



Darkness Calls

Marjorie M. Liu

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View our feature on Marjorie Liu's *Darkness Calls*.

Demon hunter Maxine Kiss, inked with living tattoos, is on a mission to rescue the man she loves from a bloodthirsty army. To save him, Maxine has only one choice: to lose control—and release her own powers of darkness.

Darkness Calls Details

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Author : Marjorie M. Liu

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From Reader Review Darkness Calls for online ebook

Anne says

I'm just guessing the year I read this - I just decided to add it b/c I'm considering reading the first book in the series at some point - and I want this one to register this one as read just in case I do :P

Overall I remember it being a good book - I enjoyed it quite a lot - I thought the power was interesting the plot was fast paced and interesting

Athena says

Darkness Calls was a more difficult book for me than the first one, *Iron Hunt*. Like a lot of second books this one bridges to those following with a LOT of details & new characters in addition to the plot of this book itself. In this series it is important to read in order, if you haven't read the first book this one is going to be a very tough read.

Darkness has some of the absolute creepiest scenes I've read in a long, long time. If these are Liu's nightmares I'm glad I don't live in an apartment near her because I felt like screaming a time or two at some of her descriptions; fortunately this didn't go on long. Erl King is by far the scariest character I've encountered in years.

Liu continues to world-build in a big way with this book and I found it both difficult and effective: instead of just *telling* us $a+b=q$, she makes us live through the process along with Max and it's confusing as hell, just like real life is sometimes. I'm very glad my real life is nice and boring and doesn't feature any labyrinths or demons, but it's great fun in the end to read about it.

Kt says

When creepy Mr. King shows up, Maxine knows right away he is trouble, but she doesn't grasp just how much. Things get complicated when Grant flies overseas to help an old Priest friend. Since Maxine cannot fly on account of the boys, she has to find another way to go and protect Grant. However before she can even leave trouble finds her hard and fast. It becomes a deadly fight for her life and everyone she cares about, with much more at stake then she realizes.

It makes absolutely no sense that Grant insisted on going overseas when he knew it was a trap. Actually a lot of the trouble the characters get into in this book could have been easily prevented if they had of just thought things through just a little bit. I found this really frustrating, as well as the fact that things are still pretty confusing. Maxine nor Grant still don't know much about what they really are, yet everyone else does. You would think their "allies" would want to tell them as much as possible considering their enemies keep trying to kill them for the "threat" the two of them supposedly are. The excessive mystery is annoying.

I did enjoy the developing relationships in this book. Maxine was able to spend a lot more time with her

grandfather and they seem to be getting quite close. Even though the boys have always been important to Maxine, in this book the motley crew becomes even more affectionate towards her. I'm not sure of the reason for the increased attention but it makes for really enjoyable parts to read. The bond between them is so thick. Maxine comments more than once that she always thought she would be alone except for the boys. However, now she is completely surrounded by love and support and I think that will really help her as she faces what is sure to come.

I'm really hoping things will become more clear in the next book. The series has such a great potential but is quickly losing a lot of its appeal due to frustration and confusion. I really do love Maxine's character and the boys are absolutely adorable so I'm going to hang in there to see where her story goes, and hope for the best.

Katie(babs) says

Darkness Calls is the second full length novel in Marjorie M. Liu's Hunter Kiss series. This is the first book I have ever read from Marjorie and it certainly won't be my last. I didn't read the short story in the Wild Thing anthology that started it all or the first full length book, The Iron Hunt. Because of this, I had some reservations before reading Darkness Calls because I thought I would be confused. Marjorie is a wonderful storyteller and catches the reader up to speed. This is one dark and raw urban fantasy that makes your squirm. Some will probably not be able to get past the first chapter because the action is so gritty and a bit disturbing. Darkness Calls reads more like a horror novel, where as you turn each page, you are not sure who will end up dead next. Bodies don't just end up on the floor, but are ripped apart with their blood and guts all over the place. Tasty right? With that in mind, I have to say that Marjorie has delivered a very original tale that grabs you by your throat and won't let go.

