



Thorn

Intisar Khanani

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For Princess Alyrra, choice is a luxury she's never had ... until she's betrayed.

Princess Alyrra has never enjoyed the security or power of her rank. Between her family's cruelty and the court's contempt, she has spent her life in the shadows. Forced to marry a powerful foreign prince, Alyrra embarks on a journey to meet her betrothed with little hope for a better future.

But powerful men have powerful enemies--and now, so does Alyrra. Betrayed during a magical attack, her identity is switched with another woman's, giving Alyrra the first choice she's ever had: to start a new life for herself or fight for a prince she's never met. But Alyrra soon finds that Prince Kestrin is not at all what she expected. While walking away will cost Kestrin his life, returning to the court may cost Alyrra her own. As Alyrra is coming to realize, sometime the hardest choice means learning to trust herself.

Thorn will be re-released by HarperTeen in Winter 2020.

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Thorn Details

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Author : Intisar Khanani

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Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Romance, Fairy Tales, Retellings

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From Reader Review Thorn for online ebook

Katerina Kondrenko says

8 out of 10

????? ? ???? ?????/This review on my blog

Living A Thousand Lives (please use Chrome/Yandex browser or Android/IOS to see the page; otherwise, spoiler-tags I use to make my post compact may not work)

Genre: fantasy, retelling, YA

Stuff: a la The Goose Girl

Fail: a bit passive MC

WOW: prince, atmosphere

POV: 1st person, female

Love-Geometry: none

Quote-Core:

"I am the Lady who has lost her soul. I am the princess who has lost her self. I am the goose girl who has lost her way. I am the child who can scream no more."

We're all familiar with the fairytales by Grimm. But does everybody remember the plot of *Goose Girl*? If you forgot it (just like me), then don't re-read it, 'cause *Thorn* is really close to the original story, and thus you'll spoil for yourself all the plot-twists.

So, **MC is a princess of a tiny country** which is decayed after its king's death. **Her name is Allyra**. She's skinny, brown-haired and very timid. No wonder! This girl has no respect among court nobility, her brother used to beat her and her mother does nothing to protect her and thinks she's a waste of space.

The book starts with arriving of delegation from another another, rich and powerful, Kingdom. Emissaries are looking for a bride for their prince named Kerstin. There are many other princesses thereabouts but the foreign king wants Allyra. Why? Good question. For Alyrra his choice is a chance to start a new life but she's afraid of it. Her old life is bad but usual, the new one is unknown and unpredictable. BTW, at the start our MC is pitiable and even silly but don't be fast to judge her. She'll grow up.

The night before Allyra's departure, she sees a man in her dream; they are having a nice conversation about different dangerous things when a sorceress breaks into the room. The witch has plans for the stranger and for Alyrra as well. The princess has been already warned that in the country of her soon-to-be husband people don't live long: members of royal family disappear, common girls miss on the streets, the prince itself is cruel and stuff. Now the sorceress who wants to possess her or something like that... Such a great perspectives our dear MC has.

But the marriage arrangement is already signed and there's no way back. Allyra is leaving with Valka (pretty but bitchy red-haired devil), a daughter of a mean lord Daerilin, an escort and a new white horse. As I said,

this beast is very similar to the one from the Rapunzel's cartoon, but our horse is not only witty, it can speak. The horse's name is Falada, he's wise and kind, plus has a snarky sense of humor.

On the way to the prince's kingdom, Valka lures Allyra to the river, where the sorceress is waiting for them. The witch switches the girls's souls and puts an unseen chain around Allyra's throat: if she tries to tell anyone that she is the princess in Valka's body, she'd die.

I was so frustrated! The princess had already endured this much and now that I had to suffer with her quite all the book and I hated it. But after several pages Allyra thought something like that: I'm not a princess anymore? Wow, no evil brother, no politics, not foreign prince. I'm free! I'm happy! And I was like, 'Wow, if you're happy, I'm happy too'. BTW, the horse had seen what was done by sorceress and with Falada Allyra could be herself.

Upon arrival to the palace Allyra (as Valka) is given the cold shoulder (a figurative one) and is sent to the geese barn. The princess adjusts without problems to hard labor and new conditions, she starts to enjoy her life, gets stronger and wiser, but our story is far from over. The prince suspects that Allyra is not Allyra...

