

Best Book Club with Shanna and Jen Podcast
Season 1, Episode 15 - April 7, 2021

A Court of Thorns and Roses by Sara J. Maas Book Review and Discussion

Jen: Hello Everyone and welcome to the Best Book Club Podcast - I'm Jen

Shanna: And I'm Shanna

Jen: And today we are going to be talking about A Court of Thorns and Roses by Sara J Maas.

Shanna: We will start by warning you that, like with all of our book discussions, this episode will contain spoilers and also possibly some adult language - not sure yet, but just in case. There is definitely sex in this book, and we are going to talk about it. So, even if we aren't swearing, there is that.

Jen: Okay so this is the first book in a series also called A Court of Thorns and Roses

Shanna: Ok you know, I could have googled that, but I didn't, and every time I start trying to talk about it I fade off like "A court ... series ... A court of mmmmbmmhmm"

Jen: Haha me too. I really prefer when books have another name for the series as a whole. Maybe it's because the main character Feyre is called "cursebreaker" in these books and once it was realized that Brigid Kemmerer had already called her Beauty and the Beast retelling series "The Cursebreaker Series", it got awkward? Especially since most of the books in Maas' series came out first? That makes no sense, but, This is either a really funny coincidence or an unfortunate oversight that I HAVE noticed and questioned.

Jen: Anyways, that doesn't really matter.

Jen: Disclaimer. I have read the next two books in this series and I am going to try so hard not to let them into this episode. Usually, I wouldn't be too worried about it, but I think it matters for these books and I will get into why a little bit later on.

Shanna: And I have intentionally not read the next one yet so that one of us can act as spoiler control. I know if I kept going they would start melding in my mind too and we would both just be trying to remember what book we are talking about the whole time.

Jen: I am honestly having such a hard time separating this book with the other ones. I'm gonna do my best.

Jen: This book was published in 2015 and is well known for being a retelling of Beauty and the Beast.

Shanna: Which turns out, I am into.

Jen: ME TOO! As I've said before, I have become such a huge fan of retellings so as soon as I found out that these books that I have been seeing EVERYWHERE recently was one, I was in. Especially because it was Beauty and the Beast which is one of my favorite stories of all time.

Jen: Okay, before we get started, I want to talk a little bit about the classification of this novel. I went into this book expecting YA because I had seen so many people describe it that way but it didn't take long for me to become a little bit confused because as I was reading it, it was very obviously not YA in my opinion. So that got me thinking about what actually constitutes a YA book. To clarify, YA is written for readers from 12 to 18 years of age and includes common themes such as friendship, first love, relationships, and identity all coming from the point of view of young adults. As far as the bookstores in our town go, this series is definitely sold in the adult section. Well not the "adult" section - although it could be. Being that I have a child that is between the ages of 12 and 18, if someone gave her this book, thinking that it was YA, I would be so upset. What about you, Shanna, did you think it felt like YA? Am I totally off base here?

Shanna: It definitely felt "New Adult" to me. I think YA also has something to do with the ages of the characters? And these ones are definitely 18 plus. I don't actually recall an age being mentioned in the story, but the general vibe was that these are people who are legally adults.

Jen: Yeah, Feyre is 19 so she IS young but she's not that young and I wouldn't really call her voice young either. Also, literally everyone else in the book is 1000 years old at least. So this book is categorized as Adult. I could see it being considered New Adult, but for some reason I just don't really like the idea of "new adult" and I don't see it used very often..

Shanna: Oh see and I thought New Adult fit this one perfectly! It feels kind of YA, but not all the way. It still felt like it had some of the lightness to it that some adult fantasy can lose. I love fantasy, don't get me wrong, but yeah, this just had ... something different to it.

Jen: Yes I know what you mean! Anyways, it did get me wondering why a book that has quite a lot of adult themes and adult sex would even be considered YA and I'm wondering if it has a little bit to do with the fact that it is fantasy marketed mostly to women so it's maybe seen as less legitimate than fantasy focused towards men.

Shanna: You know I didn't think of that but you might be onto something there. Maybe it being a fairy tale retelling also makes the brain assume since fairy tales are for children that it's for a younger audience? Maybe?

Jen: It would seem that Sara J Maas really enjoys pulling from older folklore, myths, fairy tales - because I have seen this come up a few times while reading about her books. I found it out that Thorns and Roses seems to be a retelling of a few different stories at once.

Jen: One of them is actually from an old scottish fairy ballad called Tam Lin - which if you don't know - is the name of one of our main characters in this book, except in the ballad it is like Tam space Lin and in this book the character's name is Tamlin.

