



The Last Hunt

Bruce Coville

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Readers will be on the edge of their seats with this concluding episode of the riveting best-selling series by one of America's most gifted fantasy writers.

In the center of Luster stands an enormous tree called the Axis Mundi, the Heart of the World. But now that tree is wounded, pierced through by magic. And through that wound marches an army of Hunters, led by the sinister and vengeful Beloved. And they are all determined to destroy each and every unicorn.

As the unicorns gather to defend their lives, the human girl, Cara, is sent on a mission to meet a ferocious and mysterious dragon. Faced with perilous danger, Cara must make a desperate decision that will change her life forever.

(contd.)

The Last Hunt Details

Date : Published June 1st 2010 by Scholastic Press (first published March 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9780545128070

Author : Bruce Coville

Format : Hardcover 605 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Unicorns, Dragons, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Last Hunt for online ebook

Heather says

I've been waiting 13 years for the final book in this series. I hope it lives up to my expectations. *Fingers are crossed*

SPOILER ALERT!

... Just finished. I realized about a quarter in that Bruce has really expanded this series. The first book was about 150 pages and had a single viewpoint. This final book is about 600 pages and has close to twenty viewpoints. Perhaps he meant to make this series an epic fantasy all along. But it was not what I was expecting style-wise.

Also, I've never read a middle-grade epic fantasy before. Does that genre even exist? Despite having an epic battle to the death where the whole world is at stake, he still shies away from saying anyone dies or is killing someone else. And this is a series that starts off with a Unicorn stabbing a wounded little girl in the heart. Come on Bruce! Live up to it! Very strange but what else could you do in a middle-grade epic fantasy?

Aside from my issues with the style, the ending was fairly standard for what I had envisioned. Cara, now a unicorn, does not kill Beloved but simply tries to heal her and because she is centuries old she dies anyway. Cara is sad about this. Seriously? She's an evil demented demon and you're sad? Sheesh!

A lot of what made the ending work however, was not introduced or set up properly until this final chapter. Yes, there was some foreshadowing with the Dimblethumb and the Squijium and a few hints in the 3rd book, The Whisperer. But really, why couldn't this Whisperer have been around in the earlier books? Would have been better.

Of course, these books were written over the course of what, 20 years? I guess ideas change.

Also, he didn't even really resolve the major issue for me! Yeah, Luster is healing. But now that it's creator is gone forever, what is going to happen to the blank spaces that were never finished? Will Luster forever be a half-world? That just seemed sad.

As a kid, I kinda hoped Cara would turn into a unicorn. As an adult, didn't like it so much. And there is a hint at a reconcilliation between Martha and Amalia/Ivy but none between her and Ian despite their huge fight in the middle. We never really even get a reaction from Ian at Cara's transformation. Adn why did Elihu/the Dimblethumb have to smash the Amulet to transform her if he had the transformational magic in him all along?

Overall, the lesson here is to finish you series in a decent ammount of time and know what you are promising to the reader. I still love and adore the first 2 books. The second two however are just okay. I only read them to know what happens.

Bah. I'm probably far too cynical now. I miss being A Cool Girl Who Likes Unicorns ...

Jennifer says

How do you review a book you've been waiting all your life to finally read? I began the Unicorn Chronicles as a Second Grader, and finished them eighteen years later. So much changed with these last two books. A very strange but amazing thing happened as I dove into the final two installments. Cara remained basically the same age, lending an air of timelessness to this tale. It brought me back to my childhood, but the world of Luster expanded so much I felt like this series grew up with me. It is larger than life and I'm convinced no one can write epic Unicorn novels like Bruce Coville. There really are no words to do it justice. You'll just have to read it and discover the mystery behind the magic for yourselves. I finished this book with a hint of sorrow and a sweet satisfaction in knowing our beloved characters will continue to have more adventures. If only we could break into Grimwold's cave and read them ourselves!

Becky says

Originally posted at my book review blog: <http://www.active-voice.net/2010/06/2...>

Beloved has finally broken through into Luster, the land of the Unicorns, and brought the Hunt with her. As the Hunters start their genocide, the unicorns gather together and find allies of their own -- but if they can't find a way to get back their fighting fire, it could be the end of the unicorns forever. But Beloved's mad Hunt has an unintended consequence: the gate she opened is right in the heart of Luster, destroying the great tree that holds the world together, and now not just the unicorns, but all of Luster, may be doomed...

Not gonna lie: I devoured this book. I did a doubletake when I realized I'd missed its release, bought it the next day, and had it finished in under 24 hours. I had originally planned to reread the whole series first, but it was so new and tempting and *right there in my bag*, and look, I'm only human and I've been waiting for the series conclusion for, like, 16 years now.