The character of Maxine Kiss is also very unique. Not only is she a hunter of zombies, demons and truly evil beings, but Maxine's body is a wonderland of tattoos that come to life after dark. Her boys, as she calls them, are handed down to every female in her family from so many generations passed. These tattoos have their own names and personalities. Zee is her main bodyguard along with Raw and Aaz. There are also Dek and Mal who act like pelts on Maxine's shoulders and in her hair. Dek and Mal enjoy humming Bon Jovi songs in Maxine's ear. These five demons are playful but also very deadly. One minute they will play with teddy bear or baseballs, the next they will take down their victims and consume them whole. Maxine's boys protect her at night and because of them, she is invincible. Not even bullets can harm her, until the daytime when they hibernate within her skin. Then she is vulnerable.

Maxine has never stayed put in one place, mainly because of her mother who was a nomadic zombie hunter. They moved from place to place until the things her mother hunted ended up killing her. Now Maxine has roots in Seattle, Washington. Maxine wants to build a home, but it will take a great deal of patience on her end because she always has the need to run. There is one man who won't let her run. He is former priest and in charge of the Coop, the local homeless shelter. Grant Cooperon is the complete opposite of Maxine. Grant has a brain disorder where he can see sound. He is also a lightbringer who can see people's auras. Maxine has found true love with Grant. She thinks of Grant as her man. Calling Grant, "her man" is a lovely endearment that Grant graciously accepts. Maxine also thinks Grant is beautiful even though Grants walks with a limp because of a bad leg and uses a cane. He wants to build a future with her and hopefully have children. But if Maxine has a daughter this bloodline curse will be passed down. And Maxine doesn't think she has much longer to live. Maxine's lifestyle is harsh and deadly. But as long as Maxine has her boys and Grant, she has hope that she can stay alive.

Things are never a dull moment and when a priest from Grant's past finds him, he and Maxine will be taken on a very dangerous journey. This priest, Father Antony Cribari is a very sketchy character. He believes Grant is a monstrosity and was the reason Grant was kicked out of the priesthood and almost executed. Cribari wants Grant to come with him to China to save a dear friend of Grant's who has been possessed by a demon and tortured and killed three nuns. Grant accepts even though Maxine has a bad feeling that he is being set up. Maxine can't go with Grant to China because of her condition with her boys jumping out of her skin at night, so she remains behind.

While Grant is away Maxine is caught unaware and is taken captive. Father Cribari is the one responsible and wants her dead. Maxine is able to escape but needs to find Grant and save him. Cribari works for a man, or rather one of the most evil of all, a Mr. Erl King. Is Mr. King Satan? That's up to the reader to decide. Whoever this King is, he wants Maxine out of the way because she is the key, one who can enter too and from the Labyrinth, another dimension or a wasteland that King wants to enter and take over.

In this wasteland is Maxine's grandfather Jack Meddle who is an avatar. He is her spirit guide and the one who can help her defeat King because at one point Jack was able to imprison him. But King was able to break free and is angry and wants revenge.

Along with Grant, Jack and a few friends such as Father Lawrence and mind reader Killy who are sympathetic to their plight, Mary, a semi-deranged homeless woman full of hidden powers and Byron, a misunderstood teenage who looks up to Maxine, this eclectic group will take on Erl King even though they may not survive. And death will be the least of their problems if Erl King comes out on top.

This is one book not for the faint of heart. The action is very intense and there are many scenes that deal with the psychological horrors that reside in all of us. Marjorie is able to make this all come to life with the supernatural and takes certain religion aspects, fairy tales and other myths and combines them where the reader will have quite the rush as they watch Maxine fight for her life and those she cares for. Maxine is another kick ass heroine that is so well known in the majority of urban fantasy I have read. What I really loved was that Maxine has a great network of individuals to be her back up. Where else have you ever read about someone's tattoos coming alive and taking over almost every scene they are in? It seems so freakish because these helpful demons of Maxine are with her every second of the day. Makes for interesting times in the bathroom, doesn't it?