Jen: Anyways, basically the story of Tam Lin is that a mortal woman encounters a mysterious man in the forbidden forest when she picks a rose that does not belong to her. Apparently they must have sex because she goes home and then finds out that she's pregnant. She then seeks him out and finds out that he is being held captive by a fairy queen and some other stuff happens but basically she is asked to break his curse and rescue him. So. That sounds familiar. There is also a part about changing into other beasts and Tamlin in this book is a shapeshifter. It's super interesting, I definitely recommend looking more into this if you're interested in this kind of thing. These are the parts of the story that are relevant here today but there are tons of different versions of it. I found the rose part to be really interesting because that's also kind of an homage to Beauty and the Beast - it doesn't happen in this book - or maybe beauty and the beast took from this ballad or maybe it's a coincidence!? I don't know.

Jen: The other is the story of Psyche and Cupid. This is a pretty long story to be honest, so I am going to give the real cliff notes about it because THIS is not why you are here! But, I live for this stuff so I'm goin for it. So, there are three daughters, the youngest is the most beautiful - her name is Psyche and Venus becomes jealous of her. So in revenge, Venus sends Cupid to shoot Psyche with an arrow so that she may fall in love with something hideous. Instead he scratches himself with the arrow which makes you fall in love with the first thing you see and so he falls in love with Psyche. This pisses everyone off and she is taken away. When she wakes up from a magical sleep, she wanders around until she finds a beautiful house that has golden columns, a carved ceiling of citrus wood and ivory, silver walls embossed with animals, jeweled mosaic floors - so very fancy and very spring courtish. A disembodied voice -which turns out to be cupid- gets her to fall in love with him but when she finds out who he is, she is taken away and has to undergo three tasks set out by Venus including - sorting lentils which may sound familiar to you all - some other stuff happens and in the end they plead their case to the gods who make Psyche immortal so they can be married and together forever.

Jen: So obviously, like I said, more happens in that story but you can see the similarities between both of them, along with beauty and the beast to this adaptation.

Shanna: Yes I can absolutely see all three of these stories being put into a shaker and having "A Court of Thorns and Roses" fall out.

Jen: Talking to people about this book has been kind of interesting because everyone seems to see another story woven through it. I have had people mention Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, Hunger Games. In this way it feels like it could appeal to a lot of different people differently.

Shanna: Totally.

Jen: I read this book first and as I was reading it, I kept telling you that you would not like it and to not even bother. Then I read the second book and I changed my opinion there. I told you to SUFFER through the first book to get to the second. I didn't say that because I didn't like the first book, because I did, I just wasn't sure you would be able to overlook some of the parts that I was having a hard time with. But! You started it and really liked it! And I was shocked!

Shanna: I know! You were so wrong! Like, shockingly wrong. I loved all of this book. I was trying to find what I thought you thought I wouldn't like, and couldn't find it. I thought MAYBE it would be the age difference, because we know how I feel about that. BUT my opinions there change with a few points. 1) As long as everyone in the story is a CONSENTING ADULT. I don't care if they are 20 and 70. 2) Turns out like, 17 and 27, I say, gross. Stop it. 19 and 1000? That's fine. It's so outside the realm of possibility, and also, magic, so, that changes things.

Jen: Yeah I don't even know what I know anymore! Obviously I cannot be in charge of telling you what and whatnot to read - I will tell you at the end what I thought you wouldn't like!

Jen: I read this book in January, but you've just finished it so you are going to be more familiar with particular details of the story. Plus, you specifically didn't start the next book even though you were dying to so that your opinion and memory of this book wouldn't be muddled by information from the second book like mine is. Ugh this is going to be so hard.

Shanna: Exactly. I sacrificed to serve the cause. I am very noble. I don't blame you for going on though. If I didn't have a bunch of reading I was trying to get done as well it would have been way harder for me to resist starting the next one immediately.

Jen: So the book starts out with Feyre who is a young woman whose family used to be very wealthy but they lost all of their money when the father made some bad/risky business decisions. She lives in what sounds like pretty extreme poverty in a very small house with her father and two older sisters. Their father is unable to work because he got his kneecaps smashed in by people he owed money to so instead he basically sits by the fire doing wood carvings he sometimes sells?

Shanna: Yes. He ... you know ... sucked a bit.

Jen: Feyre's sisters, Elaine and Nesta, are portrayed as being frivolous, ridiculous and completely selfish. They spend any money they can get their hands on, they don't help out around the house or with providing for the family and to top it off, they are quite rude to Feyre who is literally keeping them alive. Elaine is described as the sweet sister and Nesta is the cold one.

