



Dark Triumph

Robin LaFevers

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I lean forward, pushing my body out past the battlements. The wind plucks at my cloak, buffets against me, as if it would carry me off in flight, just like the birds or the knight's soul. Let go, it cries, I will take you far, far away. I want to laugh at the exhilarating feeling, I will catch you, it whistles seductively.

The convent has returned Sybella to a life that nearly drove her mad. Her father's rage and brutality are terrifying, and her brother's love is equally monstrous. When she discovers an unexpected ally imprisoned in the dungeons, will a daughter of Death find something other than vengeance to live for?

Dark Triumph Details

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Author : Robin LaFevers

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From Reader Review Dark Triumph for online ebook

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

I have made no secret of my immense love of Grave Mercy, and have been recommending it to everyone I know who enjoys historical fiction, fantasy, and kickass heroines. As with every sequel to a book I loved, trepidation filled me as I approached Dark Triumph. There's always that chance that the sequel will not live up to its predecessor and will color your enjoyment even of that first book. Robin LaFevers, though, hits her sequel out of the park. Dark Triumph does not fall victim to middle book syndrome and even surpasses Grave Mercy.

Grave Mercy was fairly dark, but still a nice readalike for Maria V. Snyder or Kristin Cashore. Dark Triumph is even darker, not a novel I would recommend to those who do not like unhappy tales. Sybella's dark past makes what Ismae went through look like a healthy childhood, and, those who read Grave Mercy, know that Ismae's youth was no picnic. Ismae and Duval do make a couple of appearances in Dark Triumph, and it's startling how much more optimistic and friendly Ismae is in comparison to Sybella.

My attachment to Ismae formed immediately in Grave Mercy, but Sybella took me some time to adjust to. She's darker, moodier, more pained, and sometimes verges on crazy, though one can't blame her. However, as I got used to her and came to know more about why she is the way she is, I became even more bonded to Sybella, and even more desirous for her to overcome the horrors of her life.

Sybella's childhood, I will reiterate yet again, was...there aren't really words for it. Her father, d'Albret, used her as a pawn, and she had to watch him kill off wife after wife. Two of her brothers sexually abused her, one for the fun of it and one from a misguided sense of love. Her past is without brightness, and I'm warning you now of triggers for rape and incest. On top of that, there is a whole lot of violence.

One of the main criticisms I've seen of Grave Mercy, even from those that liked it, had to do with the circumstances of the consummation of Ismae's romance. It was seen as a bit of a cop-out, as though Ismae needed an excuse to have sex. In Dark Triumph, the same could not be said. Sybella has had more than one sexual partner, some willed and some not, and does not have any hesitancy about having sex when she desires it. Sybella seems a bit more empowered than Ismae, and will likely be a big hit with those disappointed by that part of Grave Mercy.

The romance in Dark Triumph makes me even happier than that in Grave Mercy. Though I do think this series could just as easily have been marketed to an adult audience, I love that this book will be going to a young adult audience. LaFevers tosses aside convention and delivers a hero utterly unlike those to be found in the bulk of YA romances. He is not handsome; in fact, he is described as ugly more than once. That does not make him unlovable to Sybella or to me. This message is so important for teens, the importance of personality and common interests over physical appearance.

If you loved Grave Mercy, get excited, because you will surely love Dark Triumph too. If you were in the camp of readers who thought LaFevers pulled some punches in the first book, then I urge you to give this installment a try, because it is much darker and more unique. My love for Robin LaFevers' writing has been firmly cemented, and I shall proceed to wait impatiently for the third His Fair Assassin novel.

Glass says

Second book in *His Fair Assassin* series was something I picked up to read, expecting mediocre read compared to *Grave Mercy*. Tanja scared me with her 3.5 rating, but I decided that I would finish this trilogy no matter what.

Dark Triumph left me **speechless!** I even loved it more than previous book. It is much darker and brutal - which is something I love - characters are more complex and nothing isn't how it seems. So many times you will question your own sanity because Robin LaFevers doesn't reveal everything outright. She teases you with snippets of possibilities, some of those so horrible, that you would have to take a short break just to process what you have just read.

One thing that I did not expect is that this would be a story about different set of characters set into the same fictional world. It is and is not a sequel to *Grave Mercy*. While you do find out what happens next, story is focused on fate of (previously) secondary characters. This reminded me a lot of *The Lumatere Chronicles* by Melina Marchetta. Even Sybella, main female character, is so much similar to Quintana with her bloodlust and how savage she can be.

Now I am even more curious to read final book of the series. Annith is so different from both Sybella and Ismae, which makes me wonder what will be her roll in upcoming events. I guess, we will have to wait and see.

Review posted at Ja ?itam, a ti?

Grave Mercy review

Copy of this book was provided by publisher, HMH Books, via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

♥Rachel♥ says

Dark Triumph is a stunning sequel to *Grave Mercy*. I had high expectations picking it up and I was not disappointed. I loved this story just as much if not more than *Grave Mercy*!

Sybella is one of St. Mortain's daughter's and thereby gifted with deadly talents, and skills in the art of killing to carry out his will. She owes a debt to the convent in service to St. Mortain since they brought her back from the brink of madness, taking her in at fourteen and training her for special assignments. Sybella never thought she would be forced to go back to the very same household that caused all the terror in her life, but that's exactly what she's had to do. To aid the young duchess of Brittany she is sent as a spy into the d'Albret's household, one she knows only too well. For the last year there she's been there, languishing in hell until she is instructed to move against him. The only thing that keeps Sybella going is knowing that she'll be the one to kill d'Albret, and finally bring retribution to this vile man.

