



# Darkest Mercy

*Melissa Marr*

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**Darkest Mercy** Melissa Marr

*Send the messengers for the Faery Courts. This is the end.*

The Summer King is missing; the Dark Court is bleeding; and a stranger walks the streets of Huntsdale, his presence signifying the deaths of powerful fey.

Aislinn tends to the Summer Court, searching for her absent king and yearning for Seth. Torn between his new queen and his old love, Keenan works from afar to strengthen his court against the coming war. Donia longs for fiery passion even as she coolly readies the Winter Court for battle. And Seth, sworn brother of the Dark King and heir to the High Queen, is about to make a mistake that could cost his life.

Love, despair, and betrayal ignite the Faery Courts, and in the final conflict, some will win...and some will lose *everything*.

The thrilling conclusion to Melissa Marr's *New York Times* bestselling Wicked Lovely series will leave readers breathless.

## Darkest Mercy Details

Date : Published February 22nd 2011 by Harper (first published 2011)

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Author : Melissa Marr

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## From Reader Review Darkest Mercy for online ebook

### Arlene says

#### Undoubtedly 5 Stars!!

*When I told you I wanted to try, I spoke the truth. When I turned away, it was for my former court, and when I tried to make another faery love me, it was for that court. I've lived my whole life trying to bring the Summer Court back to the strength it once was. In all those years, in centuries, I've only wished myself free of duty because of one reason. You...*

**Darkest Mercy** was the perfect series finale for Wicked Lovely. I am gushing right now because I loved this book... TO.PIECES! I could not have asked for anything more in terms of an ending for my favorite faery series. I'm actually very sad too that this journey is over, and I can only hope that Marr has some spinoffs in the making, not because everything wasn't tied up properly, but because I want more... simply just not ready to let these characters go yet.

It's no secret that my favorite character in this entire series is Keenan ((SQUEEEEE))and in this installment it just proves how much he's willing to sacrifice for his court and the ones he loves. He HANDS DOWN gave up the most and fought the hardest to make sure the Summer, Winter and Dark court survived Bananach's reign of terror. His final sacrifice made my heart drop!! I did not even phantom that was even possible!!! Melissa Marr is an EVIL GENIUS!! She makes her characters fight, struggle, and sacrifice but not without their just rewards. Gawd she's brilliant!!

The final battle was EPIC!! I loved how throughout this final book Marr was adamant about one thing – she is willing to spare characters to ensure the storyline progresses properly. None of this “mental battle” bullsh!t other authors use as a cop out. Melissa Marr is fearless and she makes her characters earn their ending whether it be a happy one or simply what they deserve. BRILLIANT!!

I will stand behind my previous opinion on how Fragile Eternity and Radiant Shadows came off as filler books. To be honest, this final installment does not need those two books to deliver this flawless ending. What I do recommend is reading the novellas Stopping Time and Old Habits, so you can understand the relationship between Irial, Niall and Leslie. Other than that, there is nothing I could have asked for that Marr didn't deliver in this final book for the Wicked Lovely series.

I highly recommend fans of the first few books give this installment a try. So worth it!! It's one I'll be re-reading over and over again. Loved it!

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### Katie says

These books have the most beautiful names, where does she get them?

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### Wendy Darling says

So after 5 books, hundreds of pages, and many years...it all comes down to an ultimatum. If Keenan had just issued one in *Wicked Lovely*, it would've saved a lot of time.

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### **Jenna says**

FINALLY I'M DONE WITH THIS SERIES! I forced myself to finish this book despite my not liking of the pairing. It was a good book though, can't say that it's bad because it was also good. just an OKAY for me though. BUT i'm so happy I'm done! it's like one obligation crashed out from my list! haha.

What can I say about the book? Well, it sure was full of MERCY. There was the usual conflicts and resolved. Bananach finally destroyed, and all the fae courts are in unity. With happy ending for both Aislinn&Seth, Donia&Keenan (i'm not happy.) oh well! haha.

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### **kari says**

So. I've made it to the end of the story and I'm left with the feeling that Marr has a better story in her head than what actually appears on the page. While she might know what she means, she hasn't expressed it particularly well.

