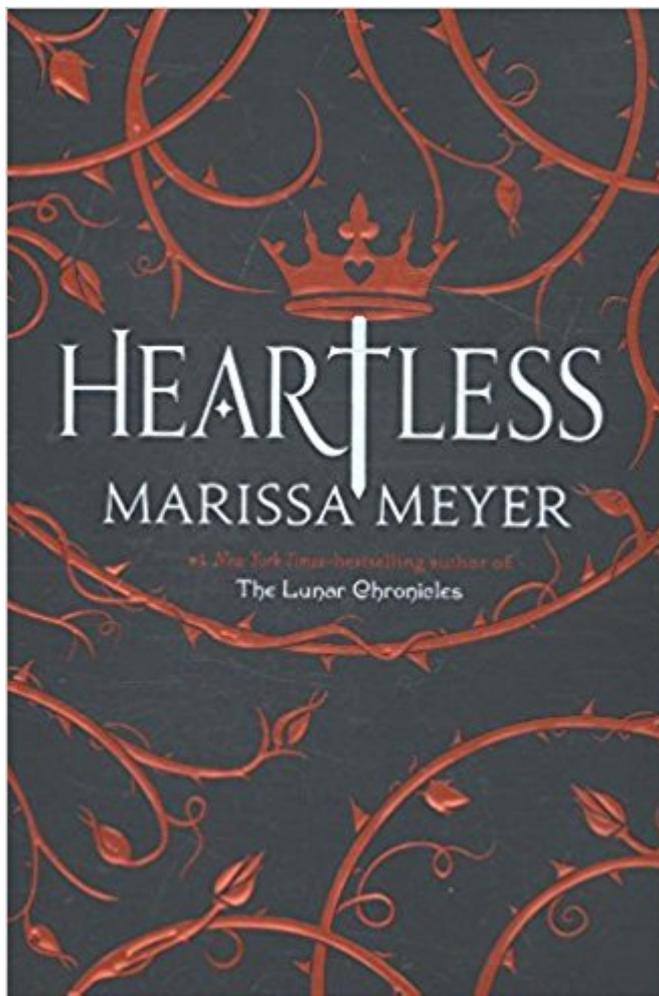


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# Heartless



## Synopsis

The #1 NEW YORK TIMES bestseller that Gregory Maguire (*Wicked* and *After Alice*) calls "full of heart." Long before she was the terror of Wonderland, she was just a girl who wanted to fall in love. Catherine may be one of the most desired girls in Wonderland, and a favorite of the unmarried King of Hearts, but her interests lie elsewhere. A talented baker, all she wants is to open a shop with her best friend. But according to her mother, such a goal is unthinkable for the young woman who could be the next queen. Then Cath meets Jest, the handsome and mysterious court joker. For the first time, she feels the pull of true attraction. At the risk of offending the king and infuriating her parents, she and Jest enter into an intense, secret courtship. Cath is determined to define her own destiny and fall in love on her terms. But in a land thriving with magic, madness, and monsters, fate has other plans. In her first stand-alone teen novel, the New York Times bestselling author dazzles us with a prequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up — •The author's best fantasy yet. In her inspired reimagining of Lewis Carroll's inimitable adventures in Wonderland, Meyer has explored the world that existed before Alice fell down the rabbit hole. All Lady Catherine wants to do is open her own bakery with the help of her

maid. She has no wish to wear beautiful dresses or go to balls, and she certainly has no desire whatsoever to marry the good-natured, bumbling, childlike king. But that seems to be her fate until she meets the king's handsome and mysterious new joker, Jest. Although his mission is to steal Lady Catherine's heart and take it to the White Queen, who would use it to overcome the enemies of her realm, he falls in love with her instead. Employing all the best aspects of Carroll's book *The White Rabbit*, croquet with hedgehogs and flamingos, suits of cards, and the Jabberwocky, Meyer has woven all the elements of darkness and light, fate and free will, and love and hatred into an unforgettable story of the evolution of the Red Queen from a young girl who dreamed of true love and freedom to a madwoman best remembered for the phrase *Off with his head*. VERDICT If you only read one fractured fairy tale this year, make it *Heartless*. A must-have title. —Jane Henriksen Baird, Anchorage Public Library, AK

