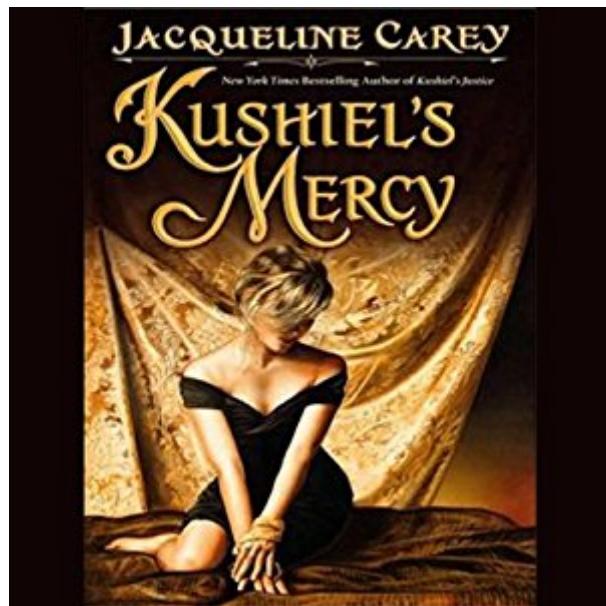


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Kushiel's Mercy



Synopsis

From Jacqueline Carey, New York Times bestselling author of Kushiel's Scion and Kushiel's Justice, comes the final adventure in the Imriel Trilogy. Having paid dearly for ignoring Elua's edict to love as thou wilt, Imriel and Sidonie have finally come forward to publicly confess their love for each other---only to watch the news ignite turmoil throughout the land. Those who are old enough cannot forget the misdeeds of Imriel's mother, Melisande, whose self-serving lies plunged their country into war. In order to quell the uprising, Queen Ysandre hands down a decree: she will not divide the lovers, but neither will she acknowledge them. And if they decide to marry, Sidonie will be disinherited. That is, unless Imriel can find his mother and bring her back to Terre D'Ange to be executed for treason.... --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

I really enjoyed both this book and the whole series, but I'm giving this four stars because something just didn't catch me as much as the other books did. I think it may be because most of the D'Angeline characters spend a huge portion of the book under a spell that makes them completely OOC. This was done on purpose, and I actually really love seeing magic take a more active role in this novel, but I think ultimately it just turned me off. I still love Carey's writing and was impressed with the change in viewpoint character that we see later in the story. The books are told in first person from Imriel's point of view, but here we see a spell to make Imriel into someone else. The writing both changing from and back again to Imriel were really well done, and I thought it was

kind of fun. The antagonists, for the spells they managed to wrought, are not as impressive as they really should be. They pull off spells of enormous magnitude but make a number of really stupid (and enormous) mistakes. Still, the journey was fun, and I love the over-arching theme (of the whole series) of love overcoming all. I thought it was a lovely end to a wonderful series.

Note: While this is Book 6 in *Kushiel's Legacy* (also referred to as the Terre d'Ange Cycle) it is Book 3 in the second trilogy and focuses on Imriel de la Courcel, who we met in Book 3 of the first trilogy, *Kushiel's Avatar*.

Kushiel's Mercy is best read as part of the second trilogy, if not as Book 6 in the larger series, since there are plenty of characters and situations referred to from the previous books. Imriel de la Courcel, a Prince of the Blood, and Sidonie de la Courcel, Terre d'Ange's princess and next in line to the throne, are in love. This doesn't sit well with much of the realm because Imriel's estranged birth mother, Melisande Shahrizai, betrayed the nation a generation ago. Imriel and Sidonie are faced with a difficult choice: Bring Melisande to justice or Sidonie will not inherit the throne. After beginning their search for Melisande in earnest, an unlikely city nation, Carthage, comes with luxurious gifts, promises of alliance, and an apparently heartfelt hope that Sidonie will consider their General Astegal for marriage. Things do not go as expected, for anyone. This historical fantasy is another beautiful addition to the Terre d'Ange cycle. Through the adventures of Imriel and Sidonie, we learn more about this alternate world Carey has created. Carthage is a budding empire, rich in gold and gems but also dependent on slavery. General Astegal comes off as a very charming man, willing to bend to Terre d'Ange's way of things when it comes to love; for instance, he wouldn't be in a miff if Sidonie decided to have a harem of pretty young men. The other culture that really stood out for me was the Euskerri, which is akin to the Basque. Deeply proud and also demanding equality from their two neighboring countries, Terre d'Ange and Aragonia. In the previous books, there has been some magic, though much of it is left up to the reader's interpretation. In this novel, the magic is direct and has immediate consequences. Even though this is a reread for me, I always find myself surprised by how not subtle the magic component is in this story, as compared to the previous books. So how do you fight strong magic when you only have a passing experience with it? That is something that Imriel and Sidonie will have to figure out, though I do like all the hints that Elua, Terre d'Ange's primary deity, may be giving them a hand. The magic

