

Never Mind Me When There's You
The Submission Of The Heroine In Young Adult Supernatural Romance Fiction

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Franciska Billekens
5736269
Creative Writing
Johanna Hoorenman and Simon Cook
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1. Introduction

There is an interesting split in young adult fiction which has created two distinct and popular trends; namely dystopian fiction and supernatural romance fiction. These two genres could be seen as two very different responses to the post-feminism world of Me-Too. On the one hand there is the assertive, independent heroine of dystopian fiction who shows women defending themselves; whereas the supernatural romance is more reactionary by creating a heroine who craves the love and protection of a strong man. Although Me-Too is quite recent, the knowledge that young women should be wary of men who view them as prey, and then might crave the protection of another strong man, is not (Roach 9). This desire for a powerful supernatural fantasy of a man who can protect his heroine appeals in particular to teenaged girls, the age when women are introduced to this Me-Too world of harassment where such protection can be interesting. This social issue and its attraction to young female readers is the relevance and reason I have chosen to focus my thesis on supernatural romance fiction, the type of characters it portrays and the issues that come from this genre.

In particular, this craving has translated to a disturbing trend in YA supernatural romance fiction according to Stevanovski. Although she has not written an academic source, her blog is from Duke University and objectively and thoroughly compares heroines and storyline from decades of romance novels. Namely, this group of novels creates a submissive and meek heroine. The problem with this trend is not the romance itself but rather how the romance is approached by the female protagonist; and to an extent her lover. When falling in love, the heroines in these supernatural romance YA novels cast aside their friends, family, personal goals and dreams in favour of their new relationship. A relationship which, when analysed, I argue is dominated by patriarchal norms of female subjugation, stereotypical gender roles as well as the need for utter control on the part of the love interest. This, thanks in part, to the supernatural world the lover lives in, which heightens his alpha-male behaviour;

as I argue later on. Moreover, the female protagonist appears content and passive in her view of these aspects in the romance, affirming and validating them.

Comparing these female protagonists with their counterparts from YA dystopian fiction in particular, brings out a sharp contrast. They prioritise their friends, family and goals and these never leave the heroines mind, even as she falls in love. The romance itself also seems to be more in the control of the heroine, she lays out boundaries and sets her romance aside when more pressing matters present themselves. This begs the question why these subgenres have such different heroines; in particular why the supernatural romance subgenre does not have a similar heroine as the dystopian subgenre.

The sources in this thesis analyse the female protagonists from both subgenres and the types of romances they are engaged in. I have connected these two by comparing the heroines and their lovers in their respective subgenres. First, Peterson and Stevanovski explain the disturbing trend which takes place in YA supernatural romance fiction, providing their ideas on how this trend has formed. Borgia and Cruger focus their paper on specific novels which show this trend. Borgia comments on the problems found in *Twilight* whilst Cruger does the same for *The Mortal Instruments*. Brendler, Dubino and Rubenstein-Avila provide a more general analysis on the gender-stereotypical and patriarchal issues found in YA novels and supernatural romance fiction. Roach and to an extent also Dubino, Borgia and Cruger offer insights in the alpha male who loves a submissive heroine, found in the YA supernatural romance novels, what defines an alpha male and why young female readers are still so interested in reading about them.

This thesis analyses the characterisation of the female protagonists in four YA books, two of the supernatural romance subgenre and two of the dystopian subgenre and compare them, their female protagonists, lovers, friends, family and environment to fill this niche and answer the thesis statement: Female protagonists in young adult fiction are characterised as

submitting themselves to a controlling alpha-male lover whenever the primary focus of the story is a supernatural romance.

For the supernatural romance subgenre I have chosen to focus on the *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments* series because *Twilight* is almost the embodiment of all those differences between the supernatural romance and dystopia heroines I have just mentioned. According to Seifert: “*Twilight* certainly wasn’t the first book to fetishize virginity (...) But what *Twilight* did was mobilize a legion of fans who had an insatiable hunger for romantic storylines featuring ordinary girls pursued by extraordinary men.”(10-11). I chose *The Mortal Instruments* because it attempts, and fails, to create a more independent and assertive heroine by having her participate in the supernatural world she is thrown in, which differs from the *Twilight*-esque novels. Yet it still focusses mainly on the romance of the heroine and her lover, which is why it belongs with YA supernatural romance fiction.

For the dystopian YA novels I have chosen for *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series. Once again, *The Hunger Games* is the embodiment of the dystopian heroine type and *Divergent* veers quite a bit closer to romance whilst successfully maintaining an assertive and independent protagonist.

The analysis of this thesis is supported by first providing a definition of the romance novel, the typical misconceptions that come with it and an outline of how most romance novels unfold. The following chapter shows that not just *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments*, but *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* all fit the outline of how romances typically unfold but more than that, how the heroines’ approach to this romance outline differ between these two genres. This is followed by an analysis of three moments in the book that prove the submissive or assertive behaviour of the female protagonists in the four books. The following chapter provides an explanation of the behaviour of the lovers. How they display alpha-male behaviour and what effect the addition of the supernatural has on this behaviour.