Finally Sybella receives word to take action, but it's not what she expected. Instead she's instructed to save one of the duchesses' knights being held in d'Albret's dungeons, the mighty Beast.

While I was thrilled to pick up *Dark Triumph*, I was also a little nervous. Knowing it would be Sybella's story, I knew it would be darker than *Grave Mercy*, because she was such a tortured character. I was even *more* nervous when I found out Sybella was in d'Albret's house. I shuddered thinking of what she might be going through, because one thing you found out in *Grave Mercy* is that d'Albret was a man of twisted and dark depths! It was heartbreaking to find out the full story of Sybella's past but her strength and bravery made you love and admire her. Plus, she was no defenseless creature, and I love that she dealt out some much needed kick-ass!!

Another hesitation I had was the thought of a romance between Sybella and Beast. He's described as a big hulking and ugly character, and to be honest, that didn't sound very appealing as a potential love interest. I had nothing to fear because what Beast lacked in looks he made up for with his big heart, and charismatic personality, he's like a magnet you can't help but be drawn to. I loved the slow progression of their relationship and how it lightened Sybella's soul. I can't tell you how much this romance touched and filled my heart!

While *Dark Triumph* is an adventure and full of action, I felt there wasn't as much focus on political drama as there was in *Grave Mercy*, and I liked that change. I would like to know more about the abbess: her motivations whether they're good or bad. I couldn't stand the woman for most of the story.

If you're a fan of *Graceling*, *Fire*, or *Poison Study*, I highly recommend this story and *Grave Mercy*. You won't be disappointed. *Dark Triumph* is a story you won't be able to put down! I was addicted to the point of sneaking pages in between work when I could! Robin La Fevers' writing utterly captivated me, and I will be picking up anything she writes in the future. I can't wait for Annith's story!

A copy of this story was provided by the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in exchange for an honest review.

You can find this review and more at [The Readers Den](#).

Jay says

All the gifs cannot describe how awesome this book was.

Minor Spoiler. Just one. If you don't want to know who the knight was, don't read on. But we were all expecting it.

I have to admit, in the beginning, I was a little unsure of how this was going to turn out. One, I forgot kind of what happened in *Grave Mercy*, and two, I was a little confused. But 20 pages later, I was sucked into the absolute insanity that was *Dark Triumph*.

Let's take a moment to appreciate what a total badass Sybella is. Her character was beyond amazing. Her past was by far one of the most awful I've ever read in a book. Her character slowly did change into a *warmer* Sybella, with the help of a knight who I practically fell in love with myself.

We all admit that we thought it was Beast who was going to be the knight. AND I WAS RIGHT! Who says the "knight in shining armor" (punny) always has to be gorgeous. He was beautiful, actually. He was kind, protective, broken, and freaking hilarious. *dies from Beast's perfect imperfectness*

This book was stuffed with action. But along with the action were some holy mother of all twists that I did not see coming for the life of me. That last quarter of the book got me. I was so not expecting any of that. I can't even begin to list some of the chaos that happened because there's too much and my words won't do it any justice. I died like, 8 times from the craziness. I was like "Holy crap!" and then as soon as I'd start to recover LaFegers would throw in another twist that succeeded in making me flail on the ground for an hour. Ha! Kidding. (It was 2 hours)

The characters in this book were like real people. (Yay Ismae and Duval for showing up!) Even the sick psychopaths who I wanted to strangle myself added to the book in a way that may have been disgusting and terrible, but the book wouldn't have been nearly as good without them. *Dark Triumph* had a brilliant story. I know that all books are "thought out", obviously, but this one just seemed so much more ... I don't know. Planned out? Prepared? The story never ceased to interest me. The book kept moving *forward*, you know? Nothing was repetitive. Once a problem showed up, the characters would go their way to try and fix it. There wasn't any hanging around in this book. JUST READ IT AND YOU'LL UNDERSTAND

This book's ending was literally the perfect way to end it. I loved the last paragraph, I loved the way Sybella's character changed, and I love Beast. SO MUCH. It was packed with action until the very last chapter. The ending was sweet, lovely, and also *funny*. Which makes it that much better.

So, all in all, this book was suspenseful, heartbreakingly action packed, with a little hint of romantic, all tied together with LaFever's phenomenal writing and amazing characters to go with it. I loved this book, and I cannot freaking freaking wait for *Mortal Heart* with ANNITH. *dies*

I love you, LaFegers! And I love your last name.

Dark Triumph,

Keertana says

Rating: 3.5 Stars

Where *Grave Mercy* was a lie, a novel about dancing and political parties deftly wrapped up with a bow-tie of kick-ass assassin-nuns that never assassinated, *Dark Triumph* is more of the dark, bad-ass story I was looking for with LaFever's debut last year. Nevertheless, while *Grave Mercy* was a sore disappointment, I am glad to admit that *Dark Triumph* completely won me over. It seems to be the case this year that series I swore off of last year have come back to haunt me, making me eat my words with my utter love for their companion novels. It happened with *Scarlet* and it has happened again with *Dark Triumph*, so to any other companion novels out there? Come at me! ;)

Dark Triumph takes place in the same historic setting *Grave Mercy* was placed and the writing isn't significantly different either. Instead, what makes this novel so much better than its predecessor is that **it is actually about assassin-nuns**. Sybella is an experienced killer, but also the daughter of the evil Lord d'Albert, sent back to his home with the promise of extracting revenge upon him. Once within the castle, however, Sybella is thrown sharply back to her dark life, watching as friends are slaughtered ruthlessly by her father and forced to give into the wishes of her half-brother Julian who has become a lover instead of the

childhood protector he once was. When Sybella receives orders to free a prisoner in the dungeons, the revered Beast, she resolves to exact her revenge on her father at last, all while freeing his most valued prisoner. Life, it seems, has slightly different plans for Sybella...