Here's what I think: If you're going to continue to refer to a character's backstory, then at some point you have to tell me that backstory or the current story has no foundation. Also, if you're going to ramp off on these tangents(Devlin/Ani/Rae) they need to actually be a part of the final story. After a whole book about D/A/R, they do not appear at all in this book, other than Devlin informed Seth about the closed gateway. That's it. I'm still waiting to find out what exactly Rae is. I'm waiting to find out how the Shadow Court affects the Faerie world. How does Sorcha feel about a new court just popping up in the world she controls? Nope. Nothing. That isn't good when the story is completed. And no, I wouldn't be interested in reading a story about who Rae is, what a dreamwalker is and what she was before that. No thank you.

In world-building, the world needs to be explained, clearly and sensibly so that as a reader I can lose myself there. I was never able in five books to ever get truly caught up in Marr's world. She tosses the reader into it with no supports. There are all these characters which she seems to assume everyone knows. I've said this before but I feel I needed to read these books with the encyclopedia of fey creatures next to me, but that wouldn't be too helpful because it would actually have to be the fey world according to Marr. After five books, I shouldn't still feel confused.

Having said that, the story here did move me at times and Marr did at the very least give the big battle that has been building throughout the series. There are some surprising twists and turns along the way.

While I am happy with where everyone ended up, I was disappointed that Ash seemed to have been relegated to almost a secondary character while Donia and Keenan took center stage along with Seth and Neill. I felt somewhat short-changed on Ash's story. She has spent too much of the story either moping because one or both of her boys was gone or resisting, kind of maybe or maybe not, Keenan. When this is resolved, she makes the adjustments far too easily. That's all I can say without spoilers.

All in all, I don't think I'd sign on for another Marr series. A single book, maybe. Series, probably not.

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### **Lora says**

**Actual Rating: 4.5 stars.**

All of the Faerie courts are in peril and both Keenan and Seth are missing. Devoid of the experience and advantages of the other faery monarchs, Aislinn is doing her best to rule and prepare for the impending War being incited by the malevolent Bananach. But without the Summer King and her newly turned faery lover at her side, how will she protect her already weakened court from destruction?

Apparently I'd forgotten exactly how much I enjoy Melissa Marr's writing. She has this way of writing that makes it almost impossible to put her novels down. It seems like one minute you're on page 10 and the next you're already halfway through.

I will admit that this isn't my favorite faery series, but it has had its good moments. I loved the first installment, the second confused the hell out of me, the third was disappointing, and, I realize that *Radiant Shadows* was a filler, but it was actually my favorite since the first novel, *Wicked Lovely*. I'm not sure why, but I really liked Devlin and Ani's story. I thought it was a nice addition to an otherwise okay series. So, for me, *Radiant Shadows* was an improvement. But *Darkest Mercy* just blows all of that out of the water. There's one thing I look for most in a series, and that is that I'll be able to re-read it in future and not have to take a loss because I bought the whole series and ended up disliking it as a whole. (\*cough\*Vampire Academy\*cough\*) Fortunately, the *Wicked Lovely* series is one that I'll be able to enjoy again. In most areas, *Darkest Mercy* didn't disappoint me. There are some things that I wish the author would've done differently, like make the novel longer so that some of her characters' endings wouldn't have been so rushed, but all in all I'm still happy with the outcome.

Throughout this series my feelings toward Aislinn's character have alternated between liking her and hating her; the latter especially in *Fragile Eternity* (I think that's my least favorite of this series). I strongly dislike heroines that are indecisive in their relationships. In past installments it seemed as if she were forever leading Seth and Keenan along. And yes, I know there's all of the ridiculous court rules and duties that Aislinn had to consider, but that didn't mean I had to like it.

At the beginning of the series, Aislinn starts out as an average mortal girl with the gift of Sight (the ability to see faeries whereas others cannot). Initially, Aislinn fears and avoids faeries, but she ends up becoming one and ruling over an entire court of them. So her character changes and evolves quite a bit over the course of the series. And she definitely steps up to the plate in this as the Summer Queen and kicks some ass come battle time. Gotta love a feisty heroine. So, in the end, I'm quite happy with her character.

