



The Mermaid's Madness

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There is an old story — you might have heard it — about a young mermaid, the daughter of a king, who saved the life of a human prince and fell in love.

So innocent was her love, so pure her devotion, that she would pay any price for the chance to be with her prince. She gave up her voice, her family, and the sea, and became human. But the prince had fallen in love with another woman.

The tales say the little mermaid sacrificed her own life so that her beloved prince could find happiness with his bride.

The tales lie.

The Mermaid's Madness Details

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From Reader Review The Mermaid's Madness for online ebook

Rea says

Full review can be found [here](#).

I enjoyed the first book of the Princess series but felt that it dragged at times when it lost my attention. This second book worked much better for me – maybe it was because I preferred the setting (the sea here vs. Fairytown in the previous book) but I'm more inclined to think that it's probably because the plot seemed more concise in this one.

Jim C. Hines takes elements from the traditional fairy tales and plays with them, taking them closer to their darker roots, because in life we don't always get our happily ever after. So Danielle, Cinderella, is probably the luckiest of the characters. Even though her husband was kidnapped in the first book, she and the other princesses managed to rescue him. Talia, Sleeping Beauty, was not awoken by the chaste kiss of her Prince Charming, and Snow's seven dwarves were a far cry from the jolly men who work in a mine and sing a happy song. In this book we also meet Lirea (anagram of Ariel in case you hadn't noticed) who begged her human prince to marry her so that she too could assume permanent human form. He refused her and she killed him, shattering her sanity. Not quite "and they lived happily ever after."

Each of the three princesses brings her own personal added extra to the fold: Danielle can talk to animals; Talia is proficient in combat; and Snow is a sorceress. They all also have very different voices: Danielle's tends to be caring and pragmatic; Talia's is guarded and always on the verge of a violent outbreak; and Snow's tends to be light-hearted fun. Considering the parody nature of these books, I think Snow's is my favourite voice. Also, Snow was the character who seemed to undergo the biggest character growth in this book. There was a lot of focus on her coming to control her magic powers but also facing the reality of what she's doing to others with them (I adored the passage about the ship's cook refusing to make breakfast after the peas, screaming in agony, had tried to climb out of the pot the previous evening.)

I found Lirea to be an interesting foe because of the way that she could never really control herself what with the voices of her madness whispering to her. I much preferred her to the stepsisters in the first book. I'll admit that I also felt sorry for her because, despite her actions, she is ultimately the victim of other people's madness and prejudices.

Katie says

This book was a little more cinematic than the Stepsister Scheme, what with the mermaids and their "inhumanly wide eyes," but overall I didn't devour it as voraciously as I did its prequel. There were several points, particularly in describing Snow's magic at the end, as it captures air spirits, that could be translated rather as "Er...this problem needs to be solved, so...MAGIC!", but I didn't mind too much. The author is still writing feminist books for young adults (and adults who love YA books), and he'd have to mess up pretty badly for me to fault him. I'll keep going with the series in hopes that it picks back up.

MISC NOTES: poor Lirea; I worry that the author was a little too tied to this idea of, go figure, The Mermaid's Madness. I wish the ending had gone a little differently, and frankly wonder why it didn't.

Also, go Lannadae! Great name. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out if it was another name rearranged. I don't *think* it is... is it?

Also, I wish there had been more sexy scenes in the mermaid mating den. JUST SAYING.

Paul Weimer says

In the Stepsister Scheme, Mr. Jim Hines came up with a clever fantasy conceit, reimagining Snow White and Sleeping Beauty as kick-butt action heroines that could stand toe to toe with the likes of Sarah Connor, River Tam, and Ripley. Princess Cinderella, Danielle Whiteshore, joins their duo in an effort to find her husband, the Prince, who has been kidnapped, with faerie magic aid, by her evil stepsisters.

In the Mermaid's Madness, we turn to the sea. The relationship between the island kingdom of Lorindar and the merfolk of the sea have necessarily been amicable for a long time. When the annual meeting turns deadly, the three princesses have to uncover old secrets, discover the truth of the Mermaid's Madness, and even save the life of their Queen. In the aftermath of the attack, her life, and her soul hang by the slenderest of threads.

And, as best they can, kick some butt.

Although the Stepsister Scheme was never as light and frothy as it seemed to be, the Mermaid's Madness does strongly rejigger the balance between lightness and more serious matters. The threat to the Queen comes across on the page as far more serious than the threat to Armand in the first novel. In addition, the revelations of how and why the Princess' antagonists are acting are much more complex than the relatively straightforward motivations of the first book. Snow White's mirror magic extends and evolves, Danielle learns what it means to step up and be a Princess, and Talia's secret, unrequited love is revealed. This is all good character development. I appreciate a series where the author avoids the Scylla and Charybdis of no character development on the one hand, or radical and unrealistic development on the other.

So one might say that the Mermaid's Madness is a more mature book than the previous one. The writing still is strong, and the episodes of humor and levity do not clash against that darker, mature tone that I mentioned. And its damned entertaining. The central concept of the first book, of Disney Princesses as heroines that take charge, still is in full flower. Oh, and I love how the story of Ariel is transmogrified into something as tragic as the original Hans Christian Andersen story, and yet has unique elements to Hines' universe as well.

I look forward to reading the third and final book in the series.

John says

Three fairy tale princesses take to the high seas to help save the kingdom from mermaids with a vendetta. The three fairy tale princesses are Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White. Now, however, they go by the names Danielle, Talia and Snow. Why do they go by these names? Who knows? The book tries to turn the often passively portrayed protagonists in sword-fighting, magic-wielding heroes. None of their stories had a happily ever after ending. This entry in the series focuses on the story of Little Mermaid. The Little Mermaid, who has been rechristened Lirea, is jilted by her prince and seeks revenge on the human kingdom using a knife that traps souls. The other fairy tale princesses journey above and below the seas to stop the mermaid's rampage. Verdict: Fairy tales have been re-imagined many times. Recently, many books and movies have tried to put a more feminist spin on the princess stories. This book misses the mark. It does little

with the fairy tale mythology and does not add to the life of these cultural touchstones.