What makes *Dark Triumph* such a success for me is Sybella. Although the layers behind Sybella's dark past are artfully revealed as the novel progresses, it is evident from the beginning itself that she has lived a brutal life. As a woman, there is little use for her in her father's household and despite successfully dispatching of his allies, she longs to put an end to the man who has made her life a living hell. Yet, through these conditions, she perseveres. While her faith in Mortmain wavers at times, her courage and strength never does, making her an inspiring character in the way that naive, dancing Ismae never was. Furthermore, Sybella doesn't fear death or murder. What she fears is the spreading evil of her own family and her cursed existence as a d'Albert herself, but all this only makes her a far more full-fledged and hurting character than we imagine. As the full story of Sybella's past comes to light, it is only with awe that we can chart how far she has come, even from the beginning of the novel.

Along with Sybella, though, the slow burning romance she shares with Beast is one to behold. Both Sybella and Beast share a love for killing, but they retain their humanity in a way d'Albert fails to. What makes their bond so strong, though, is the fact that Beast sees Sybella for who she is and never tries to stifle her. While the other men in Sybella's life mold her into what they want, Beast accepts Sybella as she is with her assassin skills, dark past, and treachery. Granted, he yearns to protect her, but he also knows that Sybella is more than capable of protecting herself - and he lets her. Although Beast has a large, scary, scarred, and ugly appearance, he is a complete softie inside and lacks the alpha male tendencies that make me roll my eyes. All in all, it's safe to say I've fallen for him - quite hard.

What prevents me from giving *Dark Triumph* a higher rating, however, is the fact that a solid eighty pages could be cut off from the beginning. Folks, it takes a *long* time to get the ball rolling on this plot line and it is wholly unnecessary. While it does shed much light on Sybella's past, I feel as if the same effect could have been achieved with a fewer number of pages. Additionally, *Dark Triumph* is one of those rare instances where I recognize that, technically, a book contains no flaws but a slight lack of connection with it yields to a lesser enjoyment of the book. I'm not entirely sure *why* I didn't enjoy the novel as much as I hoped, mostly because I *liked* it, but my enjoyment of it hovered on just *mere* like opposed to *really* enjoyed. Not sure why. I suspect it may be because of the first few chapters or even because the political scheme which was more war-related - which I really liked, mind you, but which did take away limelight from the characters on more than one occasion. Even the writing, at times, could be a bit off-putting in certain scenes, so all together, I did not wholly *love* this book.

Nevertheless, *Dark Triumph* is, as far as I'm concerned, a triumph when it comes to a solid sequel and I find myself eagerly looking forward to Annith's story next. If I'd found myself saying that last year, I would have been sorely surprised, but at this point, I am ready for more pleasant surprises to come my way.

You can read this review and more on my blog, Ivy Book Bindings.

Norah Una Sumner says

I just want to marry this book.

And Sybella. Love this girl! I seriously enjoyed reading this beauty - the story was amazing, the characters were captivating and complex and the action was phenomenal. I loved reading from Sybella's POV and it just made me like this trilogy even more. It's been a long time since I've loved a book this much. I've missed this gorgeous feeling. Also, MY ULTIMATE SHIP IS IN THIS BOOK! Asdfghjkl. Love them! And I just want them to be happy. They really deserve it. I've already started the last book but unfortunately I'm not liking it much. I hope it'll get better.

Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says

Reread 03/12 : Beast and Sybella still own the show. LOVE THEM.

» Book 1 : Grave Mercy ★★★

There's a fangirling Gremlins in me who's lurking to spread his love. Picture the mohawk one ← Always been my favorite. You've been warned.

? **Possible side effects** :

- Irrepressible squeals (Yes. Like fucking mice. You got it)
- Overuse of the words *love/like/enjoy/swoon/...*
- I'll stop here otherwise I'll scare you away if that's not already too late anyway

"There is a wild, frantic energy in this part of town that fits my mood perfectly. I raise my head and dare any of the dangers lurking in the shadows to try to match its skill against mine."

? **Why all this love, you're asking? ?**

❶ **A fast-paced plot.** Forget the tedious wanderings of *Grave Mercy* and get ready : the story here starts on page one. Indeed I was hooked from the beginning, enthralled in Sybella's life like I never was in Ismae's. Her ultimate goal? To protect Anne de Bretagne from the multiple dangers that threaten her, first of all the Count of Albret, wicked and twisted as always. In the city of Nantes which has been previously taken by him, Sybella must use all her training skills, sometimes at her own expense. **Nothing is more blissful than revenge, but she had yet to succeed without losing herself.**

This book was dark, oh so dark at times. As it is, I must warn you here that the story deals with difficult issues, including sexual violence and incest, and several kind of abuse.

"But it is no holy light, simply me, whole and unafraid of who and what I am, eager to do the work I was born to do".

❷ **A real assassin as a heroine.** As you can guess, I was able to care about Sybella because she's everything but perfect, and much more than our average female lead. To be frank, I kind of want to throw adjectives and call it a day : flawed, multi-layered, sarcastic, loyal, smart, fierce, tortured, and straight-on awesome. Not to mention, **deadly** (I KNOW! An assassin who actually *KILLS!* Often!). But it wouldn't do her justice, would it? *Sigh.*

"Someone is happy this morning," he smirks.

