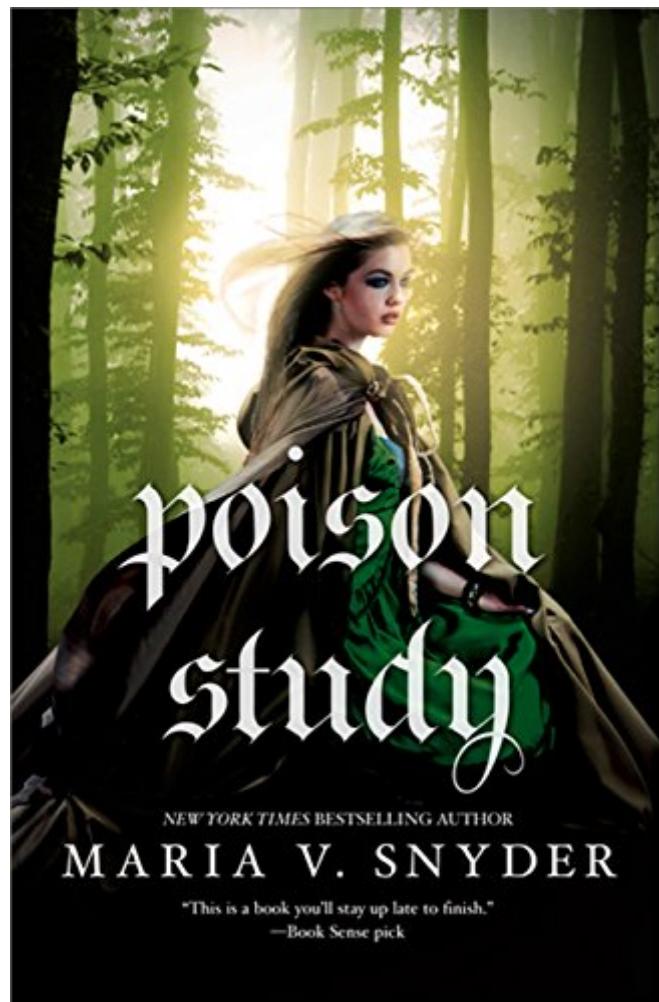


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# Poison Study (Soulfinders Book 1)



## **Synopsis**

Murder, mayhem and magic; Locked in a coffin-like darkness, there is nothing to distract me from my memories of killing Reyad. He deserved to die; but according to the law, so do I. Here in Ixia, the punishment for murder is death. And now I wait for the hangman's noose. But the same law that condemns me may also save me. Ixia's food taster; chosen to ensure that the Commander's food is not poisoned; has died. And by law, the next prisoner who is scheduled to be executed; me; must be offered the position.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

3.5/5 I enjoyed this book and for the \$1.99 ebook version, it is definitely worth the read. Our main character Yelena must become the food taster for the Commander of Ixia and learn to taste any poisons before they get to the Commander. She chooses this path only to escape certain death, but she quickly learns that many other poison tasters previously died on the job. We also briefly learn that Yelena is sentenced to die for killing someone, however as the reader we are not aware of the specific circumstances. This is revealed later on as we learn more about Yelena's background and character. I appreciated that we learn more about Yelena and her past as the story progresses, rather than getting an info dump at the beginning of the book. It leaves some mystery

surrounding her character and kept me reading until I got answers. What I liked: The poison tasting. I have not read another book with this premise and it was interesting to learn about the different types of poisons, their effects and the daily life of a poison taster (and how important their job is!). Ari and Janco. Yelena meets these two fairly early on and they become her close friends. I enjoyed their witty dialogue and comic relief. They quickly become Yelena's protectors and I found their relationship endearing. They added depth to Yelena's character and enhanced the plot of the story. The plot was fast-paced and exciting. I read it quickly and it held my attention. The writing was simple and straightforward. Not amazing, but good. Commander Ambrose. He is a powerful, no-nonsense leader. At first Yelena fears him, but throughout the book we learn that while his leadership is strict it is also fair. Snyder leaves it up to the reader to decide if this leadership of Ixia is better or worse than the previous monarchy. There were some interesting revelations about his character and I hope to see him more developed in future books! What I didn't love: While the poison taster premise was original, it is clouded by other elements as the book progresses. Yelena learns to fight, she discovers she has powerful magic and falls in love. These plot elements are typical of other YA novels and took away from the original poison study premise that I found so interesting. Valek. I liked him in the beginning. He is a hardened, ruthless assassin and I enjoyed his scenes with Yelena as he instructed her on various poisons. While I could see that Snyder was setting up the plot for a relationship, it was still too out of the blue for me. Valek honestly didn't treat Yelena very well at all, and suddenly they are in love? It was too much, too quickly. I wish all of the characters were more well-developed. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about them but never really felt connected to any character. Overall, this book is definitely worth the read even if it is lacking in some areas. It did end with a huge cliffhanger and I am eager to find out what happens. [...]

