



The Scorpio Races

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It happens at the start of every November: the Scorpio Races. Riders attempt to keep hold of their water horses long enough to make it to the finish line. Some riders live. Others die.

At age nineteen, Sean Kendrick is the returning champion. He is a young man of few words, and if he has any fears, he keeps them buried deep, where no one else can see them.

Puck Connolly is different. She never meant to ride in the Scorpio Races. But fate hasn't given her much of a chance. So she enters the competition — the first girl ever to do so. She is in no way prepared for what is going to happen.

The Scorpio Races Details

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From Reader Review The Scorpio Races for online ebook

Maggie Stiefvater says

You know I had to. It IS my favorite of all my books, after all.

Claudia Ramírez says

I ACTUALLY CRIED WITH THE LAST LINE OF THIS BOOK. REAL TEARS.

Kai says

"It's easy to convince men to love you. All you have to do is be a mountain they have to climb or a poem they don't understand."

Puck has a horse, two brothers and soon no house to call a home. Sean's heart beats for something that he doesn't own. Both have no choice and only one chance to get what they desperately need. It's either win or die.

Why did I not pick this up sooner?

This totally deserves the 5 star rating. My heart goes out to every single tiny detail of this book. But most of all for the oh so precious characters. I'm a little in love with all of them, but very much so with Finn.

I'm at loss with words and it's too late to form a clear thought, especially now that *The Raven King* is waiting for me to be read. A+ for world building, plot, characters, writing, unpredictability and magic. Perfect from start to finish.

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Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

I don't even know what to say!

Catriona (LittleBookOwl) says

3.5/5 stars!

I really liked The Scorpio Races, and I'm glad I listened to it on audiobook. Since there were two voice

Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says

? I reckon the reasons for which *The Scorpio Races* weaved itself throughout my beloved favorites could cause an opposite reaction to other readers. Do I care, though? No, because every slow-paced page, every heartfelt and beautiful sentence, every haunting and atmospheric landscape, every *inch* of Sean's bloody-stained jacket and killer horse reminds me that if nothing else, *The Scorpio Races* has a *soul*, and **I'm consumed by it.**

"I am here on firm ground, but part of me is already down on the beach, and my own blood is singing *I'm so, so alive*"

Sigh. I've been trying to put my thoughts into words for hours now, but it seems that *The Scorpio Races* joined the very exclusive club of the novels which mute my abilities to express myself. Puck and Sean's story is burned into my brain, though, twisting my perception of the reality around me, Thisby's landscapes forever ingrained in me. That's why I cannot, I will not leave this space blank and no matter how impossible it seems at this time, I'll try to do this wonderful book justice. Sorry in advance if I don't succeed.

"Outside, the wind is a live, starving thing. The sky over Skarmouth is a dull brown, lit by the streetlights, but everywhere else is inky."

■ If you're - even a little - accustomed to Maggie Stiefvater's books, it shouldn't come as a surprise that **the writing is nothing short of spectacular** : compelling and beautiful, warming your heart a second and breaking it the next. How could I complain about the slow-pacing if I thought it was *perfect* for the story? I'll tell you, I can't. Is it subjective? Sure it is, and I understand the readers who were bored out of their minds. Yet I wasn't. Never at any moment.

"Why aren't you going?"

The question infuriates me. I demand, "Why is it that going away is the standard? Does anyone ask you why *you* stay, Sean Kendrick?"

"They do."

"And why do you?"

"The sky and the sand and the sea and Corr."

■ I genuinely think that your ability to enjoy - to love - the plot depends on your expectations. **Does *The Scorpio Races* revolve around the sea killer horses and the race taking place every year on Thisby's beach? Sure, but if you think that's all it is about, you will be disappointed.** Many readers pointed it, and they're right : the race doesn't start until the very end, and is only an excuse to deal with the real issues in my opinion.

What issues?

The raw and frightening feelings one can experience when not sure if he - she - **belongs somewhere**. Through Sean, Puck, Gabe, Finn's eyes, we witness different ways to answer the difficult question of who they really are and what they need to do to find happiness. Is it staying, whatever it takes? Is it leaving? Is compromising themselves *okay* to reach their goals? As much as I personally find that the "coming-of-age" label is often misleading, in *The Scorpio Races* it rises to a whole new level. I couldn't be indifferent to their struggles, because as strange as it might be (given the fantasy elements) **they felt real and heartbreaking and oh so moving**. Beware of the harshness, though : many parts are - really - difficult to handle, especially because **it contains cruelty toward animals**.

■ As usual **Maggie Stiefvater nailed her characterization**. If I sure didn't agree with every decision they took, none of her characters felt wasted and all of them provoked contradictory feelings in me. Honestly, they're just so freaking amazing : well rounded-up, fleshed-out, and a little heartbreaking. **Sean, in particular, made it impossible for me to *not* love him almost instantly** : his wildness, his loyalty to Corr, his sea horse, his intensity - **that boy didn't need to talk for me to be lost forever**.

"All I know is that Sean Kendrick rode that bay mare and waited until he was nearly over the cliff edge before saving himself, and that the dead speak more than he does."

? *The Scorpio Races* changed me, somehow, even if I can't pinpoint in what way so far, and this story will linger for a very long time in my heart. Now, tell me, what better compliment could I give it? **None**.

For more of my reviews, please visit:

Mary ~Ravager of Tomes~ says

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"This Skarmouth is raw and hungry, striving and unknowable. Everything the race makes me feel on the inside is bleeding up through the seams in the street tonight." - Sean Kendrick

"I wonder how long it will take for me to feel as adult on the inside as I look on the outside." - Puck Connolly

deep breath

Sometimes you read a book and it becomes your whole world while you are reading it. For me, *The Scorpio Races* is one of those books.

