounts in terms of family relations and rules for the most part.

The book is laid out in chapters that go back and forth between Arsinoe and Berenice during a three year period when Berenice is ruling in her own right, approximately 58-55 BCE. Each character has her own voice and view which Holleman does an excellent job of embodying. We feel sympathy for both the little girl forced to learn the arts of flattery and politicking to survive as well as for the young woman wearing the crowns of Egypt and trying to apply what she has been taught and learned from a father who has abandoned her.

Holleman adds in enough details to make the world of Ptolemaic Alexandria come alive without resorting to long descriptions or purple prose. We can picture this world in our minds as we read and the result is a lovely book that is also fast paced and easy to grasp for lovers of historical fiction.

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Berenice is the better known of the two sisters

By Ms Winston

I found this debut novel to be both entertaining and informative. Apparently the author, Emily Holleman, has been fascinated for years by the sisters of Cleopatra...Berenice and Arsinoe. Berenice is the better known of the two sisters, while Arsinoe receives hardly a mention in the historical record. "Cleopatra's Shadows" is told in alternating chapters by the sisters, who are actually half-sisters with different mothers.

I know very little about the history of Egypt during this time period, other than what is in popular culture involving Cleopatra and her affairs with Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony, so much of what is covered in this book is new to me. I think the author did an admirable job in giving the reader the rather convoluted history of the Ptolemy dynasty without overwhelming the reader with details that could sink a novel. Both sisters were presented as developed figures who became more human as their respective stories progressed throughout the novel. I recommend this book for those who want to read a novelistic treatment of two relatively obscure women who lived in the shadow of a legend. Those who are more acquainted with the time period and history may be more critical of the historic aspects, but as pure entertainment I think the book works fairly well.

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