



# The Shattered Court

*M.J. Scott*

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M.J. Scott

**The Shattered Court** M.J. Scott

**First in a new fantasy series from the author of the Novels of the Half-Light City.**

*Entangled in a court ruled by tradition and intrigue, a young witch must come to terms with newfound power and desire—and a choice between loyalty and survival...*

The royal witches of Anglion have bowed to tradition for centuries. If a woman of royal blood manifests powers, she is immediately bound by rites of marriage. She will serve her lord by practicing the tamer magics of the earth—ensuring good harvests and predicting the weather. Any magic more dangerous is forbidden.

Lady Sophia Kendall, thirty-second in line to the throne, is only days away from finding out if she will be blessed—or perhaps cursed—with magic. When a vicious attack by Anglion's ancient enemies leaves the kingdom in chaos, Sophia is forced to flee the court. Her protector by happenstance is Lieutenant Cameron Mackenzie, a member of the royal guard, raised all his life to be fiercely loyal to the Crown.

Then Sophia's powers manifest stronger than she ever imagined they would, and Cameron and she are inextricably linked in the process. As a witch unbound by marriage rites, Sophia is not only a threat to the established order of her country, but is also a weapon for those who seek to destroy it. Faced with old secrets and new truths, she must decide if she will fight for her country or succumb to the delicious temptation of power....

## The Shattered Court Details

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Author : M.J. Scott

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Genre : Fantasy, Romance, Magic, Paranormal, Witches, Adult, Fantasy Romance

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# From Reader Review The Shattered Court for online ebook

**MischaS\_ says**

[well, except for Cam sleeping with Eloisa... (hide spoiler)]

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**Melliane says**

3.5/5

Mon avis en Français

My English review

I had read some novels in the paranormal romance series by MJ Scott, but when she has announced the release of a brand new series, with a different note, I admit that I was intrigued. A kind of historical mix, added to that some intrigues of the court, witches and power, a mix that we can only appreciate.

Lady Sophia is an innocent girl, frightened because about her future. She is a heir to the throne even if a far one, and she is waiting to see if her witch gifts will manifest or not ... But if her powers appear, she will have to marry the man chosen to be her husband and it is not a future that many are waiting for with pleasure. Yet on the day of her birthday, everything will change ... Oh yes, because while the palace was attacked by an enemy nation, our heroine is far from the place with a bodyguard of the day: Cameron. But it is also during that day that she discovers her powers and that she realizes that she is and will remain a royal witch. Unfortunately, the events taking place early in the book prevent her to being bound and soon many people will be interested in her. Her power grows and some wonder if she is not a threat to the throne, a pawn who could be not as malleable and suggestible.

I enjoyed discovering Lady Sophia. This is a young woman who evolves throughout the story, a fair person who will quickly understand that people sometimes have deceptive appearances, they soon forget friendship when power and desire come into play. It is rather sad to see how people behave when they feel threatened by someone while there were no problems at the start. Fortunately for her, her bodyguard and finally a little more than that will be there for her, to support her and help her. I loved this young man too. He is true, tries to understand what is happening and acts as best as he can in all situations. Their story is not really easy under the circumstances but I think they both form a beautiful duo. Through them, we discover the world of the author, myths she chose to explore and I confess that I found it all fascinating. She had lots of ideas here, and we remain captivated by this new world.

It was a good first volume, which perfectly lays the foundation of the history and I'm very curious now to read and learn more.

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**Kara-karina says**

Alright, I am torn about this one. On one hand I liked it. It had such potential in the main characters and

world-building.

Sophia and Cameron are both sensible and resourceful, not prone to melodrama, and they operate as a pair of equals from the very beginning. I always enjoy such character traits immensely.

The world-building starts quite formulaic, with Anglion as a prototype of England, and Illwya as France, but towards the end it develops into something tantalizingly lovely.

And therein lies the problem.

The whole book is a giant prologue, where the author is establishing the set and mood of the whole series. Whatever happens here is muted with a buildup towards the end. The secondary characters are also formulaic. Cameron conveniently doesn't have close friends, Sophia's supposed friend, the Queen, does a 180 and becomes someone who dislikes her very fast and without any reasonable explanation. The familial relationships of both characters are vaguely sketched. Perhaps the only character who stands out is Madame de Montesse.

Another good thing about Cam and Sophie is the level of heat and sincerity between them. I started *The Shattered Court* thinking it will be a YA, but there are some very steamy scenes here, and they are lovely!

Overall, recommended, bearing in mind that this is only a taste of things to come. The ending is wonderful and makes me think that the next book is promising to be absolutely amazing. I would loosely compare it with *Darkborn* series by Alison Sinclair.

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### **Althea Ann says**

'*The Shattered Court*' is a fantasy romance which manages to nicely balance the 'romance' content with the other elements of the plot.