Maxine and Grant are very much a couple, but the intimacies they share are very subtle. These two are very set with one another. They are each other halves of their souls and I think if one died, the other would go into the afterlife to follow the other. All Grant has to do is look at Maxine and you will feel the deep love he has for her. And it also doesn't hurt when he kisses her so desperately because he is not sure if Maxine will be alive the next time he sees her. Maxine is more the type to stand back and watch Grant. She is not as affectionate as he is, but you can still feel the love and chemistry she has for him, and he for her.

Darkness Calls is one riveting book and Marjorie Liu is one hell of a writer. The desperation Maxine feels as she deals with her past and unknown future is one that will keep you reading and anxious for the next terror Maxine will have to endure.

TheBookSmugglers says

Full Review Link

Maxine Kiss is a huntress; the latest in a long line of women sworn to protect humanity from demons that threaten her world. For generations, the women of the Kiss line have lived solitary lives, moving from town to town with only the “boys” for company – demons that live on the women’s skin by day as tattoos, ensuring that each Kiss woman is invincible, but leave their host’s flesh and come alive at night. Maxine has chosen to settle down temporarily in Seattle, largely because of her feelings for Grant, the compassionate man whom she has given her heart. Grant is one of the last of his kind, a lightbringer, gifted with the ability to see and manipulate people’s auras – and when a dark figure from his past shows up at his homeless shelter, beckoning him into a trap, Maxine and Grant are tested harshly, in terms of their power, and the lengths they will go to for each other.

As in its predecessor *The Iron Hunt*, heroine Maxine Kiss is back in top form here with *Darkness Calls* – with even higher stakes, this time around. Maxine has some soul searching to do in this book, in terms of her chosen life forsaking the tieless nomadic existence of her mother and choosing to follow her heart, even when it means embracing the darker power she fears to wield. Maxine’s inner narrative and growth as a character is admirable here as she comes to grips with her own bloodline (granddaughter of an avatar, Jack the “meddling man”), and what her burgeoning powers mean. More interesting, however, is what we learn about Grant in this book – his past as a priest and the special nature of his own singular powers. Ms. Liu pushes her characters past dangerous lines, and, as the title suggests, explores their own darker natures. The introduction of another avatar, the Skinner, who has come to notice Maxine after she destroyed Ashan in *The Iron Hunt* is a fearful twist and makes for a terrifying foe that these characters must face together.

One complaint that *The Iron Hunt* garnered in reviews across blogland concerned the writing style – and I will concede that Ms. Liu’s impressionist style in the Hunter Kiss novels inspires a love or hate reaction. I just happen to be one of those that love the clipped, almost poetic quality of Maxine’s narrative. For those that were turned off by the style in the first book, I would recommend giving *Darkness Calls* another chance as the tone is less confusingly abstract in this installment. Also, in comparison to the first novel this second book is much more action-centered and digs much more into characters and the dark implications of Maxine’s world – another compelling reason to give *Darkness Calls* a read for those who were disappointed with the pacing of the first novel.

For my part, I highly enjoyed this novel, more so than its predecessor, and certainly recommend it to fans of darker urban fantasy. There are some delicious plot threads left open at the end of this novel, and I cannot wait to see where Maxine, Grant, and the boys are in for next.

Debbie says

Being raised to work alone, then finding a man to love and to keep as her own, Maxine Kiss never thought she would grow to trust and need others. Finding out that her man (Grant Cooperon) was also the last of his kind with special powers made the connection between the two even more difficult to understand. Now they have to try to get information from her grandfather Jack, a man that has not proved himself to be reliable in the past, and then find a way to stop the newest, or is it the oldest threat to humanity and this powerful couple.

