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# The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender

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“Rowe peered at me thoughtfully. ‘Funny. I suspect they might say otherwise.’ He stood. ‘And that might just be the root of the problem: we’re all afraid of each other, wings or no wings.’ Rowe smiled that quick smile of his. ‘Shall we join them?’” – page 177

Normal in every way other than the speckled brown and white bird wings sprouting from between her shoulder blades, Ava Lavender fits right into the Roux family. Ava’s mother, Vivian, has a sense of smell so strong she can tell how a person is feeling based on their own distinct aroma; Ava’s grandmother, Emilienne, is constantly followed by the spirits of her three dead siblings. But it isn’t Ava’s wings, Vivian’s sense of smell, or Emilienne’s ghosts that tie the three together as true Roux women – it’s the experience each has with love.

Sixteen-year-old Ava spends much of her time at her bedroom window. Vivian has never once let her leave their Seattle home and Ava longs to spend time with kids her own age, hanging out and just being an ordinary girl. So with the help of her neighbor, Cardigan, Ava hides her wings and begins sneaking out at night. When pious Nathaniel Sorrows catches a glimpse of Ava walking home one night, wings freed from the cloak in which they are usually hidden, he mistakes her for an angel. Confident that Ava is a message from God, Nathaniel’s obsession with her grows until the night of the town summer solstice celebration, when he invites her into his home.

A 2015 William C. Morris Debut Award Finalist, *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender* is not just the story of Ava; it is also the story of Ava’s mother, grandmother, and to some extent, great-grandparents. Ava narrates, but her own tale doesn’t truly begin until nearly half-way into the work. To understand herself, Ava must view her life through the lens of her family history and through that which is at the heart of her story, along with Vivian’s story, and Emilienne’s story as well: the joy and the pain of love in all of its forms and the ability love has to change us. This modern day folk tale will leave readers heartbroken, yet still hopeful.