This analysis shows that the heroine from supernatural romance is indeed more passive and submissive, but that the love interest is also a big factor in this behaviour. A brief conclusion is followed by an exegesis and a piece of creative writing on the subject.

2. The Romance Genre Defined

The romance genre is a more misunderstood genre than any other; as it is the most read genre with the least amount of reviews and a high amount of misconceived negative criticism (Regis, xi, 3). Regis' seminal work *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* marks a turning point in our understanding of the romance genre. Since it is a watershed work, it continues to be a key reference point for many academics, which is why I use Regis despite it being an older source. Regis defines romance as follows: "A romance novel is a work of prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines"(19). Romance is derived from comedy (Regis, 16) and strives for the heroine to achieve freedom through love or rather freedom through choosing love. According to Regis, for any novel to be able to call itself a romance novel (38) it has to follow eight story points that structure the book. There are three additional points but these are considered accidental and do not always occur. These eight points can occur in any random order and may even come around multiple times but they have to all be present.

First there is the defining of the society. The novel, either by narration, monologue or simply by observation from the reader is defined in some way. This society always oppresses the main characters (Regis, 31). Then there is the meeting between the heroine and hero. This obviously occurs quite early on and frequently hints at strife between them (Regis, 31-31). More complex is the barrier. Throughout the book, the barrier is the reason why the main characters cannot marry. "The elements of the barrier can be external, a circumstance that

exists outside of a heroine or a hero's mind, or internal, a circumstance that comes from within either or both." (Regis, 32-33). These barriers can be all sorts of things and even multiple things at once. Think of elements such as the society that was introduced, values and beliefs that the main characters hold or a villain keeping them apart. The barrier is the most important element of a romance novel as it drives the story forward and allows for exploration of any sort of problem, whether it be moral or other.

Then there is the attraction. This is the connection between the heroine and hero that helps them overcome the barrier(s), this attraction can be sexual desire, friendship or any other form that allows for a bond to create (Regis, 33-34). The declaration is once again something that can occur at any point in the book and even shapes the type of book it is depending on when the two main characters declare their love for each other (Regis, 34-35). The point of ritual death marks the end of the barrier. The heroine never actually dies, but faces one final hurdle, as it were, that seems so impossible to overcome that the happy ending appears lost. This could be actual physical danger from an enemy, but also perhaps a moral issue or a bridge created by the guidelines of society (Regis, 35-36). This hurdle is overcome by the recognition. This point is frequently a number of scenes that depict the heroine overcoming the obstacle at last. Since the point of ritual death can be any number of things, the recognition adapts accordingly. Physical danger, for example, would be moved out of the way (Regis, 36-37). Finally there is the betrothal. At the end, when all is well again, the hero proposes marriage which is always accepted. Although in novels of the last few decades, a simple acknowledgement that the two lovers will be together is also sufficient (Regis, 37-38).

Critics have been making the same few allegations towards romance novels for a while now. First is the concern that romance novels depict the validation of enslavement and subjugation of women in romance novels for their love (Regis, 4, 10). Regis is quick to point out that the most notable critics who make these accusations base their claims on little

research of only a small selection of works from specific subgenres and then use their findings to create large generalised claims (5-7). It is notable to point out that although Regis makes these sound arguments to refute the basis of the critics arguments, she herself offers little actual proof to show they are wrong about these claims. She provides only one book, namely *Pride and Prejudice*, to dispute them as well as her view that women are freed through love.

Another critique is the ending of the novel. Critics seem to object to the fact that the story always ends with marriage. Taking offence that the heroine ends her journey with a patriarchal choice of life rather than more independence (Regis, 10-11). Since the marriage is a necessary structure point for any romance novel, one would agree with Regis that it is silly to complain about it. Moreover, most women today do still get married at some point. Love and marriage will be on their mind, it seems strange to protest against a book doing the same. Then there is the argument that the love and marriage holds the heroine back from fulfilling her full potential in the world; to reach goals, have a career or even try new hobbies. Regis is quick to point out that even after marriage, the heroine stays the same in her personality and that many heroines start or continue a career during their romance (12).

With the romance novel defined and the misconceptions clarified and out of the way, the four novels discussed in this paper can therefore now be analysed, not on the issue of romance, but how it is approached.

3. Outlining the Romance Elements in the Four Novels

In order to be able to analyse all four books to compare their romances and heroines, it is important to note that all four novels do indeed adhere to the eight story points outlined by Regis. Notable is that although the YA dystopia novels *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* both adhere to these points as well and can therefore be used as comparison to the YA

supernatural romance novels, the fact that the novels themselves revolve around and focus mainly on the dystopia rather than the romance is why they are classified as dystopia, and not romance and are therefore not a part of the disturbing trend.