"Someone is eager to feel the kiss of cold steel before he's even broken his fast."

Since her childhood, Sybella had to rely on herself to survive, and as it was, the choice she was given didn't always let her the opportunity to be in harmony with herself. She's no innocent, and she knows it. Does she regret some decisions? Yes, she does. Has she doubts? Oh, many. Does she whine or let her doubts eat at her? **Never.** On the contrary, she knows where lie her strengths and how to use them to fulfill her quest - yet she is seeking approval and the growth of her character was fascinating to follow, realistic and gradual as it was.

❸ **An ugly and fascinating love-interest partner in crime.** What can I say about Beast, except that he's everything you don't expect from a male-lead? Well, just that. ← *By Mortain*, I want more men like him in my books.

"What in the names of the Nine Saints was that? *Throwing* your sword? Is that some special trick of Saint Camulos?"

He grins, and I am startled by how feral he looks, all gleaming white teeth and pale eyes in a blood-splattered face. Indeed, I do not believe he is quite human in that moment. "It slowed him down, didn't it?"

God I love him. Did I say that?

❹ **Peril and feeeeels.** Remember how *Grave Mercy* let me numb? Don't worry, *Dark Triumph* is nothing like his eldest. Indeed whereas Ismae's book dragged on the underwhelming side, **nothing could have prepared me for the kaleidoscope of emotions I felt while following Sybella and Beast in their battles.** Betrayal. Anger. Hope. Despair. Acceptance. Hate. *Love.*

❺ **A gradual, very light romance**, which never overtakes the plot. Anyway, you just can't help but root for them, because to see the growth of their relationship makes you remember why it's sometimes fucking *great* to insert a bit of romance in a book.

"I glance up at Beast's face, which is contorted with - horror? Despair? I cannot guess what he is thinking or feeling. He looks down at his enormous, scarred hands. "How you must hate us all," he said."

Nowadays, it's more and more difficult to find a romance which can warm our heart without making us rage because sexism, control, stalkers. Beast and Sybella's story is one of them, and because **it's believable, smile-inducing and adorable**, it reminds me if needed why I'm a sucker for a good romance in the first

place.

»» **Now, love is not blind people.** Although I'm willing to give it 5 stars still, I have to admit that this book isn't flawless.

? **Historical inaccuracies**, here we go. The truth is, if I'm completely aware that it's a work of fiction, I fail to understand why authors keep choosing well-known individuals as characters if they don't respect the historical facts. Now, the book was really good so I chose to blind myself but come on. Please don't underestimate readers.

? **Lack of details in the settings** : I don't know if I'm more aware of it because I know the cities and the landscapes where the story takes place here, but I was slightly disappointed by the (lack of) description of the background. Indeed I would have loved to *see* Morlaix, Nantes, and the Breton country, and it sadly wasn't the case. Not enough, anyway.

...

? Can you believe it? I can't blame this book for anything else. **This was just fucking awesome, that's all.**

For more of my reviews, please visit:

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

I am so glad I disregarded the weak first book of this series and followed through to Sybella's story. I have to admit, the girls in the convent did not appeal to me. Ismae, tragic though her story was, initially came off dull-as-dishwater, and she still did not grow on me throughout her book (I did not know murder could be so boring). Annith was almost nonexistent in her quiet presence. Sybella was a holy terror when we first met her, and we saw little enough of her in book 1 that my initial bad impression of her as a tantrum-throwing brat didn't get dispelled. I was turned off enough by Sybella in the first book that I really didn't want to pursue this series furthermore until I was desperate for something to read, and to my own surprise, she has turned out to be one of the best female YA characters I've read this year. This is an outstanding book.

Sybella is not a likeable character at first, she says so herself. She's killed, she's had lovers, and some very, very twisted relationships. She is no innocent, and my first impression of her was bad because she was so tormented when she first arrived at the abbey. We only got to see what's on the surface of her in book 1, and in book 2, everything changes. Her past is a tragic, tortured one, full of abuse. Even after witnessing so much pain that she should be immune to it, Sybella is still in pain herself and still seeking approval, however much she tries to deny it to herself. She is given orders from the abbess (who is still hell-bent on hating Sybella) to rescue the Beast of Waroch, who has been imprisoned and tortured by her father, and bring him to Rennes.

Sybella succeeds in rescuing the Beast from the dungeon, only to get dragged along with him against her will. Along the way to Rennes, they get to know each other and begin a reluctant truce, mainly because Sybella feels she has a debt to pay, due to her past with the Beast's sister. Their relationship grows, the Beast does not become a handsome knight, and she doesn't care. Against her will, Sybella falls in love with him. Their relationship is beautifully written, all of it; I loved seeing how it grows, how much pain Sybella suffers

because of her secrets. Seeing how easily the Beast turns Sybella from an angry, aching soul into one who forgives herself is a beautiful, bittersweet process. There is so much doubt in Sybella's soul. This is truly one of the best, most realistic transformational process that I've ever read. She is like a wounded animal that bites anyone that comes near, and she is unbendingly loyal to those who have won her loyalty and love, like her sisters, the Duchess and Ismae, even Julian to a point.

The villains in the book are believable; even if they're so tremendously evil with no redeeming qualities. Actually, D'albret is the only truly evil character, and he is still believable in his evilness; the rest of the villains are under his influence, and while they do bad things, they do so under his influence and power (can you say Stockholm syndrome?) and so it's not hard to imagine their actions. Even the worst (stupid Jamette) redeem themselves somewhat eventually.