It's hard for me to figure out what to say here, so I'll start with this: it feels like the legend and worldbuilding behind Luster ran away with the story at some point. I remember reading the second book, and I was utterly blown away by the twist at the end, when you find out the truth about the Wanderer. But I didn't feel similarly about the reveal of the Whisperer in the third book, because the first two set it up clearly that Beloved is the series' Big Bad. Adding in the Whisperer, while intriguing (and it says a lot of interesting things about the unicorns) meant that the story was no longer about Cara and the unicorns fighting with Beloved; it was about defeating a much more nebulous villain.

The fourth book takes it further. It turns out that the Whisperer isn't something that can be defeated by Cara or the unicorns at all, which surprised me: with the repeated talk about the unicorns needing to find a way to "regain their fire" after having tried for so long to be pure, I genuinely thought that they would have to reclaim their darker impulses, and in so-doing, defeat the Whisperer that was *created* by those impulses. Instead, there was a whole additional layer of conflict added. To defeat the Whisperer, you had to bring in Elihu, Fallon, and Allura, and even though we barely got to know Elihu as a character, the whole conflict hinged on him. There were pieces of it I loved -- I think the Dimblethum's backstory was awesome -- but that meant that the series was *really* no longer about Cara and Lightfoot and their friends. Instead, it was about some godlike creatures and ultimately out of everyone else's hands, and that frustrated me a little.

Actually, now that I think about it, very little of *The Last Hunt* was about Cara, and Lightfoot barely was in it

at all. Between her parents, the dragons, the centaurs, the delvers, M'Gama, and other unicorns, her story was only one of many, many plot threads. They were all woven together very well. The book never sagged, I was never bored, and once I remembered what had happened in the previous book I was never lost or confused by having such an array of subplots. And the fact that they came together in the massive final climax was nothing short of amazing -- just getting all of those characters together at one place and time couldn't have been an easy narrative feat, and the dual-climax of the Hunt and Luster shaking apart worked really well. But, as I said in my mini-review of *Dark Whispers*, having so many POVs and so much going on means there isn't time for a lot of development for any of the characters. I think the character who stuck out to me the most in this book was Rocky, because (between this and the previous book) he really *did* have the strongest character arch.

As a reader, I'm really into story structure. I *love* worldbuilding. On a technical level, I think those aspects of *The Last Hunt* are brilliant. But as good as they are, I don't think those things are really Coville's strength as a writer. I've always loved his characters most of all. He has a rare talent of making characters feel very, very real -- especially tween and teen girl characters, which seems to be pretty rare from male writers (and oh man, I can't tell you how strongly I identified with Wendy from the *AI Gang* as a kid, for example). So as much as I flew through this book, and really loved the glimpse into Luster's history and aura of hope for its future, I also wish there had been more of that character in it. Still, I enjoyed it mightily -- more than *Dark Whispers*, definitely -- and give it a solid **four stars**.

Jessi Jones says

It took the better part of two decades, but I've finally been able to finish this darn series.

What a great ending to the story. Everything was tied up so nicely and the final battle with Beloved was worth it. I specifically enjoyed the new things I learned about Luster and its creation. The great part is the length of the book; it's much longer than the books before it and every loose end gets addressed.

My only disappointments are in how long it took for the series to be completed and publishing issues with the final book. I know that it doesn't affect the quality of the book, but it's still irritating. For whatever reason scholastic only ran the first set of hardcover books and never reprinted, so the only way to purchase the book to spend outrageous amounts online. Fortunately, my local library had a copy.

Overall, The Unicorn Chronicles is a fantastic fantasy series for all ages. I especially recommend this book to adults who love unicorns or started this series as a kid and never had the chance to finish it.

Kaitlin says

When I first picked up "Into the Land of the Unicorns" (Book I of the Unicorn Chronicles) I was excited. I was young. Bruce Coville spoke to my generation, and seemed to put into words the kinds of adventures I'd always wished I could have, magical and supernatural and otherworldly. I tore through the first book in a day, found the second book almost immediately and ate it up in gulps as well.

Then, years passed between the second and third books. And when the third book ("Dark Secrets") finally

appeared, amid much anticipation on my part, it fell short. It seemed to me that Bruce Coville, hero of my early childhood with such stories as "Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher" and "Aliens Ate My Homework," had changed his mind about what story he wanted to tell. Pieces didn't add up. Whole chunks of the world's mythology were "casually" slipped in, as though they'd been there from book one. But they hadn't, and it was jarring.

