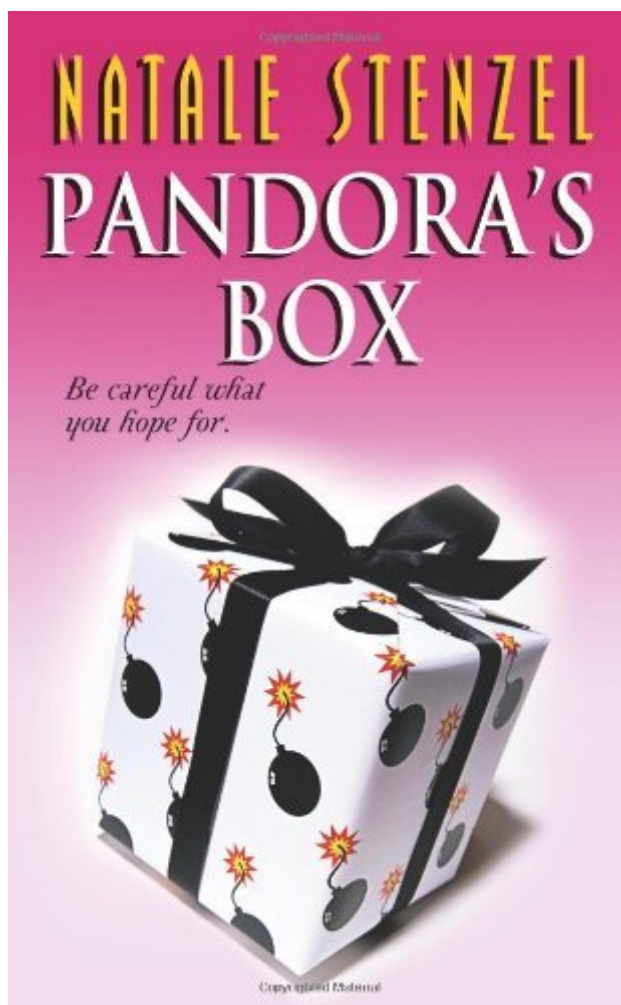




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Pandora's Box (Pandora's Series Book 1)



Synopsis

HOPE REMAINS All Pandemina Dorothy Avery ever wanted was to be beautifully, blessedly normal, with a stable career and a love life leading to a white picket fence and a happily-ever-after. That seems impossible now. Penniless and parted from her unfaithful boyfriend, unfairly shunned by her coworkers, not even Mina's recent inheritance can help—especially not when it amounts to a ten-pound rock box and guardianship of the horny, devious puca she released from inside. His name's Riordan, and he ain't no Harvey. What's a puca, you ask? A tricky faery-type, whose magic not only includes shape-shifting into a magnificent black stallion and a snarky mutt, but the ability to manipulate human perceptions. And Riordan is hardly shy of manipulations: Wasn't that why he was imprisoned in the first place? He seems set upon making Mina's life harder than ever, whether it be with Jonathon Teague, the handsome contractor who wants to work on more than her house, or Mina's penitent ex-boyfriend. But as Riordan's very existence proves, things are not always what they seem, and what stepped out of that box might be the key to her dreams.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had never read this author before. The storyline sounded good and the price was right. I was happily surprised. Not only did I enjoy Pandora's Box but I immediately bought and read The Druid

Made Me Do It (2nd in series). Finished that one in one day and now I'm reading the 3rd book 'Between a Rock and a Heart Place'. The way each book flows into the next yet could stand alone is amazing. I am putting this author on my 'love to read list'.

For more than 15 years I've only read a handful of books that were not business, wellness, or self-improvement focused. While on vacation I decided I wanted to read something for fun! The author is a high-school friend so I downloaded Pandora's Box, through my Kindle, while in transit. It took me a while to get into the flow of the story (maybe because of my rusty experience in reading fiction) but as the story progressed I became more engaged. I loved the way the story ended and its unexpected twist. I just may buy the sequel on my next vacation and put away my latest investment 'how-to'! Thanks Natale.

Nina and her Pucca. What is a Pucca you ask. Well you'll have to read it to find out! Humorous from the start. I just brought all of Natale Stenzel's other books this one was so cute....

I so enjoyed reading this book! It's got everything, from frantic and funny to warm and touching and tastefully sexy besides. Not to mention really delightful confusion over who the hero actually is, a few complete surprises (how often does that happen?), and it all makes sense by the end. A great read.

