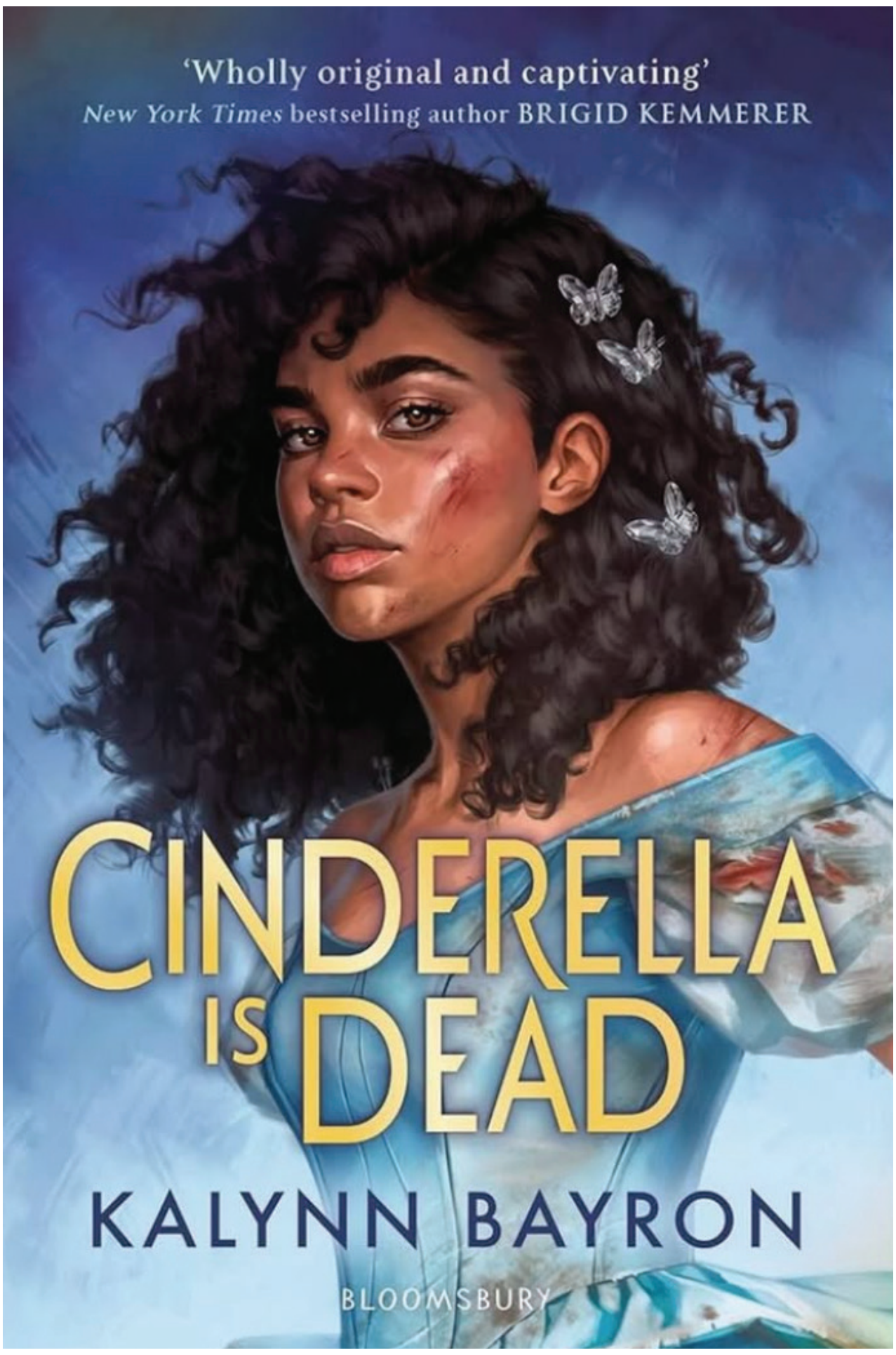
Daily

LIFE

# SECLUDED RAINBOWS: 'CINDERELLA IS DEAD'

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**The cover of Kalynn Bayron's book, "Cinderella is Dead." The book follows Sophia Grimmins, who attempts to defy her society's patriarchal structure.**

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Fairytales with LGBTQIA+ main characters are often overlooked. When people hear the term, fairytale, they often think about stories like "Beauty and the Beast" or "The Little Mermaid," which have princesses and princes that marry each other.

Stories like "Cinderella Is Dead" are unique because they demonstrate that not all fairytales are heteronormative.

Welcome back to Secluded Rainbows, a biweekly column that publishes stories every other Tuesday. In each story, I discuss an LGBTQIA+ book that's currently being banned or challenged. In this issue, I'll discuss Kalynn Bayron's "Cinderella Is Dead," which was published on July 7, 2020.