Book 2 So much information, past and present are thrown together to relate more of the story of how and why the prison vail was created and why it is failing. The information and action are almost non-stop. This book was hard to put down (felt like you might miss something), at times it was so packed with info that I had to re-read sections to make sure I understood, but that was just because it was all happening so fast.

Blood and gore action with several characters changing before your eyes, their growth was heartfelt and strong. There is a few new characters that I would like to see again (if Marjorie M. Liu does a third book of the Hunter Kiss series - I hope so). I want to point out that in this book, even with the blood and guts, it has a sweet sensitive side to it, but it is mostly about the action.

Donna says

Darkness Calls begins shortly after the ending of The Iron Hunt, the first book in the Hunter Kiss Series. You will find the same exquisite story telling style that was displayed in The Iron Hunt, and the action is pretty much non-stop from start to finish, gritty and dark in nature as before, moving at a faster clip than the first book. A couple of new characters are introduced, helping spice up the storyline and some answers are given to the questions left dangling from the first book.

I want to say, I adore the boys! The boys, Maxine's living, demon tattoos, are indestructible, sharp as obsidian, yet soft and adorable at the same time. It depends on if they consider you friend or foe, which side of them you get to see. I loved how the boys would hum a Bon Jovi song that would fit the situation at hand throughout the book. It helped heighten the drama and give you a feel for that scene.

"Their tiny claws pricked my skin like kneading cats, and their soft, high-pitched hum of Bon Jovi's "Social Disease" filled the air."

Maxine's and Grant's roles are almost a reversal from the usual boy/girl relationship. Usually, you see the guy as the dark, brooding, kick your ass personality in the relationship but not here. That's Maxine's role. Don't interpret that as Grant is a pansy because he's not. Grant can definitely take care of his own and then some. Grant is Maxine's lighthouse when the waters are dark and rough.

This series should be read in order, especially since The Iron Hunt sets the back story for the Hunter Kiss Series. As you can probably tell, I'm hooked on the Hunter Kiss Series, I'll be looking for the next novel when it comes out.

Jen says

This review is a work in progress. I am having trouble focusing, and so am writing it in pieces. I am, however, completely focused on not starting the next book in the series until I get this review written! I may need to reread part of this book again before I can finish it, but hopefully it will be done today. :)

(Please note that in addition to not having it finished yet, I also have not yet proofread it. Please forgive any spelling/grammar errors. I'll catch them before I finalize the review, promise!)

The following spoiler includes some of the questions (in *italics*) I was left with after finishing book one, The Iron Hunt. These are the questions that were answered in this second book, as well as some other spoilers I feel the need to make about what I read. :)

(view spoiler)

This next spoiler contains questions left over from The Iron Hunt that I'm still hoping to find answers for in future books. :)

(view spoiler)

And here are some entirely new questions I now have after finishing Darkness Calls:

(view spoiler)

Carol. says

Three and a half stars.

I found it even better than its predecessor, The Iron Hunt, however, it still suffers from some of the same narrative confusion. One of the less coherent parts of Lui's narrative is when she has Kiss, the lead character, unintentionally jumping through time and space. I think most of the confusion stems from Liu intentionally creating mysteries, in this case related to unknown abilities of a silver ring/sword she picked up in The Iron Hunt, but as a reader, it gets confusing as to where these abilities come from, why Kiss isn't more disturbed, are they under control, etc. There's a new challenge related to Grant's abilities, and why using them now is starting to cause extremely negative health effects. There's the mystery of Byron. And although the book is called Darkness Falls, there's only a little bit of mystery related to the "darkness" inside of Kiss.

