



# Crown Duel

*Sherwood Smith*

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## **Crown Duel** Sherwood Smith

A deathbed promise to their father sends a daring girl and her brother off to war. Filled with intrigue, romance, and magic, this spellbinding novel is a dramatic coming-of-age story about a girl who rises from impoverished beginnings to take command of her own fate.

“Smith tells a fast-moving tale of adventure, intrigue, and honor, with Mel a likable heroine and a lively narrator.”--*Booklist*

## **Crown Duel Details**

Date : Published April 1st 1997 by HMH Books for Young Readers

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Author : Sherwood Smith

Format : Hardcover 224 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Romance, Adventure, Fiction, Young Adult Fantasy

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# From Reader Review Crown Duel for online ebook

## **Sakina (aforestofbooks) says**

So glad I finally got to this! Onto the next book!

The writing is just so beautiful and descriptive and very reminiscent of old fantasy and I loved it! My only complaint is that I wish there was a map cause I got a bit confused about where things were, which annoyed me.

I love Bran and Mel's relationship! The way they cared for each other was so sweet and adorable!

Vidanric...lol his pale blonde hair reminded me of Draco Malfoy for some reason, and the way he was always trying to hide his amusement got to me and I just loved him! I honestly wish there was a book through his perspective while he was at court planning everything.

I didn't mind kind of the abrupt battle at the end. We didn't see most of the fighting, but I felt it was more realistic than seeing a girl who barely knows how to fight beating off the bad guys like a pro. I'm pretty excited to see what happens next at court since I love that stuff so much!

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## **Caralyn says**

This book for me did have some good points, but the bad points far won out. I will start with what I like about this book: the courage of the main character is admirable, in the end I am even impressed by her realization of her ignorance, but that is where my like of this novel ends. The hero and heroine of the book are not fit to hold the name. The main character, beyond courage which might more aptly be described as willfulness, has no qualities to set her apart from any of the other characters in the book. she is not overly strong or smart. she possesses no magical abilities. as far as I can tell her general likability is her greatest strength but even that seems forced. The rebellion is unrealistic in the extreme. no matter their birthright or station an entire county following two teenagers into a hopeless war would not happen. Even with her ignorance, the main character's blind stupidity is inexcusable. She does nothing of note for the entire book. (view spoiler) I had read other reports of this novel as a lost gem in the fantasy genre and I would honestly like to know what they were thinking. What was worst about this book is that although magic is mentioned in the blurb there might as well have been no magic in it. the hill people are mentioned a couple of times and the war is about them but they are not really active participants. The covenant itself seems an outrageously stupid idea. one fire stick per person? and no wood furniture? I am all for saving the trees myself but why not plant them and then just use them conservedly? The threat to the covenant is the major cause of the rebellion (though taxes should have been the larger motivation) and the hill people DO NOTHING! they are the only ones benefiting from it. should not they have been included in the plans? Overall the more I discuss this book after reading it the less I like it. I would not recommend it to anyone.

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## **Parvathy says**

This was a difficult read. I don't know whether it was because it was different from my usual genre or

because I was not in the mood for such a book when I started reading it. Either way I am placing the blame for not enjoying this book entirely on my shoulders as I am not the targeted audience for this.

I never felt this frustrated while reading any other book. Not because of the story or anything but because it didn't finish sooner. That was exactly my thoughts during the first 100 pages or so then the book picked up its pace and just when I was about to start enjoying it the book stopped abruptly. Talk about irony..When I wanted it to end it just went on and when I wanted it to continue it just stopped. In a way you can call this a perfectly strategic move on the author's part because now I don't think I can rest without reading the second book in the series.