#1 NEW YORK TIMES Bestseller! A Publishers Weekly Bestseller! "In *Heartless*, the nonsense that is *Wonderland* gets a reverential makeover, full of heart and its own idiosyncratic character." —Gregory Maguire, *WICKED* and *AFTER ALICE* "What Gregory Maguire did for the *Wicked Witch*, Meyer does for Lewis Carroll's *Queen of Hearts*, tracing her arc from a teen with dreams of owning a bakery into a murderous madwoman. People magazine "The author's best fantasy yet. ... Meyer has woven all the elements of darkness and light, fate and free will, and love and hatred into an unforgettable story of the evolution of the Red Queen from a young girl who dreamed of true love and freedom to a madwoman best remembered for the phrase 'Off with his head.' If you only read one fractured fairy tale this year, make it *Heartless*. A must-have title." —School Library Journal, starred review Praise for Marissa Meyer's *Lunar Chronicles* series: #1 New York Times Bestselling Series USA Today Bestseller Publishers Weekly Bestseller National Indie Bestseller "A mash-up of fairy tales and science fiction . . . a cross between *Cinderella*, *The Terminator*, and *Star Wars*." Entertainment Weekly "Prince Charming among the cyborgs." The Wall Street Journal "Terrific." Los Angeles Times "A binge-reading treat." MTV "Marissa Meyer rocks the fractured fairy tale genre." The Seattle Times "Epic . . . Breathtaking." Teen Vogue "Utterly thrilling." Publishers Weekly "Wonderfully addictive." BuzzFeed

Working in a library, I very seldom purchase books anymore; however, there are books that I want

to have in my collection either because I will reread them or I save them for my daughter as she grows up. This one was both. Further proof that some of the best writing today is coming from the YA genre, this backstory to both *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* is a nothing less than a piece of brilliance by Meyer. In *Alice in Wonderland*, the Queen of Hearts is a flat, frightening, if sometimes humorous character. Meyer has the job of taking Cath, the only daughter of a noble family with a secret dream of opening a bakery, and turning her into that one-dimensional character that everyone knows so well. For adults who've read and treasure the Alice books, Meyer's amazing ability to work in everyone from the Mad Hatter, to the Mock Turtle, will have you smiling as you read. Her ability to quietly paint Cath into a corner from which there is no escape, even as we, the readers, which one for her, is masterfully done. A must for anyone who loves Alice and wants to revisit those worlds.

Anyone who even remotely knows me knows I am infatuated (maybe unhealthily) with all that is Wonderland. Picking up *Heartless* was a gimme, but finding the time to read it was becoming a challenge. I do happen to own a physical copy that I had originally pre-ordered. However, between my neverending TBR and constant bouts of vertigo, audio seemed to be the best solution. "A heart, once stolen, can never be taken back." *Heartless* takes us back to a time before Alice tumbles down the rabbit hole into the infamous Wonderland. We are introduced to Catherine, a young girl with a passion for baking and a heart that desires true love. Courted by the King but longing only for the court joker Jest, Cath begins a forbidden affair that may have disastrous outcomes. This is the story of how a girl in love will rise to the throne and eventually become known as The Queen of Hearts. Characters were a mixed bag for me in *Heartless*. This is a fast paced retelling that incorporates the familiar denizens of Wonderland to provide us with a prequel. We are given a rare opportunity to dive behind the scenes and take a look at the "ingredients" that lead up to the final cake, AKA the Queen of Hearts. Catherine is our protagonist. She is young and full of ambition, driven by her desires to open her very own bakery with her best friend and household servant Mary Ann. But when the King decides to court Cath, she soon finds herself facing an endless list of obstacles that will not only challenge her aspirations but her heart that belongs to Jest, the court Joker. I have to be honest, while I appreciated our heroine's emotions and situation, there was a part of me that continued to feel a tinge of annoyance. She knew what she wanted, but I felt her voice and actions were weak at times. There was this ongoing attempt to approach matters logically that had me pulling hair at times. I did not dislike her, but I couldn't help but feel