Although all four books adhere to the romance outline; focussing in particular on the barrier, point of ritual death and recognition underlines the difference between the kind of romance these two types of books portray. These elements highlight a major difference in story focus as well as attitude on the part of the heroine. Looking at *Twilight*, the main barrier throughout not just book one but the entire series is an internal struggle of the love interest refusing to turn the heroine into a vampire like him, thus keeping them separated by being predator and prey as well as the knowledge she will die while he remains immortal (Meyer 244-48). The point of ritual death occurs in book two when the love interest leaves the heroine to protect her mortality, thus never being immortal together. This is eventually resolved in the recognition when, moments from death, the heroine is turned into a vampire after all when the love interest finally consents to turn her. In *The Mortal Instruments*, the barrier consists of the realisation that they are siblings (Clare 252). This also close to the point of ritual death which is the simple realisation of the heroine and her lover that this barrier will truly prevent them from being together ever (Clare 252). This is resolved when, in a later book, it is revealed that they are not sibling after all, after which the love interest agrees to be romantically involved with the heroine once again.

In *The Hunger Games*, the barrier is also an internal struggle since the heroine is lacking any romantic feelings for her lover, Peeta (Collins 133). Moreover, she makes it clear in later books that her problems with saving her sister and inciting rebellion take priority and she cannot focus on love. This is followed by a more complex point of ritual death, where Peeta is kidnapped and brainwashed into hating the heroine just as she realises she loves him after all, which occurs in a later novel. The recognition occurs in the final book, when the

heroine takes her lover with her when she is leading a resistance in an attempt to rehabilitate him back to his old self, which she succeeds in. In *Divergent*, the barrier occurs when their team is turned into mindless soldiers and they have to separate and blend in, in order to avoid capture (Roth 171). The point of ritual death is when they are indeed discovered. The heroine is condemned to die whilst her lover is being turned into one of the mindless soldiers (177). This is prevented with the recognition when the heroine is saved by her mother and then moves to rescue everyone including her lover from their subjugation (180).

Comparing these elements in *Twilight* and *The mortal Instruments* with *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, there is a distinct difference in the choices made. The heroines in the dystopian fiction are actively participating in resolving their barrier, they choose to interfere and help their lovers so they can overcome the barrier and together improve their dystopian society. In the supernatural romance fiction, this is clearly far more passive. The heroine lets it happen, she awaits for fate and time to resolve the barrier and is then reunited with her lover when he concurs that the barrier is gone and it is the right choice to resume their relationship. This shows that on even the base level of the storyline itself, the heroines have a different approach between active and passive choices within their romance.

4. Analysis of the Heroines in *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments*

There are three moments in *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments* in particular which clearly highlight the submissive, passive and subjugated behaviour of the female protagonist as well as the controlling, patriarchal relationship she engages in.

First is the heroines behaviour towards her friends once she falls in love. In *The Mortal Instruments*, after the heroine first becomes entangled with her love interest she

forgets about her best and only friend completely, only remembering him when she accidentally runs into him after three days.

(...) ‘you clearly also couldn't be bothered to call me and tell me you were shacking up with some dyed-blond wanna-be goth you probably met at Pandemonium,’ Simon pointed out sourly. ‘After I spent the past three days wondering if you were *dead*.’ (Clare 68).

Similarly in *Twilight*, even though the heroine expresses intense anxiety about not fitting in and finding friends (Meyer 7) when she actually does, she ignores and forgets about them constantly.

She, Angela, and Lauren were going to Port Angeles tonight to go dress shopping for the dance, and she wanted me to come, too, even though I didn't need one. I was indecisive. It would be nice to get out of town with some girlfriends (...) but who knew what I could be doing tonight. (Meyer 74).

In the second quote, the heroine declines hanging out with her friends, even though she wants to, on the off chance she might see her lover. Borgia argues that the heroine truly does cast her friends and family aside as “unimportant and meaningless” (8) in order to truly pursue her dream of being with her lover (5, 8).

The second moment is when the lover admits to some ‘red flag’ behaviour such as stalking and the heroines response is passive and unalarmed to these actions. Dubino argues that the heroine must learn to accept this behaviour as the way in which the lover expresses his love for her in the patriarchal manner so as to distance herself from a desire for change in

his behaviour (6). In both *The Mortal Instruments* and *Twilight*, the love interest engages in some form of stalking and lurking. In *The Mortal Instruments*, the heroine confronts her love interest about his following her and after he easily veers the conversation towards another topic she lets it go. When he then threatens to kidnap her she becomes only mildly agitated (Clare 24-27). Cruger shows that their romance is used as a cover and excuse for this sort of behaviour, calling it outright abuse (14, 15).

In *Twilight* when the heroine discovers her beau has been stalking her and watching her sleep, instead of being alarmed or even trying to confront his behaviour, she admits to being delighted.

‘You spied on me?’ But somehow I couldn’t infuse my voice with the proper outrage. I was flattered. (Meyer 150).

I wondered if it should bother me that he was following me; instead I felt a strange surge of pleasure. (Meyer 88).

The last moment is the heroines behaviour and response to her beau exercising his will and control over her. Borgia, too, acknowledges this behaviour, calling him an “obsessed stalker” and his watching her sleep as “eerie” (4, 5).

The third moment, in both novels, is when the love interest make various moves to control the heroine and force her to do things she does not want. In *Twilight*, the love interest subjects the heroine to whatever he deems important for her to experience, physically forcing her when necessary.