It is a very action-oriented book, so there aren't many points where Kiss has an internal narrative that clues in the reader as to how she thinks about these things and what the implications may be. I do like the Kiss character, her strong sense of identity, her mission, and her awareness that falling in love with Grant changed a lot of the expectations she had for her life. Her relationship with "the boys" is unique and fun, and the characters around her are interesting, although all of them seem to have their own little "mysteries" surrounding them. Maybe that's a narrative device to keep us reading, wanting to learn more and to put the pieces of the puzzle together, but Lui's story could use a little more filling in, so that readers weren't so lost.

K Tilden Frost says

I love how Maxine has a romantic love and a romantic partner, but that's not a storyline in the book. her partner is in constant threat throughout the book, and they're working to protect each other, but it's not because they're lovers, it's because they're people.

I love this entire series.

Deirdre says

Took me a while to get into this and it's definitely a novel that takes some ideas from the past and moves things on but also adds things that will resolve later. Interesting.

Amanda says

Darkness Calls is the second book in the Hunter's Kiss by Marjorie M. Liu, and I would like to tell you about the plot, but I honestly can't! I don't mean that to sound mean, and I'm conscious that it comes across as extremely negative – but I found Darkness Calls a tough read in terms of comprehending what went on. From what I can tell, a new Avatar is on the scene and wants to take control of the power wielded by Grant, Maxine's partner – who happens to be some kind of immortal Lightbringer (something that is never quite explained). It ties into the story started in the first book as the veil between Earth and the demon prison begins to fail, but this novel takes you through time and space, and introduces many supernatural elements.

I didn't like it. And yet I did. Marjorie M. Liu writes a sharp story, with absolutely beautiful prose, but I'm not quite comfortable on the journey. I don't know where she's going. I don't know what she's doing. I'm not even sure about the characters!

As an example of my confusion, take the relationship between Maxine and Grant. When we first met them in *The Iron Hunt*, they had already been together for a number of months, but we never actually saw the start of their relationship (I believe it is detailed in a novella by Liu). On one hand, I enjoy that, because it is fairly unique in paranormal fantasy. On the other hand, I seriously dislike it because I have no investment in their love – I didn't see why Maxine chose Grant. I didn't see why she decided to reveal her big secret. For me, this makes the relationship feel empty and therefore I don't understand why Maxine is willing to risk life and soul for this man.

Another aspect of the characterisation I find tough is that everyone seems to have some kind of secret power. We haven't met anyone who is normal – for me, this makes it hard to care about them. We see Avatars, Wardens, zombies, demons, Lightbringers – where are the everyday people who usually inhabit a tale such as this. It just adds to the clinical feel of the novel.

The emotional heart to the book was Maxine, and I genuinely enjoyed her confusion about her role and her conflicting desires to follow her mother's path and to stay in Seattle with Grant. I mean, I didn't enjoy the fact she was so torn, but Liu wrote it wonderfully and I would have liked to see much more of this, rather than the supernatural elements that imbued *Darkness Calls*.

In *The Iron Hunt* we veered a number of occasions into odd, dreamlike segments that seemed to come out of nowhere – in *Darkness Calls* this happens more often and hence my enjoyment in reading Liu's wonderful prose lessened.

So, overall, I firmly did not like *Darkness Calls*, but I am desperate to see what Marjorie M. Liu could do with a decent story.

Ryan says

Angsty hand-wringing, rambling storyline, and increasingly arbitrary and wildly overpowered magic system suck the color right out of this work. Plus a werewolf shows up! Ironic in light of my comments on the previous book. I managed to make it to 95% on the progress meter and that's when I realized I simply didn't give a crap any more. This is one of those books that I was kind of OK with until I started this review and discovered I am furiously angry with all the wasted opportunities.

I found Grant and Maxine's romance to be increasingly unconvincing. Sure they're both badass and complement each other nicely, but I have real trouble with Grant's assertion that Maxine, yer bog standard socially isolated ultraviolent vagabond demon hunter, has the most beautiful soul he's ever seen. This is such classic Mary Sue. (I think it's telling that Maxine doesn't buy it either.)