tl;dr If you enjoy stories about women overcoming their demons, this story is for you. 4 Stars A young woman on death's door agrees to become the food taster for the Commander, the highest ruling official of Ixia. This book did not capture my attention as quickly as the Healer series by Maria V. Snyder, but it was still enjoyable. Yelena was an interesting character, constantly hinged between fleeing and fighting for her and other people's lives. While I enjoyed the secondary characters of the series, I wished for more fleshed-out female characters. The ending felt really rushed as it attempted to tie up the loose ends of this story line, and yet lay the ground work for the next book in the series. The romance was very slow to develop. It took me a while to even figure out Yelena's supposed love interest, and then it took forever for anything to develop beyond sorta friendship. I

would have liked a bit more on that end. The setting also never really developed. Little details were sprinkled throughout the novel of both the setting as well as Yelena's characterization, yet I never felt like they were fully formed. Perhaps the rest of the series will delve further into everything. Finally, the formatting of the Kindle edition seemed off. In the middle of chapters it would switch from one scene to a completely different scene with no context (spacing, line squiggles, etc.). It was very disconcerting, but it happened often enough that I eventually got used to it. Fair warning, there are some scenes depicting violence against women.

This kinda falls into the "If I'd read you last year" category for me. What is that you might ask? Well it's like this: I read a little over 200 books last year and of those I'd say a good 150 of them were some kind of fantasy and at least 70ish could fall into the category of YA. Assume the same number for the year before as well actually, that means that my measuring stick is a little bit longer than it was back then. I would have easily given this 4.5 Stars then but today it is a 3.5 Star rating. Poison Study has so many things I love in a YA Fantasy: A good heroine with a mysterious past. A fast paced story line. Strong side characters. Danger around every corner. Witty banter here and there. Solid bad guys. And Spymaster Valek (he deserves his own line and checkbox). The writing is pretty strong, I've just read a lot of stories and there are others that I have enjoyed more. I had a few slight issues with the end and most of the story telegraphed for me so I didn't have many surprises. All of this is what led to me dropping a few stars but overall I had a good time in the world. Yelena is a murderer who has a choice the gallows OR be the food taster for the Commander. It is a dangerous job but it does come with a chance at life while the gallows does not. Being food taster means that she gets to be trained and tested on poisons among other things by the spymaster Valek. He rarely leaves things to chance and never does things half way. In my experience, shortcuts usually lead to death. ••• That what happened to my predecessor? •• I asked, unable to stifle my curiosity. Would Valek confirm or deny Rand's theories? •• Oscove? Valek paused. •• He didn't have the stomach for it. •• Yelena has a lot to learn about her new home, her new position and how to stay alive with the plethora of people who seem to be out to kill her already. At least she is able to make a few friends along the way. I really adored Ari and Janco, they were a great addition to the story lightened up some of the heavier times. The banter between them is fantastic, I love a good bromance in a story and the way that they became big brothers looking out for Yelena solidified their place in my heart. •• Let's go. We're supposed to rendezvous with the Captain at the lake. Oh,

and try to keep the noise down. You sound like a panicked moose crashing through the woods," the smarter man chided."Oh yeah. Like you could hear me over your specially trained 'woodland-animal footsteps,'" Rough Voice countered. "It was like listening to two deer humping each other.Ã¢Â•There were a few interesting concepts in this story and the magic system that I really enjoyed but most of the magic wasnÃ¢Â™t really touched on until very late in the story. I also found that I picked up on a lot of the clues to the story along the way and so I wasnÃ¢Â™t very surprised when things happened.Overall I liked my time spent with Yelena, Valek, Ari and Janco and will continue on with the story especially since the next book should entail some some magical training in Sithia and IÃ¢Â™m very interested in that.

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