Lady Sophie is handmaiden to Princess Eloisa. Soon, on her 21st birthday, Sophie will find out if she has inherited the Earth Magic that will give her a place as a Royal Witch, with the strict duties in Temple and marriage that the position entails.

However, when Eloisa sends Sophie out on a shopping trip with her bodyguard (and lover) Cameron Mackenzie, disaster strikes. A terrorist attack destroys half the castle, and Lieutenant Mackenzie, concerned for Sophie's safety, flees with her.

This means that when her fateful birthday falls, Sophie will be far from the constraints of temple rituals...

It took me a little while to get into this story for one reason... sentence fragments. I have no problem with occasionally using non-standard grammar for dramatic emphasis, but here, the 'fragments' are non-stop. It's very distracting. However, after a while I managed to skim over them and pay attention to what was going on.

My other complaint is that this book is quite short, and ends on a cliffhanger, leaving the reader with the impression that this book was more of an prologue to a story than a complete novel.

However, I eventually found it entertaining enough that if I'd had a sequel, I would've gone right ahead and read it...

Many thanks to ROC and NetGalley for the opportunity to read. As always, my opinions are solely my own.

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**Jessica ❀ ➤ Silverbow ➤ ❀ Rabid Reads-no-more says**

**Reviewed by: Rabid Reads**

Let me tell you a story, *\*whispers\** you *might* have heard it before:

Once upon a time a princess was widowed young. She returned to the palace from her husband's estate, and she took a handsome guard for a lover, b/c she was no longer innocent of the ways between a man and a woman. It was a secret easily kept, b/c outside of the bedroom, Handsome Guard was a stone who presented a disinterested front as implacable as a mountain. But in private . . . *\*waggles eyebrows\**

Princess, of course, has ladies-in-waiting, and her favorite is a young girl from a small country estate. Princess dotes on her, refreshed both by Hayseed's wild, unsophisticated ways and her naïveté.

Stuff happens and tragedy strikes the palace, separating Princess from her two greatest comforts who are . . . as it turns out . . . *together* . . .

Which is odd, b/c Hayseed and Handsome Guard have had almost zero interaction with each other, but when the palace is attacked Hayseed is running an errand for Princess under Handsome Guard's protection, and as much as he longs (underneath the rocky outcrops of his exterior) to return to his Princess, Hayseed's safety must take priority, and so they flee to the forest through an ever-so-conveniently-located ~~waygate~~ portal in the cellar of place-of-errand.

All that time alone in the woods does strange things to people, even stone-like Handsome Guards and wild but naïve Hayseeds.

Soon Handsome Guard is admiring how Hayseed is tougher than she looks, and from there it's only a short hop to realizing she's quite fetching, and *then* Hayseed gets her magic (b/c turns 21, and apparently that's when it happens), and her magic reacts to Handsome Guard's in a decidedly sexual manner, and OOPS, now they've done it, and *YES*, I do mean *it*.

"Wut?" you ask, and I agree, that *was* a rather unnecessary plot twist (b/c would've happened anyway, *\*whispers\** you've heard this story before, remember?), but it took away reason and accountability, so why not?

And that's basically it. Over and over again. Lazy "plot twists" to speed up already inevitable outcomes.

(view spoiler)

B/c it's not the same old tired story that I object to. It's not my favorite (b/c sordid), but it's not the worst either.

It's the carelessness. The heedless way the story plows through crucial steps that make a told and retold story fresh.

Then there's the blatant resemblance between Hayseed and Handsome Guard and Nynaeve al'Meara and al'Lan Mandragoran. Don't know who they are? Then it won't bother you. But if you've read Robert Jordan's WHEEL OF TIME, it's almost not like greeting old friends.

It's just as not funny when Hayseed scoffs at the low necklines currently dictated by fashion while simultaneously drawing attention to her assets to provoke a reaction from Handsome "Stoneface" Guard.

Hayseed even puts her waist-length brown hair in a plain braid--for simplicity's sake--while she and ~~Lan~~ Handsome Guard are on the run. Doesn't yank on it when she's angry though. BUT she does suffer from portal sickness in a manner reminiscent of Nynaeve on a ship.

Handsome Guard just burns quietly. B/c *hidden* depths.