I am just forever in debt to Maggie Stiefvater because this book has truly affected me. **It's very difficult for me to put into words**.

But I suppose the best way I can say it is this: *The Scorpio Races* is the kind of story I would hope to write, if

I had the talent.

It's incredibly unique. Stiefvater's writing is totally immersive. So much detail, and yet all of it felt relevant. I savored every word, every page, every single bit of this book that I could.

I have heard some say that it was too slow, and I understand that criticism. It just wasn't true for me and my personal reading experience. **Yes it was slow, but I feel that it absolutely needed to be.**

This is a story that blooms in its own time, a breathtaking experience if given the proper patience.

While I read this, I was on the island of Thisby. I could feel the cold November breeze threading through my hair, I could smell the tinges of brine and blood on the waves that soaked the shoreline. I could hear my heart beating in my ears as the events unfolded. *And I read the last thirty pages of this story with tears streaming down my face.*

I'm just so damn emotional, and sitting here in a heap of my feelings.

I know this review isn't very specific, but it suffices to say that I loved *everything*. From the characterization, to the world building, to the plot, to the writing style - it's the whole package. I couldn't recommend this book enough, especially for fans of Stiefvater's other works.

Now please excuse me while I go recover in a dark corner somewhere.

This and other reviews of mine can be found on Book Nest!

Lyndsey says

Also posted on STRANGEMORE.COM.

This is basically the paranormal version of Misty of Chincatigue with (gasp!) romance!

Like Hidalgo, on the beach instead of the desert with (gasp!) kissing! Between two riders! NOT between the horse and it's rider though. Well... sometimes between the horse and it's rider. Just a little.

When this book started, it felt like a breath of fresh sea air, not rife with the smell of YA cliché. That was mainly because I **thought** this book was told from the alternating perspective of two *boys*, Sean and Puck, which would have been a nice change for Stiefvater. Maybe I was in the mood for a buddy story or a brother story, instead of the usual stereotypical romance. But it wasn't meant to be, you see, because Puck is a *SHE* and not a he. (Sorry, my inner Dr. Seuss came out for a second.)

Not that this is a spoiler or anything, as it is mentioned fairly quickly. It was just something my mind was set against. I wanted Puck to be a boy. I'm tired of the "here's a girl who does this and here's a boy who does that, hmmm, I wonder when and how they'll meet and, gee, wouldn't it be weird if they fell in love, because, oh boy, we've never seen THAT happen before."

The Rundown

I understand now why the blurb is so impossibly vague. This is a difficult book to sum up.

Two individuals, Sean and Puck, are preparing separately for the annual Scorpio Races (where the dangerous water horses of Thisby face off against each other with their riders and generally lots of bloodshed) until their lives eventually collide into each other. Sean is the typical Thisby teen boy who just so happens to compete every year in the races. Puck is a young girl having some family issues, in particular with her brother's desire to leave the family home and the island that they live on, and she thinks that competing in the Races will force her brother to stick around. But Puck decides to race her regular horse against the blood-thirsty water horses, which cause quite a stir and tons of problems. And that's just the beginning.

The Writing and World-Building

If there was one word to describe this book, it would definitely be "atmospheric." The descriptions *were* gorgeous, but the location for the book is more than a little mind boggling. It seems to be a created fantasy island located in Ireland? I think. The term they use for the water horses is a Gaelic term but it takes place on a fictional island, I guess? The specifics are never really laid out about where or what or when this "Thisby" is.

Many reviewers raised concerns about the lack of world-building in the Maggie's Wolves of Mercy Falls series. That being said, I feel like she almost went in the opposite direction with way too much world-building, including tiny details about minor characters, and it honestly wasn't very interesting to me. The characters all had their own quirks and backgrounds, but we were told too much and too often about them. More than was necessary.

However, the world that she built around The Scorpio Races was much better than the world of Mercy Falls. The prose isn't quite as purple and the romance isn't nearly as cheddar. I'd say it's more like a magenta colby jack. It was just a very bland and tasteless magenta colby jack.

The Pacing

Pacing was my biggest problem with The Scorpio Races. It takes at least 100 pages or so before anything remotely interesting happens. Usually by then, I would have put a book down not knowing whether or not I would pick it back up, but because this is an upcoming release, I felt like I needed to keep going. In addition, because of the way the environments are described and the action builds slowly, a certain intrigue simmers in your mind and drives you forward regardless of the slow start. But I'm not entirely sure that the pay-off was worth the anticipation.

Around page 380, the seemingly fabled races begin. Now that would have been a great place to start the book! Because up until that point almost NOTHING had happened. It was all setup. I'm sorry, but I do not *need* three hundred and eighty pages of setup. Even if it has pretty words and HORSES!!!

Because by the time that part finally came around and I thought, "Now this could be interesting," -- it was much too late. I was loooooong past mentally checked out and had become disinvested and disinterested.

This might come off rude, but this is the best way I know how to explain what it seems like has happened.

You know when a little girl first discovers the way her skirt twirls when she spins? It's cute, right?! You're like, "Oh, isn't that precious. She's twirling." But then it's two weeks later and she's STILL twirling like the world won't be able to turn itself if she stops, you're like "Okay, we get it! You can *twirl!*" But you can't say that because then you're just being an asshole for ruining a little girl's "twirl time."