Shanna: They were also quite unlikable at the beginning.

Jen: Their mother died -OF COURSE-

Shanna: Is it really a fairy tale if they don't kill off the mother?

Jen: Right? She died years ago and on her deathbed she told Feyre to take care of the entire family even though SHE IS THE YOUNGEST. What? I think that she was 14 when she died? She is only 19 at the start of this book so she was basically a child and she had to learn how to hunt to keep them from starving.

Shanna: I mean, a mother knows? /Dying mother voice: "Feyre, everyone else is completely selfish and incompetent, sorry about this, but you know, they will die without you. Don't let everyone else die like me Feyre"

Jen: This whole part killed me. Her whole relationship with her family to be honest. I just would not take that kind of crap from anyone, even if they were family. And her whole motivation through the first half of the book is that she has to take care of her family - like no. I would have been like screw those jerks.

Shanna: Yeah, the feeling I was getting from the whole thing was she was super over it and just in survival mode. You know where like, the amount of shit is just so much you don't even really notice it anymore? Like oh, what's that? More shit. Of course it is. Cool cool.

Jen: One day she is out hunting when she sees a deer that she wants to kill, but she also sees a large wolf. She kills the deer and then also the wolf and then she kills it/ skins it etc. And with her small malnourished body, carries the deer and the wolf pelt back home where her family basically just fights over what to do with the money she is going to get from it.

Shanna: SO. RUDE.

Jen: Basically Feyre is Cinderella and her sisters are the evil step sisters, I swear. Not long later, a beast smashes through her door screaming "murderer!" and confirms that the wolf she had killed was indeed a fairy.

Shanna: She knew in her heart it was.

Jen: Yeah I guess she suspected it, but hated fairies so much that she went for the kill anyways.

Shanna: There is a treaty between the fae and the humans, which she violated by killing one of them so now he is forced to kill her because - a life for a life. But he says he is sick of all the killing and instead offers that she come and live with him in Prythian which is the name of the fairy lands. He gives her the choice, die now or come with me. She chooses to go with him, with the idea that she will escape one day.

Jen: I remembered that this happened, obviously, but I think I blocked it out a bit. In my memory, the beast was a wolf just like the one in the woods, but he's actually a lion with a wolf head and antlers I think? Which sounds weird but is pretty beast like - okay I looked at some fan art and some of it was actually pretty cool. But! We both did the book on audio - which seems to be a trend for us - and I don't know about you but to me, this scene felt very cartoony to me and I'm not sure if it just has something to do with the way the narrator read it.

Jen: When they make it to his estate, Feyre, despite not wanting to be imprisoned, is pretty amazed. After living in such poverty for so long, she's actually a bit pumped I think.

Shanna: I mean, of course. Imagine.

Jen: Also, it turns out that the scary beast is actually a hot guy - well she thinks he's hot but she can't exactly tell because he is wearing a gold mask that only leaves his mouth exposed. She soon finds that everyone there wears masks. She also finds out that Tamlin - that's his name btw - isn't just Fae he is high fae and also high lord of the spring court which means he is super powerful.

Shanna: Hawt.

Jen: Okay a note on the masks haha. This part also made me laugh...this doesn't get revealed until a little later in the book, but we find out that the reason they are all wearing them is because they were at a masquerade party when they were cursed and so the masks they were wearing that night are now a part of them. Hahah. I don't know why exactly, but it made me laugh out loud - for whatever reason, I didn't picture the mask as masquerade style and when that was revealed, it just felt so corny.

Shanna: That's so funny. I did picture them masquerade style but also a bit steampunk? I totally felt for them about wanting to tear their faces off after a while though. I would loooooose it.

Jen: Oh totally! The picture that I created in my mind, especially because everyone other than Tamlin is wearing an animal mask is actually ridiculous and I could not take them seriously. I had to basically pretend that the masks didn't exist for the entire book which was fine.

Shanna: Feyre's whole motivation and life purpose, remains that even though she is comfortable and taken care of, she needs to get back to her family because she made this promise to her mother and how is her family going to survive without her?

Jen: Seriously, I hated this so much - it was so irritating! Tamlin told her that he made sure that her family was taken care of and that he wouldn't have left them with nothing. She doesn't know exactly what that means, but she doesn't believe him and just whines and whines about it forever. My family, my family, my family. I love my family, obviously, but if they treated me like actual garbage, I would just be happy to be free of them. Plus, her mom was also a crappy mom and person, so I don't know why she felt the need to take her "dying wish" so seriously. To

be honest, I don't even understand why this was her mom's dying wish to begin with. Her mom loved parties and being rich and she didn't care about her family at all so I thought that was weird to begin with.

