

# A Drop of Venom by Sajni Patel

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By: Sajni Patel

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Circe goes YA in this unapologetically feminist retelling of the Medusa myth steeped in Indian mythology, a YA epic fantasy addition to the Rick Riordan Presents imprint. All monsters and hero's have beginnings. This is mine. Sixteen-year-old Manisha is no stranger to monsters—she's been running from them for years, from beasts who roam the jungle to the King's army, who forced her people, the naga, to scatter to the ends of the earth. You might think that the kingdom's famed holy temples atop the floating mountains, where Manisha is now a priestess, would be safe—but you would be wrong. Seventeen-year-old Pratyush is a famed slayer of monsters, one of the King's most prized warriors and a frequent visitor to the floating temples. For every monster the slayer kills, years are added to his life. You might think such a powerful warrior could do whatever he wants, but true power lies with the King. Tired after years of fighting, Pratyush wants nothing more than a peaceful, respectable life. When Pratyush and Manisha meet, each sees in the other the possibility to chart a new path. Unfortunately, the kingdom's powerful have other plans. A temple visitor sexually assaults Manisha and pushes her off the mountain into a pit of vipers. A month later, the King sends Pratyush off to kill one last monster (a powerful nagin who has been turning men to stone) before he'll consider granting the slayer his freedom. Except Manisha doesn't die, despite the hundreds of snake bites covering her body and the venom running through her veins. She rises from the pit more powerful than ever before, with heightened senses, armor-like skin, and blood that can turn people to stone. And Pratyush doesn't know it, but the "monster" he's been sent to kill is none other than the girl he wants to marry. Alternating between Manisha's and Pratyush's perspectives, Sajni Patel weaves together lush language, high stakes, and page-turning suspense, demanding an answer to the question "What does it truly mean to be a monster?" Endorsed by Rick Riordan, author of Percy Jackson and the Olympians, now a hit series on Disney+.

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