Well, Maggie Steifvater can twirl... and whirl... and swirl... and canter... and whinny. It just seems like the author discovered for the first time "Wow, I can write pretty prose. Let's throw some more of that in there."

Don't get me wrong: It *is* pretty. But holy well of words, do we need SO much of it?

The Scorpio Races don't actually happen until the last 20 or 30 pages of the book, and even then, the actual Races only last about 12 pages, the rest is aftermath. For a book that's 410 pages long, that is not a good chunk of the content. Only about 3 percent of it, in fact. Maybe it should have been titled "The 380 pages leading up to the Scorpio races".

I mean, sure, Hunger Games had some setup as well. But it would have been an entirely different book had the Games only lasted 12 pages.

Who Should or Should Not Read It

I wouldn't read this book again. And I wouldn't recommend it for a lot of people. But I think a lot of people will read it anyway.

Here's why:

- 1) It is written by Maggie Stiefvater.
- 2) It is a paranormal written by Maggie Stiefvater.
- 3) It is a paranormal written by Maggie Stiefvater about HORSES! HORSES! HORSES! HORSES!
HORSES! HORSES!
- 254) It is a standalone. (Finally!)

If you hated Shiver, then you'll probably hate this one as well. If you loved Shiver, then you might love this one.

Right around the time that the Black Beauty movie with Chris O'Donnell came out, I went through horse phase like many young girls probably do. But I got over it and I think I'm still over it, which might be why I didn't love this book. I also went through a dog phase, Old Yeller, Rin Tin Tin, Turner and Hooch, except that I never grew out of it and never will.

I think Horse People will love this book. Keep in mind that there is a big difference between *liking* horses and being a Horse Person. I *like* horses. They are pretty and I like to imagine them with horns or wings or gills, but my thoughts don't revolve around them. I am a Dog Person.

I've heard people say that horses are like really big dogs, but I think that those people are just Horse People trying to convince you to be a Horse Person. When really, it's like comparing Chihuahuas to Labradors. Some people say that small dogs and big dogs are the same. They aren't. Not even close. Usually, those who say that are Small Dog People trying to convince you to be a Small Dog Person. This isn't to say that any of them are better or worse than the other, they are just *different*. I am a Big Dog person, not a Horse Person, not a Small Dog Person.

If this had been about magical sea-faring German Shepherds, I would have LOVED it.... probably.

Other Thoughts

The one thing I really like about what Maggie did with this book, though the same may not be said for Shiver, is that she didn't follow the *pack* with The Scorpio Races. After the vampire-werewolf craze hit and SMeyer announced on her website that she was writing a mermaid book, strangely, we saw a surge in the number of mermaid based books on the market, many of a questionable quality due to the fact that they were most likely rushed onto the shelves. Maggie didn't go with the surge but she didn't go against it either. She went along side it by creating her own mythology similar to many ocean based tales. It wouldn't be

surprising if we see a rise in ocean based mythology books after The Scorpio Races.

Although the pacing is slower and the story not quite as involving as Shiver, this book still seems to be a step in a better direction (albeit almost too far a step) for Maggie. The world-building is much more fully realized and detailed than that of Shiver and the storyline isn't purely romance based, which leads me to think that maybe, just *maybe*, authors **do** pay attention to reviewers complaints. Maybe she just decided to put more time into her world-building on her own, or maybe, hopefully, we are having some *minuscule effect* on how the book world evolves. And that makes me very VERY happy.

The Verdict

The Wolves of Mercy Falls was just a little too soft for me and the Scorpio Races was just a little too hard, so maybe by the time the next book comes around from Ms Stiefavter, that one will be *juuuuust right* for this little goldilocks.

I'm giving it two stars because it was written well, just badly paced and plotted, in my opinion. The pretty words weren't enough to make up for the boredom. And unfortunately, I never connected to the characters or the romance between them.

The thing that frustrates me the most about books is when feel like I didn't learn anything. I don't really mind not being entertained if I take something away from it that I had never thought about before. But I at least want one or the other.

If you aren't going to entertain me, then teach me something. If you aren't going to teach me something, then by George Washington, at least ENTERTAIN me!! I'm very sorry to say that this book did neither. But that isn't to say that you will feel the same.

Personally, I didn't love it. I don't think I even liked it, but it wasn't terribly written; it wasn't too terribly involving either.

Meh. That's my word for this book. Or rather more like -

MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAH.

Yeah, I just whinnied. Whatcha gonna do about it, huh?

Kaylin (The Re-Read Queen) says

3 Stars

Overview:

“There are moments that you'll remember for the rest of your life and there are moments that you **think** you'll remember for the rest of your life, and it's not often they turn out to be the same moment.”

Look, no one is more upset about this rating than me. I wanted to love this *so much*. I recently finished The Raven Cycle, and it became one of my favorite series. I'd heard so many great things about this, I was *sure* I'd love it.

...But I just feel really underwhelmed?

Pros:

I still love Stiefvater's writing style. There's something incredible about the way she sets a scene, and this is one of the most atmospheric novels I've ever read.

She also does a fantastic job of establishing character. A few chapters in you *feel* for these characters. You understand their struggles without being overwhelmed with information.

These established characters are involved in some very real-feeling emotional conflicts and familial dynamics. Especially Puck's relationship with her brothers. Their arguments were some of the strongest portions of the book, as no one was simply 'wrong.'

I also really loved George Holly for some reason? His conversations with Sean were very interesting and further illustrated the strange atmosphere of this island.

Cons:

I just never *connected*.

I understood the characters and what they were struggling for, and in the first few chapters I really felt for them and was *certain* this book was going to make me cry. But by the end I was just questioning the logistics?