Additionally, the wangsting was a little overdone. I did like how Maxine occasionally pined for the simpler life of the itinerant exorcist, but (view spoiler)

As for the ending, I guess I should sit down and write some stories so I can finally understand why so many people have trouble managing decent ones. (view spoiler)

Keikii Eats Books says

85 points/100 (4.5 stars/5).

When Grant gets asked to go to China to help an old friend, Maxine follows with. But, it isn't just a normal trap, there are Avatar problems at the root.

I swear, I still love these books, but I'm still not exactly certain why. Lots of things happen in this book, but I'm only certain why a small portion of them happen. This book just never, ever stops. Things keep happening, and I'm enjoying they are happening. I just still cannot figure out why. Very action-packed, there is barely any down time available in this book at all.

Most of this book is about the Avatars. We finally learn some stuff about them in this book, hallelujah! That doesn't mean it makes any lick of sense. I can accept that all of this exists, I can understand why others wouldn't though. Liu writes a good story, but the pieces don't exactly click together the way I would always expect them to. I really have no clue why anything is happening in this book, only that they are. I'm following along just fine, but I think Liu just wants to create a super mysterious story. She does that by not telling us anything at all.

It doesn't help that in any single moment in this book, Maxine can be whisked away somewhere else in the middle of the scene. It could be from where she is currently standing to another part of the globe entirely. It could be from the current time in the story to several decades ago. Maxine just will not stay where her body is placed this book. It is not an entirely fun thing to experience through her. Who needs that kind of

confusion in their life? I don't. Maxine doesn't. And since I *am* Maxine when I'm reading this, it really sucks. I don't know why Maxine doesn't bitch more, to be perfectly honest.

I want to draw attention to the romance in this book, and this series, though. It is great. Often in urban fantasy, we'll have a couple, they get together in a whirlwind romance, and they'll cleave themselves to each other. They are utterly incapable of being apart, and they are super possessive and protective over the other. This is not the case in this series, and it is like a breath of fresh air. Yes, they like to be around each other a lot, but they are a couple. Yes they are protective over each other, but it is for good reason. When they get separated, they are afraid for each other, but the goal isn't just to get back together with the other, it is to make certain they are safe above all else. And, they can function without the other. This is a very wholesome relationship, if the book ended now and all the danger was gone tomorrow, this couple would still be together at the end. I can't say that of many series.

Despite a very confusing narration, this was a fun read. I am really enjoying this reread. I hope if you're reading this, you're enjoying the story too. But, if you're not, don't worry about it, I understand why.

Alexia Chantel says

I scored a copy of this book at my library's book sale. I immediately started reading and am reminded why I loved this series so much!

Maxine Kiss, the Hunter, is figuring out who she is and where she fits in the big picture. She has always known she's a Hunter, her mother taught her that she will kill demons until the ones that inhabit her skin move on to protect her daughter, at which point Maxine will die. But whoa, in *Darkness Calls* she goes up against a powerful Avatar, the Earl King.

The secondary characters are pulled into Maxine's story more in book two. Mary, the crazy old lady living at Grant's shelter, has a great history. She'll fight till the end. And Maxine's grandfather, Jack, the Old Wolf, reveals more about what he is and what he did to her bloodline. Maxine and Grant pick up Killy, a young lady who can read minds, and to keep her alive from the demons and the Catholic church, she is now stuck with them.

There is really a lot going on but the plot maintains focus on Maxine and everything flows. I adore Liu's writing and her ability to fill a moment with heavy emotions. Now I NEED to re-read the rest of this series! I want more Maxine and Grant!

Kathy says

I strongly recommend you read the previous book in the series, *Iron Hunt*, before reading this book. Maxine Kiss descends from a long lineage of born demon hunters; natural loners, who live nomadic lives. Breaking the cycle of her mothers before her, Maxine falls in love, settles down and commits to Grant.