Donia has been my favorite character since book 1. She has a heart of gold that's been crushed by the King she loves, but through everything she still holds strong and takes on the role of the Winter Queen along with all of its duties.

Like with Aislinn, I've always kind of been on the fence with my feelings toward Keenan. Somehow I never really took a liking to him as I did almost instantaneously with Seth (this could very well have something to do with Seth's piercings). But I'm very happy to say that I LOVED Keenan in this. He completely blew me away and I couldn't have been happier with his character in this.

Seth. \*sigh\* I can't say that I like what Marr did with his character in this. Reasons being that he's not in this enough for my liking, and I think his character kind of got the shaft. I still love him, but I think the way his story is wrapped up should've been handled differently.

I'll handle Niall and Irial's characters together since ~~they belong together~~ this is getting kind of long. Well, if you've read *Radiant Shadows* then you know that Irial's character is stabbed by Bananach towards the end. And so, in this, Niall's basically a complete mess.

Let's just say that Marr surprised me big time and that I'm VERY HAPPY with that outcome.

## FAVORITE QUOTES:

"If it's between love and duty . . . *She still wanted love.*"

*"And he was gone before she could think clearly enough to explain that her yes was a Yes, I'll marry you."*

(view spoiler)

In most aspects, *Darkest Mercy* doesn't disappoint. And I think most fans of the series will be happy with the outcome. The conclusion of this series has made me an even bigger fan of Melissa Marr and I'm eagerly awaiting her next novel, *Graveminder*, set to release May 17.

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## Vi Vi says

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So, Keenan gives up bei

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## Crystal says

WOW just wow! I know some authors don't mind killing off certain characters but I have to say that Marr is fearless. I have been eagerly waiting for this last installment to Marr's *Lovely* series and I am so so happy with the way things ended. The ride throughout this book is gripping and painful but very necessary. The story takes off where the last ended, with War gaining strength and the other courts trying to find the strength to fight her. All hell breaks loose among the courts with all the deaths and unexpected twists. I don't want to give anything away as every twist that Marr throws is so exciting that it would spoil it if I gave anything away. My only problem was that I still don't exactly know where the Shadow Court comes into play. Her last book centered around this new court and I thought it was going to play a huge role in this final book, but Devlin never even showed up well I am sorry he poked his head in at the beginning but that really isn't even note worthy. Ahh my Keenan, I am so very happy for him. I still feel that there is a missing chapter from his life. He made a deal that I thought was going to come back and bite him in his booty, but unless I missed it he got off without having to pay up. Don't get me wrong I am very happy about that but it leaves an unanswered question that will bug me. He made perfect choices imo, and I am very glad that he got his HEA. If you want to know with whom you will have to read it to find out =)

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## Danny says

*Darkest Mercy* was brilliant. I'm in awe! I have no other words to describe it other than it had everything you ever wished for an ending of a series! It was enthralling, full of emotions, it has characters that will surprise you and you will shed tears, but in the end you will close the book and have closure. It has the perfect balance between light and dark. I thank Mrs Marr from the bottom of my heart for this final piece of awesomeness!

Ever since I started Wicked Lovely I was fascinated with this story Mrs Marr created, with the world of Faeries living in the human realm among Mortals but most of all with this incredible characters created. With every book you got to know a new set of characters, yet the other ones were never really neglected and moved on.

With Darkest Mercy this now all came to an end, the captivating story woven together now finally pulled all together ready for the final battle. Decision are about to be made that leave you speechless - from characters you would expect it the least.

Questions we asked ourselves will be answered. Will Ash and Keenan find a way to bring the Summer Court back to his real power? Will Donia - find Peace in being the new Winter Queen, or will be still grief over the loss of Keenan her one and true love? Is there any way she'll ever find love? Will Irial survive the poison or die. What will happen with Niall, with Leslie? What about Seth? Will be fight for Ash - to be with her? etc, etc ....