Maybe it's because I'm not a horse person. Maybe because I'm not familiar with the original mythology. Maybe it's just me.

But this was *odd* and I really struggled with suspending my disbelief. Which is strange, because I'm certain I've read weirder... but I kept stumbling over details?

If Puck's been raised on this island and loves it with all her soul, why does she know so little about the race proceedings? If everyone is so terrified of the horses, why do they race at all? I'm sure there is a larger theme about nationalism and man's innate desire to prove one's self... but so many people were dying? Why did no one rethink this dangerous game?

Seriously everyone was fine with riding horses that *eat* people, but they couldn't understand a woman participating in a 'man's' race?

The bad-guy also seemed a little stereotypical to me? Perhaps I didn't connect with him enough either, but he just seemed fueled by a blind desire to win.

90% of the book is a build-up for the race. This is okay with me, as I love slow paced stories that gradually build... but the pay-out didn't seem worth it? The actual race lasted like 8 pages, and somehow ended up feeling rushed?

In Conclusion:

It's times like this I wonder if I read the same book as everyone else. The writing was there, but I just feel like I was missing *something* with the story.

Carol. says

Tarot card reading for this book: inverted Tower. The Tower is leaning into the sea, crumbling, with thrashing waves and stormy skies, and while it can be a card of destruction, it can also be a card of fundamental change--which describes *The Scorpio Races* down to the letter.

A fierce and hungry book. Even the wind is hungry here, **"a live, starving thing."** The tomboyish Kate, otherwise known as 'Puck,' and her brothers have been orphaned ever since the carnivorous water horses killed their parents. Loss runs through Kate's thoughts daily, ghosts of her parents and the struggle of being a family when none of the remaining children is an effective adult. One night, her oldest brother announces his decision to emigrate to the mainland, motivating Kate to enter the annual horse race that celebrates the water horses' return to land. Even as the whole island survives because of the horses and the tourists they bring, there is a deep strand of ambivalence at the prospect of their return, as they inevitably bring carnage and death.

Narrative switches between Kate and Sean, both entrants into the lethal race. Sean is a little older, more independent, more sure, but half wild himself. He too has lost a parent to the horses, and the other to the mainland, but unlike Puck, he is only respectful of them, not fearful. A multiple race-winner, he has numerous little magics that assist him in control over the water horses--twine, spit, iron. When Puck meets him, she finds he is **"a dark-haired boy who is made of all corners."** Sean's storyline involves a jealous and vengeful beta-male attempting to best him with capturing and training the horses, not one of my favorite plots. Beta's actions perhaps goes over the top for the justification we are given.

I appreciated the extent to which the two voices are distinct in telling their stories. It's fascinating when they meet some of the same people, each describing and interacting with them in their own style. Puck is clearly younger, both developmentally and emotionally, but she's trying hard to grow up: **"I hope he doesn't, because my character's improved a lot since then. Nowadays I would've only *thought* the spitting part instead of saying it to his face."**

One of the highlights of *The Scorpio Races* is the language. Deceptively simple language is used extremely well, creating atmosphere and character that stands out without cumbersome description. Even something as simple as Sean watching a man carving meat is described carefully: **"I am mesmerized by the utter unawareness of the entire process, the childlike pleasure Beech takes in a job ill done."** There's quite a few ugly occurrences in this book, but something about the prose makes it darkly beautiful: **"Padgett is beginning to look improbable; something about him is starting to look less like a man and more like meat."**

I enjoyed the uniqueness of the mystical element in the water horses and the mythology of the island. The mythology behind their return plays second fiddle, however, as the focus for Puck and Sean is on survival, and the options for emotional survival that winning will bring. I love the visual of the horses riding the crest of a wave onto the sand, but their bloodthirstiness and destruction thread through the book in a dark weave. Still, Stiefvater captures their swift beauty, **"she is down the beach like an osprey diving for a fish"** and creates sympathy for Sean's longing and love for his own water horse, Corr. Puck's faithful pony, ("*horse!*") Dove stands in sharp contrast to the barely bridled wildness of the water horses, and her willing and realistically drawn great heart is one of the soft pleasures of the story. **"She is my mare and my best friend,**

and I keep waiting for some thing bad to happen to her, because I love her too much."

Overall, and enjoyable read that I'd recommend. It's grim but not despairing; there's a gently developed love interest that rises beyond the constraints of most YA romances, and the main characters are unique, sincere people doing what they can.

Cross posted at <http://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2013/0...>

may ❁ says

Buddy reading this with ~~my queen, Em (rip)~~ my girl, *Empress* but they both have no chill so I'm going ahead and starting. :)

Maggie Stiefvater has built a world that I want to live in forever.

The Scorpio Races is a slightly mystical, slightly historic, all-around awesome tale narrated by our two main characters, Sean Kendrick and "Puck" Kate Connolly. Every November the Scorpio Races take place which is a race where riders must hold their water horses away from the siren waters long enough to cross the finish line. Sounds simple, but it's not. Many die and there is only one winter.

Sean Kendrick, (who is literally my everything) is a four-time winning champion at nineteen-years old. Sean is a mysterious, solemn young man who is known, but no one *knows*. Puck Connolly, on the other hand, finds herself in a situation where she *has* to ride in the dangerous races. So much is riding on both of their shoulders as the preparation for the races begins.

*"Not a jockey?" Holly says to me as I walk Miracle back into the yard.
"Just a horse lover," I reply.*

Never have I read a book so built and raw and real. Maggie has an incredible talent when it comes to writing. The world of Thisby that she slowly crafted is not just words on a paper but images and ideas and tastes and smells.