does follow certain rules, which I liked, though it was quite the trial for Imriel to figure out what those rules were. There is plenty of adventure and sneaking about in this story. Imriel must make alliances with the most unlikely of people to even make a solid attempt to not only rescue Sidonie but the entire capitol of Terre d'Ange, the City of Elua. Indeed, spying, misdirection, and disguises make up a good part of the book. I think it was hardest on Imriel to deceive his beloved foster parents, Phedre and Joscelin. There is some pretty intense scenes that had me holding my breath! Also, those scenes with Barquiel L'Enver, a man who has disliked Imriel since he was born, were quite worthy. Sidonie really shines in this book. Even with everything told through Imriel's eyes, Sidonie had some tough decisions to make and was at the center of some dangerous situations. Carey has this magical way of writing female characters behaving in feminine ways and still getting important stuff done. While Imriel is the character that carried me forward in this story, there is a strong argument for Sidonie being that star of the story. Each time we think our heroes have found the key to winning the day, there is another twist or another spell or another hurdle or another bad guy that must be vanquished. One of the hardest things about this was that sometimes they had to find a way to sneak past, trick, or even fight friends and family that were ensnared in the magic. My poor nails! I was biting my nails too often with this story! As with the series, there are incredible sex scenes that range from playful to desperate to healing to sad to joyful. Carey is just as detailed in her love scenes as she is with her use of cultures and linguistics. I always enjoy these scenes because they reveal something further about the characters. The ending was well done. I was very satisfied that things were not easy to unravel and iron out. Not everyone gets everything they want. There is plenty to be forgiven all around. Still, it was beautiful and satisfying. The Narration: Simon Vance does this final book in Imriel's trilogy justice. He had to take on further accents as our heroes experienced new cultures. There were also plenty of complicated emotions and intense scenes and Vance did a great job capturing the subtleties of those emotions in his voice work. Also, he did a fantastic job with the sex scenes.

I have truly enjoyed all 6 books of Kushiel's series. Fast and slow at times, but Carey spins a great tale. The only thing that bothers me sometimes is her reliance on repeating words for effect. In the last Phedre book, it was "well and so". Here, perhaps it was the use of "my girl" and "always". Still, very much readable.

As the second - and please Elua, not final - cycle of the Kushiel's Legacy series comes to a close, the central question most fans will be asking is, Will Imriel and Sidonie live happily ever after? Rest assured, Carey gives us plenty of these two star-crossed lovers (complete with requisite scorching hot bedroom scenes - whee!). But she's not content with just giving us their love story, oh no. She's not even content with giving us another of Imriel's soul-seaching, personal growth quests. In "Kushiel's Mercy," the pattern more closely resembles that of Phedre's trilogy, as Imriel finally gets his chance to save the world, and the woman he loves, from evil magic and the threat of war. Part of the joy in this book comes from the way Carey skillfully brings everything full circle. In the past, Melisande Shahrizai has been the greatest threat to Terre d'Ange and the one impediment to Imriel and Sidonie's happiness; now she is the realm's, and the princess's, only hope for salvation. In "Avatar," Phedre and Joscelin sought the secret name of God in order to bind an angel; here, Imriel and Sidonie must find the magic word that will free a demon. In "Chosen," a loyal Barquiel l'Envers held the City of Elua while Queen Ysandre raced with her army to avert a coup; in "Mercy".... Well, I'll let you read that one for yourself. Can I wax rhapsodic for a minute about the fact that one seriously undervalued character, who's been around - and maligned - almost since Day One, finally gets his due? I've had a guilty crush on Barquiel l'Envers for ages now, and it's nice to see my conviction in his wonderfulness finally justified. I love that he steps up here and that he finally gets the recognition he deserves. Terre d'Ange got the better part of the bargain when the l'Envers wed into House Courcel, and not just because of Ysandre. Barquiel has proved himself again and again to be one of her greatest heroes - albeit one of her more prickly, bitter, sarcastic ones. I also love that Alais gets a moment in the sun. She's one of those characters who, no matter how much face time Carey gives her, I want more of. Her ability to stand up for herself and choose her own future - even if it's not the one I would have chosen for her - is one of the happiest outcomes of the entire book. "Mercy" doesn't quite meet the amazingly high bar set by "Justice," in my opinion. Carey leans a little too heavily on a few moments that should just float freely, while not giving enough weight to some other scenes that should be filled with emotional significance. The much-anticipated reappearance of Melisande Shahrizai was rather anticlimactic. And by the 87th time Carey ended a chapter by having Imriel and Sidonie cuddle each other to sleep, I wanted to yell, "We get it! They love each other! So sweet! Get back to the naughty sex!" These are minor quibbles, though, in such a magnificent work. Meanwhile, one of the most disconcerting - and, I fear that for some fans, disappointing - aspects of this book is that almost all of the major characters spend so much time acting very much out of character. Imriel goes mad and then believes that he's someone else, Sidonie loses a large chunk of her memory, and - most heartbreakingly of all - the entire City of Elua

falls under a spell that turns them into delusional paranoiacs, barely recognizable to us. I hadn't realized just how much the series still relied on Phedre's resourcefulness, Joscelin's grim determination, Ysandre's wry strength, and Drustan's good humor until they were gone. Terre d'Ange without those beloved characters is a strange and alien place. The madness that haunts the City was, to me, a worse tragedy than any hardship that befell the two young lovers. It really serves to drive home Imriel and Sidonie's despair at what's befallen their homeland, and lends some serious emotional weight to a truly nervewracking climax, but I worry that some readers might not be able to handle it. All I can say is, stick with it! The payoff is well worth the pain (which is pretty much the motto of the entire series, now isn't it?) Did I mention that I love, love, love this book? Quibbles and nitpicks and worries aside, I simply cannot imagine this series ending any other way. I was torn between racing to see what happened next, and trying to drag out every page to make the experience linger as long as I could. "Kushiel's Mercy" is the perfect conclusion to the Legacy, even if I'm still not ready for it to end!

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