The storytelling in the last book was perfect. We switched back and forth between all the important characters and but everything is perfectly intertwined to that you'll never feel cheated when switching to another scenery. In the end, all have to work together to defeat War, to defeat Disorder who is getting more and more violent. Fey die. This could be the end if not Summer, Winter and Dark Court don't work together - all Fey could die. The Wicked Lovely books were never just light and sunshine. There was always the darkness and cruelty lingering but I admire this books for this combination. Darkest Mercy had the perfect balance between cruelty, darkness, sunshine and hope.

I was amazed by the development and deepness of all the character. They outgrew themselves and made decisions I never expected them to to. Without any spoilers I can tell Keenan will surprise you the most, but also Ash finally arrived and took the place where she was always ment to be.

Apart from all the amazement you wil shed tears - but truly, what would be a good book without any tears? Emotions is what moves a plot and you have the perfect amount here in Darkest Mercy.

I'm thankful that HarperTeen provided us with a copy and I can assure you my review is truly and really honest. I absolutely loved and adored this book, it was the perfect ending for a wonderful series. If you haven't start with the series yet, start now!

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## **Heather says**

It's fair to say that I had high expectations for this final installment. Over the course of four books and two short stories, I had become emotionally invested in the outcome of this series. Marr has created a fantastical world with extraordinary scope and creativity that I reveled in with zeal that could rival the Summer Court. I would lose myself in the writing, which I found sparse and yet poetic. And her characters, what can I say of these captivating characters? They made me feel! I'd read their stories and would get twitchy when they were in an uncomfortable situation. I'd groan when one of them would act in a way that I deemed idiotic. I'd sigh, and okay, maybe I inadvertently puckered my lips a time or two, when one of them would say or do something particularly steamy. I cried over their heart break and would break out into a slight sheen when they were tasked with making a difficult, seemingly impossible choice. Naturally, when a reader loves characters as much as I loved these, you want to see them happy; however, I expected, nay, wanted that

happiness to have an exacting price. In a series that trumpets choice and sacrifice as the primary themes, I never imagined or even wanted a bow to be tied around the end. It would never do the series, or these characters, justice. But a bow is what I got.

I'm almost embarrassed to admit that I squeed while reading the acknowledgements at the start of the book (yes, I like to read those, don't judge me). Marr just has a beautiful way with words, and I knew in my heart that if Marr could write such a lovely acknowledgment to her friends, fans, colleagues, and family, she would write one hell of an ending, right? Wrong. I'll also confess that I stayed up most of the night reading *Darkest Mercy* and I read through my lunch break so that I could finish it, but I didn't read because I was compelled by my beloved characters, nope, I read because I felt like I owed it to them to see how their story ended, even though I didn't like where it was going. What a major blow. Maybe I'm a loon, but I was a bit bored, not to mention thoroughly confused at times. I'm still not sure how things in the end came to pass.

\*spoilers ahead, be warned\*

\*seriously, I mean it, there will be spoilers\*

I don't know where to start, so I'm just going to jump right in. I knew something was terribly amiss when I did not mourn Irial's passing. So what if I cheated and read the last 5 or so pages about 50 pages into the book, I still should have bawled my eyes out when he died. He was my favorite! And yet, when the time came, it was so sudden and anti-climatic that I just thought, huh, Irial is dead, why aren't I crying? It was like an out of body experience. And while I'm on this particular topic, does anyone understand how Irial defied death? I'm at a loss. I'm glad, sort of, because I certainly didn't want him to die, but I already suspected he would, and just assumed that he would go out in a sexy, lusty blaze of glory. Where was his blaze of glory?!

And what about Devlin/Rae/Ani? They were the main characters in *Radiant Shadows* that re-shaped faery and the mortal world forever, and yet they aren't even mentioned. Well, Devlin makes a brief appearance to open the veil, but I say that it doesn't count. I was sort of wondering what would happen to their ménage à trio.

But lastly, was anyone besides myself disappointed in the Ash/Seth, Donia/Keenan pairings? Don't get me wrong, I loved Seth, liked and respected Donia, and pretty much thought Keenan was an ass, but Keenan was my second favorite character in the series, and for some crazy reason, I really wanted him to end up with Ash. I get that they originally loved other people, but there is something enticing about reshaping your heart to fit around a consuming passion. But maybe that is just me.