‘Let go!’ I insisted. He ignored me. (Meyer 55)

‘You're taking me to *the prom!*’ I yelled. (...) But I'd never dreamed he was thinking of subjecting me to this. Didn't he know me at all? (...) He pressed his lips together and his eyes narrowed. ‘Don't be difficult, Bella.’ (Meyer 251)

In her paper, Borgia examines these moments by analysing the repercussions for the heroine, motivation of the lover and consequences for both the heroine and her lover. First she points out that the romantic interest is aware of his effect on the heroine and manipulates that effect to get his way with her (6). Moreover, she notes that despite everyone around the protagonist noticing this behaviour (11), the heroine passively lets herself be controlled into submission (9, 11-12).

In *The Mortal Instruments*, the dynamic is very similar. However, because the characters live in a militaristic environment, the romantic partner is far rougher when he forces the heroine.

Before she could throw up her hands to ward him off, he had caught her up roughly by the arm. He yanked her to her feet, pulling her away from Luke. (Clare 258).

Cruger noted this as well, claiming that his control over the heroine is partly to blame on the heroine always being physically weaker than her romantic interest (8, 14-15). Moreover, she once again points out that their romance is a cover, saying: “Because these characters are written as being destined to be together instances of abuse are easily brushed off; a relationship with a soulmate cannot be toxic, as it was written in the stars.” (5). Furthermore, the fact that the heroine and lover are fighting an evil and thus on the side of

good aids to dismiss her doubts about his intentions. Dubino explains why women then still read these novels, saying:

The romantic narrative demonstrates that a woman must learn to trust her man and to believe that he loves her deeply even in the face of massive evidence to the contrary (...) Over and over again in the form of the romance patriarchy reproduces female desire for a male sexual partner, and for a sexually aggressive partner. (6).

Part of the problem with these heroines is a lack of perspective. If the heroine had another goal, something else she was really passionate about, that could drive her towards more independence as well as provide some contrast for the behaviour of her lover. Regis defended the ending and goal of the heroine to be married as essential and noted that a heroine would still maintain a career or goal other than her romance (12). It becomes clear from the analysis that the heroines in *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments* do not have anything else to focus on, strive for or dream about. Although there are minor subplots regarding friends and family, these are of no interest to the heroine and therefore do not count. This looks to be part of the problem that makes the heroine so passive and submissive. After all, why would the heroine stand up to her lover and risk losing the one thing she does have?

5. Analysis of the Heroines in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*

In order to provide comparison with *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments*, the same moments are used for analysis as much as possible. Since *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* are so visibly different in the behaviour of the heroine and the romance she engages in, it is, however, sometimes difficult to find a scenario in the book to offer as comparison to the scenes in *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments*.

Rubenstein-Avila complains about the “witless doormats” (8) as she calls the average female protagonist who, like the heroines of the disturbing trend, have vague unexplained descriptors of supposed strength without ever actually showing any (5). Moreover, she pleads for female protagonists who possess physical strengths as well as emotional ones, so as to go against the gender stereotypical description of what a heroine should be (5). The moments provided from *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* will show that there can be heroines who do not follow the gender stereotypical roles.

First, with regards to friends. Neither novel really presents moments where the heroine ignores or disregards her friends in favour of her romantic interest. In comparison, there are moments where she continues to consider her friends or favour their company when she is with her beau, something which does not really occur in the supernatural romance novels. In *Divergent*, the heroine runs into her romantic interest yet never leaves her friends, she converses with them about her moment with him and then leaves with them again, despite feeling a desire to be with her beau (Roth 102-4).

In *The Hunger Games* this is a little more difficult. The moment she is brought to her romantic interest, she is transported away from her friends and family. She does, however, continue to think of them and make decisions in their favour rather than her love interest. When her romantic interest puts her on the spot in front of dozens of cameras when he makes them star-crossed lovers by declaring his feelings for her, her thoughts run to her best friend Gale rather than what she might feel for Peeta (Collins 134).

Second, for the red flag behaviour. In *Divergent* the heroine is attacked and saved by her romantic interest. As she is at odds with her friends at the time and in need of protection, she turns to him for help. Instead of wedging her even further away, the romantic interest encourages her to re-establish her friendship which she eventually does (Roth 118).

In *The Hunger Games* the heroine is greatly uncomfortable with nudity. As she is mending a wound on the leg of her romantic interest she needs to wash his shorts. After he voices his disinterest in covering his nudity and beginning to strip, the heroine actually voices her own discomfort and demands he cover himself, which he does (Collins 253).

As for the romantic interest making choices on behalf of the heroine, there are moments in *Divergent* and *The Hunger games* when they offer their own decisions. However, in these books, the heroine pushes back. In *Divergent* the heroine is upset after an ordeal at which point her lover insists on taking her back to the dorms. She refuses to go with him and he relents, offering to take her through another door instead (Roth 98).

In *The Hunger Games*, the romantic interest is dying of a wound. The heroine insists on leaving to retrieve medicine but he refuses to let her and even makes her promise to stay. She lies and knocks him out to go anyway (Collins 270-72).