And I'm done. But like I said, if you haven't read WoT, you won't mind the same-and-*not*-the-sameness, and despite being slaves to outside influences the sex is HAWT, so not a total loss. Recommended if that sounds like your thing. \*does not judge you if that's your thing\*

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## Rashika (is tired) says

### Actual Rating 3.5

\*\*\**This review has also been posted on **The Social Potato***

*The Shattered Court* is a book that would have totally escaped my notice were it not for Nick. I am so glad she mentioned it to me because otherwise I would not have found this wonderfulness. I will begin by saying that this isn't the best thing I've ever read, far from it, but at the same time, it just works. **It may not be incredibly original but it is so much fun to read and I do like that the author has made it her own story in many ways.**

I am going to start off by talking about the main character, Sophie. She is such a good main character. She isn't reckless yet she isn't someone who will just take things at word. She questions things, before someone even has to point it out to her. **She is a smart main character and it's nice seeing that she takes the time to think through the consequences of some of her actions.** Of course, she is not perfect but I also admire that she knows when to lay low and when to speak up.

This book comes with an interesting cast of secondary characters, including my personal favorite, Lord Sylvian. **My real complaint comes in the form of Queen Eloisa.** I actually really liked her at the start of the book and I HATE what was done to her character. I wish there were ways to make the book progress, and to make the plot develop without making her an enemy but alas, sometimes, that's the way things are no matter how much I detest it. \*sighs\*

Then we have a certain Cameron. I admit, I was worried about him. He was sleeping with Queen Eloisa for

crying out loud when the novel started. No, he was not in a committed relationship but it was a fling so I was worried how this would all come to play within the whole context of Sophie and Cameron's relationship and I guess it didn't really. It's one of the reasons why I am genuinely disappointed that Queen Eloisa turned into someone she was not at the beginning of the novel. I wonder what we will find out about her character that will at least help us better understand the sudden shift. Going back to the lovely Cameron, **he managed to win me over right from the get-go but I was slightly disappointed in the rather easy shift of feelings** (not that he had overly romantic feelings for Eloisa, it's just that his focus shifted very easily). I am happy to report that he was a good mixture of sweet but also not sweet (if you know what I mean).

The romance between the two was something I enjoyed. There was insta-attraction happening but the way their relationship builds on that is beautiful. They build trust and when they are thrust into an awkward situation that forces them to acknowledge their feelings for one another (whoever says that forced marriages aren't fun to read about), they go about doing that in a fantastic way. Cameron pays attention to Sophie's fears and assures her that he will be loyal to her no matter what. **I admire that their relationship gets to a point where the drama is external rather than internal** and what I also admire is that while they clearly have feelings for one another, there are no random declarations of love. Also sexy times. I was genuinely surprised when they made an appearance but hey, you take what you get. ;)

While I adored the fast pace nature of the plot, I will admit that I was rather disappointed that they weren't going to be on the run for the entirety of the book. I am glad though that that wasn't the case because otherwise we would have totally missed out on meeting characters like Lord Sylvian and we would have also missed seeing the politics within the court (although I wish there had been more of that too).

**I think the world building aspect of the novel could have been more intricate** but given that this is only book 1, I do like the details we have gotten. And I will not elaborate because, you know, you got to find these things out on your own. I will say there is magic involved.

This book sucked me in and left me anticipating for the sequel. It is a really fun read and I am looking forward to where our journey will take us in the future.

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## Katie says

### Re-read January 2018

The new one is finally out, yay! This is still just super nice and enjoyable.

### Original Review

Ohhh, I was into this. This might be one of those comparisons that only make sense to me, but it reminded me of Sharon Shinn. It gave me the same kind of comfortable feeling. Just . . . *pinged* with me on some level.

That said, it's very much a first book in a series, so it's not really a complete story. But I like the world and the main characters a lot and I'm eager to read more by the author.

I also really need to read more Sharon Shinn.

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## Alyssa says

\*\*\*Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog\*\*\*

The Shattered Court by M.J. Scott

Book One of the Four Arts series

Publisher: Roc

Publication Date: April 28, 2015

Rating: 5 stars

Source: eARC from NetGalley

\*\*\*Warning: this is an adult book, and for the eyes of mature readers\*\*\*

Summary (from Goodreads):

Entangled in a court ruled by tradition and intrigue, a young witch must come to terms with newfound power and desire—and a choice between loyalty and survival....

The royal witches of Anglion have bowed to tradition for centuries. If a woman of royal blood manifests powers, she is immediately bound by rites of marriage. She will serve her lord by practicing the tamer magics of the earth—ensuring good harvests and predicting the weather. Any magic more dangerous is forbidden.

Lady Sophia Kendall, thirty-second in line to the throne, is only days away from finding out if she will be blessed—or perhaps cursed—with magic. When a vicious attack by Anglion's ancient enemies leaves the kingdom in chaos, Sophia is forced to flee the court. Her protector by happenstance is Lieutenant Cameron Mackenzie, a member of the royal guard, raised all his life to be fiercely loyal to the Crown.

Then Sophia's powers manifest stronger than she ever imagined they would, and Cameron and she are inextricably linked in the process. As a witch unbound by marriage rites, Sophia is not only a threat to the established order of her country, but is also a weapon for those who seek to destroy it. Faced with old secrets and new truths, she must decide if she will fight for her country or succumb to the delicious temptation of power....