Thorn isn't an action-packed book or a steamy romance or an adventure novel. But the story is interesting and page-turning. At the very start you might feel yourself bored, since the story is told from the first-person POV and Allyra isn't the party-girl with a lot of friends: unhappy thoughts are hell of a joy. But it won't last long.

I can't say that this tale is totally my cup of tea. I'm not a fan of non-stop hard-times. But I loved how it was written and what it was trying to say. Intisar Khanani is a really good author and I'd love to read her other books in the future.

Warning: it's a dark retelling.

*** Thanks to NetGalley for providing this ARC for review ***

Dana says

This book is the only fairy tale retelling that I have actually enjoyed, and for that I am truly impressed and grateful. I really loved this story, and while the MC could be naive, I still found her very likable. The pace slows down a lot in the middle of the story, and for some this may drag too much. However I personally did not mind the slow pace, as I understood the MC's struggle and how hard it was for her to make a decision considering the life she had led.

I admit that I am not very familiar with the original goose girl story, so I can not say how far this re-telling strays from it. Regardless I loved how the author was able to keep a fairy tale feel to the story, while still keeping it modern and easy to read. I would have liked for the villain/villains to have a more prominent role in the story, but I did enjoy reading the more simple passages about the princess's new life.

Overall I found this to be a fun and engaging read, with memorable characters and an interesting plot. Although there are some slow parts in the story, I still think that this book is very much worth reading. **4.5/5**

Buy, Borrow or Bin Verdict:Buy

Note: I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

Camly Nguyen says

When a king asks Alyrra's hand for his son in marriage, she accepts happily knowing that she won't have to live with her cruel brother and bitter mother.

On her way to the other kingdom, she is cornered by her maid that used some magic from an ancient witch to switch their bodies. At first, Alyrra hated the change but slowly, she learnt to cherish the simple life. No princes, no courtly lessons, no dances... But when prince Kestrin(the dude she was to marry) grew suspicious of the fake princess and ends up discovering Alyrra's identity, they have to do all in their power to save each other from darker forces that threaten to destroy them both.

To be honest, the best part in the book was the romance. The book wasn't centered on it and it didn't feel at all instalovy. It was just the perfect amount of cuteness to warm the heart without making it too cheesy.

What I also liked was the fact that Kestrin was actually suspicious about Alyrra's identity yet he let her live her life like she wanted too. He didn't torture her or force her to be princess again. Kestrin, you're awesome balls.

The world building was clear for me, and I really loved the subtle magic that filled the book without overdoing it.

If I could change anything about Thorn, I would make Alyrra a little more... Bad-ass? I feel like even though her character was nice, she didn't have the physical action of say Throne of Glass, Graceling or Eona...

It doesn't make the book any less good though .

I liked it. I'll wait for the sequel.

Beth says

I adored this retelling of the fairy tale about the goose girl. The prose was gorgeous and the story wrapped me up so tight, I stayed up till 2am to finish it...

I love strong female characters, and Intisar Khanani has created one of my new favorite female heroines. Her goose girl came from a life of privilege, but one of coldness from her royal family. She grew up only knowing the kindness of the court servants, her only true experience of what family should be. When she is betrayed on her way to be married off to a far-away prince, she must assume the role of a servant. And, in an interesting twist, actually trades bodies with her malicious maid through the evil machinations of a witch intent on destroying her betrothed's family. Instead of lamenting her fallen position, Thorn sees the opportunity to free herself from court intrigue and backstabbing. She willingly takes the position of a goose girl away from the royal palace, and works hard at her job mucking stables and tending geese. She makes true friends who become like a family to her. And forms an uncommon bond with a very uncommon horse. In this simpler existence she sees a better life for herself and does not wish to return to the conniving way of life at court.

However, life for peasants in this kingdom is dangerous, with slave snatchers taking women and children off the streets, while the royal court turns a blind eye. As the witch plots to destroy the rest of the royal family for the actions of the prince's forefathers, Thorn must decide if the prince is worth saving. And she must choose to take up the role of princess again to save the people of a city she has come to love.

Five stars all the way, I would recommend this for everyone!

Jeannette Nikolova says

Read on the WondrousBooks blog.

The actual rating is about 4.5, but I'm pleased with Khanani, so 5 stars it is.