Rated 3.5/5
Summary: Pandemina Dorothy Avery (Mina) was an average woman with an average life and an average relationship. That all changed when she found her live-in boyfriend in bed with the vindictive mother of one of her students. Not only did her boyfriend leave her for the other woman, but his new mistress-turned-girlfriend is spiteful enough to get Mina fired from her teaching job for having lived with the school superintendent out of wedlock. Who would have guessed that her average relationship would have resulted in an ethics scandal? Jobless and alone, Mina doesn't hesitate to meet with an attorney who calls her about an inheritance she has received from a long-lost Aunt she never knew. What an enormous disappointment to discover that all she inherited was a rock! But the rock turns out to be a prison in which a devious Puca has been held captive for two thousand years. Because she had never known her father, Mina didn't have a clue that she was a descendent from a magical Druid bloodline. Prophecies had foretold of a woman from this bloodline who would eventually open the stone prison and release the Puca, and sure enough, Mina does exactly that by accident while examining the rock. It was definitely unsettling to discover that

the strange voice she was hearing in her head was actually some sort of shape-shifting horseman named Riordan. But on the positive side, Teague, the gorgeous carpenter who was working on Mina's house to get it ready to sell, comes running to Mina's aid after the rock opens with an explosion that blows a hole in her house. Much to her surprise, the perfect and supportive Teague is interested in being more than just her contractor. Unfortunately, Mina's plans for a hot romance with Teague are moving in slow motion because she has a Puca to deal with. When Mina accepted her inheritance, she became the Guardian of the imprisoned Puca. This means that unless she finds a way to break the curse, Riordan is both physically and mentally connected to her. Riordan can not only read her every thought, but he can also speak to her through their mental telepathy, and he cannot be physically further away from her than a couple of rooms. The last thing Mina wants is to have Riordan's commentary or audience while she is getting intimate with her new boyfriend. So Mina and Riordan strike up a deal - she will help him find a way to break free from his curse, and in exchange, Riordan will take the shape of a dog when Teague is around so that Mina doesn't have to stay away from her dream man. Researching the curse proves to be very difficult. Unfortunately, Druids have never believed in writing anything down. Can she find a way to free him before the curse puts him back in the rock for eternity? She has to, because if Riordan goes back in the rock, Mina's mental connection to him (as his Guardian), will exist for the rest of her life.

Review: I selected this book for one simple reason: there was a Phooka (Puca) as a main character. I have been looking for a book featuring a Phooka for a long time, and this is the first I've found. I dove into the story really wanting to love it, but it didn't quite get there for me. It was cute and enjoyable, but more of an average read overall. I liked that this author spent a lot of time developing the relationship(s). This was not the typical "passionate-love-at-first-site" romance novel. Mina feels instant attraction in this story, but she doesn't jump into love or into bed with anyone. Instead, she developed friendships, and over time, one relationships gained strength and grew into love. This was a refreshing change compared to the normal approach in this genre, and the romance felt authentic as a result. I also liked being completely surprised by a couple of twists in the story. I'm not going to include any spoilers in this review, so I can't go into much detail here. I'll just say that there was one twist that I thought was creatively genius, although slightly awkward/uncomfortable from a romantic perspective. A second major twist was linked to the story's resolution, and while surprising, it felt a little too easy. The twists in this book definitely added to the story's originality, but I'm not sure they were successfully executed. While I appreciated that the romance developed slowly, I wasn't crazy about the fact that the rest of the story moved so slowly also. I wanted to see more progress in the primary storyline about releasing Riordan from his cursed captivity. I wish there had been more

discovery throughout the book. Instead, all of the action occurred at the end in a giant whirl of activity - including the introduction of important supporting characters who joined the cast just as the book was ending. I wish this had been balanced better. It made the book feel like a long leisurely walk with an all-out sprint at the end. That sprint went by so quickly that I didn't have time to focus on some of the more interesting elements of the book. One other note: I listened to the audio version of this book, and I strongly recommend that you do NOT do this. The narrator, Cynthia Wallace, is now one of two narrators that you could not pay me to listen to again. Her character voices sounded like a little girl playing make-believe with high-pitched sing-songy soprano voices for the women, and effeminate overly dramatic voices for the men. It was laughable. Definitely choose the book or ebook versions for this one. The next book in this series may not be at the top of my priority list, but I'd like to read it eventually. There is good stuff here, and I'm hopeful that the execution will improve as the series progresses.

The characters were interesting as was the story, but it was too long winded

I really enjoyed this book, although at times I will admit, I did find it confusing and I had to re-read a paragraph or two to completely understand what was going on, mostly because some of the explanations for things happening in the story were a bit convoluted. I was also a bit disappointed that the author did not explain what exactly a puca was. I kept expecting her to work an explanation into the story, she did not. (she does explain it in a note at the end but by then it's really too late. At one point during the book I just went and googled it to find out for myself) However, despite a little confusion, I really liked the storyline, the interplay between characters and the general "feel" of the story. The book was playful without going over the top and every time I had to put it down, I looked forward to picking it up again (surely a sign of a good book). The author even managed to surprise me with a major plot turn that I did not see coming which was refreshing. I'm definitely looking forward to reading the next book in the series. Kindle formatting was good. No glaring problems.

Pandemina, Mina, has lost everything. Her live-in boyfriend, her job, and she's about to lose her house. She thinks things may be looking up when she finds about about an inheritance...but instead of a windfall of money she gets a rock that contains...a Puca. Her life becomes chaos the moment Riordan Goodfellow starts talking in her head, and it gets worse when the shapeshifter appears in person. Lighthearted fun ensues all over the place. There's comedy, heart-warming moments....and of course a truly unexpected romance. Natale Stenzel's first single title book was a blast to read.

Can't wait for the follow-up...The Druid Made Me Do It.PS. For Harlequin readers, you might remember her as Natalie Stenzel. She wrote for Flipsides and that characteristic humor shines through here!

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