What I Liked:

HOLY WOW THIS BOOK WAS SO GREAT! I had a strong inkling that I would LOVE it, but I didn't expect to love it this much. I'm itching to reread it already, and I literally just put it down. I don't even know how I'm going to put together a coherent review that will do this book justice. I read this one cover to cover, straight through, no breaks. I could not rip myself away from this book. I reached the end and... kept looking for more! I find that, out of the several hundreds of books I read a year, I don't give many five stars. This one deserved the hard-earned five stars - and then some!

This isn't my first adult fantasy novel read, but it certainly won't be my last. When I first received this novel a month ago, there were just about no reviews or ratings for this book, so it was really nice to read this with no expectations from outside sources - just my own! I've seen a few others reviews in the past couple of



days, and all have been positive (which is awesome)!

A note - this book is an adult fiction novel. Like, super adult. It's not a romance novel, so don't go thinking it's erotica. But there are a few very explicit scenes in this book. I don't want any of my blog young readers to think this is an adult fantasy fiction novel, like *The Queen of the Tearling*. There is explicit sex in this book. There are details. You are warned. Young and mature readers alike.

Lady Sophia Kendall is thirty-second in line to the throne of Anglion, which is perfectly fine by her. She is just days away from turning twenty one, in which any magical abilities that she has will begin to manifest. If she has any. If she does, then she will be bound to the goddess, and will marry an important lord. If she doesn't have any magic, then she will be married to a lesser lord. Either way, she has little choice in her future. But when the palace is attacked while she and a lieutenant are away retrieving goods for the princess (Sophia's relative and friend), Sophia misses her birthday ritual. She turns twenty-one and is unbound. Through unforeseen circumstances, she and the lieutenant, Cameron, are linked, but Sophia is in much danger, as an unbound royal witch. With the princess taking over her newly deceased father's position on the throne, Sophia will have to watch her back for dangers and threats from anywhere and everyone at the tension-filled court.

Fantasy is my favorite genre - specifically medieval/epic fantasy. Specifically, medieval epic fantasy (if there is a such thing). This book involves kings/queens/lords (which is why I'm calling it "medieval"), but there is magic and witches and mages and a goddess and rituals, so it's also epic fantasy. Basically, this novel is the stuff of my dreams. Which is why I had a good feeling that I would love it. And I did!

From the start, I liked Sophia. It's obvious that she isn't the biggest fan of court life. Her family is not royal or rich, and she does not have nearly as much privilege as the princess does. Sophia is thirty-second in line to the throne, and she isn't a royal witch yet, so she isn't of terrible importance. Sophia is always questioning things; she wants to know why royal witches only command earth magic - why not water magic (which Anglion people are forbidden to speak of, by the enemy, Illyvia, practice), or blood magic. Sophia is obedient and serves Eloisa (the princess and later, queen-to-be and then queen). Yet, she has a slightly rebellious streak to her.

Sophia and Cameron are not friends, in the beginning of the novel. Cameron is one of Eloisa's personal bodyguards. He is twenty-seven, a third son with a courtesy title, and has a fierce loyalty and allegiance to the Red Guard, and to the princess/queen. Cameron is escorting Sophia to a shop to pick up things for Eloisa when the palace is attacked, and Cameron takes Sophia far away from the palace (he's protecting the closest member of the royal family). But then Sophia turns twenty-one, and comes into immense power. Cameron and Sophia are unintentionally linked, and these circumstances lead to other circumstances. Soon, they have stick together, in order to figure things out. There are people after Sophia, now that she is a royal witch, and a quite powerful one, at that.

I love the story. It's very interesting, very engaging, and not at all boring. A lot of times, I find adult fiction novels (that AREN'T romance novels) incredibly dull and boring. Good luck to you adults who ENJOY reading those books, that are very monotonous and dry. This book was not like that at all. I read this book extremely easily and enjoyed it as I was reading. It isn't particularly long, either, and it wasn't confusing or detailed-laden (not overwhelming with the names, places, world-building, etc.). Speaking of world-building...

I love the fantasy world that Scott has created. Her world-building is very well-crafted. Fantasy is difficult, because you have to build a world, setting, environment, etc. from the ground up. I love fantasy, and one

reason why is because of this seemingly unreal, created world that authors construct. Scott does an excellent job of building this world, setting the scene, and keeping readers in the story, without overwhelming or confusing readers with details or world-building.

Plus, the magic and witches aspects of this book were really cool. I'm not always a fan of books that feature witches, but I liked that aspect of this book a lot. I also think it's pretty great that while the female witches have limited power (at least, in Anglion), the men also have limited power (as is evident by the warrior's limited powers). Magic is extremely important in this book. Sophia is even more powerful than Eloisa (which is dangerous), especially since she is unbound to the goddess. Scary powerful!

