

WILD WONDERLAND

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It is becoming common to run across some fairytale adaptation or spin-off in the bookstore—hundreds of characters become a new version of Cinderella, Snow White, or some other princess made classic by Disney. Naturally, I was a little skeptical about how cliché “Heartless” by Marissa Meyer would turn out to be, given that, at first glance, it follows a line similar to other books.

However, I had previously read *The Lunar Chronicles* series by Meyer, and while characters in the books included representations of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, and Snow White, the series was completely its own; the story was individual and not some standard the-princess-gets-the-prince tale. Have you ever read another series that had cyborgs, a colony on the moon, *and* all of these fairytale classics? I hadn't. Meyer had made *The Lunar Chronicles* completely unique. So, when I heard that “Heartless” was being published, I decided to give it a try.

“Heartless” is the tale of the Queen of Hearts from Wonderland. Just this choice of protagonist instantaneously moves the novel out of the category with all of the typical princesses and deposits it beside books like Gregory Maguire's “Wicked.” Catherine, or Cath, has been raised to marry well. In fact, she has even caught the eye of the King of Hearts. But all she has ever wanted to do is open a bakery. Desperate one night at the King's ball, Cath runs out into the gardens where she meets the mysterious Jester.

Cath embarks on a series of adventures, coming into contact with many characters. It wouldn't be Hearts

without the maddest tea parties in the land, courtesy of the Mad Hatter—just be sure you have a talent to share! But Hearts isn't at peace; a monster called the Jabberwock is striking, and everyone is afraid of being the next victim.

I certainly wouldn't want to spoil all of the madness that goes on in this book. Meyer really has brought Wonderland to life with all of its wacky characters and random occurrences. *Heartless* is not the standard spin-off you might pick up off of the shelf; like *The Lunar Chronicles*, it has its own individual characteristics and story.

I do have to say this: I got so thrown into the story that I forgot I was reading the backstory of the Queen of Hearts. Meyer completely reconstructed the character in a way that made me have what was probably an unhealthy amount of sympathy for her by the end of the novel. Not-really-a-spoiler spoiler alert: a book about the making of a villain won't end in happiness. Don't trick yourself into believing it will—you will save yourself some heartbreak (and don't worry: you will still be left with some).

So, if you're looking to read quality young adult fantasy, I would certainly recommend this book. “Heartless” strays away from the stereotypical fairytale adaptation style, and it is impossible to put it down once you pick it up. Meyer has done a truly fantastic job with this heartless character and everything about her, from the delicious treats she bakes to the vengeful soul that lies within. ✨