By the end of "The Last Hunt" (Book IV, and the finale of the series), I was just ready to be done with it all. I finished simply because I had to know how it ended, not because I was truly invested in the series anymore.

It wasn't that I outgrew them. There are plenty of books from my childhood that I can re-visit happily and eagerly, and enjoy them as much if not more than I did when I was younger. No, it was that Bruce Coville did not deliver the story he promised. And I, as a loyal reader, take such a break in faith very hard. I'll will be very objective if ever my fingers wander over another Bruce Coville title.

Christine says

I can't even begin to tell you how long I have waited for this book. The Unicorn Chronicles was my childhood favorite, and it broke my heart that it was set up for a sequel and yet none was out. I waited 10 years to finally finish my story. Well, this book and the one before it finally arrived in the mail, so here's my review.

My main issue with this book is all the years that went by between Book #2 and Book #3, because I blame that for the reason this story turned out the way it did. When this story started out, it was a magical tale of a girl who had stumbled into Luster and met unicorns. The second book preserved that, and even the third book managed to some degree. But the fourth book, The Last Hunt, ruined everything.

My first irritation at the book came with a disagreement of fact. In the Unicorn Chronicles, when Ivy Morris runs through the gate to Luster, the first thing she does is touch another unicorn and speak mind to mind with them. In this book, (view spoiler) How does that work? In my opinion those facts must be laid out before writing the book, and, once written and published earlier in the series, cannot be changed without adequate explanation as to why.

I have a lot of other complaints, but those can all be voiced in the unanswered questions I still have. When I finished the book, my heart sank, and then I saw a letter from Grimwold in the back as I was throwing it down. I scrambled to pick the book up again and eagerly read it, hoping for answers...but missing them yet again. Here are all the questions I have. Perhaps my fellow readers can help me invent answers to them.

(view spoiler)

But, enough with the book bashing. I did love the backstory - how the world came to be, what historical events drove everyone to where they are today, everything. It is the most beautiful story I've ever heard, and it sings to my heart in a way I never thought possible.

Still, it pains me to see that when all is done, I have no other positive things to say about the series. It seems to me that books 3 and 4 were only written because Bruce Coville had this nagging sense that he hadn't finished something. They were not as good as the first two books. The same passion wasn't there, and it showed.

As a final parting word, if you want to stay attached to any character at all, focus on Squijum. He is the only character throughout the entire book that doesn't either go through some odd personality / form change or die, so he's a safe choice as a favorite.

Ashley Briscoe says

I love this series! I just finished listening to them on audio book. Into the land of the Unicorns is my favorite book of all time. I first read it in elementary school sparking my love of reading in 1995. I even wrote a letter to Bruce in Middle school and to my surprise he replied. I have it framed envelope and all. Finally catching up and finishing the series today with love and sorrow.

That being said I have pros and cons.

Pros:

I love the character development through out all of the series including this book. The book moves smoothly along up till the end.

Most of the storylines are tied up.

Cons:

Some of the deaths didn't hit me quite as hard as I feel they should of. There was only 1 death in particular that made me sorrowful in the previous book. I wish we could know more about emgama and the delver magician. Also if there was a way for the delvers to re connect with the dwarfs. I love the squigem and noticed he didn't speak as much in this book as he had in the others. I do not recall hearing if Thomas the tinker was alright in the end. I just wanted more closure. I know at the beginning it said years had passed since the battle but there were no updates to how they were doing now so many years later.

I would love to hear stories from the other Chronicle keepers since grimwald is the 4th. Also where was grinwald watching from? I don't recall. Also a little bummed out about lightfoot and cara being cousins. Once she turned I wanted them to be a thing later on maybe...or bell if she still has feelings for lightfoot. Any she loved it hope there is more to come

Quill says

I was a little girl when I started reading this series, and I finished it as a young woman. It's been a journey of over a decade, but I still found this conclusion incredibly satisfying and just as rich as the first two books. My little unicorn-hearted self would have lapped this up. Thank you, Coville, for finishing this.

Janni says

(Disclaimer: Bruce has edited not only some of my short stories, but also some of my unicorn short stories. So I'm not an unbiased reader here.)

If my inner 10-year-old has a strong thread of horse girl in her, she has an even stronger thread of unicorn girl. (The two are somewhat entwined, but not entirely.) And she and I have both been waiting for the conclusion of The Unicorn Chronicles for something like fifteen years now. We're not at all disappointed that we waited.

