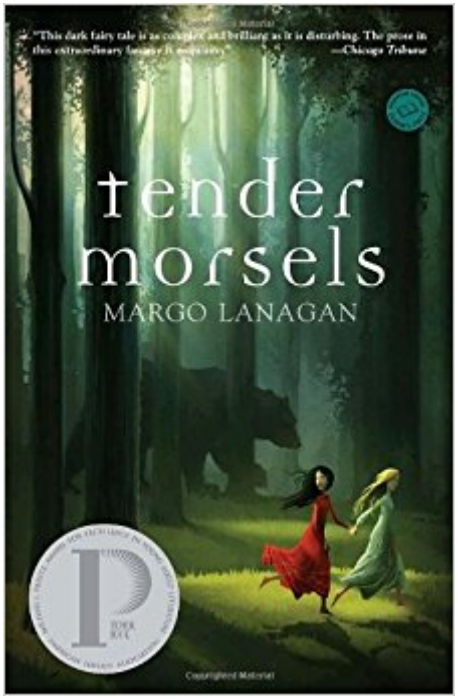
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Tender Morsels



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Synopsis

Tender Morsels is a dark and vivid story, set in two worlds and worrying at the border between them. Liga lives modestly in her own personal heaven, a world given to her in exchange for her earthly life. Her two daughters grow up in this soft place, protected from the violence that once harmed their mother. But the real world cannot be denied foreverÃ¢â ¬â •magicked men and wild bears break down the borders of LigaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s refuge. Now, having known Heaven, how will these three women survive in a world where beauty and brutality lie side by side?From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In her extraordinary and often dark first novel, award-winning story writer Lanagan (Red Spikes) creates two worlds: the first a preindustrial village that might have sprung from a Brueghel canvas, a place of victims and victimizers; the second a personal heaven granted to Liga Longfield, who has survived her father’s molestations and a gang rape but, with one baby and pregnant again, cannot risk any further pain. As she raises her two daughters, placid Branza and fiery Urdda, she discovers that her universe is permeable: a dwarf or littlee man, in Lanagan’s characteristically knotted parlance, slips in and out of her world in search of treasure; and a good-hearted youth also enters, magically transformed into a bear in the process. A less kind man-bear follows, and then a teenage Urdda, avid for a richer life with the vivid people, figures out how to pass through the border, too. Writing in thick, clotted prose that holds the reader to a slow

pace, Lanagan explores the savage and the gentlest sides of human nature, and how they coexist. With suggestions of bestiality and sodomy, the novel demands maturityÃ¢â ¬â •but the challenging text will attract only an ambitious audience anyway. Ages 14Ã¢â ¬â œup. (Oct.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. Grade 9 UpÃ¢â ¬â •A traumatized teen mother magically escapes to her own personal heaven in this daring and deeply moving fantasy. The characters, setting, much of the action, and even the very words of the title are taken from the Grimm Brothers' "Snow-White and Rose-Red," a sweet story of contrasting sisters who live deep in the forest and whose innocent hearts are filled with compassion for a lonely bear and an endangered dwarf. In the novel, Liga's daughtersÃ¢â ¬â •one born of incest, the other of gang rapeÃ¢â ¬â •first flourish in Liga's safe world. But encounters with magical bears and the crusty dwarf challenge them to see a world beyond their mother's secure dreamscape. Eventually the younger one, Urdda, and subsequently her sister and Liga are drawn back into the real world in which cruelty, hurt, and prejudice abound. But it is also only there that they can experience the range of human emotion, develop deep relationships, and discover who they truly are. The opening chapters vividly portray the emotional experience of a boy's first sexual encounter, mind-numbing abuse by Liga's father, and a violent gang rape. It's heavy fare even for sophisticated readers, but the author hits all the right notes, giving voice to both the joys and terrors that sexual experience can bestow without saying more than readers need to know to be fully with the characters. While the story explores what it means to be human, it is at its heart an incisive exploration of the uses and limitations of dissociation as a coping mechanism. Beautifully written and surprising, this is a novel not to be missed.Ã¢â ¬â •Carolyn Lehman, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The first sentenceÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“there are plenty would call her a slut for itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •tips the reader off right away that this may not be the most kid-friendly of YA novels. In fact, Margo Lanagan strips past the implicitly brutal foundations of the Grimm fairy tales to reveal the savagery of a world from which such a tale of female refuge could spring. We speed past Grimm territory very quickly.Providing a back story for her version of the Grimm BrothersÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœSnow White and Rose Red,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•