Brendler argues that both *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games*, have capable heroines who are independent and still able to enjoy a romantic relationship (3). Moreover, she notes that these heroines are more an exception than a rule when it comes to their behaviour and capabilities (5).

It looks as though the dystopia genre does in fact influence the behaviour of the heroine somewhat. Not in the sense that the world makes her a warrior or drives her towards her lover, but rather it provides her with focus. Living in a dystopian world, a regime, where the heroine is at risk of losing her friends and family at any moment offers the perspective that the heroine should cherish them more and think of them more often. Having that knowledge on the forefront of a heroines mind can help balance priorities between family and love, as *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* make clear.

6. The Alpha Male Defined and Analysed

When comparing the scenes between the two subgenres of novels, it becomes clear that part of the problem with the heroine and her romance is the love interest himself. The love interests in *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments* actually display ‘red flag’ behaviour such as the need for control and co-dependency. In short, they are classic alpha males. The alpha male is always physically stronger than the heroine, easily capable of harming her but graciously resisting, in complete control of everything and with his emotions in check (Roach 9-10).

The terminology for alpha and beta males and females first appeared in a study from 1947 on wolves, and although the study has been discredited, it is clear from Roach, Borgia and other academics that the terminology is still frequently used to underline behaviour in people and characters as well as the dynamic between people. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go in-depth on this matter.

Although these traits can easily be attributed to the love interest in *Divergent* and the heroine in *The Hunger Games* as well, it is clear from the analyses that these alpha traits are most pronounced in the lovers of *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments*. Perhaps it is possible that these novels have a super-alpha because the love interest is a part of the supernatural world the heroine is introduced in. In *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games*, both the heroine and her lover are regular humans whilst the world around them is the adventure. In *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments*, the love interest is a supernatural himself as he is the one who pulls the human heroine into the adventure that is his world. Even in *The Mortal Instruments*, whilst the heroine is technically supernatural herself, her lifetime of living a mundane life has made her as frail and incompetent as the human heroine in *Twilight*. The behaviour the heroine in *The Hunger Games* displays compared to her lover shows that she is the alpha in their relationship whilst Peeta is the beta. The dynamic of alpha and beta, having one person

be more in charge and in control, is not new or strange. However, the addition of the supernatural to this dynamic is what turns this into the over-controlling, subjugating, patriarchal and gender-stereotyping relationship shown in supernatural romance fiction.

Roach mentions this as well, arguing that such an alpha can have supernatural strength, be even bigger, even more powerful than any human alpha could ever be (11). This added strength can then highlight the weakness of the heroine physique which could trigger a heightened need for control and protection from the romantic interest. Borgia notes this as well, saying the heroine in *Twilight*: “(...) normalizes his volatile behavior as inevitable due to his inhumanity (read: virility).” (5). Ergo his super-masculinity makes him more alpha, which the heroine accepts just because he is supernatural. Moreover, Borgia points out that the heroine reacts more negatively to the more human, beta friend who is in love with her when he attempts to court her, specifically due to his being a beta and therefore less masculine than her alpha lover (17).

Cruger also argues that the super-alpha can be found in romances with a supernatural love interest, just like in *Twilight*, she explains how the alpha behaviour in *The Mortal Instruments* is excused because of his immense power; showing constant restraint towards the heroine with his strength and urges, means he is good despite his continued control (7). This begs the question why these novels, containing such an super-alpha, who portray a submissive and passive heroine in a patriarchal gender-stereotypical relationship are still so incredibly popular among female readers.

Roach believes the reason for this popularity is because young girls are confronted with the patriarchal world which limits their power and marks them as prey for the stronger man who can harm them. This creates a desire for a fantasy where a woman can use love as a power over such a strong, protecting man; an inkling of control over the patriarchy they are in.(9). Dubino offers two other reasons, explaining that women are raised to mother men, they

desire the same from men yet rarely receive it in real life. They therefore enjoy reading about the controlling alpha male who overly nurtures the heroine (5). Moreover, Dubino argues that reading these novels allows women to re-experience courtship at its fullest (6). She does acknowledge the negative side-effect of this popularity for alpha-male romances, saying: “Romances bolster patriarchal ideology, continuing to reaffirm the centrality of men in women’s lives and to harness the desire of both men and women for a gendered other.” (7).

7. Conclusion

It is clear after these analyses that the issues found within YA supernatural romance fiction are more complex and go beyond just the heroine being compliant and subjugated. Taking into account the analyses of all four novels it is indeed true that when a YA novel puts more focus on the romance than anything else, like *Twilight* and *The Mortal Instruments* have done, issues arise with the romantic relationship as well as the heroine.

There are three clear elements which attribute to this problem, which is indeed a recurring trend, namely the heroine herself, her environment and her lover. When comparing the analysis of the supernatural romance novels with the analysis of the dystopian novels, there is a clear difference in response and behaviour on the part of the heroine. Disagreements are voiced less frequently in supernatural romance and any problems she has with the actions of her beau she evidently accepts regardless, which suggests the supernatural framework serves as an excuse to allow this behaviour.