The universe that the author has created requires a special mention. The land of Remalna were ordinary people live together with magical beings known as Hillfolks. For years they have lived together in a form of truce where the people have agreed to refrain from cutting down trees for their own profit. But that is about to come to an end as Remalna is now under the rule of a tyrant King who plans on breaking the covenant for his own gain. That is where our protagonist enter. Lady Meliara of Tliath, Mel to her friends and family and countess of the a land that has fallen on tough times. She along with her brother Bran on the dying wish of their father has decided to wage a war against the tyrannical king and save the kingdom of Remalna from destruction. The story goes on from there, Wars, Horse Riding, Escaping for Dungeons etc etc...and then the end. The truth is I admired the heroine from the start. She had the courage of spirit from the beginning and faced difficult situations head on. The hero on the other hand Vidandric did not get the same amount of face time as I would have liked but he did make an impression. There are a lot of names thrown at you, character name that is that can be a bit overwhelming at times but those of who are experienced with those kind of books it is not going to be much of a problem. Initially I thought of giving it 1 star rating then after 50 pages it increased to 2 stars then towards the end 3 stars which makes me wonder whether I would have enjoyed it more if the book was a little bit longer. Guess I have to read the next one to find out.

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## Simply Sam ? says

This book manages to both exceed and fall short of my expectations. It's a strange phenomenon. I was expecting a fantasy with a strong female lead. In fact, I perused GR lists looking for just that. You know there are lists for everything here on GRs and several with "fantasy" and some derivative of "strong female lead" as the topic. Surprisingly this book, unbeknownst to me at the time, was in the top running on several of the lists I found. Needless to say, I had high hopes. So let's start with those criteria, shall we?

First off, fantasy. This is very light/low fantasy, not "epic fantasy" or "high fantasy" or whatever other sub category of fantasies there are. There are some fantasy elements that are mentioned briefly and sporadically, and a weird history involving portals to other places and magical special trees. None of it is ever fleshed out and it really just made for a semi-awkward reading experience. Like the portals to other worlds, they were mentioned once,*maybe* twice, and that was it. The Hill People who roamed behind the scenes for much of the story remained mysteries. No real explanation or background, just that they are. It just wasn't cohesive. I really felt like I was reading a period piece with random magic stuff and hard to pronounce names thrown in here and there to make it a fantasy. Now don't get me wrong, I **like** period pieces but it's just not what I was hoping this book would be. I wanted *MORE*. Maybe that's just me being a greedy reader but there it is.

Next up is our strong female lead. Hmmm. I will admit, what Meliara lacks in common sense she makes up for in gumption. She was never one to shy away from a fight or back down from a bully. She fought for her people earnestly and without reservations. But honestly, throughout the book she was always running

recklessly into one situation or another. She didn't stop to think or plan ahead, she just rushed in and hoped for the best. Of course this never ended well for our young protagonist. In fact, more times than not she ended up either captured or injured or both. Fortunately, towards the end of the book she experiences some character growth and is able to reflect back on her actions and see them for what they are: decisions based on ignorance. Not quite the lead character I was hoping for but I didn't hate her. That's a plus. I am super critical of female MCs. I have this hyper awareness of faults and lackings when it comes to heroes of the "fairer" sex. I know it's not fair and it's not just, but heroines tend to bug me FAR more than their male counterparts. So the fact that Meliara, our young and often foolhardy MC, did not earn my permanent ire is actually a nice (and surprising if I'm honest) thing.

So the plot is basically Meliara (Mel) and her brother Branaric (Bran), the unofficial Countess and Count of Tlanth, try to lead a revolt against their tyrannical king. They have obtained proof that he's about to break a very sacred covenant that the kingdom has established with the Hill People having to do with the super special trees I mentioned earlier. However, before Mel and Bran can secure the allies they know they are going to need, an army led by Baron Debegri, who has his eye on their lands as his prize, begins marching in and they are forced to attack to the best of their meager ability. And, though their ability is meager their hearts are not and they hold off the troops for far longer than anticipated. Enter in the cold, aloof Marquis of Shevraeth charged by evil King Galdran with bringing these troublesome mountain people to task. And, unlike his predecessor, the Marquis seems to know his way around the battlefield. It isn't long before Mel and Bran begin to realize that this is a losing battle so thus begins the real conflict of this story.