*A couple of months ago I wrote about Intisar Khanani's **Sunbolt**. As you may have seen in that review, I liked the book but I wanted and expected more. I'm SO SO glad I decided to follow Intisar Khanani's work because **Thorn** is great!*

If you are a fan of A Court of Thorns and Roses, you should be able to like this one too!

What's great about this book is that it has this lovely fairytale-like quality. The main character **Alyrra/Thorn** is a perfect mix of our favourite Disney princesses: she is smart like Belle, humble and hard-working like Cinderella and kind like Snow White. I rarely fully approve of a YA character, but if there was ever one that I thought was worth of admiration, it's Alyrra. I had some issues with her stubbornness, but all of her other actions made me really, really like her. And it was her good heart that completely won me over.

The entire story was much better thought through than the one in *Sunbolt* and instead of being loaded with constant frenzy, it was slower (which is to say it wasn't slow, it's simply that *Sunbolt* is a very fast-paced book), the plot was interesting, the characters had some thought behind them, something moving them and it was fun being able to glimpse into their personalities. The mystery in the book was also on a good level and there are still questions I'm asking myself, and therefore hoping for a second book (whereas I usually hope that a single book won't turn into a series). Among the things which intrigued me the most was **Red Hawk**. For the majority of the book I thought that he was Prince Kestrin and he was changing his looks through magic. But that theory turned out to be wrong. I still thought that there was nice chemistry between Alyrra and Red Hawk, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed for a possible next book.

That doesn't mean that I didn't like **Prince Kestrin**, though! I was very interested in how his personality is going to develop and what kind of person he is going to turn out to be. I was not disappointed. I especially loved the scene with the tree.

NOTE: Right before I posted the review, I took a look at the GoodReads page of the book, only to find out that there is an actual fairytale called **Goose Girl**. How I've never heard of it is a mystery to me, but I'd like to say to Ms Khanani: *YOU GO GIRL!* I really love good re-tellings of old fairytales.

Sophia Sardothien says

Thank you Intisar Khanani and Netgalley for sending me this book in exchange of an honest review

Having never to read Goose girl, I pleasantly enjoy reading this book.

The plot was alright, interesting enough to kept me reading for the entire time. Despite the fact that the synopsis seems to empathise a lot on the romance, but the main focus was definitely beyond that. I would have elaborate more but I think it would be better getting in the story without knowing much.

The writing style is extremely beautiful, it grips on the themes of the books perfectly.

"Justice is not men beating each other up," Laurel says quietly. "Justice is teaching men that there is a law and, if they don't abide by it, there is an established punishment."

I really do like the Princess Alyrra, she's mature beyond her ages as well as that fact that she never acts irrationally. But most of all it's her personality that really sparks my love for this book. She's an extremely kind hearted girl, in defiance of being a princess she is not a spoiled brat, if anything she's considerate and generous always doing things with her best intentions.

"Murders make one cold." "It takes away your soul, piece by piece. It turns your heart to stone. Is that what you want?"

Prince Kestrin is alright too, not exactly swoon worthy but he definitely makes the book less tense. I love his relationship with Princess Alyrra, they're interactions were extremely rare but cute. Also there's no insta love, which made me love this book even more.

"It is easier to be strong when you have a friend supporting you."

Overall I give this a full 4 stars :D Hope this helps

Althea Ann says

A beautifully-done retelling of 'The Goose Girl.'
(<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm089.html>)

As in the original Grimm brothers' fairy tale, a princess, on her way to meet her betrothed, is betrayed by her maid, who uses magic to force the two to change places. 'Thorn' adds an extra element of magic in that the women don't just exchange clothes; but actually switch bodies.

Prevented by a curse of speaking of what has been done to her, the princess Alyrra must make the best of her

new situation and adjust to living a life of privation and hard labor - like so many of the kingdoms' subjects take for granted. Luckily, she is an adaptable and resourceful individual - and has the advice of a wise horse to help her through.

However, the story does not shirk from the cruel and tragic elements of the original tale, and Alyrra's troubles are not at an end, even when she resigns herself to her fate and makes the best of it. Not to mention - does she have a responsibility to the kingdom to make sure that her cruel former maid, now drunk on her new status, does not get the opportunity to keep on deceiving the Prince and grabbing for power?