Overall, I'm glad that I know how the story unfolds, and Marr did include some lovely writing (most of which occurs between Donia and Evan, or Donia and Keenan) but mostly, I felt let down. Nothing happened the way I hoped, or even expected. And the only character who paid an exacting price was Keenan, which was a shocker to end all shockers. If you love the series, the way I continue to love the other books, you won't regret reading this installment. But my guess is it won't ever be a re-read. It wasn't epic, or even particularly memorable. Mostly, I'm befuddled, and scratching my head as to how the events came to pass.

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**Julie Zantopoulos says**



I have been rereading this series this year to get to this final book which I hadn't read yet. Oh heavens, I love these Fae. The rest of the books were 3 or 4 stars and mainly for nostalgia but this book came together beautifully. The motivations were true, the violence and passion these fairies should be feeling was present and the insta-love and insta-acceptance of other worldly beings or situations stopped. Everyone had a role to play and they did so fantastically!

So good.

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### **Rebecca ♥ Warner, Kishan, Magnus ♥ says**

This was an absolutely perfect ending to this unique series. Although I could have done without books 2 and 4. I hated 2 *a lot* because I find Irial to be a truly despicable character. And although I really enjoyed Devlin and Ani in book 4, they turned out to be mostly irrelevant to the larger story. I would have liked to see them again.

This series was nearly perfect! It was dark without being too dark. There was no shortage of romance and swoon-worthy guys. I'll admit Keenan finally grew on me in this book. Probably because he finally left Ash alone. I had never disliked him as much as Irial though. He was just too manipulative for my tastes, not downright evil like Irial. But Seth still has my heart in this one. And the fantasy and faery magic was so prevalent. We are fully immersed into faery courts and politics and war, seeing as nearly all the main characters were faery regents of the various courts. This is the first faery book I have read with more than 2 courts. There were 4 in the beginning, and later 5.

Another thing that I really love about this series is that there are so many main characters. Usually a YA book will have 2 leads, a guy and a girl, who usually fall in love. In *Wicked Lovely*, I would say the leads were Ash and Keenan, but they didn't fall in love! And that seemed revolutionary to me at the time. But Seth isn't any less of an important character later in the series. Nor is Donia, or Niall. There are so many people you will learn to care about. So many couples you can put your heart behind. And they all got their HEA! Although I am a little weirded out by the Irial/Niall/Leslie ~~love-triangle~~ threesome. They only ever hinted at it, until the end they made it pretty clear.

If it wasn't for Irial's character in general, and if the series had kept its focus on the story as a whole instead of each book focusing on a different aspect of the story, I would have loved this series even more than *The Iron Fey*!

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### **Terri says**

*Darkest Mercy* is the fifth and final book in Melissa Marr's *Wicked Lovely* series. Each *Wicked Lovely* book tells its own story, and *Darkest Mercy* is the perfect conclusion.

Each book is a story revolving around four faery courts: Winter, Summer, Dark, and High. The Winter and Summer Courts are the embodiment of their seasons, the Dark Court is surrounded by emotion, and the High Court is bound to provide order. Order and Discord take form in the High Queen, Sorch, and her sister Bananach. But, Bananach, being no longer content with discord, wants war, and War will go to any length to get what she wants. The only way to stop her reign of terror is to kill her. It is said, however, that if Order or

Discord were to die than it would end the lives of all faeries. It is too dangerous to leave Bananach alive, but can she be killed?

The Regents waited too long to act and now War is upon them literally and figuratively. Everyone, (including in the readers) suffers. War has power and she is winning. The Courts have to pull together or they will crumble, and every Faery will either have to serve fealty to Bananach or die.

Every character is hanging off a cliff at the end of Radiant Shadows, and Darkest Mercy ties all the threads together. There are choices to be made, allies to be found, battles to be fought, and loves to be won.

I'm writing this immediately after finishing the book, so please bear with me. The only words I was able to utter 10 minutes ago were, "Oh my God", over and over. I am shell-shocked.

I can tell you this right now: I will not be able to do Darkest Mercy justice.

A while ago I was wondering if Melissa Marr was heartless. She has no problem killing, (or torturing), any character, and I was reminded of JK Rowling's Deathly Hallows. I am warning you: if you love these characters, as I still do, you will not read Darkest Mercy in a public place.