The characters, like everything else about the book, are not stereotypical, they are not obvious or obnoxious or common. They are hand-crafted and so so so *real*.

Also, Sean Kendrick is everything.

The thing about Maggie's books are that they are slow. They are slow like a burning flame that melts away the unknown to reveal the plot, the story, the characters, the romance, the friendships, the conflict, and the conclusion.

This book has burnt a special place in my heart.

Also, Finn. Finn Connolly is so damn precious. Someone please give him lots of machines and gears and all the November Cakes in the world.

*“There are moments that you'll remember for the rest of your life and there are moments that you **think** you'll remember for the rest of your life, and it's not often they turn out to be the same moment.”*

5 stars!!

Wendy Darling says

Killer water horses + Maggie Stiefvater. What could go wrong?

As it turns out, quite a lot. I feel just terrible writing this, and if you want to know just how much, it actually took me 4 months to make myself finish the book--partly because I wasn't engaged in the story, but also because I could sense that this wasn't going to be good reading experience. After the bruising my heart took with *Forever*, I really didn't want to write a second negative review for this author. But I'm afraid my disappointment continues.

The story centers around violent, flesh-eating water horses called *capall uisce* who are used in a race on the beach on the fictional island of Thisby every November. From clues dropped throughout the book, it seems that the events take place sometime during the 20th century, though not in present day, and the choice to be vague about the location and time work well for the backdrop of the story, particularly in setting up the hardscrabble life, antiquated attitudes, and the pressing need for money. Puck Connolly is hoping to win enough money to keep her parents' house. Sean Kendrick wants to win his fifth race so he can buy the horse he's come to love. The entire island is focused on the race, both out of fear of the unpredictable water horses and out of desire for the material gains it may bring.

I love the concept of this story, and some of the writing is very evocative. Unfortunately, the framework and plotting feel very loose to me, as characters wander in and out of scene to have meaningful conversations with one another, to posture and bluff, and to strain for glimpses of people or horses throughout much of the story, all without a whole lot of substantial action to back them up. It takes a loooong time to set up Puck's entering the race with an ordinary mare, and a loooooong time for the two main characters to meet. While I'm not a fan of characters who swoon all over each other as soon as they meet, I'm also not a fan of reading hundreds of pages in which not very much happens at all. Well, there are a number of violent deaths of both human and horse randomly inserted into the story, but few of them were particularly affecting to me, as there was so little time setting them up or dealing with the aftermath that none of them felt particularly real.

Aside from lack of action, however, I also had a number of issues with the writing. I think too many authors use alternating perspectives these days, and it becomes a problem when the second POV adds little to the narrative and when the two voices sound so very similar. I had to flip back several times to figure out who was actually speaking, since they're both mucking around with horses and entering races and butting up against one obstacle or another. Add to this an unfortunate tendency to repeatedly use both first and last name when referring to a character we've known forever (as late as on the second to last page), chapters that

are often too short, chapters that too often end on heavily meaningful statements, an incredibly annoying insertion of a name that sticks out like a sore thumb, and it all becomes a pretty frustrating reading experience. My biggest issue, though, is that so much of this just did not resonate emotionally with me. There are plenty of justifications on paper for why Puck stubbornly defies tradition and why there is sabotage and so on and so forth, but...I just didn't believe in it all enough to care. And being that I was willing to believe in water horses that kill people for no reason whatsoever, that's really saying something.

All in all, there wasn't enough here to keep my interest, though I know that many of my fellow Stiefvater fans have enjoyed it. *Shiver* is still one of my favorite books of all time, but I've yet to read another book by this author that comes close to living up to it. Will I keep looking for a Maggie book that thrills me and moves me to the same degree? Sure I will. But with 380 pages of build-up, 12 pages of the actual race, and 12 pages of wrap-up, *The Scorpio Races* certainly isn't it.

**Coming back later to edit this review and to insert more specific examples and quotes, but I wanted to get my thoughts down before I let the review drag out for as long as my reading experience did!

Lora says

I am seriously excited for this. As excited as this kitten, in fact.

Em says

"It is the first day of November and so, today, someone will die."

With these haunting words laid out like a feast of uncertainty and doom, Maggie Stiefvater launches a new telling of an old tale inspired by elements of Celtic mythology, legends of the water horses, and her own imagination.

And nothing had ever been more beautiful, or fearsome, or bizarre.

So, what's this book about?

Each October, dread settles over the island of Thisby, as The Scorpio sea throws *capaill uisce*—commonly known as water horses—onto its shore, and a hint of fear mingles with the ocean breeze as the dreamlike unreality of such delectable creatures warries with the gruesome truth of their deadly nature. Every first of November—a date bound to loom large in the landscape of the islanders' mind—the Scorpio Races are held, and young men compete in a beachfront race to the death astride the *capaill uisce*, with such longing in them, all bound up in hesitancy, as though they yearned for connection, but the mounts didn't reciprocate their desires.

Sean Kendrick has carved his life out of the land of sea and sand and fatal, beautiful horses. Four-years running champion of The Scorpio Races, he is locally reputed as the best *capaill uisce* trainer, but he remains bound to the wealthy Malverns for whom he works as a stable hand. Of all the things Sean Kendrick has conjured in years of yearning for an independent life, buying the right to his water-horse stallion, *Corr*, was a

thing he only folded inside his heart, until he was assailed anew by the brew of feelings that had churned in him at the terrible clear-eyed certainty that it was *now or never*.