I LOVED the romance in this book. This isn't a romance novel, but there is romance in the story. The romance isn't the most important part of the story, although Cameron and Sophia's relationship is very important (you have to read this one to know why). I love what Scott did with their relationship, and the romance. I was so convinced that the romance would take a certain turn at the end of this novel, but it didn't! I love what Scott did! There was nothing terribly upsetting about the romance. Cameron and Sophia slowly begin to trust and care for each other, though their relationship started off with a bang and a flare.

Keep in mind that this IS an adult novel, and the characters are NOT teenagers. They are pawns in the court, at the mercy of whoever has the throne (it was the king, but by the end of the novel, it is Eloisa, his daughter). Courts tend to have lots of scandals, arranged marriages, consorts, etc. I was scared that the romance in this book would be terribly screwed up, because this IS a political fantasy world. But the romance doesn't have a ton of drama - at least, not enough for me to want to stop reading. I LOVED the romance. But as I said, it's an ADULT novel, we're talking about a political fantasy world, and this book is not dealing with children or teenagers.

The climax and ending of the story had me reading as fast as I could, and looking for more, when the ending came. I had a feeling that a particular part of the ending (not related to the romance) would take Cameron and Sophia to where they are, and I was right. I'm VERY excited to read the next book, and see what will happen. Squee!

What I Did Not Like:

I can't quite think of anything that I didn't like at the moment. I feel like everything in this novel just kind of fit together. Things happened for a reason. Even if there were things that I initially did not like, I could understand why those things happened or what the purpose of them was. If you know what I mean.

Would I Recommend It:

YES! To adult fantasy readers especially. If you're not comfortable with explicit adult-y scenes and themes, then perhaps this is not a novel for you. The fantasy and politics are strong in this one as well, but don't be discouraged, because neither will bog you down or overwhelm you. In my opinion. Maybe I'm too used to fantasy to notice anymore. But remember, this is an ADULT book. For ADULT reasons.

Rating:

5 stars. So well-deserved. I am so glad I had the chance to read this novel - I'm grateful to the publisher! I hope the next book will be just as amazing as this one - or more so!

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## Jane Stewart says

I enjoyed it, but on hindsight I wish I would have waited until the sequel is out and read them together.

Sophia is going to have some unexpected and unusual magic abilities. But we won't know about them until the second book. There are a couple of hints in this book, but this book is mostly setting things up. At times I was waiting for the plot to take off.

At the end, someone attempts to murder Sophia but she gets away. Story to be continued. It wasn't a bad cliffhanger because some things were resolved. But a lot was started and not resolved. Two powerful characters could be Sophia's enemies, we aren't sure. The story is more about fantasy and magic than romance, but there is some romance and a happy ending regarding the romance.

Think Regency England in a Fantasy world. A lot of titles and court intrigue. Women are property to be married off. They wear corsets. Transportation is via horseback and portals. Fighting is done with swords, guns, and magic.

This is not YA due to the sex scenes.

I believe the plan is for two books in the series, not more.

DATA:

Narrative mode: 3rd person. Story length: 313 pages. Swearing language: mild. Sexual language: moderate.

Number of sex scenes: 4. Setting: unknown time in the past in the country called Anglion. Copyright: 2015.

Genre: fantasy with a little romance.

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## Online Eccentric Librarian says

*More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>*

The Shattered Court ended up being a difficult book for me. What appeared to be a YA/NA type of fantasy romance (just look at that cover!) instead read much more like the graphic sex fantasy books of the late 1970s/early 1980s (Sharon Green's Jalav series comes to mind). But the slow pacing, passive ingenue heroine, bodice ripper romance aspects, and lack of development in both characters and plot made this more than a bit daunting to slog through. I ended the book feeling like nothing really happened and that this was more of a prologue than the first in a new series. In all honesty, I was bored.

Story: Lady Sophie Kendall is about to come into her witch powers when the capitol is attacked and the king killed. She is saved by dashing Lieutenant Cameron Mackenzie, who whisks her away to safety. But then her powers manifest - powers which cause her and the captain to engage in urgent sex. Now, unable to be bound to the Goddess since she is no longer a virgin, the princess/Queen-to-be requires Sophie to marry Cameron. She's quite happy to - but soon discovers that with the attack on the capitol (and with her strong witch powers that extend beyond what's permitted to royal witches since she couldn't be bound) she's a target for political conspiracy and murder. Can Cameron save his new bride? And does he love her for her or is it just her witch powers that attract him?

From what I can ascertain, the world is loosely based upon Renaissance England and France. E.g., the country is named Anglion, is an island, has northerners with Scottish sounding names, and has princesses, kings, and nobility like Earls and Marquis, just spelled phonetically. It felt lazy to use British history nearly wholesale, just throwing in the trappings of magic on top.