The plus side to this book is this: it is extremely readable. Though there was some repetitiveness in storyline (like her goal was always: to escape) and the world building and "magic" system left a lot to be desired, the story moved quickly and kept me engaged. I basically read it in a day. It helped that I read the omnibus as well so after completing the first book I went straight into the second, which I liked even more than this one, but for totally different reasons.

\*\*\*3.5 stars\*\*\*

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## **Pam ?Because Someone Must Be a Thorn? Tee says**

I read a great deal of kid and YA lit and I'm always interested in a good adventure story. Several people had suggested I read this book so I boogied over here and read the reviews and was simply captivated by the love-it or hate-it take people had.

Once I read "Crown Duel" I figured out why that might be. Simply put, Sherwood Smith's book is a romance for the MG/YA crowd. (Not that adults couldn't enjoy it, but that wasn't the target market that Smith and his publishers likely had in mind.)

The story is about about two teens; a boy named Branaric, and his slightly younger sister, Meliara. They live in what is left of the family castle, scrounging to pay the rents due the king. They don't have a particular longing to get involved in politics, but when their father dies, he forswears them to fight and overthrow the

king.

As they don't have any money this is rather difficult. But still they gather what villagers they can and make the effort.

It would be easy to say more, but unfortunately it would only serve as a spoiler, so I won't. But will merely say that readers of the Romance genre will totally recognize the familiar and popular theme... oops! Almost said too much.

I thought it was a fun read even though it was entirely wholesome... and fairly predictable. Sherwood Smith's writing brings the story vividly to life and he manages to bring matters to as much of a conclusion as you can given that there is a follow up book.

Enjoy.

a mini Pam Tee review  
(BooksForKids-reviews.com)

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### **Lizzy says**

**\*\* 2.5/2 stars \*\***

Crown Duel is a fantasy story that involves a young woman coming of age story. It was my first experience with Sherwood Smith, and it was good that I began reading it without a good idea of what it was about besides a fantasy tale.

In brief, it's about Meliara 'Mel' Astiar, a noblewoman from an impoverished province, who along with her brother Branaric or 'Bran', starts a desperate war to depose the tyrannical king Galdran. After a short period of battles, she is captured and taken to the capital. And that is just the beginning.

I kind of liked her, despite the fact that she comes out unsure of herself, capable of misunderstanding people and situations, which leads to mistakes that drive part of the plot. She comes out as immature most of the time, in fact we don't know how old she is, so I can't say it's not appropriate. Other times, she lacks plain common sense and seems too reckless considering what she is fighting for (depose a king!). All this can be irritating at times. Nevertheless, she is never less than courageous. Towards the end we understand that she can learn with her mistakes and starts to change.

It's clearly a young adult book, not my type. Despite that, it's very well written and being relatively short I was able to read through to the end without problem.

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### **Maqluba says**

The Idea of the plot was a good one... too bad the execution didn't match. I've been on-hold in reading the second book of this series but I've now realized I'll never go back so I'll just rate this one and move on.

We read thru the heroines POV which wasn't too bad until the hero is introduced and I get really annoyed at not knowing what his true motives are. Because we weren't given the heroine's age I couldn't decide if her immaturity was due to age or stupidity. I treated her as a teenager and it seemed to make sense but then the hero would have been much older and I've never been too keen on big age-gaps in romance (esp. when one is a teen) so I lost a little interest there. She was alright until the end when she started to get really annoying in her distrust for the 'hero', even though he's proved his side time and again.

The battle was pretty childish, def don't expect anything dramatic or any real action. It felt like kids fighting useless adults.. which is what it essential was. I didn't mind the "she gets sick then is fine then gets sick again and again" as much as some other reviewers because that at least felt real. I did mind her acting like a baby at the end and having the brother be so meek as to not trying harder to get his sister to change her mind about the hero.