I'm looking forward to book 3, but it's going to be anticlimactic given how epic this book is.

Fenia says

FEELS. I have so many feels, i will burst! This book was so good. I haven't read a book that good in a while.

Sybella was such a complicated character. Everything she's been through was horrifying and the fact that somehow in the end she got over them and moved on, its a sign of hope. She's so strong and kind and good and badass and a proper assassin. I LOVE HER!! The Beast, OMG, he's the personalisation of goodness. He's so full of life, bravery, kindness, that he radiates that, he doesn't have to be beautiful on the outside, because he's true self is so so beautiful it hurts. Btw the ending with Julian was so freaking sad.

I also loved the Duval/Ismae scenes!! FEELS!! ❤

Powerful book. It's worth a million stars, five are not enough. I'm going to cry my eyes out now. bye.

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life

I received an advance reader edition of this book from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt via Net Galley for the purpose of providing an honest review.

5 Stars!

I loved the first book in this series and to be honest I really didn't think the second one would be able to top it. But it did. This book was absolutely amazing. This was the kind of book that I hated to put down. This story grabbed me and made me feel for the characters. This type of novel is exactly why I read. I read to be swept away by a story, to feel for the characters, and hope for their triumph.

We all have our secrets. And our scars.

This book picks up right where Grave Mercy left off. Sybella has been placed in the home of d'Albret, who is by all accounts an evil man. This book had a darker feel than the prior book in the series. It also had a lot more action. Sybella is given the task of rescuing the man being kept in d'Albret's dungeon. That man is known as Beast and is known and loved throughout the region.

After fleeing the dungeon with Beast and his former guard, Sybella works to keep Beast alive. We quickly learn that these two people have a lot in common. They have both killed and are good at it. They both have a horrible past that they have been forced to overcome. They are both also very stubborn and determined to succeed.

The writing in this book was absolutely remarkable. I really did not care for Sybella too much in the first book but by the end of this book my heart was breaking for her. She was tough and a survivor and one of the most wonderful characters I have read. Beast was very likeable in the first book and as we learned more about him in this story that feeling only grew. Beast was able to see Sybella for who she really was and look beyond her past. These two characters made the story and I found myself hoping that they would find strength and healing in each other.

Through the darkness, his big warm hand tenderly takes hold of mine, and I want to weep at the understanding of his touch.

I would highly recommend this book to really just about everyone. This is the second book by Robin LaFevers that I have had a chance to read and I will definitely be reading more. I would recommend that this trilogy be read in order as it is a continuation of the overall story. I cannot wait for the final book in this trilogy to be released and I hope that we see more of Sybella and Beast in that novel.

clara says

DNF @ 77%

i'm sorry but life's too short to read boring books. bye.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

It had been awhile since I had read the first book in this series Grave Mercy and I was a bit afraid I would be lost going into this book, but the author didn't info dump me into oblivion and I was able to step right into the story again.

Assassin nuns-what a great story idea. These nuns are bad-ass. They come across as real since the author gives them flaws and they admit they aren't perfect. *Gasp* A main character that isn't perfect?!!

These nuns do their killing under their dark god Death. Their abbess though! She is the frigging most vile character. She makes my hair stand on end.

I want the next book just so I can see why the heck this woman has such vile personality. I hope the girls go off on her hateful bum.

Then you have Beast..*another gasp* A main character who is not the most gorgeous hunk of man ever..I still fell head over heels for this guy. Strong, protective, kicks bad-guys asses because it's fun..sign me up!!

There are some excellent characters in this book though. The villains are so bad that you feel their evil coming off the pages. The good guys aren't all that and a bag of chips-which made me love them even more.

I think this is the better book of the two I've read so far. That could be just because I like these characters so much more than the previous books main character.

I received an arc copy of this book in exchange for an honest review from Netgalley

Maggie ? (Reader in Wonderland) says

5/5 stars

“I am in desperate need of killing something.”

Dark Triumph, the second book from *His Fair Assassin* trilogy is, to my surprise, even better than *Grave Mercy*. The story follows another very interesting character - Sybella. In the first book, Sybella shows up at the doorstep of convent St. Mortain full of grief and nearly on the verge of madness. After Ismae convinces her to stay there she becomes Death's handmaiden and after years of training, leaves for her first assignment - to the only place Sybella so desperately wanted to avoid - home.

“Indeed, I am as skilled as any alchemist, but instead of turning lead into gold, I turn my fear into daring, and assuredly that is a far greater trick.”

While *Grave Mercy* was about political intrigue and court life, Sybella's story is much more fast-paced and adventurous. And there's also a lot more fighting! Whoo hoo!

Sybella is very much different from Ismae, more bloodthirsty. While both of them have had bad experience with men and live through a lot, Sybella's story is much more darker, vengeful and heartbreaking. I loved how the author didn't reveal Sybella's past right at the beginning, but slowly so the full story is shown just to the end.

“It is a good thing I no longer have a heart, because if I did, it would surely break.”

The romance is also worth mentioning. While I really loved Ismae and Duval, the romance between Sybella and Beast was more interesting and complex for me. They were two broken people with horrible pasts, but together they made each other much stronger and complete.

“It is a raw and uncomfortable realization that Beast is partly behind this newfound will to live. Not for

him, but because he reminded me of what life has to offer. He lives life so joyously - it is impossible not to want that joy for oneself."

If you have read - and loved - Grave Mercy, than I recommend to catch up on the rest of the series, you most definitely won't regret it! And if you thought that Grave Mercy was a little bit slow or missing some fight scenes, then don't fear, this book definitely delivers it and so much more!