Shanna: I remember her saying something to the effect of a promise is ... like ... an unbreakable vow. Ok that's Harry Potter, but you know what I mean. Instead of dying its super bad luck. Or something. And the mean sister really liked her mom, or maybe I am just saying that because she didn't hate her like she hates their dad. Who was also awful. I mean, all of your points stand.

Jen: Yeah I'm not sure they had any good luck anyways lol and then even after Tamlin tells her that he family is taken care of and not to worry, she still needs to get away to take care of them. I guess I'm coming at it as someone who works their butt off constantly... If someone said sit back and relax, I would. I just would. I was like FOOL! Take a break Feyre!

Shanna: Omg lol yes preach. I am so round right now when I am told to sit I sit. I also sit when I am not told to sit. I do a lot of sitting these days. It's actually pretty good.

Jen: So she's living in Tamlin's house and spending time with him. Another male also lives there BTW, his name is Lucian and he is.....what's his job....

Shanna: He is the Ambassador.

Jen: Yeah and Instead of a library he has an art gallery - oh and Feyre also paints, that's her thing.

Shanna: She can't even read! Which was a very different thing than Belle, but I thought that was an interesting way to keep the same flavour from Beauty and the Beast while still shaking it up some.

Jen: I really didn't enjoy this aspect of Feyre's character. I haven't seen anyone else complain about it so maybe it's just a me thing but it felt very unnatural to me. I think it gets worse in the second book but I found her stopping to describe how she would paint everything she sees to be very distracting from the story and some of the things she described painting - like every available surface of her house - sounds very amateurish and not what I would want at all. I could understand why Nesta wasn't impressed.. It's still annoying me in the third book so that did not improve for me.

Shanna: Hahahahaha ahhh well. Yes that does sound like a you problem, but maybe it'll start bugging me too in the next book so I will report back . I didn't find it too distracting while I was reading it, but now that you mention it it was kind of a lot. Mostly how often she said "I would never be able to capture it/her/him" Like, I get it, you suck at painting.

Shanna: At one point Fayre gets warned that there will be a fairy kind of holiday called Calanmai happening and that to stay safe, she should stay in her room. Of course she doesn't listen because no one will tell her anything about it so she sneaks out to see what's going on.

Jen: OMG I messaged you about this when it happened haha. Something like "Not really sure how I feel about the sex ritual" haha

Shanna: Baaahahaha ooooh yeah. I mean, it was a bit. I dunno. Fine I guess. It didn't bother me anyways. I am all about them kinks though. At least all the fairy ladies got to choose to be there. If they're down for that, go ahead and let your freak flags fly ladies. My bar is pretty low, like, don't be siblings, be consenting adults. Do you think they had safe words? Probably not hey.

Jen: All of these females present themselves to Tamlin and he must choose one to have crazy sex with to replenish the lands for spring? Then when Fayre shows up there and immediately almost gets attacked by three males who basically think they can do whatever they want because all the females are there to have sex? Luckily another fairy saves her from them..

Shanna: See, less crazy about that. I mean, someone could have MENTIONED she was not invited to the wild springtime bang-a-thon, instead of "trust me you wont like it" like those cereal commercials. Like, excuse you, now I'm gonna eat that cereal out of spite. I could really go for a bowl of cereal right now.

Jen: Right? And if I remember correctly she told them not to touch her and they were very much not listening. Then when Lucian sees her, he tells her that Tamlin will be able to smell her and he won't be able to control himself and then basically anything that happens is her fault for not listening to them?

Jen: Okay, here's my thing, a bunch of consenting adults having a sex ritual....thats fine...whatever. I'm not into ritualistic sex but I'm sure there's nothing wrong with it. But, when it becomes that the men will be so frenzied that they can't control themselves it gets gross.

Shanna: Agreed. Safe words people. Use them. Respect them.

Jen: Plus when Feyre does return to the house, she encounters Tamlin and he goes on to tell her that he can't control himself and it's not his fault, he's not himself, and he bites her on the neck. This stuff can happen in a story, it's not surprising but my problem was how into it Fayre was.

Shanna: I mean, he's pretty sexy.

Jen: I guess, but it all felt a little too rapey to me.

Shanna: Yes, I can see that. I think her being in on the frenzied sex aspect of the whole thing would have cleared that up a bit. She was DTF before that though so I can kinda see why she wasn't too bothered.