At least it wasn't a long read.... although I did start skipping around a lot so maybe that's why...

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### **Tatiana says**

This book was not what I expected. The cover is misleading, the summary is misleading. I was quite disappointed. Don't start reading this expecting lots of action and adventure and a brave heroine. That's not what you'll get. While the heroine does have some endearing qualities (and she is quite likeable) she doesn't DO much.

The thing that bothered me the most about this story was that there wasn't much action from the heroine and the "good" side. Instead the story was filled with their "reactions" to events that happen to them. For example, for a good portion of the novel you find the heroine being carried/moved about unable to walk or do anything for herself. She simply had to let things happen to her and react to them.

A lot of the world in the book was left unexplained. There are a number of mystical elements in their world, but we are given little to no explanation about any of them. The world was interesting, and it could have been handled much better if I actually understood what some of the elements meant.

I was quite disappointed with this story, but I'm going to go ahead and read the second book. I'm hoping that the next book will redeem this duo for me.

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### **Angela says**

I would have given this a 3.5, but the anticipation it has kindled for the sequel rounded my rating up. The book is beautifully written, with a vivid landscape and culture. I enjoyed the adventure, the magic, and especially the Renselaus characters.

Meliara is, in many ways, a fantastic heroine - clever, determined, brave, and fiercely loyal. Unfortunately, her mistrust, anger, and sometimes outright rudeness became a little exhausting at times. In very brief moments, and then at the very end, you could tell that there was some complexity, but otherwise her character seemed pretty flat. I'm hoping that the next book will develop her character more.

I would recommend it as a clean, romping story and an easy read.

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## **Metaphorosis says**

I first encountered Sherwood Smith in an excellent anthology (Firebirds), where I was taken with her story "Beauty". Purely on the strength of that story, I went right out and bought the related double novel, Crown Duel. I'm sorry to say the story was far better than the book. In fairness, I note that the story was written several years later.

This first book was disappointing. For one thing, some of the language is careless. Early on, a pair of characters are described as having hip flagons. Flagons? Flasks are traditional here. A flagon is large pretty much by definition, generally not watertight, and basically not suited for the hip. There are a few others like this; not a lot, but enough to throw me off as a reader, and to weaken my confidence in the author. Some continuity flaws don't help.

The story itself is determinedly Young Adult, though the protagonist's age is never clear. That's no problem; I like YA. But even writing about a teenager doesn't excuse some of the weakness here. For example, on the run, fearing torture and death, repeatedly ill, just past escaping a trap, and literally surrounded, Mel nonetheless decides to play a childish prank. Young is one thing. Dumb is another, and not one that most readers are looking to relate to.

Even before that point, the story has its flaws. Mel is injured, gets sick, gets rescued and partly healed, gets sick, gets rescued and partly healed, gets sick ... you see where this is going. It's just not the most inventive of plots.

There were opportunities here for some interesting growth and reflection, as Mel and her idealism confront cold hard reality, and realizes there's more to the world than she knew. Unfortunately, that brief realization is about as far as she goes. The characters are likeable and Mel is mildly fun, but there's no real depth anywhere.

All in all, disappointing. I admit that the short story left me expecting a lot, but this isn't even close to what I hoped for. If I hadn't bought this as a double novel, I wouldn't have gone on to Court Duel.

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## **Carol says**

This book was originally published as two separate volumes: Crown Duel and Court Duel, and is, I think, intended for a YA audience. It is the story of Meliara Astiar, a noblewoman from an impoverished mountain province, who, along with her brother Bran, initiate a desperate revolt against the tyrannical king Galdran. Along the way, she is captured by the enemy and begins a complicated relationship with Vidanric, a nobleman who has long been engaged in a covert attempt to topple Galdran. After Galdran is killed and deposed, Meliara comes to court and gets involved in political and romantic intrigue.