Fans of this book may also wish to take a look at another take on the story, Shannon Hale's 'The Goose Girl.' <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Talltree says

I love this book. I'd hug it if I could. It is beloved to me and will stay forever and ever on my reread shelf
<3<3

Pauline Ross says

I loved this book, absolutely loved it. It's an object lesson for me, actually, in not pre-judging a book, because this one ticks so many of my 'no' boxes: it's YA, it's a fairy-tale retelling, it's first person present tense ("I back away...", "I gaze at him"), it's more or less a romance, it's about a princess who doesn't quite fit in, it has villains with no redeeming characteristics. Had I known all that beforehand, I would never have touched it and I would have missed a lovely, lovely story. As it was, it popped up on a list of free books, I started reading the sample and just kept reading, couldn't put it down, in fact.

For those who know their fairy tales, this is a reworking of the Goose Girl story. I didn't know anything about it, so maybe I missed a few subtleties, but I felt it worked perfectly well without any prior knowledge, and apart from a few oddities (like the talking Horse!) there was nothing in there that couldn't be found in conventional fantasy. One of the great strengths of this book is that the characters all feel truly rounded, so even though they are fulfilling traditional roles (the princess, the prince, the witch and so on) they have great depth and believable personalities. The villains seem at first glance to be simplistically cruel and evil, but they all have enough backstory to make them credible, if not exactly sympathetic.

The magic in the book is quite powerful, but the fundamentals are explained clearly enough to be believable, even the talking Horse. The author has thought everything out very carefully, and it works so well that when the heroine is rescued by magical means, it makes perfect sense. Not that she has to be rescued very often, mostly she is perfectly resilient and self-sufficient, and manages to get herself out of trouble and help others as well. I liked, too, that the magic is simply an integral part of life, everyone accepts it and it's properly regulated. Interestingly, there is also religion, never explained or central to the plot, but just there, as a natural and perfectly normal thing. There are also social customs which are alluded to without full explanations, like a system of debt between people (if someone helps you out, you owe them a debt of comparable value). At one point there's a discussion of a gift, and whether it incurs an obligation (a debt) or

whether it's just a gift, freely given, and a decision is reached without any attempt to explain the 'rules' of such an arrangement to the reader. I rather like this relaxed attitude towards world-building. Some things just are, and don't need to be elaborated.

The character of Alyssa, the princess, is central to the story, naturally, and the first person narration makes it imperative that she is both likeable and believable. I feel the author pulls this off magnificently. Of course Alyssa makes mistakes sometimes, but she copes well with the strange events which overtake her, and is strong-minded, caring and intelligent without ever turning into the tedious type of kickass female protagonist so often depicted in fantasy these days. On the contrary, she often feels overwhelmed and suffers a great deal, but she always tries to do the right thing, as far as she can. There is a certain amount of angsty, but it's actually understandable, given Alyssa's predicament.

The plot rattles along very nicely, with some unexpected twists and turns. There are villains, of course, so bad things happen, but there are also friends who help out from time to time, just as in real life. Also realistic is that physical encounters have physical effects - if you roll down a cliff, for instance, or get beaten up, there will be cuts and bruises, maybe even broken bones, and time needed to recover. The climax is a bit of a show-stopper, a wonderful outbreak of magical manipulation with everything at stake, and no real certainty of how things will go. And the author neatly side-steps the clichéd ending. It's a fairy story, so of course good triumphs over evil, but the way that is achieved is refreshingly different. And there's not the obvious happy ever after, either. Rather, there's an acknowledgement that a lot has happened and there are bound to be scars, and a tentative sense of moving forward.

This book surprised me. It may be YA, but it addresses some very profound issues, like the nature of justice, the corroding effect of revenge, questions of loyalty and trust and honesty, and the inner goodness (or not) of people, regardless of what they look like, or their rank. The romance element follows a traditional path but with great originality and commendable restraint. The writing style is eloquently literate, and I barely noticed the use of first person present tense. I had a very few minor quibbles - there were a few places early on where I wasn't clear about relationships or what exactly was happening - but nothing major enough to spoil my enjoyment. A terrific read. Five stars.

Sarah says

Thorn 99-cent Sale For A Cause -

All proceeds from this sale will go towards helping a good friend cover the cost of international adoption of a pair of biological brothers with Saethre-Chotzen Syndrome--a condition that results in brain damage unless treated in the first year. Evan (age 7) and Raymond (age 9) were each given up at birth, and were unable to receive treatment for their condition.

