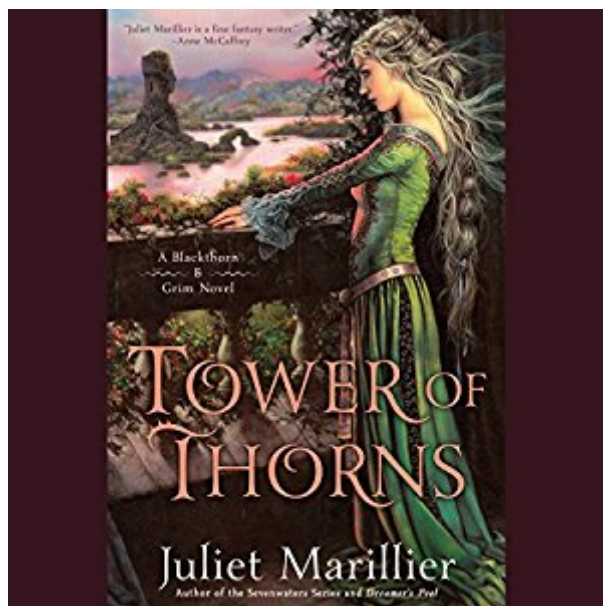


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Tower Of Thorns: Blackthorn & Grim, Book 2



Synopsis

Award-winning author Juliet Marillier's "lavishly detailed" (Publishers Weekly) Blackthorn & Grim series continues as a mysterious creature holds an enchanted and imperiled ancient Ireland in thrall. Disillusioned healer Blackthorn and her companion, Grim, have settled in Dalriada to wait out the seven years of Blackthorn's bond to her fey mentor, hoping to avoid any dire challenges. But trouble has a way of seeking out Blackthorn and Grim. Lady GeilfÆis, a noblewoman from the northern border, has asked for the prince of Dalriada's help in expelling a howling creature from an old tower on her land - one surrounded by an impenetrable hedge of thorns. Casting a blight over the entire district, and impossible to drive out by ordinary means, it threatens both the safety and the sanity of all who live nearby. With no ready solutions to offer, the prince consults Blackthorn and Grim. As Blackthorn and Grim begin to put the pieces of this puzzle together, it's apparent that a powerful adversary is working behind the scenes. Their quest is about to become a life-and-death struggle - a conflict in which even the closest of friends can find themselves on opposite sides.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Last year in DREAMER'S POOL we met Blackthorn and Grim, who quickly became two of my new favorite characters. They were both woefully broken, but that mutual brokenness (aided by a promise made to one of the folk) was what made them so compatible. As friends, as cohorts, as travel companions. Blackthorn, fueled by her implacable hatred of the man who took everything from her, quickly stole the spotlight--not only is she a healer, a position regarded with respect, she is more

forthright. She may be surly and taciturn, but if something needs to be said, Blackthorn is the one one to say it. Grim was a strong back for lifting heavy objects. He took odd jobs, performing manual labor for various townspeople, and when he spoke, he used as few words as possible. Obviously, there was more to him than that, but he was firmly established in Blackthorn's background. And he's perfectly happy there. Or as happy as a man like him is capable. This time around, Grim, still silent, still steady, burrowed so deeply into my heart that he's still there, months after I first read this book. I can't think of him without a corresponding ache. Marillier so brilliantly captured his patience, his selflessness, his calm acceptance of his perceived lack of any real usefulness and the inevitability of his belief that one day--it's only a matter of time--Blackthorn will get tired of him and send him on his way, worthless sod that he is. It hurts. Ye gods, it hurts. But it hurts the way it hurts to look at Chihuly glass in the sunlight or heathered fields in Virginia. It hurts b/c it's so damn beautiful. In TOWER OF THORNS, Blackthorn and Grim are once more thrust into the strangeness that goes hand-in-hand with fey creatures and practitioners of magic. A woman has come to court, begging Prince Oran for assistance. Her land and her people are plagued by a creature in a tower. It howls in agony from sunup to sundown every, single day. The tower is surrounded by impenetrable thorns, and all attempts to get through them result in injury and death. Marillier spins her story so deftly that you wonder if you've heard it before, but, no, that's not possible--you have no idea what's going to happen, and yet . . . it feels so familiar. B/c it is the quintessential fairytale. There are secrets and selfishness, harsh truths and consequences. But there is also peace and forgiveness and a road on a sunnier path. You only have to step out of the darkness. TOWER OF THORNS by Juliet Mariller is bloody fantastic. As much as I loved DREAMER'S POOL--and I did love it--this second installment of BLACKTHORN AND GRIM has taken up residence inside me, it's now part of me, and I will make a nuisance of myself, pushing it on everyone b/c you NEED to experience it for yourself. Tied with Uprooted by Naomi Novik for my favorite book of 2015.

The best part of Tower of Thorns is the great leading characters. I really like Blackthorn. She is smart, tough, emotional, not young, and very, very flawed. I love Grim, who desperately loves Blackthorn even more than he realizes. I appreciate that Grim is much smarter than people give him credit for. As a pair, Blackthorn and Grim are underestimated and therefore, the best at solving mysteries. In Tower of Thorns, the mystery is the tower itself. And the creature in the tower. Blackthorn sets out to determine how to break the curse. Breaking the curse should appease the creature and bring peace to the land. Blackthorn tries to unravel what everyone in the district, including some taciturn fae, have told her (or not told her) about the legend associated with the

tower. Meanwhile, Grim watches from the background in his own unassuming way, collecting his own important clues. This unlikely partnership is currently my favorite pair of fictional detectives. Even though I absolutely knew that there was information being withheld and Blackthorn did not have all the details; even though I was expecting a horrible realization when the truth was revealed; there was an audible gasp from me the moment that it happened. I LOVE surprises. The three-narrator audiobook version makes the story even more amazing. With separate narrators (Natalie Gold, Nick Sullivan and Susannah Jones) for three different points of view — Blackthorn, Grim and Geil, the story comes alive and is very difficult to turn off. Juliett Marillier is an amazing storyteller. The Blackthorn & Grim series has truly captured my imagination. Tower of Thorns is for the person who enjoys characters with depth, a multi-faceted story with surprises and a very satisfying ending.

The second book of the series is as strong as the first; just as memorable, just as painful. Marillier's stories aren't easy to read, but they're hugely rewarding. Despite the suffering of the characters, there are always moments of astounding beauty, often illuminating some delicate and marvelous discovery in the natural world. Here, much of the story's struggle happens within Blackthorn's head as she wrestles constantly with the choices she's made. That turmoil makes her less discerning than she generally is, but Grim rises to the foreground as his loyalty finds a great reward. We learn a lot more about his backstory, though he doesn't share it with Blackthorn, and he receives some wholly unlooked-for healing while helping others. If there's ever a man who ought to be blessed with a great and fruitful love, it's Grim, and I hope Marillier grants him all the gifts he deserves along the way in the next books...

The story is solid and the premise good, although there are few surprises in the main plot due to the periodic flashbacks. That makes for a significant flaw, as the reader is *not* in the thick of Blackthorn's struggle to uncover what's going on -- just waiting for her to catch up. There *is* a surprising twist independent of that. However... in order to get there, you have to wade through a bunch of Blackthorn fretting over her vow vs. her revenge and writing off Grim as "he'll be fine without me" when she's had abundant evidence that that is not at all the case! After having spent the last book's character development on that very issue, it was pretty aggravating to find that Blackthorn hadn't progressed at all. So while this story was solid, the plotting okay, the writing good... the lack of character progression made it not so much a pleasure to read.

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