The fact that her connection to her surroundings such as friends and family is less strong attributes to this problem. The heroines in *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* evidently continuously remain in touch either physically or through thought to their friends and family, which offers reprieve for her relationship as well as perhaps some perspective. It has been

established that the love interest makes choices on behalf of the heroine in the supernatural romance fiction. If the heroine had a goal she was striving toward, this could offer the perspective that her lover is preventing her from reaching her own dreams by his interference and control. Moreover, the fact that the heroine has nothing to value such as family, friends or a dream aids in her excusing the behaviour of the lover at times. The lover himself is the last element. As analysed earlier, the alpha male behaviour is the very friction that triggers a (non-)response from the heroine in the first place.

The thesis is indeed correct, the heroine has a clear difference in attitude and viewpoint in her romantic relationship depending on whether the YA novel is supernatural romance or dystopia. It is, however, important to note that the alpha male behaviour on the part of the love interest underlines this difference greatly. The scope of this thesis is, of course, limited due to the number of books and sources analysed and further studies are required. It would be relevant to assess how far this trend reaches within the YA supernatural romantic fiction and whether it stretches beyond this genre as well as a study on the supernatural alpha behaviour and the readership of this YA genre and its popularity.

The analysis of this thesis is relevant because it is clear that young women are interested in reading about the fantasy of having a strong man protect them but the issue is that YA supernatural romance fiction achieves this through the approach of a subjugated heroine and an overly controlling super-alpha lover. This feeds right back into the Me-Too environment of physically stronger men being able to prey on young, vulnerable girls in the name of love and desire which sparked the interest in this genre in the first place.

In conclusion, YA supernatural romance fiction does indeed show a trend of heroines who are submissive and passive in their romantic relationships which are dominated by patriarchal norms of female subjugation, stereotypical gender roles as well as the need for utter control on the part of alpha male lover.

8. Exegesis

For my short story I have purposefully chosen to make the hero a human in order to avoid the super-alpha behaviour found in the YA supernatural romance books of this thesis, limiting the supernatural only to the world of this short story itself. Moreover, having both the heroine and hero as human teenagers means they are still a bit immature which is a useful effect to play with in the story to outline the behavioural difference between the heroine and hero as well as their development throughout the story.

Since the story takes place in an American town and the dialogue occurs between two American teenagers, the entire short story is therefore written in American English to make the story a bit more fitting with the writing style.

I have also chosen to start my characters off with somewhat gender-stereotypical roles as befitting a patriarchal relationship, giving both characters simple, mundane, and for the heroine especially feminine, names.

The occasional use of irony, combined with the wizard of oz-like story of transporting them elsewhere to bring out their problems and differences, highlights the issues the characters and their relationship find due to the gender-stereotypical and patriarchal relationship I have started them out in.

Using the hero's insistence on taking charge, making choices and placing them in their patriarchal roles and having these things go wrong provides contrast for the ideas and decisions the heroine makes on her own as well as on their behalf which do work out, to show the hero the flaws in his logic and therefore the problems they find in their romance.

I have given the heroine a goal and purpose in the form of her dancing in order for her to have some perspective on her romance and something other than the hero to live for.

The story is told from a third person narration, the focus more on the heroine and the story focussing more on dialogue than description in order to keep the focus on the heroine, hero and their romance rather than the adventure they are on since that is the main topic of this short story.

9. Short Story

The library in Hippos, Kentucky wasn't normally this busy. Several unsolved murders over the years had kept the visits to a minimum even after they'd relocated, but finals were coming up and so the senior year had crammed themselves into the tiny space. Jim and Daisy were no exception. Even though they had already been spending most of their time together these past few months, the fact that they both needed to study simply provided a good reason to be together even more. Daisy glanced at her bae as she handed him another book. As he read the title, Jim gave a snorted laugh, exposing his crooked teeth. Daisy's cheeks turned pink.

Jim offered his arms as he followed her through the stacks. "You shouldn't have to hold that bulk."

"I can carry my own books you know." She rolled her eyes as Jim gently lifted the stack of books from her arms. "But thanks."

"No worries, your gentleman boyfriend is here and he has been working out." Jim lifted the books over his head in a squat. She laughed so hard she gave a hiccup. The librarian shushed them both harshly.

"I have a good feeling about our French and History of American Revolution exams. If we spend a little less time making out and a little more time studying I feel sure we'll both get straight A's." She grabbed an old book from the shelf without looking at him.

“No promises. I don’t mind trading us getting C’s for a little extra time making out.”

To make a point Jim put down the books and gave Daisy a big sloppy kiss. They both laughed again which earned them another shush.

“Well considering college isn’t going to be much different, might as well get used to those C’s now,” Jim started grinning. “I got accepted into Berkeley! We can get a joint room and take the same classes together like we’d been talking about.” He swooped her up into an embrace and while Daisy did hug him back, she was hesitant. She didn’t want to bring it up now, but Jim gave her a quick kiss and stepped back.

“This is the part where we should be dancing through the book stacks. What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. It’s great to hear. Do you know where this book belongs by the way?”