Jessica Strider says

Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid* is a horribly depressing story. Jim Hines takes that story and makes it even more horrifying. So yet another princess missed out on her 'happily ever after'. Only this time the princess strikes back. Against those who hurt her and those who want to help her.

The Mermaid's Madness begins with the Lorindar nobles welcoming the return of the undine (merfolk) from their annual hybernation. Only this time the undine aren't happy to see the humans. The subsequent attack lands one noble grievously wounded and embroils Danielle, Talia and Snow in an adventure with consequences none of them are ready for.

The novel is fast paced, with well defined characters. Readers who haven't read *The Stepsister Scheme* will be confused by one or two points left unexplained from the first book, but won't otherwise have any trouble reading this book on its own. The true joy of this series is figuring out how Mr. Hines has twisted otherwise familiar (or not, depending on the version you read as a child) fairy tales. And this one is twisted indeed.

Liz says

Wow, so, the second book is better than the first. Not that I disliked the first at all, but it really was an introduction compared to this one.

First off: I GOT IN EVERYONE'S HEADS. It was fun! I liked that. Not that Danielle was a bad POV in the first one, it's just I was intensely curious about the other princesses's thought processes.

Second off: I am so happy with the gay in this book. Like, normally I have to wade through pages and pages of ilk about how some female protagonist lures some guy and angst, but in this book? It's some lady love, albeit currently unrequited. And it's kind of sad how little of that I get outside of porny vampire books. Kind of hit me in the gut and reminded me of my confusing teen years. I especially love the contrast between the human angst and the more freeform magic folk

Third off: Wow, it's really obvious that the author has some experience with therapy and people that have been through trauma. And it's nice to see some characters that have gone through trauma and survived juxtaposed with one that didn't--the latter being all too common. If there were ever a fairytale to use for these kinds of things, *The Little Mermaid* would be it.

These books so far are just hitting all the things I really REALLY wished I had growing up. Seriously. The author's daughter is so lucky!

Chris says

I read this just after I read *The Stepsister Scheme*. This book answers some questions raised in the first and continues the characterization started in the first.

Like the first novel, Hines seems to be writing in response to the Disney Princesses trend. The princesses in his book, however, are far from passive. In this book, Hines tackles the story of "The Little Mermaid", relying more on the Andersen version of the story instead of the Disney bastard version.

It's a fairy tale for grown ups. Unlike Disney movies with the almost chronic absence of mothers (honestly, would you like to be a Disney mum?), Hines seems to be exploring the relationships that develop between female friends and family members. The Undines (mermaids) represent one type of family and Queen Bea and the three Princesses another.

Like the first novel in the series, Hines keeps the dark side of the tales present, making this book at times darker than the first novel. There is heavy cost to be paid, and the ending is bittersweet. It works well because of that.

What I really enjoy about Hines is that he writes women who are strong in different ways and who are friends and not rivals. Additionally, he does not do this at the expense of the male characters. This is more of a female oriented story, but the men don't suffer from weak character either. Hines, for instance, does a good job of presenting two happily married couples.

There was one development in terms of Talia that I felt unsure about. In truth, when it was revealed, it elicited a small internal groan. Unlike some writers, Hines handles it well and in a rather touching manner.

Scott Wozniak says

I didn't finish this fantasy adventure. In the end, I just didn't care about the characters. The adventure seemed interesting enough--why was the queen in a coma, how can we save her? But the main character, a Cinderella-based princess, was flat, boring, and I didn't care much for her. The Sleeping Beauty-based princess was even more annoying than the first book. The Snow White-based princess was fun, but not enough to make up for the other characters.

I think it goes to show that the most exciting activities can't drive a story alone. You have to care about the people facing them. Even when those people are tragic or even evil, we have to find them interesting. We have to care what happens to them, even if we hope they lose. Stories are about people, not merely events.

David says

This is an endearing light fantasy series, like a Disney Princess adventure for grown-ups. Although billed as "the darker side of fairy tales," Jim Hines doesn't really get *dark-dark*, he just takes traditional fairy tales and treats them as stories about adults in a fantasy world.

In *The Stepsister Scheme*, we were introduced to Danielle Whiteshore, aka "Cinderella," newly married to

Prince Armand and just learning that her mother-in-law Queen Beatrice has a predilection for collecting girls in trouble with unusual gifts. Hence, Snow White and Talia, aka "Sleeping Beauty," both of whom come from their own tragic real-life fairy tales. The three women go forth to rescue Armand from malevolent faeries, and a buddy team-up fantasy series is born.

In book two, the threat is mermaids. Yup, Hines adapts the tale of *The Little Mermaid* this time. Lirea, the mermaid who fell in love with a human prince, has subsequently gone mad, killed her own sister and her father, and has taken over her tribe and is leading the Undines (merfolk) in a war against the humans. Danielle, Snow, and Talia discover trouble brewing on a diplomatic mission to the Undines that goes badly wrong. Lirea is apparently hunting for her surviving younger sister, convinced by the voices in her head that her little sister (and everyone else) is trying to kill her.

Hines is definitely writing in response to, though not in imitation of, the Disney versions we are all familiar with. Lirea is no Ariel (her sister is a little closer), but we do get a Sea Witch, far more complex than the Disney version (first she's evil, then she's not, then she is) and a more complicated version of the "mermaid and her human prince" story (they were in love - no, he was a cad who used and abandoned her - no, he was actually in love with her - they were married - no they weren't). There's also a lot of magic treated with some complexity as well, as the details of what really happened to Lirea, what her grandmother the sea witch is really up to, and how Cinderella, Snow, and Talia will save the day all depends on understanding how certain spells work.