UK: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B00869SADQ...>

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B&N: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/thorn...>

Find out more here - <http://reecesrainbow.org/83163/sponso...>

(I was given this book for free on a read-to-review basis as part of the 'Thorn' Blog tour.)

I have to start this review by saying that this book really surprised me, mostly because the blurb is actually a terrible description of this book, and the actual story is totally different to what you expect having read the blurb!

Alyrra is a 15-year-old princess. Her father is dead, her mother is unkind to her, and her brother basically tortures her for fun.

One day a king visits, and Alyrra is told that he has come to seek her hand in marriage to his son. Her mother thinks that the king is a good ally, and so Alyrra accepts the proposal when it is put to her, as that is what her mother tells her to do.

Alyrra sets off on her way to her betrothed's kingdom, taking with her a maid and a girl called Valka. Valka is the daughter of a member of her mother's court, but she is in disgrace so they basically send her off with Alyrra to get rid of her.

Half-way along their journey, Alyrra goes off to wash at a stream and Valka follows her. Once by the water a woman appears who Alyrra recognises as a sorceress. The woman casts a spell, and suddenly Alyrra is Valka, and Valka is Alyrra. Valka now feels that she has got her due – she is now princess, while she sends Alyrra off to work as a goose girl once they make it to their new home.

While Valka feels that she has beaten Alyrra, Alyrra is secretly pleased by the swap; now she can do with her life as she pleases, rather than being forced to be a princess and to be a member of the court. The only problem is that the prince, who Alyrra was to marry, seems to realise that something is wrong with Valka and Alyrra, and pays more attention to the real Alyrra than she would like.

Now that she is starting a new life, Alyrra changes her name from Valka to Thoreena, which is shortened to Thorn. Thorn makes a life for herself in the stables and small town, while Valka as the princess is disliked.

The sorceress has not finished her trouble making though, and her next target is Kestrin (the prince). Can Thorn stand by while the sorceress kills Kestrin, or will she find a way to solve this whole mess, and save herself in the process?

As I said I was really surprised by this book, the blurb mentions nothing about the whole body-swap thing, which is one of the main parts of the storyline! I was quite shocked when this happened as I obviously wasn't expecting it!

Thorn/Alyrra was a very quiet girl, but had strongly held beliefs. Her mother said that her strength was her silence, which showed how little her mother really knew her, as Thorn was actually the one to speak out when she saw injustices being done, and even labelled herself as 'too honest'. I really liked Thorn for exactly that reason, she just couldn't sit by while bad things were happening, she took it upon herself to try and right wrongs no matter what the consequences to herself.

I thought that Thorn's reaction to her body swap experience was a bit of an odd one, but it did actually fit with her character – she's rarely complained about anything unless it was to aid someone else. I'm sure most of us would have thrown an absolute fit if a similar thing happened to us, but she just took it in her stride, and actually seemed to only see the advantages to swap!

Thorn's life was not easy by a long shot, and there were several points in this book where the things that happened to her were just so awful that I cried. Throughout it all though she stayed strong and did her best and always looked out for others.

As surprised as I was by this book, I was also surprised by how much I enjoyed it. Thorn was just such a loveable character, and the storyline was full of twists and turns that I didn't see coming. From the very beginning, Thorn captured my attention and held it, and I couldn't help but love this book.

9 out of 10.

(Book length: 4116 kindle locations)

Cee (The Mistress Case) says

I wish safety for Krestin, as little as I understand him— safety for him and from him.

I just— this one line— hit mehhh in the feels— I can't.

Okay, okay, in all seriousness, let's get started.

If you read and liked *The Goose Girl* by Shannon Hale like I did, don't be afraid to pick up *Thorn* by Intisar Khanani. The storytelling is different, as I hoped it would be. For one, there are Fey and sorcerers in *Thorn* and I don't recall any in *The Goose Girl* (which I read years ago, so I may be mistaken). *Thorn* is confusing and complicated to follow and you may get tired of it because truths are kept in the dark and are revealed very late, but the story won me over in spite of my complaints. Nothing's perfect. Therefore, I will leave the flaws up to discussions with other reviewers and won't address them in my own review.