"I now possess something I never had before: faith. Faith in myself, faith in Mortain. But most of all, faith in love."

Deborah Obida says

This is even better than the first one, I was a bit skeptical about this, that was why it took me this long to read this. This one focuses on Sybella's story, the politics and war was less in this, the book is 50% Sybella's life, 50% the other stuff. The romance also is cool, it wasn't forced or rushed but happened at a good pace. This book took place after the final battle in Grave Mercy.

The world building and writing is exquisite, I can see an improvement between this and the first book, especially the battle scenes, this is written in first person POV of Sybella.

The characters here are so cool, they were not one dimensional.

Sybella is my favourite character in this book, I like that despite all she has been through she refuses to give up and still has room for love in her life, I prefer her fighting skills to that of Ismae.

The Beast of Worach didn't die as we thought, but was captured by D'Albert, he was tortured but didn't break.

Julian my sweet Julian, I was skeptical about him at first but that changed and he is now among my favourites.

Ismae and Duval was just in this for a few pages and that place was cool.

Oh and I dislike the abbess.

? Sh3lly - Grumpy Name-Changing Wanderer ? says

4.5 stars - This is the second book in the His Fair Assassin trilogy. It focuses on Sybella, who was the mysterious "wild child" from the first book. We learn all about her past and why she is the way she is (aloof, sarcastic, brusque, and seemingly uncaring and unemotional). There is a *very* good reason for the mask she wears in front of others.

I really enjoyed Sybella's story. Her loneliness and melancholy and feeling of always being separate from

others resonated with me. This one didn't have the royal court politics of the first book. It was more of a personal discovery of acceptance and love and Sybella working behind the scenes to help the Duchess. There's still a lot of action. Sybella's background was quite violent and shocking at times.

I also loved Beast.

He is a tall, huge, passionate, and facially disfigured man with a heart of gold. He and Sybella make a perfect match. She's blunt, but he doesn't take it personally, and she eventually softens up to him.

I think I liked the overall story of Grave Mercy just a tad bit more, but Sybella is a richer, deeper, more complex character than Ismae was. This really is a great historical fantasy series.

Rachel Reads Ravenously says

4.5 stars!

“Hate cannot be fought with hate. Evil cannot be conquered by darkness. Only love has the power to conquer them both.”

These books just keep getting better and better!

A daughter of Saint Mortain, Sybella has been trained in the art of assassinry and death. Now that she is a grown woman and fully prepared, the nuns send Sybella to return to her childhood home to spy on her father, and to endure the horrors within.

One evening, Sybella is tasked with aiding the prisoner, Beast, in his escape from the dungeon. From there I cannot say more, as it would give away much of the plot.

“Jewels can be replaced. Independence, once lost, cannot.”

First off, I'd like to note that I rarely if ever, read and enjoy historical fiction. My undergraduate major was general history, so I tend to find historical inaccuracies in many of the HF books I read and it bugs me. I always find myself second guessing what's happening. For example I end up asking myself questions or making statements such as: **“Why are you not pregnant already?!”** or **“They would never be unchaperoned in that time period.”** or **“That is such a modern word phrasing, they would never say that.”** I never found myself doing these things when reading these books. Since this series has an element of magic, I pretty much have been able to overlook these. Plus, these books are just so good that I throw all of my history pet peeves out of the window.

I liked this book so much better than the first one for many reasons. For one, I found the main characters to be incredibly interesting and way more complex than the MC's in the first book.

- **Sybella:** she is cunning, smart, untrustworthy, not quick to trust others, haunted, and abused.
- **Beast:** A man described as that ugly has never been more attractive in the readers' eyes. Beast was a strong, kind, funny, loyal and caring man, and quite honestly, the perfect man for Sybella.

The romance between Beast and Sybella, while not at the forefront of the book, contained some of the sweetest moments. I love the two of them together. It made sense that Sybella would look past Beast's not so handsome features and see him for the valuable man he was on the inside. Beast was also huge so he could easily overcome her in a fight, which not many can do. These characters, they just clicked right together.

The continuation of the themes from the first book was present in this book.

- **Do not use a higher power to justify your own actions.**
- **Think for yourself and make your OWN conclusions.**
- **(specific to the book) Just because someone is marked, does not mean they need to be assassinated.**

Basically I loved this book. The only thing I don't really care for is the political plot, as it doesn't interest me. But it cannot be avoided as it is essential to the plot, so I do my best not to skim it.

“Truly, we are the gods' own children, forged in the fire of our tortured pasts, but also blessed with unimaginable gifts.”

Note: This book is the 2nd in a series and the 1st book must be read before this one in order to understand what is going on.

Robin (Bridge Four) says

10/6/14 - Currently as Read Now on Netgalley

I loved this book. Sybella and Beast together are phenomenal. This is a great blend of HF with a splash of romance and a little dash of magic.

Original Review:

While grave Mercy was more of a political intrigue Dark Triumph is a personal story of redemption. Sybella and Beast's story is compelling how they are very similar people with very different attitudes toward what they do. I was immediately captured by our broken Sybella. Seeing the inner dialog of her made me realize just how masterful she was at hiding her true self and feelings from those around her the game she has had to play all her life with her family. Her rode to mend her broken heart and learn to love again was all I could hope it would be and Beast is such a great love interest. I loved his carefree being in Grave Mercy and to see him in this is wonderful. He is ugly, hard and fierce on the outside but on the inside he is patient, tender and caring.