This is the final book of the series, so you already have favourites. You are attached, and you love certain characters. On the flip side, there are characters you want to burn in the fiery pits of hell. Yes, I am personally holding a grudge towards Bananach.

Putting it lightly, I was (and currently am) very emotional. This book broke my heart. What happened to these characters broke my heart. At one point in this book, I have felt sorry for every faery that is NOT War. Right now, I cannot form words, but what they had to face ... it was avoidable and undeserved.

Melissa Marr has created amazing characters. I want to live with them. I want to keep reading their stories, but I think it is best that it ended they way it did. I do not want to say anything that would spoil the ending for you, but I will say this: If you do not cry, you will scream. (I did both).

These characters, and the writing caused so many strong emotions that I couldn't contain myself. Darkest Mercy is the first book that ever made me scream. And I wouldn't have ended it any other way.

There was one relationship that I believe had a definite destination throughout the entire series, but EVERY other one surprised me. You would have never seen what was coming, and then it changed direction again. I was wrong in nearly all of my predictions. You will not see anything coming, and I am so happy for that. Everything was a shock. And I love it to pieces.

Melissa Marr is as cruel as she is kind.

Keenan is a fool in love, but we already know that.

Irial is my favourite character and it is rare that I can choose.

Seth is driven, and kind, and the most pure.

Donia is strength.

Aislinn is hard and bright.

Niall is as terrible as he is vulnerable.

Sorcha is out of her element.

Bananach is crazy ... As if I needed to point that out.

Darkest Mercy is a love story.

Is it tragic? Yes, at times it will rip your heart out.

Is it lovely? The loveliest.

I won this Advanced Reader's Copy from Goodreads. Receiving this ARC did not influence my review in any way.

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### **Vicki Keire says**

On the day I received my copy of Darkest Mercy, I was late. I'd just driven five and a half hours through one of the poorest regions in the United States after teaching most of the day on very little sleep. It was hot. I was frightened; I had never seen the kind of poverty I'd just driven through, solo, to get to a book signing in Jackson, Mississippi. I slid into a metal folding chair next to a man who looked at me funny. I didn't blame him. I had no idea what was going on and I probably needed a shower.

Many fine writers graced a low stage. One, in particular, was the reason I'd come: Melissa Marr. I had, in fact, claimed that I would crawl through glass to meet her. One writer said something about trivia questions. I remembered a crossroads in lower Alabama where children played in front of a burned out building next to a liquor store. It was the only business for twenty miles. Too badly rattled, I knew I was going to suck at the trivia questions. Melissa Marr said something about "only four copies." None of it made any sense. I was late and glad to be alive. Then Melissa Marr walked down the aisle. She looked as if she was praying and if she might trip, so I stood up to help her. She put a book in my hands and I thought, "Oh. She must want me to help with the trivia questions."

It was Darkest Mercy. One of four copies in the world. I didn't realize what I had done until the man who periodically looked at me funny leaned over and gave me the low-down. Fools and children; separate gods: there is no other explanation.

I absolutely loved it. It definitely merited the emergency hotel room all-night read. I can truly say that the ending of the series fulfilled the promises of the beginning. Several times, when I'd come to grips with a character's fate, she threw a wrench in it. I cried a couple of times. I threw the book across the room once and yelled, "Melissa, how could you?" She took my least favorite character away from me by making me feel sympathy, understanding, and yes, love. Gross! At the very end I smiled, misty eyed at the beauty and logic of it all. This is not a tale of Happily Ever After, however. Rather, Marr leaves her meticulously crafted universe and deliciously wicked faeries room to breathe and grow, if only in our own imaginations. Fans of specific pairings and.. er... arrangements will be satisfied, but to my mind everyone is in for surprises.

What surprises, you ask? There is no way I'm spoiling, but I will say this: Use Your Brains. Re-read the books \*carefully.\* Marr is nothing if not methodical and her world, although one of fantasy, has consistent rules that she does not break. The answers to some of my most burning questions were gracefully obvious. It made re-reading the series feel like finding buried sub-plot treasure.