This novel was a lot of fun to read. The plot was exciting and proceeded at a nice clip. Meliara is a prickly, brash, smart, determined, and occasionally exasperating but ultimately lovable character. She is capable of grossly misunderstanding people and situations, and of admirably cutting through to the essential. Smooth, subtle, and enigmatic, Vidanric is an excellent foil for her. Their slowly developed romance was very



charming and satisfying.

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### **Katherine says**

So as it turns out, I am a total and complete sucker for: Pride and Prejudice/North and South + strong young woman comes of age + strong/silent/tall love interest + secret admirer/courtship by letter a la You've Got Mail + magic + court politics. TOTAL SUCKER. Whatever, I still loved it.

I liked the second half with the court politics and intrigue (Court Duel) better than the first half of battles, but the first half is necessary for setup. There are a few characterizations that seem a bit forced to support the second half (Mel's brother Bran, mainly).

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### **Jamie (The Perpetual Page-Turner) says**

First posted over at my blog where you can find more book talks and general book nerdery.

Crown Duel was a quick paced adventure for sure that, despite a slow start for me to warm up to, really pulled me in and made me eager to grab the conclusion at the library and check out the novellas. It really hit the ground running with the father dying and with Mel and her brother quickly having to go war against a tyrant king who is threatening their kingdom. It was quite the adventure from the start and I knew pretty early on that I'd really love Mel — even when she's kinda rude and stubborn. I loved watching Mel and her people think of cunning ways to outsmart these larger and well trained troops. I always root for the band of misfits! As soon as Mel's adventure breaks off from the rest is where it gets even more intense and made for a great story of adventure, survival and political maneuvering. I really liked the world, though that and the magic system were a little too sparsely constructed for me at times, and loved finding out more about the other kingdoms and players within. I wanted to understand more of the magic and the Hillfolk to be honest. I will say...I WISH THERE WAS A DAMN MAP IN THIS BOOK. I had the hardest time picturing places traveled to or talked about which was really hard for me. I looooved the Marquis and how Mel and he interacted. I see a good ship for book 2 especially because you know I love me a hate-to-love ship! Although I think I would have enjoyed this more when I was younger I did quite enjoy this adventure! Definitely a book to pick up if you are craving fantasy but want something shorter and fast paced!

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### **Jolanda says**

Crown Duel is a fast paced book that opens with subtle magic, sword fighting, pranks, cross country adventure, horseback riding, knife throwing heroes and court intrigue. The empathetic character development and confidence conveyed by the author's familiarity with her setting pull together with the plot for a very compelling read. The first time I picked up CD I chose it literally by the cover the combination of art and blurb were enough to interest me immediately. I read it again now because it was a favorite that I wanted to revisit.

Crown Duel will probably appeal to more girls, despite the number of strong and complex male characters or the brother and sister relationship between Mel and Bran as they begin to fight, and in many ways depend on each other's strengths. This book will appeal to different audiences depending on the printing they find, the two separate works will have wider appeal and appear easier to read. While, the larger Firebird edition is

more physically daunting and might only appeal to avid readers. The work is fantasy, and well-reviewed by renowned author Tamora Pierce again suggesting fans of fiction, predominantly female readers. I read this work in and before high school which is about when I would anticipate most of its readers being interested as Mel is almost an adult and comes of age with the reader. The romantic tangles of the second book as well as Mel's discomfort in social situations is typical of female YA reading.