You witness today that Princess Alyrra aka Thorn has become one of my favorite princess heroines. She's strong, but she's not concrete. She's submissive, but she's not a doormat. She's clever, but answers don't come effortlessly to her front door. She's selfish, but she's not self-interested. She's suffering, but she's not wallowing in her pity party. She's ashamed of herself, belittle her self-worth, and doubts her power, influence, and strength to a point of exhaustion. **She has insecurities. Insecurities that aren't all about how fat she is or how unattractive she is. Thank god! YA authors, learn something from Intisar.** Even though at times I found Thorn's actions and beliefs unreal and far-fetched, I forgive her because I like her too much to battle with my common sense. Describing her is a challenge, so let me just say I was genuinely surprised by her character. She's not a saint, and yet she's pretty damn close to one and she makes me feel like a devil for wishing the worst fate upon the bad guys. It's not her forgiving and merciful attitude I admire about her, but it is her acceptance and eagerness to learn about a new kingdom and its language. She doesn't cower away (HA! This sounds like a lie!) and her progress is shown throughout the book in an improvement of her understanding and responses to more complex conversations.

Aside from the characters and the morals, there is one other thing I really like and that is— the dialogues.

There are **the brilliant dialogues.**

Exhibit A: *"Your father offered me passage home if I informed him of certain matters concerning the princess. When I refused, he sent me to my new duties, assuring me that should I wish to betray her, there will always be a willing ear. As for Your Highness, you care for me only for the knowledge you believe I have. Each time we speak, it is only that you may try to pull some fact for me you are convinced I know. You would not help me to better my situation any more than my father, for you need me to feel that I need you, that I will be in your debt for your help. Is this not the game you play, or have I— have I mistaken you?"*

Exhibit B: *"How are the stables treating you? Still shoveling dung?"*
"An honest living often involves dealing with others' filth."

Exhibit C: *If you are not tempted by power, wealth, rank or an offer of flawed protection, or by a personal concern for justice to be carried out for yourself," he looks up and catches my gaze, "then what else is there?"*

The humorous dialogues.

Exhibit D: I wouldn't have thought a bump on your head would improve you so. The next time you walk around looking like a rainy day, I'm taking you to find another youth to save." Said the Horse after Arylla injured her head due to rescuing a boy.

Exhibit E: *"And Laurel," Violet responds, "sat up half the night listening to you stomp circles in your room not because she was worried about you but because she prefers to sleep sitting up with her eye open."* One of the best sarcasms I've heard so far.

And at times, the poignant/heartrending dialogues.

Exhibit F: *"Thorn, let me tell you about dangerous. Dangerous is cutting your finger on a rusty nail and getting lockjaw. Dangerous is walking behind a skittish a horse and getting kicked against the wall. Dangerous is walking anywhere in this city at night. Dangerous is not helping someone stay safe."*

Exhibit G: *"I cannot protect you so far from court," he says. "Will you not return?"*
His words release me from the spell of his touch. I pull my hand free. "There is nothing for me here," I say, my voice shaking."

A character can say so much more than the words they speak, making their implication run deep and far. There aren't endless amount of redundant and pointless dialogues/monologues jumping out of the page to beg for my attention saying, "Look at me! I'm quirky with my sarcastic remarks." Or "I'm so philosophical and smart. Love me!" Do you get where I'm coming from? Because I am honestly tired of books overdoing the sarcasm and wittiness of the characters and having these characters act and talk like childish idiots one minute then spout philosophies the next. Boo!

Therefore, Intisar did an amazing job with giving life and meaning to her characters and her retelling. Well done. Well done, indeed.

By the way, I need someone to fangirl with me. The last paragraph that ended the book was so friggin adorable. Way to make me desperate for more Kestrin and Thorn. ~~I NEED TO SEE THEM FALL IN LOVE~~
≤3 Fulfill my needs.

Olga Godim says

This novel is one of the few that have left me divided. On one hand, it's too intense, too emotionally grueling for my taste. I wanted the heroine, Princess Alyrra (aka Thorn), to have a respite, to have something working for her, but the author wouldn't oblige. So in my head, I argued with her. I told her that she was wrong to subject Thorn to so many indignities. I told her that the test she devised for her hero, Prince Kestrin, was unfair and unnecessary cruel. I told her that Thorn behaved foolishly. She could've found an easier way to deal with her problems. I told her that Alyrra's friend, Horse Falada, is an inadequate teacher. He knows stuff but he talks in riddles and never explains anything as a teacher should.