Jen: Maybe I looked at it through a different lens because I have heard people describe how hot this scene was but I was cringing away from it.

Jen: And here's another thing - The way Tamlin is described is very animalistic, very beastly. He growls and roars and bites and all of this is described as being sexy and it was just not to me. It really turned me off. Literally and literally.

Shanna: Jen is not a furry. Noted.

Jen: Yes, note me down for a negative there. This might be jumping ahead a little bit, but while we're here, I also messaged you that I didn't consider myself to be prude but I really kind of felt like one while reading the sex scenes! I think that a part of it was that I thought that I was reading a YA novel and then suddenly there was a lot "Sheathing" going on and I was like "waaaaaaaiiittt what?!". And by the way. This would be where I would be having a problem if my young teenager picked this book up also expecting YA. There isn't enough sex or me to call this erotica in any way but the sex scenes were erotic novel level - honestly. I think because of how beastly Tamlin is, I found myself giggling more than anything at his roars of pleasure. In the following books, there is also a lot of sex but it is less giggle worthy and that's ALL I CAN SAY ABOUT THAT!

Shanna: Oh good, I will make sure I stop and tell you my opinion in real time for the next book.

Jen: But on with the story, one thing we also know by now is that there is a sickness they call the "blight" that has been plaguing the lands of Prythian for almost 50 years and it has gotten much worse recently and they tell Fayre that it is now becoming threatening to the human land on the other side of the wall and the only cause we are given is that a mysterious "she" is responsible. But we don't get much more information than that.

Shanna: As you know I get pretty annoyed when information is purposely withheld for dumb reasons. I actually liked the reasoning for why they couldn't tell her more accurate information the whole time in this one. AND earlier than all of this, well before they're really friendly at all, she went into the woods to capture a ... creature. The Suriel. And it will answer any question you ask it, but all tricky and cryptic, you know, because that's just how mythical creatures roll. That's how I would do it too so I don't blame them. If I was clever enough I would speak in riddle way more often and I'm just a normal creature. Anyways, what is my point? Oh, it tells her some stuff too. Staying with Tamlin was really the biggy. I tried to google what else but then I got a big ol' spoiler first thing and I gave up.

Jen: How do Tamlin and Feyre actually get together? There is a party and Feyre gets drunk on fairy wine even though Lucian warns her not to? I think they kiss and dance - Tamlin and Feyre - and then they are in love? I can't exactly remember.

Shanna: Ahh yes, I remember reading that part and being like "please for the love of all that is good in this world don't do the drunk hook up thing" and it wasn't quite that so I was appeased. She drinks the fairy wine, and Tamlin is all "ho ho ho you silly" and yes they dance all night. And then when she is sobering up he takes her to that starlight lake and she talks about how bad she wants to paint it but never could.

Jen: But then! They are all having a meal and Tamlin sensing something, tells Feyre to get behind Lucian and he glamors her so that she is invisible. Rhysand who is the high lord of the night court and also turns out to be the male who saved Feyre from the rapists shows up in the dining room, obviously uninvited. Though glamored, he can sense that Feyre is there and threatens to tell his lover, Amarantha, who is the "she" that has been mentioned. When asked for her name, Feyre gives the name of another girl in her town and Tamlin and Lucian beg Rhysand not to tell Amaranantha about her.

Shanna: Ahh yes I knew the second a name came out of her mouth that that girl was about to be super dead.

Jen: Hahah naive little me over here didn't bat an eye. I was like oh yeah, he knows your lying, no big deal. Claire's fate never crossed my mind and let me tell you, I was SHOCKED when they revealed her dead and mutilated body hanging from the ceiling!

Shanna: Yes that was horrible and wonderful. I was like oh wow she went there. Excellent.

Jen: Tamlin, now loving Feyre, knows that she is in danger if she stays with him and sends her back home - releases her - and she goes home to find her family rich as ever. They have been glamored to believe that their money has returned and Feyre has been off taking care of a sick rich aunt who has now died. Apparently the glamour didn't work on Nesta though and Nesta had actually gone to find Feyre, but was forced to give up the search.

Jen: Imagine your whole family being under some magical ruse and you are just like...what are you talking about?

Shanna: Yeah that would be so frustrating. But you know, sometimes I like to imagine that is the case. Like "Ahhh, oh no, my husband must be under the 'can't load the damn dishwasher properly' curse again!" or, it makes the three year olds ramblings easier to understand when I think "He must believe he actually lives in the super mario world." But, if none of them noticed or remembered A GIANT BEAST busting into the house and kidnapping one of us though, yeah, yeah that would be a bit much to carry around.