You might assume Bayron's novel is about Cinderella. It involves her, but she's not the main character. She instead influenced the heteronormative, patriarchal society that the novel's main character, Sophia Grimmins, attempts to defy.

Despite the dark title, "Cinderella Is Dead" is an enjoyable novel with an inspiring story and characters. However, not everyone sees the novel in that sense.

In the 2021-2022 school year, "Cinderella Is Dead" appeared on PEN America's Banned Book Index after facing investigations in Texas and Tennessee. Furthermore, Florida's Collier County School District attached a warning label on "Cinderella Is Dead" and many other novels for having LGBTQIA+ characters, characters of color or both.

Bayron believes the challenging of her novel is overtly homophobic, according to PEN America.

"To see it being challenged and banned in public libraries and in school libraries was just very disappointing because I felt like I worked so hard with my young readers in mind," Bayon said in an interview with PEN America.

"Cinderella Is Dead" takes place in Lille, a fictitious city that was once ruled by Cinderella and Prince Charming. Since their regime, every woman in the kingdom has been required to marry a man. Those who refuse are banned from the city. This law is problematic for Grimmins, who prefers to marry a woman.

In the novel, Grimmins wants to run away from Lille with Erin, her best friend and crush. However, Erin doesn't want to run away because she's worried she'll put herself in danger and disappoint her family.

A major event that happens in the beginning of the novel is King Manford's ball. Grimmins attends it, where she meets Luke, who's gay and also wants to flee Lille. Deciding to run away from the city together, Grimmins and Luke design a plan, however, their plan gets shattered, resulting in Luke being seized by the guards and Grimmins fleeing the ball. Not long after fleeing the ball, Grimmins hides at Cinderella's tomb, where she feels desperate about the future.

"I want to believe there might be a way out, but with every passing day, that feeling fades," Grimmins says on page 50.

Eventually, Grimmins meets Constance, a descendent of Cinderella. Together, they learn the true story of Cinderella and work to destroy Lille's patriarchal and heteronormative restrictions.

Regardless of backlash, "Cinderella Is Dead" also received positive feedback after it was published.

GLBT Reviews called it "a girl-power story that encourages reflection on and questioning of stories, whether fiction or not." Kirkus called the novel's atmospheric setting "a particular strength" and said, "the twists and turns will keep readers in suspense."

Natalie DeFelice, who reviews books on The Nerd Daily, said "Cinderella Is Dead" inspires readers to do what's best for them.

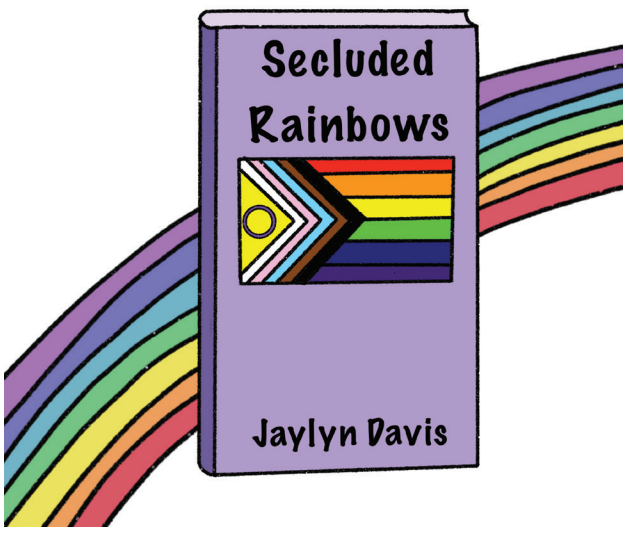
"The point is to question what you've been taught and told," DeFelice said. "Sophia is a headstrong young woman who's stubborn about arguing for what she wants. It definitely puts her into some precarious situations, but she's prepared to fight."

DeFelice also said the novel is a "perfect feminist read," and it's a great choice for those who are "looking for stories that dismantle the patriarchy by entire castles at a time."

"Cinderella Is Dead" also received many awards. Two are the Wordery Children's Book of the Year Award (2020) and the We Need Diverse Books Book Shimmy Award (2020). It was also nominated for the Readers' Favorite Young Adult Fantasy and Science Fiction Award in 2020.

"Cinderella Is Dead" appeared in a few bestselling lists. It was in the Young Adult Library Services Association Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers list in 2021 and Rise: A Feminist Book Project the same year.

Stories like "Cinderella Is Dead" are excellent representations of LGBTQIA+ pride and the willingness to advocate for same-sex relationships. It's a shame that they're being challenged or banned.




LOGO BY LILLIAN LAFEMINA, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS