



The Glass Casket

McCormick Templeman

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Death hasn't visited Rowan Rose since it took her mother when Rowan was only a little girl. But that changes one bleak morning, when five horses and their riders thunder into her village and through the forest, disappearing into the hills. Days later, the riders' bodies are found, and though no one can say for certain what happened in their final hours, their remains prove that whatever it was must have been brutal.

Rowan's village was once a tranquil place, but now things have changed. Something has followed the path those riders made and has come down from the hills, through the forest, and into the village. Beast or man, it has brought death to Rowan's door once again.

Only this time, its appetite is insatiable.

A YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults Pick

[**STAR**] "With stylish prose, richly developed characters and well-realized worldbuilding, Templeman plumbs archetypes of folklore to create a compelling blend of mythic elements and realistic teen experience."-*Kirkus Reviews*, **Starred**

[**STAR**] "This has both the stylish beauty of those [classic fairy] tales and the chilling darkness that makes them timeless."-*The Bulletin*, **Starred**

"The legion of Maggie Stiefvater fans out there ought to look this way."- *Booklist*

The Glass Casket Details

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From Reader Review *The Glass Casket* for online ebook

Leah says

Rating: 4 of 5

An entertaining fairytale-inspired dark fantasy!

The Glass Casket surprised me - I did not expect to discover (for the most part) such a refreshingly unique story. Sure it's based on a mashup of age-old fairytales, along with tried-and-true fantasy elements, but it was original in its own way. Familiar yet different, like catching up with a lifelong friend who'd been away for years and had transformed into someone new.

I loved the story's pace: a slow build to a brutal climax. The atmosphere was also genuinely creepy: isolated in winter, up against an unknown assailant, an underlying layer of deceit and distrust. The mystery was so well written I was never 100% sure where the story was going or who / what would be the "bad guy." Sure I had a list of suspects, but I was always just shy of feeling totally confident with my pick for whodunnit. And I loved that no one was safe, including Rowan.

While other reviewers tend to point out Templeman's (obvious) influence - *Snow White and Rose Red* - there were several others, such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Cinderella*, and those were just the in-your-face references. Woven into the fabric of this story were numerous other tales and their elements - a literate female character, repeated mention of an egg, the Black Forest, wild beasts / wolf, fairies, witches, ancient demons, Hell and on and on - but with SO many influences, the story was sometimes too broad. (I wonder what Templeman could do if she focused the world-building a bit more?) And like a traditional fairytale, the characters were quite simple. Had this one aspect of the story been changed, and the characters given more depth, I would have rated *The Glass Casket* 5 stars.

My only complaints would be about the romance - as is often the case with young adult books nowadays - and a young person refusing help from an adult. The romance seemed to dominate the middle of the story, which could've been filled with something deeper. And Rowan, described as "scholarly" and smart on more than one occasion, repeatedly ignored people who could actually help.

Recommended to diehard fairytale fans and open-minded dark fantasy readers.

Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten! My copy was an ARC I received via Amazon Vine.

2.5 stars.

Bear with me for a little bit because this review needs an introduction. This semester, one of the courses I'm taking is called Literary Approaches to Film: Horror and Gender. It's pretty much exactly what it sounds like: A class for English majors where we look at gender in horror movies. Seeing as *The Glass Casket* is *Red Riding Hood*'s setting meets slasher horror tropes and storylines, it was difficult not to look at it like I've been taught to watch films like *Scream* and *Halloween*. Whoo boy, this book. I had a lot of issues with it, but

thanks to the frame I read it with, it was pretty difficult to put down at times. I needed to dissect it like that pig in tenth grade.

There are a lot of elements Templeman nails without reservations. Though you figure it out eventually, the mystery of what is happening is well-developed and keeps you guessing for a while until that last piece slides into place. The storyline itself is a memorable one (a little bit of Snow White, Grimm tales, and old-fashioned horror all mixed in together), the suspense is killer, and she nails the setting of this little wintry mountain town that is reminiscent of Red Riding Hood. Were this a movie and not a book, there would have been more than a few moments that would have made me jump like some of the horror movies we've watched for class have. Then again, that might not be saying much because frightening me isn't difficult.

Her writing, however, failed to sell me on this novel. It has pretty turns of phrase and is far from unpleasant, but it tells a little too much. We're told Tom used to be all about helping the elderly and being good and all before whatever took hold of him came along, but we don't see that. Our first real encounter with Tom is when he falls into insta-love with Fiona Eira's beauty (he is rightly called out for this and things turn out as they should because of that even though he insists it was really love). Not even her. Her beauty. Another time is when Rowan meets creepy little Merrilee, which may be less Templeman's problem and more mine:

"Nice to meet you," [Merrilee] whistled, air passing through the large cap between her top two teeth. "I'm sure we'll be the best of friends."

"I'm sure we will," Rowan said, decidedly disturbed by the girl." (ARC, p. 115)

When such a sentiment as Rowan being disturbed by Merrilee is explicitly expressed, I get a little annoyed. It may simply be me, but I prefer seeing such things in the dialogue. Maybe she's so disturbed by the girl that she stutters for a moment or pauses as she speaks, unable to spit the lie out all at once. If an emotion can be expressed in the arrangement, I'd like it to be so I see them feeling a certain way instead of being told that.

The Glass Casket has a sizable cast of characters and being in third-person, we're in a lot of characters' heads. A lot. It being told with that specific POV might help some and most of the changes are necessary anyway. Without them, we wouldn't be able to see the story as thoroughly as we do. I suppose we spend the most time in Rowan's head, but other characters' whose eyes we see through include Tom, Fiona, Tom's older brother Jude (aka the guy I shipped with Rowan until it became an actual possibility because I'm that shipper), and a few of the victims of the monster that descends upon Nag's end. It really is like a horror movie without depth.

What baffles me most? The novel's approach to gender. The people of Nag's End worship a female deity and the all-female witches receive more flak for their powers than their gender, but this isn't a matriarchal society at all. The people of Nag's End are clearly patriarchal; the average woman's only real option is to marry and daughters can't do anything about it if their fathers promise them to men without their permission or knowledge. When Rowan is trying to theorize about what is going on later, a man asks why they should listen to a woman about such things. In addition, this may be kingdom-wide; according to Fiona's reaction, very few women kingdom-wide can read like Rowan can. This clear matriarchal/patriarchal clash stayed on my mind throughout the novel because it just doesn't work. It muddles up the world Templeman is trying to build.

Also, can I have a matriarchy, please? Actually, not a matriarchy. As many YA matriarchies as you can give me. I'm on sexism overload from all these YA books that overemphasize how women really get the short end

of the stick in life sometimes. It goes back to my old post on why I can barely deal with YA fantasy lately.

Now that the general review is over, the horror elements. The formula for slasher horror is pretty simple: A gender-ambiguous male psycho killer murders a string of mostly female victims one-by-one with a penetrating weapon (teeth and claws in this case, but it's usually a knife and actually is a knife at one point) until he is defeated by the gender-ambiguous Final Girl. The gender ambiguity comes from some Freudian stuff like unresolved/poorly resolved Oedipus complexes. If you think that sounds broad, that is exactly what the professor told us the second day of class minus the part about the killer having supernatural qualities (they survive anything, are everywhere, etc.). I omitted that since *The Glass Casket* is explicitly supernatural.

As you would expect, there are twists in the formula. If there weren't, horror would have died a while ago. The killer is sometimes female like in *Friday the 13th*, but they retain their gender ambiguity via the male energy that comes with being the killer. Violent acts like that are associated with males because if females are weak and meek, men must be strong and violent. It's how our definitions of the sexes work. It's stupid, but it is at the same time and it gives horror movies power.

The Final Girl. Rowan is definitely one. She's the intelligent, resourceful one with the gender-ambiguousness about her in her name, her strong connection to the killer, and how she's the only one who can stop the killer. Everyone else that could? Male, though Tom has an odd role I can't quite put my finger on. They don't have the powers of the Final Girl. She's chaste and generally uninterested in romance to begin with, but like some of the semi-trope-subverters in recent memory (Sidney, from *Scream*, anyone?), she does eventually get to kiss someone/express her sexuality and live. Yay!

With the victims, we have a little divergence from the formula. I do believe there are more male victims than female (nine men vs. five women), though six of those male deaths happen completely off-screen. The ratio of male-to-female on-screen deaths is pretty even too; in most horror movies, the men die quickly and the deaths of the women are prolonged because female deaths elicit much more of a reaction than male. Not sure why, but it does. Four of our female victims are very... interesting, though.

See, Fiona is the first. Not much of a spoiler, really. She kisses Tom, runs off, and she's dead the next time we see her because you're usually going to die if you express sexuality in a horror movie. The next three women that die are mothers and yet not mothers (I hate that wording because it implies only birth mothers are mothers and that's entirely untrue, but there's no other way to put it); one is a stepmother, one is a woman who no longer has children, and the third is a mother figure to someone. All are killed in their homes, safe places that become the terrible places like the womb. Why the mothers? Is Fiona angry her own didn't keep her safe from her stepfather and so she punishes them because she can't punish her own?

Is *The Glass Casket* a novel worth reading and thinking about? Definitely. If I weren't already certain she would reject it because it's not literature, I'd suggest it to my professor as something future classes could read for a modern form of slasher horror (the only novel we read is the centuries-old *Frankenstein*; the rest of the class is movies). But is the novel good? Is it well-written? My gut says no, but for once, that may not be my judgment to make. At the very least, I can say fans of slasher horror are going to love it.

Though less polished, the second half of this review is a lot like what the rough draft of a paper for my film class would look like. It hasn't made a horror film fan out of me because it hasn't made my problems with common horror movie tropes go away, it has made me think about them a new way. It did introduce me to *Scream*, though, and that's one of my new favorites. Meta-horror is awesome.

Becky says

The Glass Casket has a great opening line, "One bleak morning in the eye of winter, five horses and five riders thundered into the remote mountain village of Nag's End." It caught my interest and kept me reading until the very, very end, without a single break. For the record, I do NOT like horror novels. I do NOT like thrillers. Witches. Monsters. Vampires. Not my thing AT ALL. Yet, for some reason, I found myself unable to walk away from this fantasy novel. In other words, I found myself LOVING it.

After these strange riders fail to return, several men go up into the woods and investigate. What they found shocks them to say the least. One man is bloodied and his eyes and tongue are missing. The remaining four were found NAKED and frozen. One could reason that wolves might have killed one of the five men. BUT what would lead four men to strip off their clothes, fold them up, and allow themselves to freeze to death?! And what was up with the last journal entry found in their belongings that reads: It's starting. Tom Parstle is, I believe, the one who finds that journal entry. And he also removes something else from the scene, something that any fan of Pirates of the Caribbean could warn him against, a coin or medallion. "It was a circle enclosing a smaller circle. They were linked by seven spokes, empty spaces between them. He was leaning in to examine it more closely when he found himself suddenly queasy, as if beset by a noxious force" (19). The men return with some answers but more questions.

Rowan Rose is our heroine. She is Tom's best friend. She's super smart. She doesn't only know how to read and write, she knows how to read and write in several languages. She assists her father in his translating work. In fact, she is BETTER at translating than her father is. She does not want to marry. She wants to be a scholar. She thinks her father is supportive of her plans for the future.

Jude Parstle is Tom's brother. Jude has long been thought to be the lesser of the brothers. No one expects much of him, Tom, well Tom is "the good brother." Jude, well, Jude is allowed to do whatever. Rowan and Jude have a tense relationship: they are ALWAYS bickering. Everyone thinks that Jude hates Rowan, that he perhaps hates her because she's so brainy, though that is more Tom's theory. (Tom thinks his brother is only interested in one thing from a woman.)

Those five riders weren't the ONLY strangers to come to town. There were three other strangers: a glassblower, his wife, and a young woman that is OH-SO-EXTRAORDINARILY-BEAUTIFUL. Her name is Fiona Eira. Not everyone is pleased with these strangers. Rowan's father, Henry, is the most opposed. He insists that Rowan have NOTHING AT ALL to do with Fiona.

So what is Rowan to do when her best friend, Tom, falls madly, deeply in instant-love with Fiona? He HAS to meet her. He just HAS to. He begs and pleads with her to be the go-between, to seek her out, to introduce herself, to speak well of Tom, to arrange a meeting for them the next day. Rowan is creeped out by Tom's obsession in all honesty. But. She dares to disobey her father. She'll do it for her friend. At the very least, her helping Tom may help him calm down a bit.

But this wouldn't be much of a horror novel if Tom and Fiona live happily ever after...

The Glass Casket is definitely packed with action and suspense. There is a big mystery to solve. It is intensely violent. The scenes depicting violence--murder--are very graphic. It is also graphic when it comes to passion. Yet despite the fact that this one is in many ways plot-driven, I feel Templeman did a good job with characterization. I definitely had favorite characters.

Rowan and Obsessed-Tom talking about LOVE:

"Rowan," he said, "do you think it possible to love someone upon first laying eyes on them?"

"Well, the poets certainly thought it so if they're to be believed, a woman's eyes can know a future lover upon seeing him, and if the man sees the fire in those eyes, sees himself there, then he can fall in love before they've even spoken a word."

"But what do you think? Do you think it's possible?"

"I don't know. I suppose I like the idea of some part of our bodies knowing and recognizing our futures even if our minds cannot. That appeals to me. But no, I don't think it possible."

"You don't? Really? If your future husband came riding into the village one day, you don't think you'd recognize him immediately?"

"I don't think that's how it works."

"How does it work, then?"

"I think in order to love someone, you must know their heart. You need to witness their goodness, and you can't know something like that unless you've known someone for a while. I think familiarity breeds love."

"That's not very romantic of you."

"Isn't it?"

"I'm talking about love, grand love--that thing that makes you feel like your knees are about to give way, that certainty that you've seen the essence of your future in a pair of red lips."

"Tom, beauty isn't the same thing as goodness; it isn't the same thing as love." (52, 53)

Rowan on Jude:

Staring at him, she felt rage burning in her chest. How was it that he could make her so angry? How was it that he always seemed to know how she felt without her saying a word? It was unfair. He had no right to her feelings. Her temper getting the better of her, she strode over to him, her hands clenched into fists, and took a single wretched swing at him. The force she'd put behind the blow was intense, but she never connected, for he caught her forearm gently in his hand, and looking deep into her eyes, he held her gaze. (75)

Sample of atmosphere:

The funeral should have been the next day. It ought to have been. The village ought to have gathered in Fiona Eira's home and the elders ought to have performed the rites. She should have been covered in the funerary shroud, hiding the sight of human flesh so as not to offend the Goddess. Her body laid up on Cairn Hill at the Mouth of the Goddess, stones carefully arranged atop her resting spot. These were the things that ought to have been done. But sometimes things don't go as planned. (117)

It was a coffin. A glass coffin, intricately carved, and set out in the yard for all to see. Inside it was the girl, her black hair splayed out around her, her lips like rotting cherries set against a newly ashen complexion. (129)

S.E. Smith says

So creepy. So good. So fantastical. Don't read in bed at night or you'll regret it.

Amy says

In a world where daughters were married off as soon as possible, with no chance of being anything but a helpmate to a husband, Rowan knows she is lucky to have a father who values a girl's mind, seeing her equally as great as any scholarly son.

With dreams of journeying down the mountain pass to see the palace city for her own eyes, Rowan knows her secret longing will one day be fulfilled, as she uses her studies as a key to the palace. So when five palace riders, on horseback, thunder through the village on their way up the mountain, Rowan knows her destiny is about to change. However, destiny can't be pre-determined, and when an enchanting stranger, instead of the riders, emerges from the forest, destiny is about to take shape. Changing Rowan's life in a way that even she can't be prepared for, when the dead bodies of the riders are discovered. Rowan's destiny is about to intertwine with something so vile and sinister, no one is considered safe.

So, when Fiona, a scarlet hooded beauty, with raven hair and snow white skin appears in the village, Rowan starts to lose that of which she holds most dear. When she learns that her best friend Tom has been enchanted by the beauty of Fiona, leaving him vulnerable to the allure that befalls her, opening the door to wickedness itself.

Soon, Rowan is plagued with images, as if they were "painted on the back of her eyelids by a wicked hand." As death rips out the throats of those that are close to her. Like two words etched in the snow, "it's starting," death silently ravages the night, like a vile creature creeping over her. Fear is suddenly awakened with a rumble deep in the woods, of something too large to be any animal. A scream pierces the dead of night, sharp and beyond recognition, ripping a new pain of loss through the village. Where the stench of crimson blood can be tasted in the air.

Bringing with it a sinister beast, that comes to rest upon the village, feeding with its insatiable appetite upon the villagers. A beast that can only be described as one that has gaping wounds for eyes, needle sharp teeth, with a rotting breath smelling of dirt and death. Where the forest suddenly becomes a place in which the devil stalks between the trees. Leaving Rowan the only person to discover how to save the village and kill the beast.

In a story where secrets are meant to be kept, *The Glass Casket*, reads like a classic horror straight from the Brothers Grimm. Like a tale that was meant to be told, a door opened and life began. Where secrets resurface in the face of a beauty, and death lingers in the shadows. Horrific and gruesome at times, McCormick Templeman knows how to deliver in the world of horror.

you can find more of my reviews and giveaways in my newspaper column *For the Love of Books-Dixon's Independent Voice*, or the online newspaper: <http://dixon.patch.com/blogs/for-the-...> / and my horror book reviews in the magazine *Dark Discoveries*

Isa Lavinia says

In the sleepy village of Nag's End, nothing much ever seems to happen, so Rowan's life is one of study. She dreams of being a scholar like her father. She spends her free time with her best friend Tom, swimming, playing, daring each other.

But, one day, five riders bearing the King's crest ride by Nag's End, and when their horses return sans riders a search party is organized. One of the riders shows signs of having been mauled by some kind of beast... the other four are untouched and lie dead in the snow.

The superstitious villagers insist it was all the work of a wolf and are quick to rid themselves of the bodies.

Shortly afterwards, Fiona arrives - she's too enchantingly beautiful: hair black as a crow's wing, ruby red lips, skin white as snow.

Rowan's father forbids her to speak to Fiona, but once she learns Fiona is her cousin, and with a little insistence from Tom (who wishes to court Fiona), Rowan ends up meeting her cousin.

The title and blurb were very misleading to me. The actual Glass Casket appears for only one scene and has no particular significance to the plot. And all that talk of Death not having visited Rowan, etc., made me believe that a personification of Death would appear in the book, when it's merely referring to the deaths that occur within the story.

It's an imaginative world: the villagers believe that goblins steal children to feast upon their flesh, fairies bewitch people to drown them in the lake, and the nixies who live in a cave beneath that lake, when a man would swim under moonlight, they'd tear the flesh from his bones.

There are several types of witches: the greenwitches who heal, the redwitches who draw their power from passion, the woodwitches who live in forests, the bluewitches who drew their strength from water and divined the future, and of course, the greywitches who were said to be wicked creatures who hoarded silver.

There is an old fairytale tone to the whole story, weaved with terror and tragedy. There is a wintry atmosphere, with the falling snow covering the horrors that happen in the forest.

We never really know where this is happening, a made up world which is a mix of Old Europe and Colonial America? Either way, they use the word "okay" in dialogue which never fails to pull me out of the story. "Okay" has been used from the mid-nineteenth century forward. Don't write about witch-hunts then use "okay" to go with it, *please*.

And it's a very, very slow book. Within the first 100 pages nothing of particular importance happens - you'd think they could have been used to develop the characters, but they were all collections of traits, I never really felt as if they were real. All the effort that went into keeping the mystery just made all the character act oddly, since nothing in the dialogue or their actions could be revealed.

And to be honest, it got a bit tedious. All the talk of wickedness this, wickedness that, and the death rites, and the superstitions. The writing is fine, but there is something missing... how can you write about a bestial force slaughtering people in a superstitious village full of people who believe that fairies are out to get you... and make it boring? I don't know.

Mauoijenn ~ *Mouthy Jenn* ~ says

Hmmmm.... Where to start.

This was an interesting book.

Held my attention but I believe that was due to the weirdness of it. Something for someone who likes different takes on fairy-tales. Okay book for me.

Reynje says

3.5

So, this was good. Templeman has taken various elements and symbols from original fairytales and blended them into something intriguing and quite dark (though it's no Tender Morsels). While I initially found the writing slightly distancing, the worldbuilding, strong mystery, and well developed characters made the story compelling.

* * * * *

A thousand WTFs at this horrible cover.

Dawn Abron says

Overview

The Glass Casket is a horror retelling of several fairy tales. Rowan is the daughter of the town scholar when one day a mysterious family including a beautiful girl moves into town. People start dying horrible deaths and the small mountain town panics.

Dang, That was Good

*The cover is beautiful. Not quite sure which girl is on the cover but it is eye-catching.

*It is a loose retelling. It is dark, almost Grimmesk. It's bloody and makes no apologies-YES.

*It's very unpredictable. Just when you think you have it figured out, you're wrong! It is a mystery and the reader has to figure out the identity of the killer but Templeman does give small clues along the way.

*I've seen several readers who didn't like Rowan. I liked her. I thought she was strong. She had ambition and she wasn't too clever. By that I mean people explained things to her; she didn't magically figure it out on her own like Harry Potter. Now I LOVE Harry Potter but I thought at times it was convenient that he happened to figure things out on his own-being raised by Muggles and all. People complained that Rowan through tantrums when she was upset but she is 16 and her tantrums were valid. I think if you were 16 and were forced to marry someone instead of leave your boring little town to study, you would throw a tantrum too.

*It is written well. Templeman paints a beautiful world surrounded by a mysterious forest.

*I read some complaints about the 3rd person aspect and the back and forth between character points of view. I didn't find it confusing. I thought it was pretty clear who was talking.

That's Too Bad, Dang

*I was ready to give it a 4.5 but there was a love interest that I wasn't feeling. I know these teens were young, 15 and 16, and this takes place in the Victorian Era (???) which means they don't have good

entertainment like TV, but the love between this particular couple-wasn't feelin' it.

*The ending wasn't hard to follow but the logic of the killer wasn't strong. I felt like the motive could've have been better.

*Nit Pick-There were like 10 characters in the first chapter.

Overall

It was a good retelling, a good mystery, and a good horror book. The main character was likable, unexpected things happened, and it was well written.

I'm pretty bummed that I haven't heard about this book until now. I'm shocked that Harper hasn't given it as much PR that it should be getting.

I will definitely buy this book for my library and I will recommend it to my teen patrons. I hope Templeman writes more horror fiction.

Book Clubs for Tweens/Teens-

Please stop reading if you don't want to see spoilers!!!

I do this b/c I am a librarian that runs a book discussion group for 5th-7th grade. Parents of younger teens are expecting librarians to pick clean books and it is helpful to know if the book is okay for middle school.

Otherwise, I am all for Intellectual Freedom.

* No bad language

*There is a subtle sex scene but I didn't even know the characters had sex until the character said they did (in his own way).

*There is drinking

*There is a beginning of a sexual assault but nothing happens.

*Appropriate for 12 years and older.

Anne says

3.5 stars

Mixed feelings on this one.

On one hand, it got off to a really slow start, and it was all over the place with *weirdness*.

But.

On the *other* hand, once it got going, it was interesting. Still weird, but at the same time, *different* than what I was expecting.

Enjoyably different.

Alrighty. Fairytale retelling called **The Glass Casket**.

It's Snow White, right?

No.

Yes.

Sorta.

There's a stepmother, a girl in a glass casket, and something in the woods ripping people's hearts out. So, yes, there's *some* pretty obvious elements of the Snow White fairytale in this sucker.

Mainly, though, what you'll be reading is a more like the Snow White and Rose Red fairytale.

You know, the two sisters who befriended the bear, who turned out to be an enchanted prince. There was a goblin, yadda, yadda... One sister married the prince, the other married his brother.

Only it's **not** a straight-up retelling of *that* story, either. It's a mish-mosh of both, with a few extras thrown in for good measure.

Warning: Spoilers? Ish?

I don't think these are spoilers, but people tend to bitch over the weirdest things...

The chick who ends up in the Glass Casket, should be **Snow White**, right? Well, yes. But for the purposes of *this* story, she's *also* the **Rose Red** half of the other fairytale.

She also wears a red hooded cloak, peeks fearfully out of her house, and heads into the woods *a la* **Red Hiding Hood**.

And if *that's* not enough, her stepmother recalls that when she first met the child, she was sitting by the hearth covered in **ash**, mourning the death of her mother.

cough* Cinderella *cough

Kinda neat, no?

Then again, this story isn't even really *about* her.

Say what?!

Nope, this is (the other) **Snow White's** story.

Rowan Rose is her name, translating dead languages is her game!

Huh?!

It makes sense in the story...

Here are the 3 stand-out things that I really liked about this one:

1. The above mentioned twisty-turny use of fairytale. It was confusing in a fun way!

2. The stepmother. I loved her!

(view spoiler)

3. The Love Quadrangle

That's right, you heard me. There were *THREE* guys I thought Rowan might end up with. And, *no*, it wasn't even the least bit annoying. Templeman did such a good job with this part of the story!

I swear, I had no clear idea who it was gonna be for quite a while.

The handsome Duke, who liked her mind?

The sullen brother of her best friend, who seemed to hate her?

Or would it be her best friend, Tom, who didn't seem to know how she felt about him?

Well, I ain't tellin' you!

Ok. The ending?

Yes, while the author does wrap things up nicely, I wasn't *quite* satisfied for some unknown reason. I just...

No idea why I felt that way.

I recommend this one to **Hardcore** fairytale fans only. And even then, it's not gonna be one that everybody likes.

Know going into this that it's a *dark* retelling, and not every single character is going to get a Happily Ever After.

You've been warned...

Kat Heckenbach says

I'm not sure how to put my finger on what I didn't like about this book. It simply didn't grab me. I would possibly have given it three stars despite that, because there are some interesting things and the writing is competent--but there was never any life to the story. The characters remained flat, and the story seemed to be trying to weave too many different elements in without really getting deep enough into any of them.

That's it--everything was only surface deep. The characters, the emotions, the descriptions. I never felt part of the story. The writing voice was a bit formal, which suited the setting (which seemed an odd cross between medieval Europe and colonial America--not a bad thing, just different), but the formality was a barrier for me. Also, the voice wasn't distinctive enough between the different point-of-view characters.

I really did read with an open mind, but the tipping point came at the end of Part 1, when a relationship had been built up in literally less than one day and then ends in tragedy, and there was nothing there to make me care.

Wendy Darling says

Hmm. I liked, but didn't quite love this, although I may bump up the rating to 3.5 stars.

Review to come.

Jessica says

Lately, for some reason, I have been having some huge misconceptions about books before I read them. I have an idea of what they're going to be going in, and end up reading a story I hadn't expected at all. Based on this cover, I was expecting a creepy paranormal, but instead got a thrilling fairy tale that was both dangerous and enchanting at the same time.

Rowan Rose has been used to living a quiet life in her quiet village with her father. But one day, when five riders come thundering through the village on their horses, disappear into the forest, and never return, the villagers decide to look for them. Up in the snowy hill, they find death and destruction, a bloody sight no wild animal could have caused. Upon the villagers' return, death seems to have followed them as people from the village begin to die gruesome, inexplicable deaths. Rowan's father seems to know something, and when her best friend starts acting strange, Rowan knows it's time to get down to the bottom of whatever is lurking in the darkness of the village.

Like I said, this one was much different than I was expecting. The whole setting and storyline reminded me

of the movie Red Riding Hood, where there's mysterious magic going on that's affecting the once quiet, innocent village. The characters, though, are what made the story for me. I really liked Rowan and the village she lived in- everyone knew each other and the way things were just worked for them. But when tragedy struck, their relationships were put to the test. Also, Tom and Jude were polar opposites, yet they both intertwined in Rowan's life in such perfect ways.

The whole mystery behind the killings was so creepy and you really have no idea how to explain anything until the very end. While the build up is a little slow, by the time Rowan really gets into trying to figure out what exactly the beast is, the story picks up and you won't want to put it down. Also, I didn't mind the little romance that was going on. With so many possible romantic interests in Rowan's life, it's interesting how she deals with listening to her heart versus listening to her head.

Overall, The Glass Casket was a creepy fairy tale that will definitely keep you on the edge of your seat. I wish the story was more fast-paced near the beginning, but the character and plot development worked for how things escalated so quickly near the end. The mystery and scary nature of this book keep things intriguing, giving the reader a chilling story they won't forget anytime soon.

Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says

This was eerie, lovely, haunting, evocatively Gothic and full of lovely prose.

Review to come but color me impressed.

Evie says

To win a finished copy of the book stop by Bookish any time between today and February 10th!

Fantasy is a genre that doesn't always work for me. If the world-and-character-building aren't thorough enough - or, in some cases, if they're so detailed, they end up being overwhelming - I probably won't enjoy it. If the writing is too descriptive and too wordy - or if it's too plain and straightforward - I won't be able to get fully immersed in the story. Then there's also the pacing, the setting, the fantastic elements such as magic or supernatural creatures, and of course, the plot line itself. So many things that could go wrong! That being said, I am thrilled to report that The Glass Casket didn't miss a single mark! McCormick Templeman's latest novel is the perfect combination of a tragic love story and a gorgeously imagined, skilfully weaved, often times completely shocking fantasy tale, sprinkled with elements of horror and macabre. I absolutely loved it and it's definitely one of my top five favorite books I've read this month.

"One bleak morning in the eye of winter, five horses and five riders thundered into the remote mountain village of Nag's End. Without ceremony or respect for local custom, they charged through the square and up the steep alpine trail that lay just beyond. Hazarding the rocky terrain, they wove their way between snow-shrouded pines, climbing ever until they reached the icy plateau of Beggar's Drift - a place, it was said, that the Goddess had forsaken."

With these words, starts the magical tale of love and sacrifice, family secrets and dark prophecies, deception and revenge.

The Glass Casket had me glued to its pages from the opening lines. I loved everything - or almost everything - about it, from the isolated and creepy snow-covered setting, wonderfully charismatic characters, to the completely absorbing and unpredictable plot line. This book has so much going for it! It's filled with unique and highly imaginative elements, such as different kinds of witches, magical and cultural rituals, local superstitions and folk tales, unstoppable evil. There's also mystery, family drama, passion and thoroughly bone-chilling, brutal murders. The thing I loved the most about it, though, is Templeman's writing style. The story reads more like a classic fairy tale than your typical fantasy novel. The dialogues are very sharp and full of sparkling chemistry (especially the interactions between Rowan and Tom, and Rowan and Jude), the descriptions - evocative and rich. Overall, though, the prose has a vibe of vagueness and fogginess that sort of requires you to suspend your disbelief, stop questioning every development and just take things at face value. And honestly, I thought that worked really well here, adding to the mysterious atmosphere and creepiness of the tale.

As far as the pacing is concerned, The Glass Casket is not a very fast-paced book and I'm afraid some readers will find it too slow for their taste. Personally, I didn't mind that at all. To be honest, I loved the fact that the author took time setting the atmosphere and slowly building the tension. And the build-up really is amazing! Once we reach the tipping point (which is about 1/3 of the way), things start happening fast, and they are sure to send a cold chill down your spine and make your toes curl! Templeman is not one to hold back. She is not afraid to kill-off characters - even the important ones - and she often does it in a beautifully cruel style. I loved that about this book - the fact that you could never predict what will happen next, who will be the next victim of the mysterious, blood-thirsty beast.

The mystery plays a great part in this story. From beginning to end, this book had me wrecking my brain for answers. I had no idea what was really going on, no clue as to who the evil culprit was and what their motivations were (even though, at one point, I was suspicious of literally every single character in the story - including the heroine herself!). Templeman did a fantastic job keeping me intrigued and guessing, and I am not ashamed to admit that I was completely clueless most of the time. The plot line was very well thought out - intricate and complex - and made for an entertaining guessing game.

All in all, McCormick Templeman's The Glass Casket is an amazingly imaginative book. Well-plotted, inventive, dramatic, and absolutely dazzling, it's a gorgeously dark fairy tale that will keep you enchanted and intrigued all the way through. If you're craving an engaging, atmospheric mystery set against a well-developed medieval-ish background and filled with different kinds of magic and otherworldly creatures, this should be your next pick.