Jen: Oh yeah that would make my life make way more sense to be honest

Shanna: I really liked Nesta after this. Finally some sort of personality beyond just ... cranky and rude. And also it was just nice to see her family not being the worst to her for once. I mean, it would have been better if it didn't require riches for them to not be the worlds biggest ass holes, but, you know, I guess I will take it.

Jen: Yeah I also started to like Nesta. We do get to know her a bit better in some of the other books so you have that to look forward to!

Shanna: Feyre finds out that Claire, the girl whose name she gave to Rhysand, her house was burnt down, her family killed and she was missing. Obviously this isn't a coincidence and Feyre realizes that it was a mistake to leave, and she has to get back to spring court right away. When she gets there, she finds the house trashed and everyone gone but Alis

Jen: I love this spelling BTW-

Shanna: I was just about to say how much I hate that spelling so that's too funny.

Jen: Hahahaha really!? So glad I said it out loud and didn't just name a future child that - not that you choose my kids names lol - though maybe it would have been amusing to watch you painfully have to pretend you like it or tell me how awful you think it is.

Shanna: Hahahaha I just think that poor child would have to spell their name and correct people's pronunciation Every. Single. Time. I know that pain lol.

Jen: Yeah I know what you mean, Shawna.

Jen: Alis tells Feyre pretty much everything at this point. She reveals that long story short because, man a lot of stuff happens in this book - Amarantha worked for the King of Hyburn which is another fairyland. They hate humans and don't want a treaty between them and fairies. Amarantha spent a lot of time getting all the high lords to trust her and when they did, she drugged them, took most of their power and then locked them all up "under the mountain" where she now has ruled for almost 50 years. She has a thing for Tamlin so the Spring Court is exempt from this though because he refused her advances and marriage proposals, she cursed his court with the whole mask thing and also, the curse cannot be broken unless he is able to make a mortal woman who hates fairies, fall in love with him. She also says there is one more part to the curse but they still are barred from saying it to her, but she does manage to give her a hint.

Shanna: Yes. Amarantha is really pissed at us mortals because her sister fell in love with one and was betrayed and murdered by him. I can understand that. I have a sister. I would be ... so mad. But you know, I am just a silly human. If I was a high and powerful fairy, watch out. Goose, I call my sister Goose, I would totally avenge you.

Shanna: From here it starts to feel like another book. Not in a bad way, but I think you can pretty easily split the book into two halves. Before and After going to the mountain.

Jen: Definitely! Before this point in the book I was still unsure what I thought. Based on everything I've said so far in this episode, it probably sounds like I hated this book. I didn't, I was just... I thought it was equally as bad as it was good. When they go under the mountain, this is where I started to be surprised (even if naively). The story took a really dark and twisty turn and I really loved it. We also got to see different sides to all the characters which I thought was great.

Shanna: Ok so from here whaaat happened. Feyre goes to the mountain. Check. She stealths around in there for like 5 minutes, because, come on, obviously she's not gonna be able to stealth around in there. So she is captured and dragged before Amanratha, who had Tamlin on a throne beside him and he's just kind of blahhh about everything because he doesn't want to show his cards. Feyre has to make a deal, since the other choice is death. She has to complete three tasks, which is so fairy tale style I love it. OR she can answer a riddle. I was frustrated that I was listening to the audio book at this point because I love riddles even though I kind of suck at them, and wanted to read it a few times to try and figure it out.

Jen: ME TOO! Well no, I don;t love riddles but I did feel like not having the physical book at this point put me at a disadvantage even though I would have never figured it out.

Shanna: In my heart I knew it was going to be something like Fate or Love or Vengeance, but still. I love it when bad guys give the good guy a chance to fix everything. Or maybe I hate it. I don't know. It makes more sense in my brain to just SMASH THEM TO DEATH and continue on your evil way, but that isn't a great story for anyone but all of us super villains out there.

Jen: It's so funny because you are always "I knew it was going to be this or that because.. Obviously" and I'm over here like....no clue. Totally clueless.

Shanna: Task number 1 is a survival challenge. She is thrown into a big poo pit with a giant sand worm. I don't actually know what the creature was called, but when i heard the description my brain made it like a sandworm from Dune.

Jen: It's called the Middengard Wyrn!