Like everyone else, I love certain Courts and certain pairs.. er...arrangements more than others. I traded away my Summer Court bracelet for a Dark Court one, if that gives you a clue. But the beauty of Marr's universe is that she creates a place where everyone, and I do mean \*everyone\*, can find bits of themselves, both bright and dark, broken down and reflected back in new and sometimes beautiful ways. Tempestuous temper tantrums become a Summer Court asset. Nightmare scenarios of drugs and sexual abuse become the Dark Court's greatest strengths: the fierce loyalty and resilience of the survivor. Darkest Mercy continues the series' astonishing power by taking expectations, shattering them, then rearranging all the broken pieces into

a strange new reflection, and asking, simply, "Have you considered things this way?"

No, I hadn't. I hadn't known that nightmares could be beautiful, that lies could be more honest than truth, that summer and winter really had nothing to do with temperature, that I'd come to love a character I didn't like at all.

As a storytelling vehicle, *Darkest Mercy* is not my favorite. I would have to rank it second or third among all five books. This probably has something to do with a thing that happens that I wish didn't but that's all I'm going to say about it now. I mention it to point out that I wasn't entirely happy, but so what. Some others will be thrilled. *Ink Exchange* was actually my favorite book, which is not at all usual. When considered against the arc of the entire series, *Darkest Mercy* ties up loose ends but still leaves the universe room to breathe. Which is exactly what a good finale does.

My favorite part of Marr's writing, and what so often goes unrecognized, is her sheer narrative brilliance, and this is by far my favorite part of *Darkest Mercy*. Yes, I said it. I have advanced degrees in English Literature to back it up, too. (Yes, I'm touchy about that.) Marr has managed to invent Faerie Courts with their own distinct stylistic traits, including characters, settings, mannerisms, and even Internet hit squads. But she has also given each Court their own unique narrative technique. I'm going to expound, with the caveat that if you're here for the spoilers or Seth's piercings or Irial's British accent (Iri!) you might get a bit bored. (Irial!) Where was I? Narrative technique, right.

Part of what makes Marr's universe so strong is that the very language she uses to create it reflects the Court it represents. Winter and the High Court are both written with more formal diction, complex sentence and paragraph structure, etc., to highlight their cold, remote natures. But with the Dark Court, Marr plays with time, warping character's perceptions of it to emphasize emotional power. As readers know, the Dark Court feeds on emotion. Marr uses one of the most innovative narrative techniques I have recently encountered by compressing two points of view to warp time; after all, time loses all meaning in the grip of strong emotion. The stronger the emotion, the greater the warp. I first encountered this in Chapter 30 of *Ink Exchange*:

" 'It's been a long day,' she murmured as she swayed under his caresses. She closed her eyes and asked, 'The second day will be better, right?'

'It's been a week, love.' He pulled the covers up over her. 'You're doing much better.' " (272).

This brief exchange caps less than a page of a powerful montage of addiction and loss in which time is an unreliable marker of reality. The emotional connection is the real power here, once again underscoring a key Dark Court trait. Marr is just that good- she's created a unique stylistic technique that is nothing short of (dare I say it) literary brilliance. (I invite my colleagues who disagree to examine pages 271-72 of *Ink Exchange*. I'll be right here on Good Reads, waiting.) *Darkest Mercy* serves up more of the same masterful writing, and that is why I love it so.

The reasons why we love the books we do are so often tangled and messy. Part of why I love this one is because it is *The End* to the series that taught me that Faeries and Literature are not mutually exclusive. It hurts me to say goodbye to the characters I love so much, and even the ones I just kind of tolerate. But Marr makes sure that her Faeries are happy enough to suit their natures. After all, if she didn't leave them with enough conflict to scheme and plot and be wicked and lovely then they wouldn't really be happy, would they? And neither would we.

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**Colleen Houck says**

The characters in this series are lovable, real, and, at the same time, a little scary which is as it should be in the world of the fey. I loved the conclusion to the series. Everything ended in a very satisfactory way. Bananach was certainly frightening. Wanted to rip her wings off myself, but it's more likely I would have run in the other direction. I could feel the sunlight and the winter and the creepy dark things on my skin as I read.

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