One of the many things I love about these books are how each book is more complex and deeper than the one before. Longer too: the first book is a slender 150 page middle grade novel, and each book after it is 150 pages longer than the last. Unicorn girl that I am, I loved these books from the start, and thought even the first brought more to the story than a quick summary (girl goes into the land of the unicorns and has to save them) might suggest, but even more I love how the later books aren't constrained to the shape of the first, but allow the story keeps expanding outwards and inwards.

I love the mythmaking of these books. The original origin story of the unicorns' mortal enemy, the ever-wounded, ever-healing Beloved, is powerful enough, especially for anyone who already is a fan of unicorn stories--but by the third and forth books, the mythology expands to take on the whole question of what unicorns are, and what the price is for creating a creature so pure--not only for us, but also for them. There are lots of other threads, too, including threads about family and the bonds among them.

Unlike the first three books, I do think the fourth one wants to be read after the other three--but it does an excellent job of reminding someone who has read the first three books and is simply too impatient to reread them before plunging in (that would be me) of things that need remembering. And even at 600 pages, there were threads I sort of wanted to see given more time, especially around heroine Cara's family and the betrayals and pain that have shaped same, threads that (as the book acknowledges for at least one of those relationships) will take more time to fully heal.

But by this book the story is no longer only about Cara--for all that one of the book's final acts of redemption is hers, as it needed to be--but also about the world she's found herself in and its fate.

Mostly I just loved this book, with its rich-yet-oddly-fragile world of Luster, and the things it has to say about creators, creations, stories, and--as with all the best fantasy stories--being human.

Clearwater Public Library System says

A remarkable final book. No plot line is left unresolved, and there is action and mystery galore. Beloved characters do die, and other are transformed in ways no one expected. The end result of the battle with Beloved was as expected, but in my bumble opinion, it was also a case of the author taking the easy way out. The Whisperer's identity and purpose were quite a surprise and made the book all the more interesting. A well crafted conclusion to a wonderful series.

-Miss Jessica

Gillian Brownlee says

So I started this series as a kid when the first book was published in 1999. I read the first 3 as they came out, and then Coville didn't publish the 4th one until 2010, when I had given up hope and mostly forgotten about the books I loved so much as a kid. But I finally got around to rereading the series, and after 18 years, finishing it.

It was everything I could have hoped for. It's like Coville knew his audience had grown up a bit, because this book was intense. I'm rarely a vocal reader, but there were many gasps and laughs and tears as I made my way through. Was that due to nostalgia? It's very likely. But I am so relieved to finally see these characters to the end of their stories after all this time.

Richard says

A very satisfying conclusion to Coville's Unicorn Chronicles. I couldn't put this book down until I finished it.

I read the first book in the series when I was in 6th grade. Shortly after, when I found the 2nd book I was ecstatic and read it nearly non-stop. Imagine my horror and surprise to find the rest of the series was not yet available!! Fast-forward more than a few years and I recently discovered that the final two books of the series were now available. I sat down in the space of about a week and devoured the entire series. How wonderful to reread and old favorite.

This entry very satisfyingly wraps up the story of Beloved and the Final Hunt (as the name implies :) as well as a few other morsels I won't spoil. Needless to say it was a wonderful story from start to finish and I personally couldn't be happier with the conclusion. The way all threads are brought together and wrapped up and yet just enough morsel left over to hint at the possible inclusion of other stories from the fabled Unicorn Chronicles is tantalizing and was worth every second spent reading.

Kaila says

I uttered a sigh of relief upon starting what I knew would be the last novel in this series. I grew bored of it in book 2, although this book was much better than its predecessors, it still left me a bit flat.

Again with the terrible brown text on cream paper. The cover for this one is quite pretty, although I'm not sure where the dragon's left arm went. Looks like an action book and that's what we get.

A lot of the negative reviews in young adult novels nowadays is because of how sexist they are. The girl main character gets with a guy, is ok when he is abusive, and generally shows extremely disturbing emotions in a positive light. Cara Diana Hunter, at the very least, can't fall into this category too easily. Sure there are a couple instances of the men being overly protective or brushing over her much warranted need for a good cry and just say "She is so brave" quietly to one another. But you know, at least she's not in an abusive relationship, and she's off having fun scary action times in a fantasy world.