Shanna:She fights it and wins. BUT she was very badly injured. Her arm is messed up and infected, so things are not looking great for her in her cell where she mostly hangs out between trials

Jen: Yeah she pretty well knows that she is going to die and she's hoping that Lucian will come to save her - actually she knows he will come to help her, but she doesn't know if she has time to wait for him.

Shanna: Rhysand comes and bargains with her that he will heal her, but only if she agrees to come and stay with him at the night court for 2 weeks every month for the rest of her life. She haggles him down to 5 days, and is healed. He leaves this big tattoo on her as a mark of their deal and she's pretty bummed about it. It's got this weird blinking seeing eye on her palm as well which is creepy.

Jen: Yeah I guess tattoos appear on fairies when a bargain has been made, it shows up quite a lot in the books. Which I kind of like. But also, the bargain creates a bond between Feyre and Rhysand. I don't know if bond is the right word in this situation or if this is even apparent yet but, it creates a link anyways.

Shanna: More on that in a minute. I was like no Feyre you stupid idiot. Alis TOLD YOU not to make any deals. I GUESS she was DYING of an infection, so, I can understand it, but I thought it was going to go a lot worse for her in the end than it did.

Jen: Yah! She didn't hesitate for very long, she knew that she would die without it and went for it, but I was like shoot that is a shitty deal.

Shanna: And then, did you find this as weird as I did? Rhysand starts taking her every single night as an escort to a ... party? Because they are having weird fairy parties every night under the mountain? This is what they are doing every night? I ... what? He makes her wear this ultra skimpy "dress" and has servants paint her entire body so that he "knows if anyone else touches her" So she is pretty much naked and covered in paint. I mean, kinda hot, but also super weird and not her choice, and he makes her drink wine that makes her dance all seductively for everyone, which was scummy of him. Unfortunately all of those bad points outweigh the sexy factor by a long shot. And poor Tamlin.

Jen: I'm guessing that the reasons for this aren't revealed in this book....Okay! Uh I will pretend not to know the answer. Yes, yes it was so weird and gross. What a huge jerk! I'm all honesty, I didn't think it was weird because he was the high lord of the night court which - dark = bad and light = good obviously and he was Amarantha's "whore". I guess if anything, based on the information I had, I almost assumed worse would happen to her. Maybe in terms of the paint, it's more about making sure no one touches her more than knowing that no one touches her...if that makes sense....I'm not saying anything else so stop asking!

Shanna: Task number 2 was a riddle. The problem is it was a written riddle, and if you recall, she cannot read. SHOULD HAVE TAKEN TAMLIN UP ON THE LESSONS HEY FEYRE? But, luckily, you remember the eye on her palm? Rhysand CAN read, and he helps her solve the riddle by using the eye to communicate with her. Very sneaky. The whole thing was extra

stressful because it was one of those riddles where you have to solve it or be crushed to death by spikes. Oh and it wasn't just her. We haven't talked a lot about him despite his being a main character in the book, but Lucian and her are pretty much friends at this point, and he is also in the death crusher.

Jen: This was another time when I wished that I could see what the riddle said. I remember it being pretty fast paced and stressful in the audio so I have no recollection what the riddle actually was.

Shanna: After this task Rhysand visits her again in her cell and she is super confused as to why he is placing bets AGAINST Amarantha, when in all other things he appears to be on her side.

Jen: Yeah he is the only one who bets that Feyre will win in these challenges.

Shanna: He admits a bunch of stuff to her about how much he hates Amarantha and wants to see her fail.

Jen: Which was very out of character for him, he is supposed to be the one of the bad guys.

Shanna: Task number three! This one stressed me out. She is taken into the throne room and presented with three hooded figures and ash knives, which are like fairy kryptonite. I 1000% thought she was going to kill them and then they were going to be revealed to be her family.

Jen: ME TOO!!!! 100%

Shanna: Like. I was so so so sure. I was wrong, thank goodness, but there was still a trick to it. She kills the first fairy and feels like crap about it. Then she kills the second one. The families are there crying too. It's awful. And then, the twist, the last fairy is Tamlin. I know whaaat?!

Jen: Yes this was very stressful. I knew it was going to be someone, it had to be, but I was surprised that it was Tamlin.

Shanna: Feyre is freaking out, and Amarantha is doing a classic evil villain moment up on her throne of evil. Then luckily whatever Alis said to her comes rushing back, and she has a sherlock holmes style puzzle pieces all fitting together moment and realises that Amarantha wouldn't actually sacrifice Tamlin, and he has a heart of stone! So she stabs him and is like HUZZAH I WIN! This is where Amarantha takes MY villain approach and says "I never said WHEN i would release everyone! And also I am going to kill you!" And breaks Feyre's neck. With her dying thoughts she solves the riddle, its love, obviously, and says it, insta breaking the curse. Tamlin goes beast mode and rips Amarantha to shreds and then is very sad while he holds Feyre's dying body. She's having a weird out of body experience and watches all of the high lords give her ... fairy juice. Drops of ... life?