Snow White and Danielle both "level up" a bit in this book, while Talia is still the same bad-ass she was in the first book, but what she gets more of is character development. We learn a little more about her background — specifically, how she came to the Kingdom of Lorindar and wound up under Queen Bea's protection — and her love for Snow, revealed in the first book, is revealed to more people in this one. I am not sure where Hines will go with this, since so far, Snow seems pretty heterosexual, constantly flirting, and, it's strongly implied, going well beyond flirting, with anything in trousers. I suppose for many fans it would be a "happy ending" if Snow reciprocates Talia's feelings, but an unrequited love seems more likely.

There is a bittersweet happy ending, a twist or two on the traditional ending of the *Little Mermaid's* tale, and generally things are wrapped up in a satisfying manner while leaving a few dangling threads (like Talia's so-far unrequited love) for the next book.

This isn't brilliant fantasy, but it's very enjoyable fantasy written with a thoroughly modern sensibility — the characters are living in a medieval fantasy world, and somehow they manage to act like enlightened people without outright spouting 21st century viewpoints. The presence of non-straight characters does not come off as gimmicky or an arbitrary checking off of diversity boxes, nor is there any hint of exploitation. And of course, this is a book with multiple strong female characters - in fact, a ton of them - but not all are in the Exceptional Woman Who Is Superior to Any Man mold. The men don't suffer for the badassitude of the ladies, though they do tend to be more minor characters.

Fangs for the Fantasy says

There is a new threat to the kingdom – the seas around the nation are becoming impassable due to rampaging mermaids and, worse, Queen Bea herself has been injured and lays dying. It falls to Princess Danielle, Snow and Talia to set out again, the only ones who can try and save Bea's life – and her very soul – and preserve not just the kingdom but all seafaring nations

But it's a complex task and finding who the actual villain is proves more complex than previously imagined. It begs the question – even if the villain is the victim, can they afford to be merciful?

And all because the Little Mermaid didn't get her Happily Ever After

I do like how this series challenges a lot of assumptions about fairytales, a lot of the staples we've all grown up on that are, frankly, dubious to say the least. In this book we have a very strong challenge to the whole love-at-first sight trope that so dominates fairytales. Why should that prince you've barely met and hardly know turn out to be a nice guy? How can you be so sure of his affections after such a short time knowing him? Or that, occasionally, that guy you fall for turns out to be a brutal, manipulative, arsehole?

So when the Little Mermaid decides to give up her family, her people, everything for the sake of the love of a human she has known for a week – is it any surprise that it ends badly or one applies reality rather than fairytale rules? This story is a tragedy through and through because Lirea is, in many ways, a victim as much as she is a perpetrator. Ultimately, she was a very young woman who fell hard for the wrong man and was badly used by people who were older and wiser than her who sought to exploit her for their own ends. I like how this is even applied to Danielle's own story – Talia pointing out just how lucky she was that Armand was a good man since they married after knowing each other for so little time. Danielle is presented as having made a very naïve, very silly decision that, luckily, worked out; this is even more stark when you consider that out of Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and The Little Mermaid, Cinderella is the only one who managed her Happily Ever After.

This book does a very good job of preserving that nuance, partly through the lens of Danielle's near infinite compassion and the pleas of Lirea's family, but also through the much harsher and more cynical gazes of Snow and Talia who recognise the real bad guy. At the same time, this doesn't require anyone to be a saint or ruin the story with people being just so damn nice that you have to wipe the sugar off your tablet screen. While there's sympathy for Lirea, there's equally not much forgetting that she has killed people, she is threatening the nation and she has hurt Queen Bea. Compassion and acknowledgement of her victimhood does not translate into automatic forgiveness – certainly not from Talia, nor does it stop the 3 princesses from doing what they consider necessary to save Queen Bea. And if that means everyone doesn't get a happy ending – well, so be it; not everyone's promised one.

Even the behind-it-all villain is presented with a level of nuance. Ultimately her actions stem from the widely held belief that mermaids are lesser people; a belief they took to heart and sought a way to save themselves and their people from. No-one is just a villain, and even bad people have people who care about them.

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Keikii Eats Books says

57 points/100 (3 stars/5)

Queen Beatrice has been injured by an insane mermaid named Lirea. Lirea is convinced that she has to kill her siblings and go to war with the humans after she was forced to kill her Prince she tried to get to marry her. Danielle, Talia and Snow set out together to try and save Queen Bea.

We've revisited Cinderella. Now we get to see The Little Mermaid's tale all over again, and her ending. This was so much more interesting, because Lirea has been driven absolutely insane.

The first half was a bit slow, as the book tried to find the direction it wanted to take. There is a lot of joking around again. Yet, the ending once again pulls it together. With 30% of the book left, it pulled all the parts it was trying to find together and made a solid end out of it all.

The Mermaid's Madness takes the story we've all seen before, and puts a less fairy tale spin on it. It adds in the fact that messing with people magically is totally going to fuck them up. By now, you'll have probably realised that in this story, no happily ever after is truly happily ever after. This is no different. By the end, I really felt sorry for Lireal. Also, it took me 55% of the book for me to notice that was Ariel all jumbled up, and I'm disappointed in myself.

With a new book we welcome a new narration style. The Stepsister's Scheme was focused only on Danielle, but in The Mermaid's Madness, it is opened up to everyone. We see a point of view from all of the mains, plus Lirea. It also shows that this isn't Danielle's book like last time. This is Lirea's story, it is Snow's Story, and it is a little bit of Danielle's story, too. Danielle keeps trying to take over, but she learns to share this time around.

In this one, Snow is working on herself and her magic. That is why this is partly her story, we spend a lot of time with her as she learns how to work her magic better. Talia is lost in her head a lot, as she feels guilty for the queen getting hurt. Danielle is still mostly useless, though. The only thing Danielle does is hold the group together. Both Snow and Talia look towards her to lead them, though I still can't quite figure out why.