Lanagan places it in a harsh worldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â•the dark doppelganger of Disney enchanted forests and wicked witches. In this story, the witches are not wicked although a few are a bit naÃƒÆ'Ã Â ve and unwittingly create chaos out of the best intentions. The real wickedness lies in the hearts and loins of lustful men.Liga is a traumatized teenager, left in the care of her cruel father after her motherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s death. Repeatedly molested and impregnated by this person on whom she placed her trust, her spirit is broken and she fruitlessly seeks deliverance. After two miscarriages brought on by tinctures purchased by her father from a local midwife/witch, the third results in a living, breathing baby girl. The discovery that her father has been killed in an apparent accident is small consolation for Liga. There are more brutes where her father came from and, knowing she now lives alone and defenseless, five of the younger breed pursue and trap her back in her cottage. In stylistic acknowledgment to the YA genre, Lanagan refrains from describing either the previous molestation from LigaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s father or the gang rape that results in a second baby growing inside her. She doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t need to. What she has written evokes the brutal betrayal of a childÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s innocence and the post-traumatic, existential despair that results from it, far more powerfully than if every sexual assault had been painstakingly depicted.After a failed suicide attempt by jumping off a cliff Liga and her babies is transported to a parallel world, a twilight zone-like Heaven/Haven of her heartÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s desire where she and her babies can live in safety and without fear.Summarizing the rest of the novel would not only take up too much space but deviate from what I want to convey about this novel. As anyone familiar with ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœSnow-White and Rose-RedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ may have surmised, the first baby, Branza, is the Snow White surrogate and the second, Urdda, is Rose Red. Like the original, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœTender MorselsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ contains a disagreeable, avaricious dwarf and a bear that transforms into a man. How the dwarf and the bear enter LigaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Heaven world is due entirely to the unwitting carelessness of the clueless witch, Muddy Annie (the former ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœslutÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ from the first sentence). A membrane between the worlds has been tampered with and ripped with repeated use (primarily by the dwarf, Collaby Dought) so that the temporal continuum between the dimensions has been shifted out of alignment. Time in LigaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s world goes at a faster rate than time in the true world.But how does a bear transform into a man or man into bear? First, a few words about LigaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s home village, St. OlafredÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s. There are a good many rough, lustful, aggressive cretins such as the biological fathers of LigaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s daughters. The residents of LigaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s village are a crude and bawdy bunch in general. Although the world resembles the European settings of the Grimm tales, the characters speak in a vernacular

resembling James JoyceÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s lusty Dubliners, where children refer to Father as ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœDaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ and Mother as ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœMamÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢, babies are ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœbabsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ and one of the pastimes is ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“feckingÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•. The town also has pagan-like festivals. In addition to Midsummer Eve/Day, there is an annual ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœDay of the BearÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢, in which young men wear bear hoods and furry outfits, soot up their faces, and run after young womenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •a presumably more harmless and lighthearted version of the liberties that many of the young men avail themselves of on a nearly daily basis. One of the young ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“bearsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•, Davit Ramstrong, somehow breaks through the membrane between the worlds, becoming a real bear in LigaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s and a faithful companion and playmate, like a pet dog, to Liga and her then little girls Branza and Urdda.The safe world in which Liga has raised her daughters is also sterile. Each incursion from the other world further rips the barrier. Although Branza is content to stay in her safe world, Urdda is restless and curious. A few years after Davit runs across the barrier back into his world, a second bear appears, eats the dwarf, and pursues she-bears as male bears are wont to do. Urdda pushes through the barrier and grows accustomed to life in St. OlafredÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s. Due to the misalignment of time between the worlds, she ages one year in St. OlafredÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s while Liga and Branza age ten in their world.Eventually Liga and Branza are forcibly pulled back into the world after Urdda seeks help from the person that caused them to travel to it originally. Trying to adjust to the shock of being in this similar yet different world, Branza is woefully unprepared for its harshness and Liga is filled with guilt and regret. She learns that she stayed in that other world far longer than she should have, considering the lives of her children.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦it seemed to her now that she had had cause for towering, disabling anxieties about them; that what had seemed little plaints and sorrows in their childhoods were in fact off-drawings from much greater tragedies, from which she had tried to keep them but could not. And the joys she had had of them, too, their embraces and laughterÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •it was all too intense to be endured, this connection with them, which was a miniature of the connection with the forces that drove planet and seasonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •the relentlessness of them, the randomness, the susceptibility to glory, to accident, to disaster. How soft had been her life in that other place, how safe and mild! And here she was, back where terrors could immobilize her, and wonders too; where life might become gulps of strong ale rather than sips of bloom-tea. She did not know whether she was capable of lifting the cup, let alone drinking the contents.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•Although this novel is a fantasy and a young adult fantasy at that, the emotions and the psychology of humans are as genuine as those of characters in any so called

ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœrealisticÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ novel. Lanagan slowly develops an intensity and power in this novel of accumulated emotional wrinkles and entanglements. Her ability to drop, god-like, into the minds of varied characters and convincingly depict all of them is reminiscent of Tolstoy and her ability to render the emotional turmoil as these wrinkles become even more difficult to unravel resembles George Eliot, especially in the emotionally devastating conclusion. I would advise anyone with a passing thought of reading this novel to disregard the YA label as well as the fantasy label. This is one of the most powerful novels IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve read in many years.Yes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœTender MorselsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ is a fairy tale full of magic, dwarves, witches, metamorphosed humans/bears, but it describes characters that love, hate and have natural desires like humans in our own true world of good and evil. The complexity of this particular fairy tale world resembles ours and, like our own world, contains the harsh fact that happy endings are not uniformly ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœone size fits allÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ for every character.

Based on the fairy tale Snow White and Rose Red, while presented as a young adult novel,this tale starts off with two very adult themes of incest and gang rape. Liga, a young girl, survives but is despairing with one child and pregnant with another. She makes a deal with a spirit and goes home to a personalized version of heaven, with her cottage repaired, and a village where all of the bad, evil, mean, and/or wicked people no longer exist. While she raises her daughters, the "real world" intrudes when a dwarf, aided by a woman with some magical skills, punches through to their world and discovers that ordinary items that he touches turn to gold and jewels. This breakthrough to their world causes weakness between the realities, and leads to more incursions, some more benign than others, with men in bear suits becoming bears. When daughter Urdda’s curiosity leads her to the other side, she finds a world far different and far more dangerous. Differences in timelines increase the changes between worlds and while some may find happiness, others will find heartbreak. This was an intriguing, but sometimes brutal tale.

I am left feeling disturbed and sad. I’m not sure which of these emotions is stronger.How many times must poor little Liga have her heart broken?! How many times must her very soul be shattered before our eyes?! How many?!"The only thing he could speak of to me were too great horrors for words, and the only comfort I could offer was understanding them, without him having to tell them." -pg. 302"Liga’s energy existed mainly in her bitterness and anger, so deep in her bones now that she thought she did not feel them anymore." -pg. 393Tender Morsels takes place in two very different worlds. The real world and Liga Longwood’s dream world.In Liga’s dream world all the

people that wronged her or judged her are gone. Everyone here is happy, healthy, and peaceful. And why shouldn't they be? This is the place of her heart's desire, is it not? There is no alcohol, money, violence, or anything that would frighten or hurt her and her 2 daughters, Branza and Urdda.Everything bad was left behind in the real world. The world she escaped, with the help of a "moon-babby", after a horrible deed was committed on her when she was 15.Liga knows what it's like outside of this world. She doesn't want to return.Her youngest daughter Urdda, however, knows nothing of the outside world. She was born in this safe place. All she knows of the other world are stories her mother tells her.This other place fascinates Urdda.Her hopes of going to the other world are further sparked when she sees a "littlee-man" disappear in the river. She tells herself that next time she sees him, she will follow him, for surely he knows how to navigate both worlds.Just remember, little Urdda, curiosity killed the cat.If this dream place were somehow taken from these ladies, would they be able to survive out in the real world? Where neighbors can't be trusted and people don't always have the best intentions, no matter how nice they seem? Or will the cruel ways of this world destroy them?Tender Morsels is a retelling of Snow White and Rose Red.Incest, rape, bestiality.If those 3 words make you queasy this book isn't for you. At all.I can't believe it is considered a YA book...Like I said before, this book left me both disturbed and sad.I was either thinking of ways to scrub my brain clean of certain things I had just read or trying not to cry. One of the main characters in this book, Liga, goes through so much just in the first few chapters that I didn't think she would survive it all. I began to question if I was going to be able to make it through this book. Seeing as how it is... extremely "dark".I was fully prepared to rate this 3.5 stars until I read a paragraph narrated by wild-child Urdda as she passed by her mother's old cottage and it made me tear up. Even now as I'm remembering it it's bringing tears to my eyes... If the ending didn't damn near break my heart I would be giving this book 5 big ol' stars right now. But, sadly, I'm not. I can only take so much sadness in a book, you know.My heart is breaking for Liga. She was nothing but an innocent and beautiful child who had to endure nightmares since a very young age.I truly believe life is not fair. And I have never believed it more.

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