Jen: Little bits of their power

Shanna: As a thank you and then BAM she's alive again. And also now she is high fey, which is sweet. I am not 100% sure, but I think she was actually all the way dead and watching everything through Rhysands eyes?

Jen: Yes this is correct. She was definitely dead and through their bond she could see what was going on and I think it was that bond that helped bring her back too.

Shanna: Anyways then it's the wrap up of the book. She is really torn up about murdering those fairies, which is fair. Murdering innocents in cold blood should mess you up. Her and Rhysand have a moment. Her and Tamlin have some moments. And then everyone goes home to live happily ever after. The End. Or is it? It's not, there are 3 more books after this.

Jen: There are actually four more books.

Shanna: Oh! I thought one of them was like ... a companion/optional read? I don't really know, I have not done much investigating past this book to avoid all of those sweet sweet spoilies.

Jen: I have also been avoiding the synopsis of the other books because I accidentally spoiled myself while reading this one! But I'm almost done the third book so I looked for us... the fourth book is described as being kind of a bridging story to ease us into the fifth book which focuses, I think on other characters....I have not read the Synopsis for A Court of Silver Flames yet, but I do know who the characters are. I'm not saying anything! Don't even ask! Literally everyone else in the world know the answer so I'm not being mysterious but the point is that YOU don't know lol

Shanna: Who is it? Ok fine, I would just plug my ears and yell NO SPOILIES anyways lol.

Jen: The fifth book in the series, A Court of Silver Flames, just came out this year. The fourth book was published back in 2018 so there was a bit of a gap there and the book community was super excited for Silver Flames to be released.

Jen: Overall I really loved this book! Yes, there were plenty of times when it was corny, cringy, and awkward. Oh there was one part that I really wanted to mention but I forgot. When I first started reading the book, I didn't know about the Beauty and the Beast thing and then I was thinking "hmm this sounds an awful lot like beauty and the beast" and then what finally made me look into that a little more was - and if you are familiar with the animated version, I think you will be familiar with this -there was a line when Feyre first arrives at Tamlin's and it was something like - Tamlin says "You will join us for dinner" and Feyre thinks "it was not a request" and I just laughed because - like come on guys, you're just pulling lines right from the movie now lol.

Shanna: Yes I did catch that! But I also already knew it was a beauty and the beast retelling.

Jen: I thought it was ridiculous at the time but now it's kind of hilarious. I am just wondering if it was accidental!

Shanna: I think it had to have been intentional! A little easter egg for the beauty and the beast buffs out there.

Jen: I usually love easter eggs but this one was a little bit much in my opinion! Anyways, in the end it was great. I loved the character development and the twists in the story. I loved how dark it was and it led me to the second book which is soooooooo good. I can't wait for you to read it.

Shanna: I am excited to keep going with it! I avoided it for a long time because I thought it was going to be another YA romance and I just have not been in the mood to read about teenagers making bad choices. I was so pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed this one. I think, and this is the same with Cursebreakers, but I actually like this one better, but anyways, I think that these fantasy books feel a little bit lighter because they are retellings of stories I know. So there is a lot of new stuff to them, but enough that it still has a level of comfort built in. They also have NOTHING to do with the real world right now, and that is what I need. Pure escapism.

Jen: Yeah, I agree that I like this series more than the cursebreaker series which I think is mostly because those books are YA so it's nice to some of the similar aspects but with sex and other adult stuff.

Jen: Honestly, in my opinion, this book is actual garbage compared to the next book. And alternatively, the next book which is called A Court of Mist and Fury BTW, makes this book better. It all gets tied together in a beautiful perfect big big package.

Shanna: Alright, don't forget about book club. This month we are reading The Midnight Library by Matt Maig. You can follow us everywhere at [best_bookclub](#), so go ahead and do that so you can get in on the discussion.

Jen: And don't forget to subscribe to this podcast so you never miss an episode and while you are at it, rate and review us if you are listening on Apple Podcasts - it helps, it really does. Also, follow us on all the social media at [best_bookclub](#) and let us know what you thought of this book! We love hearing from you.

Shanna: Otherwise, we will see you next week.

Jen: See you next week!

BYEEEEEE