If you have already read Crown Duel perhaps you will also enjoy the works of authors like: Phillip Pullman, Tamora Pierce, Garth Nix and Madeline L'Engle. Depending on what you liked about CD you might enjoy Pierce's strong heroines and magical settings like in the Immortals books, or her Song of the Lioness series. If the political and social aspects were particularly interesting you might enjoy the Pierce's Trickster duo Trickster's Choice and Trickster's Queen. If it was something about Meliara being unprepared or not completely aware of herself and her power I suggest reading Nix's trilogy, beginning with my favorite Sabriel. Sabriel has a little more magic than CD does but is no less compellingly written. Phillip Pullman's Dark Materials beginning with The Golden Compass and Madeline L'Engle's A Wrinkle in Time series are also fabulous works of fantasy with elements of magic, coming of age, and adventure driven mostly by an intelligent female character. (Though L'Engle's Many Waters is led by Sandy and Dennis, and Charles Wallace dominates another.) If you liked CD but the lighter romantic aspects of Mel's story were what was particularly appealing I suggest reading John Peel's Dragonhome, or Gail Carson Levine's Ella Enchanted. In the event that you have read all of these I suggest Victoria Hanley's The Seer and the Sword, this story has a strong female protagonist but is at times also driven by her male counterpart both are nobility forced to escape and unknowingly begin to shape the future for their country. And finally if you have read every book already mentioned I suggest Kristin Cashore's Graceling much like Dragonhome and CD Cashore wrote a little bit of magic, a lot of action and adventure, and a little romance into this terrific book about a young woman cutting out a life in a male dominated and superstitious land.

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## Fran says

Quite disappointing

This book have a lot of good quality that would make me love it but instead I found it boring and predictable

But let's talk about the good points first...

This book have a potential for a great plot, I like the story and the character is **not too bad**. The main character, Meliara Astiar is courageous, loyal and kind (she think about her people)

But the good points is end here, now for the bad points

The rebellion is totally stupid, she don't have a power, magic or swordfighting or army or whatever just a useless girl with his brother. And they think to overturn the kingdom? Just keep dreaming honey...

And Meliara is brave yes but she's so stupid and useless, gosh she didn't do anything at all. She just keep going captured and captured because of her stupidity.

I've wait for something happen, for her to do anything usefull but no just fainting, stupid act, help from another person for this stupid character, etc. It's become boring

And then, why the hill people didn't do anything?? gosh that rebellion happen because of the covenant a.k.a because of them, and they do nothing

But a lot of people give this book a high praise so maybe it just not my cup of tea. Maybe if I read the second book I will know what the good of it

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### **Josiphine/Tessa says**

Still one of my favorite books.

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### **Laura (Kyahgirl) says**

4/5; 4 stars; A-

Crown Duel is really two books, Crown Duel and Court Duel. I have both the paperback and the ebook. I read the paperback then went to the ebook because it has some truly priceless snippets at the back. They tell part of the story from the perspective of Vidranic.

Anyway, I'm glad I read A Stranger to Command before this book. I think I enjoyed it more because I understood the character of Shevraeth (Vidranic) so much better than I would have without it. His motivations and personality would have been a bit too opaque without that understanding.

This book was about wresting the kingdom back from a bad king and it was about Meliaria growing up and finding happiness and love. It's well suited to teen readers but I think adults can enjoy it just as well. I look forward to reading more books set in this world.

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### **Cathy says**

~~Rating and review to follow, once the Young Adult/Middle Grade battle kicks off!~~

2.5 stars

I read this for the YA/MG battle, and my review and comparison to the other battle book can be found [here](#).

This is book I of a two-book story, and even though the ebook I read had both books combined into one, I'm still going to rate and review them separately. Mostly because they are very obviously two separate books, but also because my reaction to each part was vastly different. I struggled with the beginning of this book and as a result, didn't really like this all that much until I was nearly at the end, while I ended up loving the second book/part.

I said most of what I wanted to say in my match-up post already, and I do believe that if I were to reread Crown Duel right now my feelings would be different. Yet, until I have time for a reread (and I will be rereading this at some point, without a doubt) I have to be true to my original opinion.

This was fine, and it is important to mention there was no excessive drama, which I am always grateful for. However, I struggled too much to get into the story initially, and I believe book II is definitely much better.