Again, this is mostly a feminine cast. Every major character in both of these books is female. The boys are off to the side. In the last book, it felt really masculine. They were joking, but they felt like the kind of jokes young teenage boys would make. In this one, it feels more feminine. I can't point to any one change, (though I can point to a single joke that made me go "aha! feminine!" - it involved a diaper joke) but I felt like I was with a group of females this time.

Once again, this is a tale of life or death. Queen Beatrice will die if they don't find a way to save her. Yet, they play around and joke and have fun. It just doesn't fit. At one point, Snow is actively playing tricks on others for her own amusement. Yet, I will admit Jim C. Hines makes marvelous turns of phrase. "Oh, go fondle a dragon." "Kraken bugger us all!" come to mind.

I love the concept of these books. I like seeing the dark side of the story. I just wish I could figure out what I was missing to like these better.

To read more reviews in this series and others, check out [keikii eats books!](#)

Wendy says

Yuck. Hines is still a master with setting, but the characters have become sort of cookie cutter - one is responsible, one's flirty, one's angry. It's getting old. Prince Armand, who we meet here for the first time, is a pompous jerk. I have no idea what Cinderella sees in him. More irritating still is Danielle's (aka Cinderella's) ability to communicate with animals - sea birds, sharks, crabs, kelpies - and in the process these creatures, who do her bidding, are routinely slaughtered in warfare and she thinks nothing of it. Who treats their friends

like that? It's unsettling and inconsistent with who the character is supposed to be based on her other qualities - ability to listen, her thanking the birds for their help, her concern for one of her human friends. Again, I will reiterate that Hines is excellent with setting, from the sea to the castles; his ability to create names that seem fitting for, say, a race of mermaids is outstanding. But the only reason I did not throw this book into a recycling bin is because I appreciate the lesbian storyline woven in - though I still have some issues with the stereotyping involved there.

Wortmagie says

Ich mochte Jim C. Hines bereits, bevor ich anfang, über ihn zu recherchieren. Doch seitdem ich eine Weile auf seiner Website und seinem Blog herum gesurft bin und ihn ein bisschen besser kennengelernt habe, bin ich zusätzlich zutiefst beeindruckt von seinem Engagement hinsichtlich Genderthemen in unserer Gesellschaft. Seit 2012 stellt Hines Buchcover verschiedener Genres nach, um auf die sexistischen Inszenierungen von Männern und Frauen gleichermaßen aufmerksam zu machen. Das Ergebnis (HIER) ist nicht nur unheimlich witzig, sondern auch erfrischend schmerzfrei. Hines scheut sich nicht, sich für die gute Sache zum Clown zu machen. Das finde ich enorm sympathisch; außerdem beweisen die Fotos seine kreative Ader, auf die er wohl auch beim Schreiben seiner Romane zurückgreift.

Es war einmal eine Meerjungfrau, die sich unsterblich in einen menschlichen Prinzen verliebte. Um mit ihm zusammen zu sein, bat sie eine Hexe um einen Zauber, der sie in einen Menschen verwandeln würde. Doch als sie zu ihm ging, brach er ihr Herz. Aus „glücklich bis ans Ende ihrer Tage“ wurde nichts. Was passierte mit der kleinen Meerjungfrau, nachdem ihr Prinz sie ablehnte? Die Prinzessinnen Danielle, Talia und Schnee – besser bekannt als Aschenputtel, Dornröschen und Schneewittchen – wissen es. Die kleine Meerjungfrau trägt den Namen Lirea und verfiel durch ihren Schmerz und Kummer dem Wahnsinn. Nun bedroht sie die Zukunft Lorindars. Können die drei Prinzessinnen sie aufhalten und so den Frieden zwischen Menschen und Undinen wieder herstellen?

Die Idee der gesamten Reihe *Die Todesengel* beruht auf Jim C. Hines' Anliegen, Märchenfiguren und speziell Märchenprinzessinnen die Verantwortung für ihre Geschichten selbst in die Hand zu geben. Ich finde das fantastisch. Aus Fräulein in Nöten werden dadurch selbstbewusste, selbstbestimmte Frauen; lebendig und greifbar. In jeder Szene in „*Die Fiese Meerjungfrau*“ ist dieses außergewöhnlich starke, emanzipierte Frauenbild deutlich spürbar. Ob Danielle, Talia, Schnee oder auch Kapitän Hephyra, eine Dryade, die eins mit ihrem Schiff ist – sie alle sind echte Individuen, weit entfernt von jeglichen Klischees. Die Prinzessinnen sind nicht länger perfekte, romantisierte Ideale, sondern reale Persönlichkeiten mit Schwächen und Fehlern, deren Lebensläufe um einiges weniger märchenhaft sind, als es uns die alten Geschichten weismachen wollen. Märchen sind in ihrer Ursprungsform brutal, grausam und erschreckend. Mir gefällt, dass Hines ihre unbarmherzige Natur erkannte und sie nicht verharmlost. In „*Die Fiese Meerjungfrau*“ ist es natürlich vor allem Lireas Schicksal, das in mir tiefes Mitgefühl weckte. Sie verliebte sich und wurde kaltblütig und mitleidlos zurückgewiesen. Selbst in der Vorlage von Hans Christian Andersen findet sie nicht das Happy End, das sie sich wünscht – Jim C. Hines geht noch einen Schritt weiter, zeichnet das Bild düsterer und portraitiert Lirea als die Frau, die sie vielleicht auch in der Realität durch all ihren Kummer geworden wäre. Gebrochen, verletzt, verwirrt und wütend. Oh, Lirea ist so zornig. Sie war bereit, ihr gesamtes Leben für den Mann aufzugeben, den sie liebt. Mehr noch, sie war bereit, ALLES aufzugeben. Der Zauber sollte sie in einen Menschen verwandeln. Sie hätte ihre vollständige Identität als Meerjungfrau – oder Undine, wie sie bei Hines eigentlich heißen – hinter sich gelassen. Nun ist

sie weder das eine, noch das andere. Sie schwebt zwischen zwei Welten, die definitiv nicht vereinbar sind. In der Fantasy sind Nixen den Menschen häufig sehr ähnlich, sodass ich oft das Gefühl hatte, dass sie im Grunde nur Menschen sind, die eben im Wasser leben. Daher war ich wirklich begeistert davon, dass Jim C. Hines die Undinen als eigenständiges Volk mit einer komplett entwickelten Kultur beschreibt.