Katherine “Puck” Donnelly becomes the first woman to ever compete in the Scorpio Races, rolling the dice on her own survival for her family’s sake, which had seemed—after her eldest brother decided to move to the mainland and abandon her alongside her younger brother—to be drifting away from each other like untethered boats in the mercy of the tides. Signing up with her simple land mare, Puck knows that her chances are slim but she was so far down this path that to turn around would be to face a howling, dark tunnel with nothing at its end. And with that realization, Puck feels it take root within her, this *purpose*, as though speaking it gave it the light it needed to grow.

Puck is a counterpoint to Sean, both of them forged the horrific day they’ve been orphaned by the *capaill uisce*, both of them saddled with the determination to win the race, both of them creatures riddled with empty spaces that swelled and hurt with the same species of hope: fragile and sullied by fear and uncertainty. **But there could be only one winner.** So is it possible that all their jagged edges might fit together like puzzle pieces, or would they look to each other for the faith they kept between them, and begin to find only doom instead?

*“I say, ‘I will not be your weakness, Sean Kendrick.’
Now he looks at me. He says, very softly, ‘It’s late for that, Puck.’”*

While the world that Stiefvater builds here is thinly sketched, formed only roughly with a few shadows here and there, like wisps of smoke, it’s *tantalizing* rather than incomplete, and it’s more than enough to leave the vibrant suggestion of magic. *The Scorpio Races*, ultimately, is a set of brilliant moments woven together with a sure hand, and structured around a simple plot that illuminates, with rich prose and richer structure, a set of very real, very damaged, very hopeful characters learning the courage it takes to reveal their authentic selves to each other and to the world.

This is the kind of story that circles around you two, three times before drawing you in to an oddly poetic tale of magic and passion, desire and longing. It’s so easy to let your mind relax into the fantasy of it, and let the familiarity of Stiefvater’s storytelling and characterization wear away all the sharp, startling edges of a novel world, and an even more unfamiliar myth.

I loved every minute of it.

I also love Sean and Puck so much I wish I could put them in a giant envelope and mail them away from all the bad guys.

From the beginning, they feel like characters you’ve known for years. It’s not that they’re tropes—far from it—but Stiefvater is just so deft at crafting characters that feel fully fleshed-out and more real than reflections in a mirror. There was so much in them, a lifetime’s worth of feeling and yearning—many lifetimes’ worth—concentrated into a single moment at the end, and it made reading this book feel like being locked out of a room while someone you love is trapped inside with unknowable terrors. I love how Puck fought with impressive assertiveness everyone who belittled her for imagining she could possibly have had the bad taste to compete in a sport “designated for men”, and how Sean fought for his right to claim Corr with every scrap of will and had none left over for meekness.

But as much as I love them individually, collectively they just...*set ablaze* the entire story. There is so much else going on in their lives—hellish, heavenly and in-between—but together, they have a way of being

untouchable, of being above, peering down at the rest of the islanders from some lofty place they made from their ragged hearts and every moment of peace they stole from the jaws of chaos. I love how they were both rooting out darkness in each other: desire and faith they'd never imagined themselves capable of, and how the stone foundation of their romance was a deep love found in companionship and mutual respect. It wasn't something they eagerly sought, it just came to them naturally, when it was time, and it was just so [clutches chest] so *beautiful*.

I don't how else to say **"I love this book so much"** and make you eager to read it, but I'll say this: if I could just steal a moment from this story—the breeze scented with the last dying gasp of winter and tracing across closed eyelids, the ground soft and sandy, the ocean rocking against the shore, the freedom and these moments of being *"so, so alive"* on a horse's back ripping through the wind—and exist in it forever, I would be so content.

BLOG | TWITTER | INSTAGRAM | TUMBLR

Robin (Bridge Four) says

Kindle Daily deal for \$1.99 10Sept17

Buddy Read starting Feb 15, 2015 with Brandi, Nicholas, Tandie, Sophie, D G, Athena Shardbearer, Kerry, Mich, AshleyR, Jessica and Michelle at Buddies Books and Baubles

Steve West has one of the sexiest voices ever. What a great time I had listening to this story all over again. Thanks buddy readers for a really fun reread of a story I enjoy.

Original Review:

4.5 Stars

"I didn't know," I start truthfully, "that it was the hard way when I started on it."

I've have never given a recommendation to specifically read or listen to book but I think for this one I will. I have found that the writing style of Maggie Stiefvater, it is slower and eloquent, lends itself better to being spoken aloud than reading. I don't think I would have liked this book nearly as much had I read it. I feel the same way about Raven Boys also by Maggie and anything written by Lani Taylor. The audio version of the book has two different voices to relay the alternating POV of Kate (Puck) and Sean. Both narrators did an exceptional job with the cadence of the story and delivery of emotion. One of the best audiobooks I've listened to.

"My mother always said that I was born out of a bottle of vinegar instead of born from a womb and that she and my father bathed me in sugar for three days to wash it off. I try to behave, but I always go back to the vinegar."

This is not your typical YA book where there is always a lot of action happening and a faster pace. It takes some time for the story to get moving but I immediately liked the characters. Both are underdogs in their own way. Puck has lost both her parents and needs to win the purse for her family. Sean needs to win to be able to buy the waterhorse he loves and freedom for them both. Both have a set of obstacles to overcome and it could have worked out that they would end up enemies as competitors but remarkably they become

friends.

“Where will you and Corr be?” I ask.

Sean presses two fingers along the edge of the counter, sweeping crumbs into a pile. I notice that his fingers are permanently dirt-stained like mine. He says, “Right next to you and Dove.”