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## Amy Aelleah says

Warning: angry rant. I was going to review this on my blog, but I tend to leave my more ranty stuff here and the better thought out, critical things on my blog.

**Bran sighed. "I thought it a good notion, but obviously you don't. Here. You do whatever you think best. I'll bide by it." He dropped the wallet into my lap. "But I wish you'd give them a fair listen."**

Well, no one can fault me for not giving this book a fair chance.

I don't know if it's because of the books I've been choosing, or if I'm just apathetic about all books right now, but lately my books have ranged from okay to I hate it with a passion.

This one falls in the later category.

Honestly, I should have listened to myself when, eight pages into it, I took a break. I had this instinct that I wouldn't like it. The strange part is that what I thought would be my problem wasn't.

The world is typical of fantasy. No complaints except the fact that I am getting tired of it. The plot starts off so slowly and I was ready to say the most memorable thing about this book was my boredom - then it picked up only to promptly turn into a 'captured - escape - captured - escape' cycle over and over as our main character traveled through the countryside.

Allow me to note two things about that last sentence. First, I hate the 'endless journey' type of stories. They never work for me, and no, I don't believe every traveling story is an endless journey. I like quest style adventures, where the character/s are working towards a destination. I hate the books where the character/s are constantly moving, returning to a place they left and generally going in circles or backtracking.

Secondly, I cannot call our main character (Meliara by name, countess by birth) our heroine. Because, and here is where the killing it with fire comes in, I hate her.

**Now thoroughly annoyed, I said, "Well, if you're done listening to us sit here and make fools of ourselves, why don't we get on to whatever it is you're going to hold over our heads next?"**

She thinks everyone is out to get her, that they are laughing at her simple country ways. So she plays up her 'wildness'. She'd rather meet the prince wearing holey, patched and filthy clothes than a borrowed dress. Why? Because if she keeps up the whole 'provincial filth' line, then she doesn't have to worry about anyone actually laughing at her - because, well, they don't truly know her, do they?

**There was no irony visible in face or manner as he wished me a safe journey. I felt my face go hot as I gritted out a stilted "Thank you."**

She is a self-absorbed, self-obsessed little brat that has to be always right. She is shrill and surly. She refuses to think about things from another perspective because her way is the only way. She won't listen to anyone. She's insecure so she's over compensating by taking it out on everyone around her.

She always thinks the worst of people - that they're laughing at her thick, country ways behind their hands. That if they're not willing to stand and fight (and die, thanks to the horrid plan she made because, after all,

her brother's no warrior) then there's something wrong with them. She claims to have spent all these years preparing to 'free' the 'commoners' but, when she finds out that they're content, she wonders if it was all a waste. She refuses to look past face value. She's useless and worthless and, as much as she might try to deny it, she's doing all this for the accolades.

### **But I had been raised to think of others (...)**

Well then her parents must be so proud of her. She refuses to think about anyone else's position. She's hypocritical. It's all some else's fault. She's going to destroy her people out of pure spite.

What might be even worse than all this is that no one calls her on it and they are always making excuses for her. It's not her fault - no matter how stupid the thing she does is. After all, she is a 'lively' and 'spirited' girl. (Both quotes taken from professional reviews on the book.)

I sincerely wish 'spirited' didn't mean the same as 'unruly, stubborn brat'.

Finally, I speculate that the guy that had been nothing but kind to her is going to be a love interest in the sequel. Which is a shame because him, I like. In fact, if they'd commit an uprising and burn the countess, I'd like everyone in the book. (I already do kind of like everyone else.)

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### **Kathleen says**

3.5? Can't decide how to rate this book, I liked the story well enough but my feelings for the main character kept getting in the way. Sometimes I liked her, most of the time she got on my nerves. But then the story flowed the way it did because of all her actions so I guess it's thanks to her that I liked the story? Okay, whatever. Of course I'm going to read the next book because I want to know if she's going to learn to make mature decisions. (She better.)

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