Unable to persuade the author and the book to take a gentler road, I did it myself. In my few short breaks from reading, I imagined alternative adventures for the heroes. I gave them additional options and widened their choices. I came to love and respect the heroes too much to trap them into tight corners, as the author has done. So I pleaded with the writer to be kinder, and I raved, and I cried, but I couldn't stop reading. The novel wouldn't let me. I felt compelled to finish it even though I can't say that I enjoyed it. But I can say that I will remember it.

Subjectively, I don't like so much suffering for the heroes. I like a lighter read. Objectively, I know that this was one of the best fantasy novels I've read in some time. And I know that this writer is a master of her craft. Besides my feeble squeaks fueled by compassion for the heroes, I have one serious editorial comment. There are two mysteries in the story that are revealed towards the end. They include the story of Valka's hatred towards Alyrra and the story of the Lady's hatred towards Kestrin. Both should've been explained in the beginning of the novel. The hatred of those two antagonists drives the plot, but for three quarters of the book, it doesn't make sense, and the reader wonders where it comes from. What could humble, inoffensive Alyrra have done to deserve it?

Besides that one objection, there are only a few typos to distract the reader from this rich, soulful story. It's powerful and cathartic; and I recommend it to anyone who likes fantasy.

Marquise says

A wonderful retelling of *The Goose Girl* fairy tale, that I liked tonnes more than Sharon Hale's unimaginatively entitled "The Goose Girl" retelling, which was too cloying, "fluffy" and unsubstantial to me.

This one has a very palpable Middle Eastern flavour, probably due to the author's background, which in itself was a very welcome change of ambiance from the European-like setting of most retellings, and though the world isn't especially complex or developed in every single painstaking detail, it does feel real and relatable enough even for those who've not set a foot in any country from the Levant. Ms Khanani has even infused her book with "local" words and phrases in Menaiyan, the language of the kingdom where the story happens, not sure derived from which real language. The setting is urban, but not purely so, in case "Middle Eastern" has summoned mistaken visions of deserts, sand, and Oriental decadence. It's a world with magic, but magic in just the right amount as to not feel overwhelming and too Fantasy.

The characters are the best part, I loved the heroine and hero both, something not always possible for me. The heroine, Princess Alyrra, a. k. a. Thorn, whose first person POV in present tense narrates the whole story, is a teenager, but you'd not remember that from her "voice." I certainly forgot immediately that she's only fifteen or so, as she sounds older and mature. Maybe too old and wise for her stated young age, which theoretically should be a flaw, but given that girls this age are generally depicted as idiots or... too *adolescent* to be likable, I'll look the other way in this case. The romance is, thankfully, angst-free, instalove-free, contrivance-free, and handled credibly for the circumstance of royal arranged union that originates it. Besides, in this relationship, it's the girl who does the heavy lifting, if you get what I'm hinting at.

The world is just begging for more stories to be set in it, because we don't see that much but what's shown whets the appetite for more. Fortunately, I had the short story *The Bone Knife* together with the novel, so I know there's more coming.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

A fairy tale re-telling of the "Goose Girl". I'm very pleasantly surprised at how good this book was.
3.5 stars

Princess Alyrra has never played well at being princess. She just wants to do her own thing and let her abusive brother and cold mother do as they want, as long as she escapes their clutches.

A traveling King shows up at the palace and makes an offer for Alyrra's hand in marriage to his son Prince Kestrin.

Alyrra doesn't have a bunch of choices. Stay and face more abuse at the hands of her family or take that chance and go to another kingdom where she might get into something worse. Her mother of course thinks it's a perfect arrangement so she sends Alyrra off.

On the way they stop at a river to wash and Alyrra's handmaiden shows her true colors and with the help of a Fare Folk she assumes Alyrra's identity and Alyrra becomes the hand maiden.

Upon arrival at the palace Alyrra becomes the castle's goose girl. She works the geese and shovels poop to tide her days. She actually is okay with the switch because it gives her a chance to start her life anew.

Plus she has her horse, who talks with her about her choices.

Alyrra as a heroine is just about perfect. She doesn't have that milkshake that brings all the boys to the yard, she is strong but willing to bend, she doesn't attention whore...and get this NO INSTA_LOVE!

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Another retelling of the Goose Girl fairy tale, and a \$0.99 Kindle special. I'm interested to compare this to Shannon Hale's version, which I adore.