Daisy was still holding up the withered, worn and beat-up book she’d pulled out of the shelf, the cover had faded completely. It felt strangely heavy in her hands.

He ignored her.

“C’mon, is it the necklace I gave you? If you don’t like it you don’t have to wear it you know.” She saw concern in his eyes.

“No it’s not – it’s beautiful.” She absentmindedly touched the faded stone hanging around her neck and pecked his cheek. “I got accepted into Juilliard. I thought I’d just audition to see where I’m at with my dancing you know, I never thought I’d actually get in.” She looked at him with a worried expression.

“That’s great babe! You’ll always have that, I’m so proud of you. It should give you a confidence boost for when you start your dancing classes at Berkeley.” She saw the tension leaving his shoulders as he smiled at her.

Daisy looked at Jim as he started picking up the books he’d dropped. The tension hadn’t left her shoulders yet. “No I meant... I was thinking of going there instead.”

“But that’s in New York.”

“I know. I know you always said we’d go to Berkeley. But it’s Juilliard.” She tucked her hair behind her ear nervously as she voiced her thoughts. This was it.

“What about our dream? You know I always thought of Berkeley as the place to go, you agreed with me.”

“Doesn’t change that Juilliard is my dream.”

“Is dancing more important to you than us?”

Daisy looked at up Jim with sadness in her eyes. “I shouldn’t have to choose.” She whispered.

She started fidgeting with the book when Jim turned to look into the distance. She moved to put the book down and it opened on the first page. The spidery words on the first page looked almost handwritten.

As the master thief hid the jewel he’d stolen from the library, the hunt began in Hippo, Kentucky for the retrieval of the emerald pendant. Every man for himself, gangster, corrupt cops and locals alike began the search and fight to find it first.

Are You Ready To Get Sucked In?

She looked up. “Jim take a look at this. It’s super weird.”

Jim snapped out of his reverie and moved to look over her shoulder. “Sounds almost like a real life contest.”

Suddenly the book began to shudder. Daisy and Jim couldn’t move, both their hands, which were touching the book, were glued stuck. A pale light shone from the pages. A harsh wind blew out of the book, whipping their hair around their faces.

Before they could cry out, they were pulled forward and in. Everything went black.

She was on the ground. She felt hard stone instead of the carpet from the library under her hands. Feeling around, she found and grabbed Jim's hand and got up.

"Jim. Wake up." She shook his arm as she looked around. All the color had disappeared from the world around her. As though she had stepped into an old movie, her surroundings were completely black and white. The people walking were dressed in clothes you'd only see in Gene Kelly movies and the same could be said of the buildings; the entire scenery for that matter. Looking into the distance she could see the city stretching out, yet it seemed flat. Almost like those painted screen backgrounds in old films.

"Jim wake up! I think I'm hallucinating." Daisy nudged him harder as she felt her chest tightening in panic.

Jim slowly got up to his feet, gasped and, leaning heavily on Daisy, he took in the view. "Well, either we're both hallucinating the same thing or it's for real."

"Holy shit."

"Yeah. That."

"What the hell happened?!"

"Babe, calm down. We obviously got sucked into the book." Jim grabbed both her shoulders with his hands to calm try and calm her down.

"Obviously? Like this stuff just happens?!"

"Freaking out won't help. Besides, it's like those old movies, like *Casablanca*, I'm always watching." Jim grinned as he looked around again, oblivious to her still rigid shoulders under his hands.

Two cars pulled up to them just then. Men in suits, carrying machine guns got out and walked up towards them. They were dressed like old time gangsters. The guy up front tipped his hat up to take a look and threw his cigarette aside.

"Well well, looky here. Pair of newcomers."

“I’m sorry?” She stared at the gangster with confusion. How did they know?

“We see your kind comin’ through every once in a while. Always dressed as strangely as you two, pretendin’ they don’t know nothing about the pendant. Let me guess. You two don’t know anything about the jewel either.”

“Well, no actually. Where are the others who were like us?” Jim subtly nudged Daisy behind him with his arm.

The guy cocked his gun and grinned. “Since you claim you don’t know nothin’ we’ll send you their way.” He nodded towards the others, who raised their guns in unison.

Jim grabbed Daisy’s hand and started running as the bullets rattled around them.

They didn’t stop until they found an abandoned department store Jim deemed safe. After stealing some clothes from the store to fit in, they finally sat down.

“Do you think those ‘others’ were those people found murdered in the library?” Daisy looked up at Jim with a worried look.

“Could be.”

“I don’t know what to do. We’re stuck at this point.” She looked up at Jim sadly. “I don’t know where we go from here.”

“It’ll be okay. I’ll figure something out to fix this, I always do.” Jim put his arm around her in comfort. They sat in silence as their words sank in.

“Do you remember that page we read? Everyone here is after a jewel, that’s clearly what drives them and this story, I’ll bet all we have to do is find that pendant and we’ll get home.” She saw hope in his eyes as he shared this revelation.

“Great thinking. Except how will we ever know which pendant is the right one if everything is black and white?” Panic had edged her voice with sarcasm.

Before Jim could answer, a thump alerted them. Looking over the counter they were sitting against, they saw a couple of gangsters walking towards the storage door.