We're promised a fantasy but honestly, there was little magic in the story. There's a lot of tell about battle mages and royal witches and how powerful they are - but other than stepping through a portal and one magical punch, we don't really see any of it. Instead, the magic is an excuse for sex, with the power making each gender seem much sexier and interesting, as well as making them horny.

The premise of the story is that the magic is waning, fewer witches are born and each is subsequently weaker, and for some reason, those who guard/watch over the witches don't have a clue about the witch powers (really odd). There is a religion that is hinted to be there to control the witches and force them into subservience to the men; the female head of the order is called a "domina", which gives the impression we've got a bad guy here. But I found it odd that supposedly Sophie and Cameron have a relationship that will make each stronger (a synergy), yet no one knows anything about that or suspects it. Sophie is simply considered a threat to the church because she couldn't be bound by the Goddess to constrict her magic to earth chores only. But she's useful, so she's allowed to live. But it does beg the question why royal witches who \*have\* to be virgins to be bound are allowed to go into the city to buy baubles, escorted only with a hunky and horny lieutenant (and on the day before their powers manifest). You'd think the country would long ago have created a law sentencing sex with pre-witch women as beheading/

Since this is a Renaissance/medieval type of fantasy, the women at court are objects and subservient to the men. Sophie is rather innocent but balks at the lack of freedom and idea of forced marriage. Which is fine but by the next few pages, she's quite happy with an arranged marriage and looking forward to using her husband's money on trivialities. She's quite passive, ends up most of the book being saved by Cameron, so her earlier chafing seems more like a petulant child rather than the will of a strong character. I had a hard time liking Sophie or wanting to follow her. She just wasn't interesting and spends most of the time wondering what's going on around her (or pondering necklaces, fancy dresses, etc.).

Lead Cameron, who begins the book having a sexual encounter with the princess who is apparently irresistible because her witch powers are strong, then decides that he could do worse than marrying Sophie. He pretty much becomes a rather bland and malleable Prince Charming, running around saving his future wife from unwanted advances at balls and other nebulous threats. His only purpose in the book seems to be as a boy toy for the witches and as such, doesn't feel like a real person at all. As an example, when Sophie gets jealous and starts berating him for having slept with the princess, he thinks it is cute and nicknames her 'wildcat' (what a misnomer - 'wet kitten' would probably be better). I just didn't buy it that a supposedly manly guy in a patriarchal society would think his wife upbraiding him as cute rather than just resorting to physical violence to shut her up.

We have the typical bodice ripper elements: forced/arranged marriage, graphic sex with the virgin that is perfect, a cast of side character females that all fall into the nun or whore category, the 'big misunderstanding' scene that causes the heroine to doubt her lover, the drunken lout who makes advances on the heroine so the hero can save her, unhinged rantings of jealousy and suspicion by the heroine that the hero thinks is cute and doesn't upset him, unique snowflake ability (or ancestry), and more. I kept tripping over the cliches and felt there was too much bodice ripper and not enough fantasy.

Since the story is pretty much told from Sophie's point, and she's a sheltered (I assume) simple creature, there wasn't a lot of interest for me in the story. There's sex, an explosion, more sex, a lot of traveling, balls, pretty

dresses, fancy necklaces galore, overheard secrets, and a lot of shallow machinations. There were also oddly anachronistic terms; e.g., for a story that felt very Elizabethan renaissance, the hero suggests Sophie go get his cravats to tie up an intruder.

The story hinted at a lot of world building but never delivered. I kept waiting for the plot to kick in but the focus was on Sophie and Cameron's relationship but with a story arc pretty much about things in court destabilizing. The problem is that the destabilizing pretty much took place 'off camera' since the couple went on the run. Similarly, Sophie's witch powers are hinted at being complex and there is the suggestion of a conspiracy to control the witches over the centuries - but there are no reveals at all. Just overheard conversations that leave Sophie even more confused than usual. The whole story just lacked a 'catch' for me - a reason to continue other than that witch powers make men horny for the special women.

What I had hoped for in this type of story is a girl using her wits as the only power she has in a male-dominated society and navigating court politics (e.g., a Queen Elizabeth 1). What I got was a romance between a bland and innocent girl and a fairly one-dimensional hero. And pages of magic-induced graphic sex. Reviewed from an advance reader copy.

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## **nick says**

Okay, first things first. I wanted to read *The Shattered Court*, because the gorgeous cover just lured me in. Plus, I'm already a big fan of YA fantasy, so I thought it was time I devoted some time to more adult fantasy too. *The Shattered Court* turned out to be an exceptional read that I had quite the hard time putting down.