Bei allem Lob muss ich allerdings zugeben, dass mich die Geschichte nicht ganz so fesselte, wie ich es mir gewünscht hätte. Die Rahmenbedingungen stimmen, doch der Kampf um den Frieden zwischen Menschen und Undinen ist ein wenig konfus. Ich denke, hätte Jim C. Hines die Ereignisse in eine andere Reihenfolge gebracht, hätte er den Spannungsbogen deutlich straffer gestalten können. Der aufklärende Aha-Moment kam zu spät, um ihn noch richtig würdigen zu können, wodurch die Hintergründe der Geschichte eher nebensächlich erschienen. Das ist ein bisschen schade, schmälerte meinen Lesespaß jedoch nur geringfügig.

Mir hat „*Die Fiese Meerjungfrau*“ wirklich gut gefallen. Sicher ist die Handlung kein Meisterwerk, doch die Idee der Reihe und die Umsetzung der Rahmenbedingungen konnten mich überzeugen. Es war eine wahre Freude, Charaktere mit so starken weiblichen Stimmen zu begleiten, die individuell und keinesfalls stereotyp sind. Im zweiten Band der Reihe treffen vier Prinzessinnen aufeinander, die unterschiedlicher kaum sein könnten – sie sind nicht beliebig austauschbar. Ich denke, Jim C. Hines hat seine Protagonistinnen genauso abgebildet, wie er Frauen sieht, statt sie zu idealisieren oder in bestimmte Rollen zu zwingen. Das passiert so selten, gerade in der Fantasy, dass ich nicht anders kann, als es ihm hoch anzurechnen, welches Frauenbild er beschreibt. Wenn ihr die Nase voll habt vom ausgenudelten Bild der hilflosen Prinzessin und wissen möchtet, was nach dem Happy End passierte, ist „*Die Fiese Meerjungfrau*“ genau die richtige Lektüre für euch. Danielle, Talia und Schnee werden euch beweisen, dass sie viel mehr drauf haben, als nur auf Bällen zu tanzen und Prinzen anzuschmachten. Sie nehmen ihr Leben selbst in die Hand und retten ganz nebenbei auch noch ihre Heimat vor einem verheerenden Krieg. Sie sind Heldinnen.

Terri says

The second installment in the Princess series wasn't quite what I expected. For some reason, I went through all of the book just waiting for Danielle, Snow and Talia to find Lirea, fix her madness, and welcome her into their princess club, which isn't the case. Lirea (an anagram of "Ariel" as another GoodReads reviewer points out) serves as the crazy mermaid. Her grandmother cast a spell so that she could be human and win the love of her prince; instead, he used her and threw her away, so she stabbed him with a magic knife. He dies, and she goes crazy, swearing revenge on humans. She's able to transition between fins and legs, albeit painfully, and hears voices in her head, questioning her decisions and telling her she's worthless. She rallies the merpeople and swears revenge on the prince's kingdom.

Our story begins with Queen Beatrice and the three princesses on a sea voyage. Lirea attacks their ship and stabs the Queen with her magic knife, not quite killing her, but stealing her soul. The princesses enlist the help of Lannadae, Lirea's younger sister, and grandmother, Morveren, to find Lirea and steal the knife in order to save the Queen. We are also introduced to Hephyra, a dryad whose tree was cut down and made into the Queen's ship as a punishment, so she is both the captain AND the ship itself. Hephyra was aggressive and occasionally combative, but I liked her character and giggled when they were talking about ship repairs and how such-and-such part of the ship would "grow back" within a day or two.

The pacing for MM was slow, and I set it down and read other things numerous times before finishing. The journey wasn't as interesting as The Stepsister Scheme, and the characters didn't read as fresh after one book. Danielle misses her husband and son and still can't protect herself in any way, Snow learns new ways of doing magic and flirts with any male that moves, and Talia continues to kick butt and use cool weapons.

Hines focused heavily on Talia and her feelings, which I assume he will continue to explore in the other two books in the series. I won't spoil it, but I will say it feels a little forced, as if because he was writing a lady-centric series, he had to do something radical, and this was it.

3 stars. I enjoyed the book and the setting, and I'll probably check out the rest of the series.

Riccarla Roman says

I loved this continuation of "The Stepsister Scheme". Once again Danielle (Cinderella), Snow White, and Talia (Sleeping Beauty but don't call her that) must save the kingdom of Lorindar, this time from the undine (mermaids). Every year, the kingdom sends a tribute of strawberries to the undine. It's a tradition. But this year the queen of the undine, Lirea, has gone crazy, killing her father, attempting to kill her sister, and demanding gold as a tribute or the all ships will be attacked. She even stabs Queen Beatrice (Danielle's mother-in-law) and leaves her in a coma. The three princesses rally together to find Lirea, subdue her, and put her sister (whom Snow has been hiding) on the throne.

This is, of course, based on "The Little Mermaid" and puts a new spin on the relationship of the mermaid and her human lover. The relationship of the three princesses also deepens and expands as they use their abilities to find Lirea and retrieve the knife that could heal their queen.

I'm looking forward to the next book, "Red Hood's Revenge". Hmm, I wonder which new character we'll meet in that one?