Grant is an ex-priest who runs a homeless shelter in Seattle. Grant has become Maxine's one oasis among a world of darkness. An ancient society of religious zealots tirelessly tries to capture Grant and kill Maxine, to get her out of the way.

In the last installment we learned that Grant was the Lightbringer and in this installment we find out exactly what that title means. Grant's past comes back to haunt them both and turns Maxine the hunter into the hunted. Despite being relentlessly pursued Maxine and Grant share an unwavering bond that transcends multi-dimensions, space and time. With the inevitability of the veil that separates and imprisons most of the demon race falling, Maxine being the last of her kind needs allies more now than ever.

I was fascinated with the creative and extraordinary idea that the origins of mankind are from another planet. Avatars who are incorporeal entities of thought, power and energy, floated aimlessly through space outside of time; discovered a labyrinth/backdoor to earth, manipulated and tinkered with human DNA to make them what they are today. However, Avatars were not the first to arrive on this planet; Lightbringers were already here. Avatars who mercilessly hunted Lightbringers thought them to be successfully extinct until they discovered Grant, the last Lightbringer.

The story's world building and description of the characters, as well as the blow by blow of the plethora of action scenes were fluid, brilliant and vivid. I highly recommend this book and series to dark urban fantasy readers. However, I don't recommend this book and series to paranormal romance readers. This is not a romance in the least. Although the story does put some focus on Maxine and Grant's relationship, they pretty much come as a package, there aren't any "couple issues" per se and the sex is nil. I also look forward to the next book in this series Wild Light due out 7/27/2010.

I also recommend:

Enslave Me Sweetly (Alien Huntress, Book 2)

Magic Strikes (Kate Daniels, Book 3)

Angels' Blood

Spiral Hunt (Evie Scelan)

Greywalker (Greywalker, Book 1)

Catherine says

This book, and the one before was really hard for me to rate. While I liked the characters, the plot and the action, I had a lot of trouble following the story. Although the concept was very good, as was the writing, there was just too much confusion about what was going on for me to be able to fully enjoy it. I'm not sure if this is because of all the time travelling, teleportation, and jumping between planes (as in dimensions, not the flying aircraft!) that it was very difficult for me to figure out what was happening and where the characters actually were.

There's also a lot of aspects of the background story that isn't fully explained, rather it's doled out in morsels here and there and you have to work at putting it all together yourself. I understand that it's a good way for the author to keep her readers intrigued, but when it's getting to the point where I don't actually know what's happening, then it's going a bit far! It doesn't help that for the majority of the book, (bearing in mind that it's the second in the series), I still couldn't fully comprehend what species Grant actually was, where he came from and what he does. The same goes for Maxine and her special powers.

It's also incredibly frustrating that characters who are supposed to be Maxine's allies are being deliberately vague on a lot of things. That's part of the reason why this book is so hard to follow, because the characters who know what is going on won't spill, and I don't really understand why. It's like they'd rather let Maxine stumble through everything and work it out for herself rather than help her with it...not really much of an

ally if you ask me.

What redeemed this book for me is the fast-paced action and the potential for an amazing book if only the plot wasn't so complex. Complexity is good, but keep it in moderation. Or maybe it's just me and my lack of brain power and intellect that makes it so confusing, but that's not really the point. I read the book and I was confused, so therefore I'm knocking off some points. Simple.

So while I rated this book four stars, it was mostly for the action rather than the way the story is told. The book itself, I would probably only rate three and a half, but I am looking forward to reading the next in the series, if only for the action and for the boys, who I think is adorable. And to clear up any confusion, (just to show the author how its done) by boys I mean Maxine's tattoos that peel of her body and come to life at night. They're very fierce but very cute at the same time, I want some for myself.

This book is more of an urban fantasy than a paranormal romance. It does have small aspects of romance in it, obviously Maxine and Grants relationship, but the story focuses largely on the paranormal rather than the loving. So definitely not something to read if you're just looking for some fluffy romance, but a pretty good book with a good concept if you like strong heroine's and a lot of butt-kicking.