“This must be their hideout. We walked right into their lair!” She looked at Jim with concern as the threat of danger hit her hard.

“Okay so let’s find a new place to hide out. And maybe check all the rooms next time.” Jim grinned at himself over the mistake.

Before they could move towards the exit they felt hands grabbing their shoulders. They looked at each other before turning around, both staring right into the barrel of handguns, attached to the hands of two goons.

“My my, thought you’d spy on our plans did ya?” The gangster snickered “We’ll see what this is about soon enough.” He motioned his gun towards the storage door.

As they silently stood up and started walking, she felt afraid. The exit had disappeared behind them.

They were put in a windowless room holding a single chair. The gangster pushed Jim into the chair as he took off his jacket and hat.

“Why don’t you and I go stand over here sweetheart.” The other guy said as he looked Daisy over, grabbing her arm and dragging her towards the corner. He stood behind her, his left arm embracing her while his right held a gun firmly at her temple.

Jim turned to check on Daisy and was rewarded with a quick punch from the guy standing over him.

“Why don’t you start talkin’ about why you two were spying on us.” The goon cracked his knuckles.

“We walked in by accident. I swear we don’t want anything to with whatever is going on.” Jim rubbed his jaw. Daisy recognized that look. Defiance.

“You tryin’ to bump guns here palooka? I know your type, you know best, you decide what goes. Don’t think I won’t get you talkin’.” He walked in a circle around Jim.

“He’s telling the truth you know,” Daisy chimed in.

“Shut up, skirt.” The guy behind her hissed as he pushed the gun against her head.

Jim moved up, towards the man and got knocked down by a blow from a gun barrel.

“Well, I’ll be. You two lovers eh? What would you do to help her?” Jim turned to look at the goon who’d talked. He was still holding the gun he hit Jim with.

“I’ll make this simple. Tell me what you two were doin’ and I’ll kill you but quick, the girl can go and run off. Don’t and your stubbornness will kill you both.” Both goons cocked their guns for effect.

“It’ll be a pity to let this one die.” Daisy turned her head to the goon behind her as he teasingly lowered his gun-holding hand to hitch up her dress.

She looked at Jim as she subtly nodded towards the goon standing over him, his gun was hanging loosely in his hand. Jim nodded.

She kicked the gun out of her captor’s hand while it was still lowered, turned around and punched the startled goon in his throat.

At the same time Jim lunged for his own guy, knocked him out cold and took the gun away from him.

“Wooooow! It’s like we’re in *The Maltese Falcon*!” Jim juggled his newly acquired gun in the air.

“Jim!”

“Yeah you were awesome too! Where did you learn that throat punch?”

“Mom made me take a self-defense class. Now can we get out of here?”

“Right.” Jim composed himself as he remembered they were still in danger, he held out his hand.

Daisy grabbed Jim’s reaching hand as they took their small window of chance to bolt out the door. They sprinted towards the exit in a crouch and ran into the streets, looking for a new safe house.

After finding a house that looked like it hadn't been lived in for years and checking all the rooms, they sat down again.

"You could come with me you know." She looked up at Jim after breaking the silence.

"What's that?"

"To New York I mean. Enrolments are still open, you could apply to Columbia or NYU, I'm sure you'd get in." She felt her cheeks going pink again as she proposed her own idea.

Silence followed.

"We're stuck at this point aren't we."

"I'll figure something out. I always do."

"Right..." She held back the rest. What was the point?

"Except I don't." Jim started again. "I messed up the hideout. It's my stubbornness that causes trouble." She felt his breath on her hair as he sighed deeply. "I forgot your birthday. That necklace I got you isn't an heirloom, I found it in my apartment when I accidentally opened a floorboard. More than that, I realized no matter how much time I'd have to save up and buy you a present it would never be as nice as that necklace."

"It's so like you to forget that kind of stuff. But kinda weird you just gave me something you found under your floor. You live near a gas station that sells chocolate boxes you know, those would have been just as fine with me."

"I guess I'm so hung up on Berkeley because it was my own idea. I was being a douche. I can't promise anything obviously, but I'll apply."

"Thank you. It would be so great if you could come with me." She whispered to him as she leaned in to kiss him.

"But I will go regardless." She looked gravely into his eyes hoping the message had gotten across this time.

Jim remained silent as he moved towards her again, his face blank.

“I get that now.”

As their kiss deepened, Jim moved his hands to her hips. She suddenly pushed him away.

“Isn’t your apartment building where the old library used to be?”

“Uhm yeah. Why? Fancy a long complaint letter when we make it back?” Jim moved to try and kiss her again.

“Am I the only one who can put two and two together?”

Jim looked at her, confusion drawing his eyebrows together as he shrugged.

“It’s real. It’s all real!” A laugh escaped her throat before she could continue.

“Yeah we established we’re not hallucinating. What are you talking about?”

Daisy took Jim’s hand and gave him a quick kiss as she looked down at her necklace. The gemstone shone dimly as she touched the pendant. She remembered its faded green color. She laughed again as a warm breeze blew through her hair.

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