Crystal Starr Light says

Danielle, Talia, Snow, and Queen Beatrice head out to sea to meet the King of the Undine, but instead are confronted by his daughter, Lirea, bent on revenge. Queen Beatrice is wounded, and now the three women must seek out a way to save Beatrice and restrain Lirea.

DNF at page 84, Chapter 5.

I found out about Jim C. Hines through his AMAZING series of blog posts about the over-sexualized nature of women on covers of books. Please, go check it out now. I'll be here when you're done.

Five hours later and copious buckets of laughter

There, that was certainly worth your time, wasn't it?

Anyway, Hines seems to be a top-notch fellow, so why WOULDN'T I want to support such an all-around cool guy? And this book seems really fascinating - a real life Ariel story? Where-in grittiness and non-Disneyfication occur?

SIGN ME UP!

When it came to actually reading the book for Book Club (and my 2014 goal to not buy new books/to read

those books on my shelves), I felt my heart crash to the floor.

I just don't care!

I find myself using any excuse not to read this book, even though it was MY BOOK CLUB CHOICE! I read MULTIPLE comic trade paperbacks in this time. I read Goodreads Giveaway books. I surfed my phone and my Kindle. And yet I couldn't coerce myself to read much into this book.

So that means this book must be TERRIBLE, right? I mean, I've powered through many a book that I ended up rating 1- or 2- stars, so this should be a 2- star or lower rating, right?

No.

Because this book is GOOD. It's light-hearted and fun and perfect for reading at the beach or on a warm summer day. It's just not the book I want to read.

I love how Hines has multiple female characters in this book. I love how 90% of the cast is female. I love how he's written these women with all these different strengths, weaknesses, hopes, dreams, and backgrounds. I love how he's done a twisted fairy tale.

But I don't want to read any more of this book! I don't really care to know how Danielle, Talia, and Snow restraint Lirea. I have zero investment in the story and characters. Everything's good - but me.

So Jim, if you are reading, I'm sorry I didn't like your book. I really truly am. You are a great guy and did nothing wrong with this (well, it *IS* a bit cheesy, but you are 100% forgiven for that - not ALL books have to be Sris Bizness after all). I'm just too much of a sourpuss, I guess, to like it.

If you want strong, independent female characters from all walks of life, who don't faint and wait for a man to rescue them, if you like twisted fairy tales, if you like light-hearted fantasy books, pick this up!! I'm sure you will greatly enjoy!

Artemis says

Hooray for more action and adventure for the girls! Hooray for more feminist fairy tale retellings! Sequels seldom achieve five stars for me, but I'm pumped over this. 'The Mermaid's Madness', the sequel to 'The Stepsister Scheme', is a hydraulic blast, and really clever storytelling. This is definitely a series I'll be continuing.

And to show I'm not a lazy motha*%^*\$*er, I'll also skip the synopsis of the plot ('The Little Mermaid' reimagined with the subversive, ingenious skill I've come to expect from Jim C. Hines), and plunge down into the cold, mysterious ocean that leaves ripples of my initial thoughts of the book, before resurfacing - hair flipped back and all - to the character studies (okay that's all of the mermaid metaphors in this review, promise).

I've always loved mermaids as a mythical creature. Their fascinating mystery, their relationship with water and swimming, their hybrid nature that signifies the complicated, doubled struggles of their world, their identity; everything about them holds such amazing potential for stories of all kinds. I even wrote a mermaid

story for my final year at university: about a positive love between a human and a mermaid with a homosexual twist.

But despite this, I could never find an existing mermaid story I liked (and I wanted to see a lesbian mermaid love story). Even as a kid, Disney's 'The Little Mermaid' didn't leave an impact on me, except for disappointment and confusion. I loved that Ariel was a mermaid and had red hair, but I hated that she gave up everything, changed everything she was, for a guy she hadn't even talked to before making her foolish-yet-ultimately-rewarded sacrifice for married life as a girl with skinny, unscathed, pretty legs. Ariel doesn't achieve much on her own plotwise, and even the equivalent of her selling her soul to the devil is without consequence. This little mermaid gets her happily ever after despite learning nothing and not growing as the "hero" in her own movie (this could not have been lost on Hines either; I mean, the tragic little mermaid in his book is named Lirea, an anagram for Ariel, for crying out loud). I don't dislike a Disney film easily, but 'The Little Mermaid' continues to make me groan. I prefer the original Hans Christian Andersen story, which I interpret as a cautionary tale for giving up who you are for a man you barely know.

Andersen's tragedy fairy tale may have a bittersweet ending in that the little mermaid finds peace with earning a soul upon her death, but Jim C. Hines' take on it looks at the mermaid's choices (or lack of) as merely a tragedy, and our three princess heroes, Danielle (Cinderella), Talia (Sleeping Beauty) and Snow (White), get swept up in the outcome. Just like in the princess's original fairy tales, all is not what it seems or has been reputed in 'The Little Mermaid'.

'The Mermaid's Madness' features the mermaid losing her mind as she hears mocking voices telling her what a failure she is; a cursed knife which traps its victim's soul; a little sister mermaid (sisterhood is important in this tale, another plus); and a mermaid - or undine as they are called in this book's world - matriarchy with separate clans threatening war on the kingdom of Lorindar (when they're not in mating season, of course). Lorindar is where Danielle is the princess-by-marriage, and where the other princesses are servants to the awesome Queen Beatrice.

Throughout the beginning and middle of 'The Mermaid's Madness', Lirea the mermaid is set up to be the main villain. Her POV segments offer the reader a clear - and well-written - understanding of her fragile state of mind and her grip on reality. This way she is made somewhat sympathetic, to a point, considering that she still kills people, including her father and one of her sisters. What's also worth remembering is she's only a child, and one of privileged royalty at that, so facing the consequences of pursuing a man she just met - who had used and betrayed her trust and love - was the first of the many blows to her damaged psyche and self-esteem. Lirea might in fact be more of a victim than anything else.