I had this complaint with the entire series and it was not to change for *The Last Hunt* - all the events are incredibly convenient. Every time a character would get separated from his or her party my immediate thought was "No matter. They'll find someone else wandering around the forest." And of course they did, every time. Coupled with the omniscient narrator, that left absolutely no suspense. I didn't go through and count but another reviewer on Goodreads says there are about 20 viewpoints throughout the novel, and I believe it. It becomes such a mess jumping around to practically every character we've been introduced to, yet it doesn't even include a table of contents. Now I'm not saying a table of contents is what makes or breaks a good novel, but every other book in the series has had one. It *does* include a very handy glossary at the back, but it unfortunately had me screaming at the book. The glossary contained **spoilers!** What! When I didn't recognize the name of one of the human sorcerer people and went back to check who it was, it completely gave away his story line. Ugh I was frustrated at that!

The unicorns are pretty ineffectual in this novel. Amalia Flickerfoot seems content to send off envoys on missions and then stands around to be caught unawares of a war she knew was going to happen. Yes I know she didn't know *where* it was going to happen, but there has got to be more preparation than just traveling to the location for the battlefield of choice. No sorts of armor were commissioned from the humans, the unicorns ride into battle with no protection whatsoever. That just seems negligent. This is war here people! But of course Coville tends to shy away from any of the "adult" aspects normally present in a fantasy novel, as it is meant for young adult/middle readers. I'm pretty far above the target audience here but so much of the story could have been fleshed out more had we not had so many narrators in the soup. Or is that cooks in the kitchen? Whatever.

(view spoiler)

I'm glad to be done with series, and I'm afraid I can't recommend it very highly. The first novel is enough to make anyone love unicorns, but it falls off too quickly to stay interesting. Read the first one but leave the rest.

Mark says

'Belle reflected on how odd it was that telling the tale of the Whisperer and the delvers had caused her to feel some sympathy for the delvers. what strange power did telling a story have, that it could open her heart like this?'

Need I say more really. Coville hits the nail perfectly on the head with this comment. The entering into a story, the walking in the footsteps of another through use of your imagination, can transform your sensitivities to another's plight.

This book is the fourth, the final instalment of his epic story of the mystical land of Luster. This is created, i can't say peopled for obvious reasons, with recognizable mystical creations such as unicorns, dragons, gryphen (I think that's the plural) and dwarves but there are also Coville's own creations which fill out this brilliantly imagined world.

It is impossible to say much about the story without destroying the unfolding of the Narrative. This is a truly impressive bringing together and explaining the anomalies and confusions and seeming contradictions of the

previous three books. Had I, as so many of the previous readers, had to wait patiently for each volume to be dragged from the imagination of Bruce Coville I may have lost the will to live or simply given up as the plot was a highly contorted and complicated one but I had the good fortune to only discover the series a few months ago after it had all been finished and so have been able to devour the 20 years it took Coville to reveal his whole story in a few months.

To say anything more specific about the narrative would have me having to pepper the paragraphs with "spoiler alerts" so instead I revert to the simple action of saying

"if you enjoy stories about unicorns....read it; if you enjoy clever and ever-twisting plots and storylines which gradually resolve and become clear through massive contortions and unfoldings and surprisesread it; If you respect an author who is prepared to address big questions and not 'happily ever after resolve them all'....read it; If you are not too removed from your own youngsterhood to enjoy mystery and adventure and discovery from a young adult's perspective....read it; and finally if you enjoy the stretching of the mind's possibilities into the idea of a world far bigger than we might otherwise countenanceread it"

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy

Kelcey says

Well, here we are. Book 4 and final in the Unicorn Chronicles. This has been a journey that occurred over quite a few years, but in a way, I feel like I never left Luster. The world and characters that Coville created were just as fresh in my mind as they were when I loved the books in grade school. I know a lot of this is probably based in feelings of nostalgia. Whatever. I enjoyed it.

At 600 pages, this book is a beast especially for the tweenage demographic that I feel like it best fits, but those who love the series will likely not be daunted by the size and be eager to see how the many plot lines wrap up.

There were some characters that I didn't care about (Ian still and the delver stuff was interesting, but dragged on a little too long) and some that I wanted to know more about (dragons!!! and maidens of the hunt (could've been way more badass ladies like Feng Yuan- missed opportunity there). There were almost too many story lines in my opinion, but it worked out okay. I was mostly content with the way that things wrapped up. (An epilogue would have been nice after all that... after all, I need to know if my ships end up together (view spoiler)

I liked the plot "twists" - many had been hinted at throughout the previous book(s), but some really took on some interesting topics and Coville did not shy away from the death and loss that naturally followed the progression of events in this book. Some were truly surprises, but I enjoyed everything the author did add flavor and depth to the story.

I can't wait to start recommending these books again especially since they now have an actual ending. The ending of book 2 always left me wanting something more. Childhood epic quest = completed.