M.J Scott's world building in *The Shattered Court* was on point. She blended together magic and royalty drama and crafted a strong fantasy story, that was engaging in many ways. I have a weird fascination with the dynamics of power and the author explored this tactfully in *The Shattered Court*. It was interesting how I never knew who to trust and to watch some of the meek characters turn out to be utterly twisted. While *The Shattered Court* wasn't the most action-packed book, the book still managed to be fast-paced. It introduced twists and turns that had me reading through the night. Even when I had to drop the book to go do my other chores, I kept thinking about the book because there was just something magical about the story and the world building. I haven't felt this strong of a connection with a book in a long time. I'll admit that some readers might be bothered by how uneventful *The Shattered Court* is, but I have no doubts that the sequel will be strong in that department. It was hinted at with the way the book ended.

In the midst of all the glorious world building was our protagonist, Sophia, a lady in waiting for the Princess and on the verge of finding out if she has any magical abilities. Sophia was a delightful character. She was more of the silent, but strong kind. She showed her strengths, in ways that I would not call traditional for a fantasy books, and I think that's what made her so endearing to me. We watch as she grew and matured throughout the story and I couldn't help but cheer for her to become the kick-ass woman that she clearly was. By her side was the dashing Cameron. Cameron was a character that had me scratching my head because I wasn't sure what his intentions were, but he proved to be a loyal man. He slowly managed to win me over and by the end I was swooning over him. The romance between Cameron and Sophia was also quite unconventional and I was extremely nervous about how they would work out, especially since Cameron was sexually involved with the Princess at the start, but the author managed to make it work. Theirs was a romance that was a medley of slow, sweet and sexy. I loved that they were always together no matter what the situation was and how Cameron never tried to protect Sophia but allowed her to protect herself, all of

which made this one of my favorite kind of romance!

The Shattered Court was my first foray into adult fantasy and it was a wildly successful one. This was a book that I found was captivating thanks to the stellar world building and fantastic cast of characters. I can't wait for the next installment!

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### **Pili says**

I saw this one on NetGalley and wondered about it, but once I saw my friend Alyssa from The Eater of Books's review for it, I knew I had to read this one, and it didn't disappoint!

I found the world building fascinating, even if we are left with many more questions about the history of the kingdoms and why in Anglion there are such restrictions on what kind of magic can be used and by whom. It's not that information is simply kept from us, it's that almost no one in the kingdom know the reasons behind why women can only use earth magic or why they have to be married off as soon as possible after coming into their powers, it just is... but I know we'll probably be getting more information as the series progresses, and I cannot wait!

Sophie was a great character, not very keen on simply accepting everything as is, and stubborn enough to trudge along even when she's scared and she doesn't like what's going on. She disagrees with the rules of the society she lives in, but she knows that she cannot disobey them too upfront if she wants to keep breathing. But she's more than willing to take risks and wants to find a way to control her power and her destiny.

Cameron... well, he's a very swoony guy after a while, but at first I wasn't 100% keen on him, he just seemed too dismissive and did seem too happy with the status quo and given that it includes women being married off and their powers being used and controlled... I was NOT keen on that!

Their chemistry was quite off the charts as soon as they connected, magically induced at first but once it all progresses we can see that they seem to be a very good match for each other, even if at first it seems more lust than anything, but then they start working together as allies to protect each other and to face the threats against Sophie coming from those in power. Be warned that this should not be considered YA because there's sex and not the fade to black kind at all!

The plot could be the weakest part of the book, because we aren't clear on why what's happening is happening or how things are relevant or what are we moving towards in here, but we do have loads of hints and info a few unexpected twists by the end that made me glad it was not what I expected at all!

The ending was open enough to make me really want to get my hands on the next book soon, but not awfully cliffhanger as to make me pull my hair out, so that's something!

A very intriguing start for a new fantasy series, one that I'll be sure to keep an eye on and plan to get my hands on the sequel as soon as possible! Well deserved 4 stars for this one!

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### **Faye, la Patata says**

**Let it be known that if you thought this was a YA Fantasy, turn around now because this is better suited for adult audiences.** Unless graphic sex scenes don't bother you, then you have nothing to fear... well, at least, in that aspect. There were many other factors in this book that I thought were far more concerning than what happens between a male thingy and a female thingy.

First of all, what the fucking hell - **was there even a plot in this book?!** It was 300 pages of sex, magic, witches and pseudo-court intrigue and none of the substance those themes call upon. It amazed me that so many words were dedicated to almost absolutely nothing, because if there's one thing this book is, it's actually 300 pages of setting up what should have been the first book of the series which is actually the second book. **I felt like you could cut this book down by a half and you could have a prologue.** A prologue that isn't bogged down, at least.