Danielle Whiteshore is less of a main character in this instalment, as we get more chapters from the POVs of Talia and Snow, but she is still significant. The "humble" and "clean" one of the trio (I love her compulsory habit of cleaning things, especially when she's nervous), purehearted Danielle wants to see the good in everyone, having the most sympathy for others. Less naive than in 'The Stepsister Scheme' (as she should be), she is always improving her swordplay, and knows when to be assertive and even ruthless in situations where it's necessary; she is a future queen after all, as Queen Bea reminds her. Her ability to talk to animals is a very useful skill and a major asset in 'The Mermaid's Madness', as she communicates with sea creatures when on the ship she sails (while also fighting seasickness a lot of the time). A real woman with a great heart and sense of justice, I adore Danielle.

Even being a wife and mother does not hinder her one bit from going on dangerous adventures, although she does worry about being distant from her family, and fears the prospect of her son growing up without her. Her relationship with Prince Armand is much better handled and more believable than in her first adventure,

probably because there are more scenes in which they are together. They spend as much time with each other as they can, and Armand isn't just waiting on the sidelines as Danielle goes out to sea. He is strong and brave but a sweetheart with real anxieties. The couple are truly charming, and their baby son Jakob (lovely name, lovely spelling) is sweet if not a little creepy for someone barely a toddler. Not much time is devoted to him, at least, but I'm willing to bet he will play an important part in the subsequent books.

Talia is the same old tough-as-nails, first-class fighter and ninja, with nothing about her that attributes to the conventional, stereotypically-feminine notions of how a princess should be. Those traditions regarding gender and power and control are what ruined the life of this rape survivor, and she will not have that happen again (indeed, the truth about her fairy tale is absolutely devastating). The formidable Talia loses battles in 'The Mermaid's Madness' and hates herself for it. But she never gives up and is smart, even offering Danielle insightful observations and useful advice. Literally sleepless, cynical, wonderfully sarcastic, and yet she is not so stoic as the reader gets a glimpse of her maternal instincts when it comes to little Jakob (she sneaks through his window at night sometimes to sing to him). She has a soft spot for childhood innocence and is rightfully indignant of people who use magic to "improve" their children.

Thought to be dead inside, Princess Talia Malak-el-Dahshat at one point tells Danielle more of her backstory of how she arrived in Lorindar and met Queen Beatrice and Snow. And how she fell in love. Talia's feelings for Snow are explored a lot more here, and I can't wait to see how it develops further in the next book.

Snow is the true star of 'The Mermaid's Madness'. It is she who wins the award for the most well-developed, complex princess ever, so much so that she might be replacing Talia as my new favourite character. A flirtatious, buxom, promiscuous sorceress who isn't dumb and whose sex life is NOT a plot point or a cause for concern? How often do we see anything like that? Snow's the bookworm and academic of the trio. Her priorities may be slightly skewed, and she can be thoughtless, but her heart is in the right place.

Or is it? 'The Mermaid's Madness' sees Snow discover more about her magical potential, and what she is capable of. She possesses more power as she learns more spells, including how to enter someone's mind. Magic is frequent in this book - it is fantasy after all - but it also shows the consequences. Not everything is lighthearted, as Snow is soon made aware of how dangerous she might become and regrets doing morally reprehensible things for the greater good. She finds she can't trust herself; that she might be turning into her mother, the main antagonist in the last book and the woman who wanted to possess and control her daughter through magic.

The confident, free-spirited and free-thinking Snow White is hurting - literally, with a head injury, and metaphorically. She is in total control of her sexuality, but her magical abilities? Too much power and not enough thought and responsibility could turn her into something she's feared her whole life...

Bottom line, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White are kickass in this series!

The three ladies, with their colourful, rich and complex personalities and histories, are like the fairy tale versions of 'Charlie's Angels', 'Charmed', 'Totally Spies' or other girl trio groups, only better. They get on each other nerves and banter more often than is appropriate in the deadly circumstances they fall into, but they support each other and will do anything to keep their friends alive and happy. Reading like actual human beings, each one of them has her flaws, and each struggles to regain control over her life, in how she freely sees fit. Whenever a well-meaning and/or confused antagonist or a chauvinistic man tries to bring them down, the three princesses will rise above it and kick back.

They make a marvellous team, and even turn themselves into mermaids in this sea adventure!

'The Mermaid's Madness' is one of the few novels about pirates where I wasn't bored to tears; with descriptions of ship mechanics, of where the masts are held, where the cannons are placed, or the norths, easts, souths and wests of every little thing. Action is important, and Hines did his research. The three princesses and their crew - captained by the dryad Hephya, who is connected to her ship from Fairyland - do not visit many islands in their mission to find the little mermaid and free the human souls powering up her knife. But their encounters really made me want to find out what was going to happen next.

'The Mermaid's Madness' goes in many exciting directions, and twists and turns. It is violent and bloody without being too gory, and it even boldly mixes magic with religion, if not as a light touch to this savvy fairy tale. A heartfelt message about the importance of love and trust in family circles is prominent throughout, as well as the theme of how risky the business of first love can be and how it makes us vulnerable and susceptible to the motives of others.

Oh and Lannadae, Lirea's younger sister and key player in the book, is adorable as a fairy tale storyteller and fangirl of the princess stories.

It's not the perfect sequel. Any mention of Fairyland and its inhabitants is almost nonexistent, with the exception of Hephya's character, even though they were central in the story of the previous book. For that matter, references to 'The Stepsister Scheme' are rarely written in, and they mostly revolve around Danielle's anxieties about Jakob possibly being exposed to magic, since back then she was subjected to it darkly when pregnant with her son. This is fairly puzzling, considering how important the political and economical relationships between the nations are in this series. True, Fairyland isn't visited at all in 'The Mermaid's Madness', and is not important to the story, but still. With its aforementioned twists and turns, the plot can be a bit too complicated, with a growing cast of characters who are not all that interesting or well-developed.