I stare at him. “You can’t risk not winning. Not because of me.”

Sean doesn’t lift his eyes from the counter. “We make our move when you make yours. You on the inside, me on the outside. Corr can come from the middle of the pack; he’s done it before. It’s one side you won’t have to worry about.”

I say, “I will not be your weakness, Sean Kendrick.”

Now he looks at me. He says, very softly, “It’s late for that, Puck.”

The race is fraught with danger, even the training is dangerous. The Capll uisce (waterhorses) are fierce and not to be trusted. There are some heart stopping events happening throughout the book but for the most part it is about the two people trying to get by with what they have been given and falling unexpectedly in love along the way. The romance however is very far from the front of the story. It is more about the Island, which is a character all of its own, as well as the sea and the Capall uisce. I was fascinated by the descriptions of this harsh Island world and the ferocious love that both Puck and Sean feel for somewhere that has taken so much from both of them.

The actual race isn’t until the very end of the book and doesn’t take long. Much like an actual horse race a lot of banter before and then it is over in the blink of an eye. I really didn’t want it to end, I wanted to see if Holly came back in a year and his predictions were true. I wanted to stay with Puck and Sean and Finn even after the ending. The very ending was unexpected and beautiful, I teared up a little as I thought that it was a great example of love and sacrifice.

Kainat ?HUFFLEPUFF & PROUD? says

“Vices were only vices

when looked at through the frame of society.”

Another remarkable story delivered by Maggie Stiefvater, there is a surprise!

I have a strange relationship with Maggie's characters. I don't just love Ronan Lynch. I love everything that comes with him. I love Chainsaw like it's my pet. I'm protective of his BMW like it's my adopted child. Hell, i even love his boyfriend like i'm his mother. Same goes here: I don't just like Kate and Sean, it's just everything! I'm not sure i can explain it.

Full review to come soon.

Choko says

***** 4.75 *****

A Buddy Read with the MacHalo Freaks, because mythical blood-thirsty Water Horses are awesome!!!

Let me start by saying that very few authors are capable of affecting me emotionally the way Maggie Stiefvater does. Her prose is magic! I am not just spouting words here. Her writing hits somewhere in the vicinity of my soul and I can't get away unscathed. She wounds with her beautiful prose, enchants with her lyrical cadence of melody made of letters, and heals with the hope for salvation, as unlikely as it might seem... I have never been able to pick up a book of hers and put it down without feeling as if my mind is straddling both worlds - the real one and the one Maggie weaves us in. That is not to say that her work is perfect. It isn't and I am kind of glad for it, since it makes her more human and having read some of her interviews, if she reaches that panicle of perfection, she might decide she is over with writing and go on to music or any of the other talents G-d has gifted her with... I am glad to say, she has to keep on trying by giving us more and more of her enchanting stories...

"... "Tell me what to wish for." Tell me what to ask the sea for."

"To be happy. Happiness."

"I don't think such a thing is had on Thisby. And if it is, I don't know how you would keep it."..."

The Scorpio Races is not what the book is really about. They are just the event the author has chosen in order to show us the lives of the people on the Island of Thisby, a harsh and economically depressed place, with little hope for the locals, with the youth finding their way either away to the main land, or often killed by the creatures that make the Island unique among any others... The **capaill uisce**, the mythical Water Horses which come to the beach every November and ride, taking down people as well as animals for their kills, and going back to the sea. Some know those as Kelpies and know how these horses born of mythology can be awe inspiring as well as blood-curdling terrifying. They are natural predators and their allure is what keeps the brave, sea-loving souls living on the Island, brings the tourists in November, which is the core of the local economy, and culls those who underestimate their viciousness, leaving behind widows, widowers, and many orphans.

"... "The water is still high and brown and murky with the memory of the storm, so if there's something below it, I won't know it. But that's part of this, the not knowing. The surrender to the possibilities beneath the surface. It wasn't the ocean that killed my father, in the end."..."

Puck and her brothers are just this type of orphans. She is only 17, but their parents were killed by the water horses years ago, leaving her, her older brother Gabe and her younger brother Finn to fend for themselves. The only thing she possess is her mare Dove and she cares for her as best as she can. Puck loves the island and wants to find a way to keep her life there. However, her older brother has been deeply disillusioned and is headed out, away from everything this Island represents for him, to the Mainland, promise of work and hope for the future. Puck is also faced with losing the house and in a move of desperation she enters the Scorpio Races, a race made for the **capaill uisce**, while Dove is just a regular mare. The odds are against her, the tradition of the islanders are against her, and her gender is against her, let alone that most of the racing horses are going to look upon Dove as a meal, not a competitor. But as scared and worried as she is, Puck is not backing down and her fiery personality jumps off the page, endearing her to the reader with her strength and vulnerability.

"... "My mother always said that I was born out of a bottle of vinegar instead of born from a womb and that she and my father bathed me in sugar for three days to wash it off. I try to behave, but I always go back to the vinegar."..."

Sean Kendrick is also a **capaill uisce** orphan, a witness to the death of his father while participating in one of those Scorpio Races. But just as his father before him, the salt of the sea and the wild beauty of the Water Horses calls to Sean's blood and makes him a part of the ecosystem of the island, addicted to the uncertainty and daily fight for survival. He is only 19 and already has won the race four out of six times. He races on Corr, a Water Horse Stallion, with whom he has a deep bond, a connection deeper than any he has known.