The story picked up quickly overlapping only slightly with Grave Mercy as Sybella is trying to save Ismael and the Duchess from a trap. Soon it is discovered that Beast has been captured and Sybella must save him

from a terrible fate at the hands of her father. On their journey to reach the Duchess, Sybella finds how the story of her life is intertwined with Beasts' and the seed of love begins to grow in the shriveled heart she believes she has. It was so tender and true and I loved how unsure she was of herself and how even though she didn't need Beast to save her she is able to grow to love herself after seeing through his eyes. In a way they save one another and become even stronger together.

Sybella about Beast - I am left with the conviction that an avalanche would be easier to dissuade than that man.

This is a great companion novel to Grave Mercy and I really can't wait to be transported back into this world in the next novel about Annith. There is even a little time with Ismae and Duval in Dark Triumph. I loved seeing them together again. I look forward to the wrap up to all the story arcs I think that Annith's story will bring.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

<http://melissa413readsalot.blogspot.com>

I FREAKING HATE COUNT D'ALBRET!

I FREAKING HATE COUNT D'ALBRET!

YES, I HAD TO SAY IT TWICE! HE IS BEYOND EVIL!!!!!!!

So, Sybella is sent back to her evil father, d'Albret after spending 4 years at the convent of St. Mortain. The lovely and evil abbess thought it would be ideal to send her back to this hell and try to take him out if he bore the marque and some other stuff.

Gotta be watchin them nuns!

Sybella is trying to play her part the best she can, but she just wants to kill her father and be out of there. She worries every day about all of the innocent people being killed and when is the marque going to show up on him!

After reading so much evil this man does, I want him dead, brought back to life and killed again. Rinse and repeat!

Here is a little glimpse of the evil bastard!

Once, when I was ten years old, d'Albret became so enraged at his favorite hunting hound for not bringing down a twelve-point stag that he shot the creature with his hunting bow. After a brief yelp of pain, the loyal beast began dragging himself toward d'Albret, the arrow embedded in his hindquarters, whining softly in his throat and begging forgiveness. D'Albret finally relented and delivered a second shot that put him out of his misery

Sorry son of a bitch..sohoihgiaodhgisoghsiodhfiosdhfsiodhgsiohgaiosdghsaogh!!!!!!

THAT MAN NEEDS TO SUFFER!

Moving on..

Sybella decides she wants to free one of the prisoners that she feels is in the towers somewhere. He is a beast of a man, he is actually called Beast of Waroch. He's huge and fierce and took on a whole ton of men on his own. He is really cool and I just love him. They escape, Sybella goes with them to be reunited with Ismae and all of the other good peeps. They meet some really cool people on the way. They were called charbonneries, I think I got that right, they were pretty fierce and living wild.

It's really sweet because Sybella and Beast find love together in this horrific place.

Sybella starts to remember something really, really terrible that happened to her at the hands of her father and she shares it with Beast. See if you don't want to tear him into little piece some more after reading this!

"In that moment, I saw what he meant to do. I struggled to get out of bed. 'Stop him!' I cried, but of course, none of the servants would dare cross him ." I look up into Beast's stricken face. "Only Alyse. She was the only one who moved to save my baby. She threw herself at him, trying to grab the baby from his hands, but he struck her, knocking her to the ground, where she hit her head on the leg of the heavy wooden chair. I did not know until days later that she had died from the blow. "Then he put his thick fingers around my baby's frail neck and broke it. When he was done, he tossed the baby to the floor, and left the room."

Want some dismemberment of this jerk now!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Alyse was Beast's sister btw.

That someday would have come sooner than later!

So the ending seemed good, but I'm not sure.. I was oh yes.. then hmmmm.. I don't think so..

And I'm really hoping I'm wrong, BUT.. I would rather have a more horrific ending than what I am thinking happened. Read it and see what I mean! GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

4.5 stars

About a year ago, the words ‘assassin nuns’ first started showing up around the blogosphere. Pretty soon they were everywhere, and everyone was talking about Grave Mercy, some obviously thrilled and some not so much. Seeing as I neatly fell into the first category, Dark Triumph became one of those books I often thought about... dreamed about, to be completely honest. And I was not disappointed.

The darkness of Ismae’s story pales in comparison to the utter hopelessness of Sybella’s circumstances. Sybella’s tale is so deeply personal and painful, a story of torture and degradation, a story full of monsters and betrayals. It is not an easy read, that much I can tell you, and yet it is certainly worth your tears, for you will be a better person once you finish it.

Unlike Ismae, who is well-trained but not that experienced, Sybella is a seasoned assassin. She kills those who deserve it and she does it without mercy. From the outside, it seems that her heart has hardened and that there isn’t a flicker of warmth inside her.

Through Sybella, LaFevers raised some interesting questions. Can a wounded animal ever completely heal? Can a person who’s been hurt in ways unimaginable to a normal human being ever find it within herself to trust anyone? What does it take to repair a shattered soul? Believe me when I say you will feel Sybella’s pain. It was an ugly cry I cried for this girl and yet my perception was limited because a human heart truly can’t stretch that far without breaking. There’s only so much I can imagine without unconsciously raising barriers to protect myself, and Sybella’s suffering went far above those limits.

The most interesting part by far were Sybella’s doubts regarding her god and father, Mortain. Her shaky beliefs were only natural – with all the hurt and betrayal she’s suffered, it’s hard for her to believe in anything, least of all a powerful father who supposedly loves her. Love? Sybella knows no such thing. No one ever truly loved her when she was a child, not without ulterior motives, and until she met Ismae and Annith, the concept was completely strange to her.