But despite its flaws, what a fun ride! A water slide! (Damn I'm doing it again). Forget Disney, Jim C. Hines Christian Andersen knows how to write a fairy tale retelling that is commentary, relevant and above all entertaining and creative. 'The Mermaid's Madness' is brilliantly-written with funny lines of dialogue and symbolic imagery; has a large cast of female characters who glowingly differ from one another and are each memorable and lovable in her own way; and the undine are an interesting bunch of scaly sea people, especially in their breeding rituals (this is definitely not a children's book).

What a fantastic writer.

Now to dive right into 'Red Hood's Revenge'.

Final Score: 4.5/5

Mirjam says

Jim C. Hines's amusingly dark version of cute fairy tales and their NOT so happily ever after conclusions are a real treat! In The Mermaid's Madness the three kick-ass heroines I have grown to love in The Stepsister Scheme are taking on The Little Mermaid. To save Queen Bea they have to discover what happened between Lirea and her Hiladi prince. It is a race against the clock with merfolk on their tail trying to stop them any way they can, but Danielle, Talia and Snow are not the kind to throw in the towel when there is even the slightest chance left.

The three princesses are very different even though each has had a rather tragic past. Each princess has her own gifts. Danielle can talk to animals, Talia is a skilled fighter and Snow uses mirror-magic. I like how Hines consistently ensures that each princess contributes to the 'rescue'.

Another character I really enjoyed meeting was Hephya, a dryad unlike any other dryad I have ever read about. She is arrogant, strong, feisty, powerful and utterly enchanting! Lirea was also a very fascinating character. She is a powerful mermaid princess with a strong gift yet also totally mad. Morveren, the old mermaid, was also a great character, but my favourite mermaid has to be Lannadae! She is so young and innocent, but at the same time she shows great promise for the future. And like many young girls she loves her fairy tales!

The Stepsister Scheme was a terrific book, but I do believe *The Mermaid's Madness* is even better! It has a good plot, a fast pace, lots of action as well as great characters. I love the way Jim C. Hines twists the old, familiar fairy tales. I am already looking forward to the next book, *Red Hood's Revenge*.

Anzu The Great Destroyer says

Swimming through the ocean was like flying through another world.

Long story short

On her latest sea expedition, Queen Beatrice is accidentally stabbed by Lirea, a mermaid that can shift into human form. The dagger Lirea was wielding is an enchanted one, and it absorbs Beatrice's spirit. Danielle, Talia and Snow have to catch the culprit and save the queen's life.

My thoughts

I absolutely love pirate tales. And mermaids. And underwater adventures (thank you SpongeBob). And the three princesses. And kelpies.

I do not like spawning though. It's too fishy for my taste.

Fishy. Get it?

The Mermaid's Madness was an incredibly fun read. Hines' retelling of *The Little Mermaid* is extremely interesting and, as usual, way better than the original. The characters were very detailed and varied. I really liked Lirea, her madness was extremely well portrayed. I more than once felt bad for the poor thing. Another character that I liked was Hephya. She made one hell of a captain. I hope we'll meet her again soon. I kind of doubt it, but here's hoping. /end of positive things

And now the negative ones. I was expecting to give *The Mermaid's Madness* five stars. That's how much faith I have in Jim C. Hines. I am very sad to say that this is a mere 3.5 star book. Why? Because it went terribly slow at times. Some events were unnecessary, some decisions stupid, some characters a pain in the ass (yes, I'm talking about Snow). All of this made me want to put the book aside for a while and start something else. Something better. This is never a good sign. The good news is that after 50 to 60 percent I didn't feel like this anymore.

So there you have it folks. Book two of the *Princess* series, *The Mermaid's Madness* makes up for its slow parts with a fun adventure, great characters and unique realms. I really enjoyed reading it and I can't wait to get my claws on the next installment, *Red Hood's Revenge*. Lady of the Red Hood assassin? Count me in!

Favorite quote

"The first time somebody strikes you, you're shocked. You lack the reflexes to block or dodge the blows or to roll with the ones you can't. The earlier you can learn those skills, the easier it is to deal with the next fight."

3.5 stars

Review also posted on

Sbuchler says

Genre: Fantasy (specifically the Fractured Fairy Tales variety)

The cover is the best part of this book, imho. The cover totally rocks. The previous novel in the series was a fun, comedic, fractured fairy tale, a.k.a. "what happens next to Cinderella".

The main plot of this novel is a twist on the Little Mermaid myth. It's incredibly dark (but not explicitly so, mostly). Harkening to the original version of the tale, not the happily-ever-after Disney version. The subplot is also rather dark and something of a downer. While there is occasional one-line quips that are funny, this book is not lighthearted nor does it really qualify as a comedy. It is a fractured fairy tale, but almost all the character development and character revelations happened in the previous novel; so despite there being a ticking time bomb driving the plot, it didn't feel to me like there was much driving the novel. Especially since the main character (Princess Danielle Whiteshore, a.k.a. Cinderella) is not really affected by the subplot, and she's fairly peripheral to the main plot, except for continually restating that they need to fix the queen (who's the ticking time bomb).

There are positive things going for this novel, although they are something of a spoiler: Danielle (and her companions) are mislead into befriending the villainess. Even after it becomes apparent the villainess' goals no longer align with the "good guys" goals, the good guys don't get to behave as if it's a black-and-white situation, as they still need the villainess to accomplish their goal. The intersecting motivations/goals is well done, as is the misinterpreting of the villainess, without her being "the bestest schemer ever" OR the heroine being stupid. Danielle is somewhat naive, and tends to give people the benefit of the doubt - like real life, sometimes this is a good trait, and sometimes not. Seeing the negative side of this trait is a refreshing attitude to see in high-adventure stories.

I think I would've liked the book better if I hadn't expected it to be funny, or to be character-driven.