*Just to make it clear, this is the second book. I didn't bother writing a review for the first one, but make sure you read that first or you'll be even more confused than I am!

Sarah says

Darkness Calls is the second book in the Hunters Kiss series by Marjorie M. Liu and I was looking forward to spending more time with Maxine and her "boys". I really enjoyed the first book The Iron Hunt but in my opinion Darkness Calls was even better. I like the fact that Maxine doesn't know the full extent of her powers and that we are discovering things alongside her. Although I enjoyed The Iron Hunt I did find myself getting confused by some of the plot twists but Darkness Calls was a much smoother journey and I didn't want to put the book down.

Maxine is a unique heroine and I love her "boys" - the demons who are there to protect her. During the day they magically attach themselves to her body in the form of tattoos and protect her from any harm - they can stop a bullet or any other weapon which comes in very handy if you're a demon hunter. At night the 5 boys Zee, Aaz, Raw, Dek and Mal peel from her skin and come to life - at times like children they are affectionate to Maxine and love to chew on teddy bears but they are also deadly fighters who will protect her no matter what.

We get to learn a lot more about Grant and his musical abilities in this book which is something I was hoping for after reading The Iron Hunt. Maxine obviously loves him deeply but she worries about putting down roots and the fact that the demons could use the people she cares about to get to her. It was nice to see Maxine's friends rally around her in this book though and I can't wait to read the next book in the series A Wild Light.

Gail says

Good read. Part 2 of this story. In this one, Maxine confronts the Erlking and an order of the Catholic Church that wants to kill Grant and Maxine. Confusing and hard to follow, IMO, but worth reading. I liked it.

Kelly says

I loved *The Iron Hunt*, and was eagerly looking forward to the sequel. (Has it really only been a year?) I'm happy to report that *Darkness Calls* is a worthy successor. This time around, Maxine and her boyfriend Grant are being hounded by a mysterious group of religious fanatics and by a horrifically creepy being who introduces himself as "Mr. Erl King," a name that will probably be familiar to myth-geeks like me. Seriously, this is one icky villain. I'm feeling nauseous right now, just remembering some of his scenes.

shudder

Anyway, like *The Iron Hunt*, *Darkness Calls* features lots of action, some humor, quirky secondary characters, and plenty of nods to mythology and folklore. I enjoyed it quite a bit.

Around the middle of the novel, I got briefly bogged down because I was a little confused about what was going on. Part of this was almost certainly my own fault. I didn't reread *The Iron Hunt* before starting *Darkness Calls*, and I'd forgotten some of the terminology and some of the world-building, which meant I couldn't always remember who belonged to what supernatural faction and who was trying to kill whom for what reason. Another aspect of the confusion was intentional. Maxine herself doesn't understand everything that's going on, especially not at first. The attempts on her and Grant's lives keep her running and fighting 24/7. When she does have the chance to take a breath and have a deep conversation, the "wise old sage" characters in her life are often more cryptic than helpful.

This feeling of confusion passed quickly, though. I was captivated by the events leading up to Maxine's showdown with the Erl King. The climactic scenes are harrowing and highly emotional. As an added bonus, there are a few more Labyrinth scenes and mystic-vision scenes. These are where Liu's prose and the epic scope of her imagination really shine.

Another thing that was done really, really well: the romance between Maxine and Grant. In *The Iron Hunt*, Grant was almost background. Maxine was dealing largely with her own personal demons (real and metaphorical). Here, Grant is an integral part of the plot, and so is the relationship between him and Maxine. Many urban fantasy series focus on the formation of new relationships, or on the dramatic turmoil of relationships in crisis. What Liu depicts is rarer in the genre: a long-term relationship that *works*. Maxine and Grant face tons of problems, but you get the sense that their love and commitment are a match for whatever comes their way.

Read this and my review of *The Iron Hunt* at fantasyliterature.net