she was her own worst enemy. Additional characters included a customary entourage ranging from the Cheshire Cat to the Mad Hatter. We are even offered an extension into Wonderland with the introduction of some new faces such as Jest and Raven. There is no shortage of bizarre and eccentric behavior that offers a bit of welcomed predictability. The plot was straight forward, lacking some of the imagination I have come to expect from Meyers, but that is not to say it disappoints. This is the making of a Queen that will come to reign terror on Wonderland, and for all purposes that story has been accomplished. However, it is told with little emphasis on the actual world. World building or lack of is where I struggled the most with Heartless. As an avid fan of Alice in Wonderland, I have always held firm to the idea that this is a tale that has always relied on the whimsical world to succeed. After all, it was the time down the rabbit hole that added a real element of magic to Alice's adventures. But that constant need to explore and uncover the oddities that we are accustomed to was absent. This may be a rare case of the author actually placing too much faith in the reader's knowledge. Wonderland is meant to be adventurous and immersive. This was more character driven and I missed that facet. The story telling and writing is every bit reminiscent of what I have come to expect when reading Meyer. It flows with a steady narration that facilitates a fluid and fast paced experience with a few unexpected twists. It is fun and effortless. I appreciated that while there is a love story contained within our protagonist's tale, it unfolds slowly with many elements that prove to be more realistic than the typical instalove you encounter in many retellings. The audio narration took a few chapters to settle into, but eventually came into its own. It is my understanding that Rebecca Soler also narrated the Lunar Chronicles. I found her tone and pacing to be ideal in terms of the story, but struggled with some of the dialog. However, this is always my complaint with audio. I enter with this unrealistic expectation that each character should have a truly unique voice (i.e. like 20 narrators for one story). I do feel that Soler eventually achieved this individuality to an extent and gave a life to Wonderland's inhabitants that ultimately provided an enjoyable listen. While I was surprised with the lack of world construction and desired more of an imaginative approach to Cath's story, it was still a solid one that managed to paint a history that fits well into the grand scheme of things. This is a must read for all fans of Wonderland and retellings that offers satisfying back story, and it successfully provides more depth to a beloved classic.

Being a big fan of Meyer's "Cinder" series, I pre-ordered "Heartless" and dove right in as soon as it appeared on my Kindle screen. Readers looking for another sci-fi/dystopian type plot may be

disappointed, but give this book some time. I started out a bit unhappy that it was not what I had grown accustomed to, but the more I read, the more I became totally engrossed in the lives of Catherine, Jest, etc. and found myself genuinely upset when Meyer took the characters down a path that was not the one I wanted for them. But by then I was engrossed and, in the end, it all comes together in the way that it must. And while I still wanted things to go another direction, it sure made me think about that crazy Queen of Hearts from a very new perspective. I look forward to seeing where Marissa Meyer's imagination will take me next! Recommended for grades 7 and up.

I liked this book for the way it illustrated how hurt people hurt people. This is a retelling/prequel of Alice in Wonderland that gives a lot of background of how the Queen of Hearts came into being and added the Jabberwocky to the story. The main character, Catherine wants to open a bakery with her best friend and family maid and is not at all interested in the King of Hearts who seems very interested in her and her delicious baked goods. Due to family pressure and requirements of her station, she is pressured into courting the king. But then she ends up attracted to the court jester, Jest. As Catherine struggles to decide whether to follow her heart or her station, Jabberwocky attacks in the Kingdom of Hearts and almost everyone seems to want to deny it is an issue or want to do anything to stop it. Through the twists and turns of the plot and with some fleshing out of some of the Alice in Wonderland characters and some other fairytales and folklore, this book made a story that I enjoyed more than the Alice in Wonderland story and the way evil and hatred gradually seeps into the characters makes you have a new appreciation and insight into characters from your childhood that you thought you always knew. I gave this a 4 out of 5 stars on Goodreads.

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Wife of a Heartless Gangsta Heartless Ryan the Heartless

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