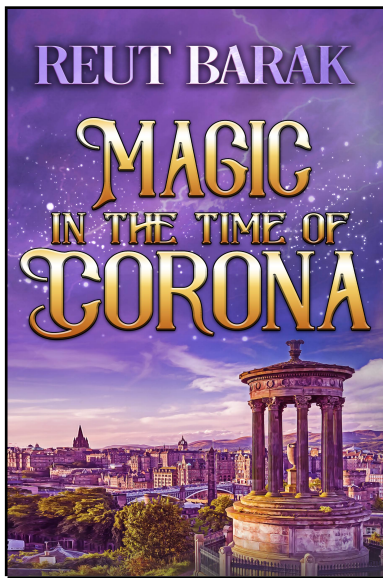


# Magic in the Time Of Corona - Novella – excerpt discussion

[www.reutbarak.com/CoronaMagic](http://www.reutbarak.com/CoronaMagic)



## Synopsis:

Molly is in trouble. On the eve of her college graduation, she must pack her bags and run away, after upsetting the vindictive witches of May's Coven. Homeless and hiding her identity, she ends up in Edinburgh at a time of Corona.

She sleeps in the park and walks the streets by day, while seeking a new coven that can protect her. Terrible nightmares haunt her, reminding her of what she saw back in May's Coven and the fate that awaits her if she is found.

In the midst of the danger, she meets Ryan, a young Scottish journalist. His down to earth style and unassuming confidence are everything she's been looking for, and their time together gives her strength and hope. But Ryan falls sick. Will their love survive when Coronavirus strikes?

## About writing the book:

"I wanted to write a book that would help me deal with what I was feeling... I wrote a few times a week, exploring what magic would have added to my experience of Edinburgh. For example, the duck pond that Ryan mentions is a place that my husband and I loved to visit before lockdown, and I missed it. And the supermarket where Molly and Ryan meet is the same one where we'd get bread to feed the ducks and swans. I also used to love going to Arthur's Seat, the park where Molly spent her homeless nights. But it was now on the other side of town and I couldn't risk the bus ride to get to it. So, in my writing I went to these places. I went there as Molly, a young and brave witch."

## Questions

1. Which other books, or real life circumstances from your own experience, come to mind when you read the excerpts?
2. How can the fact that the book is written in diary form shape reader's experience – what are the limitations and advantages?
3. The two excerpts show the main character, Molly, in contrasting emotional circumstances. What do you think could have happened to her back in May's coven to put her in such mental distress in the first place?
4. Based on the synopsis, what would be a good alternative title for the book?
5. The author wrote this book as a way of dealing with the emotional effects of Coronavirus lockdown. If you had to write a book for the same reason, what would you write about?

## Excerpt from April 14:

In the morning, I felt I needed to move my legs, after all those nights of troubled sleep. I went up to a place called Carlton Hill. It looked like the photos of it. Even better, really. I got a view of the whole city.

But my mood was low. A message arrived from my moms, from last night, reminding me of the dangers I had run away from. Sally, who was usually high-spirited, and perhaps one of the happiest people I'd known in my life, was worried, judging by her tone.

Two witches from May's coven had been seen outside the house. When Jo came out to talk with them, they left a message for me: Alice wanted to speak with me. Urgently.

"Keep safe," was the end of Sally's message.

I had promised myself that I wouldn't cry. When I'd said good-bye to my moms, I truly believed I'd take it all as an adventure, but now it was getting to be too much.

When I reached the top of Carlton Hill and looked down at the beautiful city of Edinburgh, the frustration, the fear, and the exhaustion of the past few days hit me like a boomerang, and I couldn't stop the tears anymore.

## Excerpt from April 16:

I got some takeout and then I found myself wandering the streets aimlessly. I had walked for so long that I had no idea where I was. A bridge led down to a canal on the right, and a small supermarket on the left. I chose the supermarket.

There were only three customers inside. I looked for something to buy that wouldn't be too heavy and decided to go with a box of hummus and carrots.

"That's healthy," said a voice behind me.

I turned.

He had vibrant red hair and dark-blue eyes—the kind you saw in movies about Scotland. A descendent of the strong, fierce Vikings, surely. And he was really tall.

"Yes, it is," was all I managed to say. I looked at the bag of bread in his gloved hand. My mind went blank.

He smiled at me. His name was Ryan. He lived nearby and worked from home as a journalist and editor. He said that the bread was for the ducks at a nearby pond.

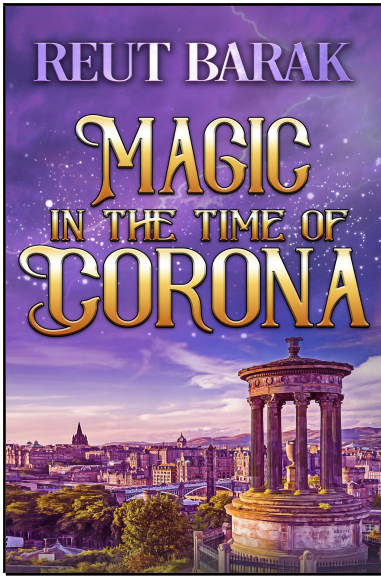
We stood in line to pay, still at a distance, but afterward he waited for me outside.

He asked whether I wanted to join him on the walk to the pond, but I was suddenly aware of how tired I was from my long walk.

And then, he asked for my number!

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## Questions:

1. If you had to give the book a different title, what would your title be? Why?
2. What were the main themes of the book?
3. How would the story have played out differently in a different time period or setting?
4. Which location in the book would you most like to visit and why?
5. What did you like most about the book? What did you like the least?
6. How did the book make you feel? What emotions did it evoke?
7. Are there any books that you would compare this book to?
8. Were there times you disagreed with Molly's actions? What would you have done differently?
9. Which moment prompted the strongest emotional reaction for you?
10. What scene would you point out as the pivotal moment in the narrative? How did it make you feel?
11. What surprised you most about the book?
12. How did you feel about the ending? If you had to write an alternative ending, what would that look like?
13. What do you think will happen next to the main characters?
14. The book touches on contemporary social themes like LGBT parents, mental stress and harassment. How do you think these helped shape your experience of the story?
15. How would this story look different in a setting without magic?
16. If you had to rewrite the story, what would you change?
17. What did you like best about the book? What didn't you like?
18. If the book was made into a movie, who would you cast to play the main characters?
19. Do you have a new perspective as a result of reading this book? Did you learn something you didn't know before?
20. The author wrote this book as a way of dealing with the emotional effects of Coronavirus lockdown. If you had to write a book for the same reason, what would you write about?