**While I agree that the narrative wasn't bad, the author having a talent considering the words were weaved like a harmonious melody, it was still paced so slow and was full of dragging pages of scenes that wer not only of minor interest, but also of minor relevance.** Even just a walk to somewhere was dragged unnecessarily. I mean, take note: I had to skim (!!!) three pages of details about what people were doing, the appearance of the places, and other things that left me thinking, "Are all of *this* even necessary?" That's not all - this pattern was repeated many times! **Needless to say, I pretty much skipped two dozens of pages when I got to the second half of the book because I just wanted the story to get a bloody move on already.**

**Second, why am I not surprised to find another fantasy where women are treated as prizes, sexual objects, and properties of men?** It was so disconcerting to see it such a rampant issue here, but none of the women seemed to try to change that at all. Even the beloved Princess of the kingdom mentioned it and the solution she said was just to fucking suck it up. **Men could bed other women, but fuck a woman who was bedded before her wedding night. When a witch manifests her powers, the first thing that happens after she dedicates herself to the Goddess is to get married to some Lord and she doesn't even get to bloody pick.** When she gets bethroted to someone who isn't an old geezer, her first thought is, "Thank the Goddess a young man was decided for me!" Complete with happiness.

**I MEAN, WHAT?! JUST WHAT?!?!?!?**

So consider me disgusted when before a sex scene, the dude said he was so excited to show her how a man is supposed to be with a woman (which of course has to be sexually-related). How plowing inside her marked her as *his*. HIS. HIS PROPERTY. **It wouldn't have bothered me so much if the characters here actively tried to go against these things, but it felt like it was so commonplace that they merely accepted being treated as such.**

I don't think I'll bother with the sequel.

**But hey, at least his manfood was called "cock" and not a "rod" or heck, a "shaft". Any more ridiculous phallic terminologies and I would lose my shit.**

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## **Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says**

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life

### **2.5 Stars**

I have to admit that I am a little disappointed with this book. I think that this book had so much potential. I was excited to read this book and on the surface it appeared that it had everything - magic, witches, and a royal court just to get started. This book ended up having a lot of problems that overshadowed all of the things that I liked in the story.

I went into this book thinking that it was a YA novel and I was very wrong. This is NOT a book for teens. I was actually a little shocked when a sex scene seemed to come out of nowhere near the beginning of the book. The book is not only about sex but there was enough of it in the story that I really think that this is a book for an adult audience. Don't get me wrong, this book is not only about sex but there are enough sex scenes to keep things interesting.

My biggest problem with this book is that I was bored for a large portion of the story. As the story progressed it felt more like a romance novel than anything in the fantasy genre and to be honest it dragged. Some of the things that I would have loved to see, such as Sophie learning to use her powers with the Domina, didn't get more than a mention in the story and happened completely off the page. I think that if there had been a larger focus on the magic during the middle of the book instead of romance I would have enjoyed it a lot more.

This book had some things that I really did end up enjoying. The last section of the book was pretty exciting. I felt that the ending was a bit of a cliffhanger but not so much that I felt cheated. I guess a better description would be to say the ending seemed to be setting up the next installment in the series. I liked the sections of the book that focused on Sophie and Cameron's use of magic and liked when they worked together. The portals that they used during the first part of the book were interesting. The overall world building in the story was well done even though the plot dragged during a large part of the story.

Cameron was the most interesting and likeable character in this story. He really filled the role of romantic hero quite well and seemed to really care for Sophie. Sophie felt really flat to me for a large portion of the book. She seemed to just be a pawn going through the motions until the last section of the story.

This is the first book by M.J. Scott that I have had a chance to read. I do feel really torn about this book and I am not sure whether I will continue with the series at this point.

*I received a copy of this book from Penguin Group Berkley / Signet Romance via NetGalley for the purpose of providing an honest review.*

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## **Sarah Mac says**

Nope.

Twice I've tried to get into this, & twice I've failed. It took me awhile to understand what was putting me off,



but this second attempt has offered a revelation. My issue isn't (entirely) the cliched storyline. It isn't (necessarily) the hamfisted, deus-ex-machina plot contrivances. It isn't (theoretically) the unholy mash of YA & adult romance therein.

No, my issue is how the book sounds EXACTLY like boring, bland, & tired Urban Fantasy. It's supposed to be romantic High Fantasy, right? High Fantasy has a certain sound. A certain feel. A certain fuzzy-blanket wallow in pace, character, & magic. So why does this book sound like shit yawn-fest neo-noir dime-a-dozen urban PNR??

Because that's what the author writes, & it couldn't be more obvious. If you wanna branch into a different genre, fine -- but your prose needs to reflect that in terms of tone & approach. I'm quite sure Urban PNR doesn't want the hoity-toity geekdom of HF intruding on their leather & guns; why should HF want the blandness & predictability of UF intruding on their magic & pretty dresses?

DNF.

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