And then she saves Beast, the duchess’s mighty hero, and she finds compassion and tenderness in the most unlikely of places. There are secrets between them, but there’s love and admiration too, and they both have to decide which part is more important.

Beast as a hero made me think about all the other heroes I hold close to my heart, which lead me to conclude that I’ve matured somewhat as a (romance) reader. Perfection no longer holds any appeal for me. It’s not all those rich, gorgeous and successful male characters I remember to this day. Instead, it’s Curran, with his broken nose and his eyes filled with violence. It’s Terrible, with mutton chops on his ugly, scarred face. It’s March, brutal, determined and strong, but nowhere near beautiful. Duval, a soldier above all, both inside and out. And finally, it’s the mighty Beast of Waroch, uglier than you can imagine.

LaFevers took a lot of risks in Dark Triumph, made a lot of choices that proved her worth, although they might not sit well with some. These days, when packaged books have become the norm rather than an (unwanted) exception, it’s comforting to know there are authors like Robin LaFevers who are artists above all. Some of us tend to forget that literature is art first, and business second (if at all), but luckily there are those who remind us over and over again.

Finishing *Dark Triumph* wasn't easy at all. LaFevers did a fabulous job of wrapping things up, but I did not want to part with Sybella and Beast. In fact, the second I finished the final page, I wanted to go back to the beginning and start all over again. That's really not something I get to say very often.

(In case you're wondering about the heroes I've mentioned, they are from the Kate Daniels series, The Downside Ghosts series, the Sirantha Jax series and of course, the His Fair Assassin trilogy, respectively.)

Mitch says

Now this is the book *Grave Mercy* was supposed to be. I was on the fence about Ismae's story, basically when I discovered (along with everyone else) that the assassin nuns weren't so much espionage, murder, and mayhem as much as forbidden romance and courtesan intrigue, but I ultimately came down on the 'pro' side because the backdrop of Anne of Brittany's attempts to keep her duchy independent and out of French hands resonated with this admitted historical junkie. Still, I think it's probably telling my favorite character in *Grave Mercy* wasn't Ismae but Anne, and I really didn't have any expectations about Sybella's story or *Dark Triumph*.

Well, what a difference one book makes - *Dark Triumph* certainly surprised me by being a sequel that ultimately is not *Grave Mercy*. Not at first, I wasn't too keen on the first few chapters because, frankly, nothing really happens as Sybella goes about her assignment in d'Albret's household, though her interactions with d'Albret and her brother Julian do delve into her tragic past and answer many of Ismae's questions about her character from the first book. But beyond a poisoned glove here and an eavesdropped conversation there, I was starting to get the distinct impression that, plotwise at least, *Dark Triumph* was going to be *Grave Mercy* all over again - except worse, because Anne's role and the historical aspect is dramatically diminished while d'Albret looms large as this brutal, yet untouchable, villain. In fact, the low point comes as Sybella's completing the assignment given to her by the Abbess to help the Beast of Waroch, who's been taken prisoner, escape, and she poisons d'Albret's entire garrison, and I don't know, but rather than escaping with one prisoner, if the entire garrison's unconscious, wouldn't it be the perfect time to rally the townspeople and get them to rise up and kill d'Albret instead?

Ok, so you might be wondering, didn't I just say *Dark Triumph* isn't *Grave Mercy*? What's going on? I did, that's absolutely true, but I guess LaFevers takes her time until after Sybella escapes d'Albret with the Beast to show it. The seeds are already there, Sybella for one is a very different character from Ismae, a tortured character, and not only does she not have any hesitation towards killing, she actually revels in it. But although Sybella is wickedly good with throwing knives, crossbows, and a garrote, rather than mindless violence, Sybella going up against the French and d'Albret's men serves two purposes, one showing just how, not just her, but her entire family, is damaged by d'Albret's cruelty, and the other really a question of theology and faith, trying to get at the true purpose of Saint Mortain, his marks, and whether the Abbess is really serving him or her own agenda. *Grave Mercy* sort of explores these issues as well, but d'Albret as seen through Ismae's eyes is nothing like the d'Albret in *Dark Triumph*, and Ismae's realizations about Mortain seem almost trite in comparison to what Sybella discovers, and how that puts her and her relationship with her family in perspective.

It's that perspective on Sybella and her family that really forms the bulk of my appreciation for *Dark*

Triumph. Julian was always a hard character to pin down, particularly his unclear motives and of course the incest, but in the end I'm impressed LaFevers has made Julian really a tragic hero who shows just what the depths of d'Albret's depravity did to that whole family. It's telling that at the start of this book I really didn't understand Julian at all, and by the end he's pretty much my favorite character of the series by far. I'm a bit less impressed with Sybella bonding with Beast over his sister, Sybella's stepmother - I tolerated Ismae and Duval in *Grave Mercy* because I was really reading for Anne and the political intrigue, but Sybella and Beast are harder to ignore here, mostly because Sybella's character development (which is great) is the main point of this book. I suppose in a way Sybella and Beast are better than Ismae and Duval, heck they certainly fight better than Ismae and Duval, but despite how Beast is a different kind of love interest, the brutish, ugly kind, I guess the way he's portrayed as protecting Sybella just came off as a different kind of romantic cliche, the protective tough guy kind.

Overall though, *Dark Triumph* is a book that, as its title suggests, is far darker than its predecessor, but in a way that uses that darkness to create some incredibly compelling characters. It's not a book without flaws, and probably requires a degree of patience, but it certainly delivers, both in terms of action and character arcs, in the end. Sure, I'm left with questions about Mortain's true purpose, but here's hoping *Mortal Heart* provides the answers.