He has been trying to bur Corr off of his employer, the rich Horse Yard and stables owner and biggest businessman on the Island. However, the dude keeps Corr over Sean's head as a reason to keep him working for him, since Sean is irreplaceable when it comes to working with the water beasts. He captures them, trains them and rides them, as well as gentles them enough to be ridden by others. He is an expert in a trade known by less than a handful and his boss knows it. But so does the rich dude's son, who is jealous and kindles a deep hatred and need to bring Sean down. However, if he wins the race this year, Sean will get the opportunity to finally buy his beloved Stallion. But that was before he met Puck...

"...“Does anyone ask you why you stay, Sean Kendrick?”

"They do."

"And why do you?"

"The sky and the sand and the sea and Corr.””..."

In some way the two of them, Sean and Puck, are the heart of the Island. They and those like them keep Thisby alive and its traditions with it. No one knows why the Water Horses have chosen this Island to gather on, no one knows much about them at all. But they show and victimize, as well as personify the image of this otherwise poverty-stricken island... As much as the locals hate the death the **capaill uisce** leave behind, they are also beholden for their economic existence to them, as well as defining their cultural uniqueness. The attempts of the locals to domesticate those wild beasts are more successful the farther away they are from the shore, since the Sea speaks and calls to them, making them wild with yearning for it, and able to tear all that stands between them and the water apart. However, they would not leave this island, thus not existing anywhere but there... I was mesmerized by their duality of nature!!!

"...“Tell me what it's like. The race.”

"What it's like is a battle. A mess of horses and men and blood. The fastest and strongest of what is left from two weeks of preparation on the sand. It's the surf in your face, the deadly magic of November on your skin, the Scorpio drums in the place of your heartbeat. It's speed, if you're lucky. It's life and it's death or it's both, and there's nothing like it.” ”..."

This story is slow, but so deeply emotional, it is worth every sentence with which it unfolds in front of us. It has Fantastic Water Horses, but it is raw and real as any Stainbeck I have ever read, and just as impactful in its own way. The beauty of both strengths and weaknesses of the human spirit are exposed with the gorgeous prose the author weaves around as a spell. Maggie's goal of the readers feeling like they have their toes in the sand and the chill wind of November pelting the salt of the sea into their skin, is achieved to a maximum and as I finished the story, I felt grief at losing those almost tactile sensations... If I was to ask for anything more, it would be to have more of this world, more about our characters and much, much more of Corr and Dove:):):)

"...“It's easy to convince men to love you, Puck. All you have to do is be a mountain they have to climb or a poem they don't understand. Something that makes them feel strong or clever. It's why they love the ocean.””..."

I love this quote!!!!!!

Now I wish you all Happy Reading and may you always find what you need in the pages of a Good Book!!!

C.G. Drews says

--> REREAD #3, NOVEMBER 2017

So I purely reread this for the aesthetic of NOVEMBER 1st. Go me. I am shallow and great. **And also I love this book so bloody much it actually hurts my heart.** I am hopelessly and utterly in love with Sean and Corr and Thisby and every word choice is so PERFECT that it melts me.

Notable 3rd Read Thoughts:

- can Holly pls adopt Sean
- Puck keeps trying to be less vinegar but she should be all the vinegar
- 99% sure Finn has OCD and it is such a good rep
- Gabe and Tommy Falks are my new ship don't @ me
- SEAN FREAKING KENDRICK <3 <3
- also shout out to the fact that this is truly the best romance of life and Sean and Puck like barely have to hold hands or kiss to be the most beautiful relationship of the world
- also why can't I have more
- sean tho
- i need to go sit down i have emotions

--> **REREAD #2, JUNE 2016**

I CANNOT EVEN POSSIBLY REMEMBER HOW TO WORD RIGHT NOW PEOPLE. This book means *so very much to me*. You know those books that are just *yours* for some reason? This one = mine. It started me on YA. I read it after The Hunger Games and there was noooo going back afterwards. YA OBSESSION HERE WE COME. Not to mention my deep eternally wildly fangirling permanent adoration of *all things* Stiefvater. She is my most favourite author of the universe. Why? **THIS IS WHY.** Flawless books of utter writing perfection and characters that steal your heart. omg. **I honestly...I'm just a mess of feelings.**

Re-reading this was like coming home to old friends. It's been 4 years since I read it. I FORGOT SO MUCH. I had like 9 anxieties reading it *even though I'd already read it*. **I fell hopelessly back in love with Sean Kendrick.** It's the quietness. I LOVE QUIETNESS. Sean says 1 word where everyone says 6. Me toooooo. Or else I say 0 words where everyone says 6 and wait until they're definitely listening to talk. His non-talking-ness just resonated with me. aGAIN. And **Puck's vinegar and sugar temperament I just love endlessly.** ALSO FINN; the precious. He is probably one of the bestly written characters with **OCD I've ever read...**especially in a fantasy!! (I think Maggie Stiefvater has OCD, right? So you can tell this is just crafted so beautifully and thoughtfully.) (I just wish I knew how old he was, dangit. I just KEEP WONDERING. I'm going to say 13 maybe?)

ALSO I THINK I CRIED. Because *beautiful words* and just the way Thisby always catches my heart so I KINDA CAN'T BREATHE BECAUSE I LOVE IT ALL SO MUCH.

I need more stars to give this book. MORE. STARS.

(Also there's a whole chapter set in a bakery, FYI.)

Needless to say: this is one of my all time favourite books of the universe. I just...I JUST CAN'T SUM IT UP OKAY?!? My heart fractured so. many. times. and the last chapter actually...I just...ajfdklasfdjakldj. **If you haven't ever read a Stiefvater book: START HERE.** I just want to HUG IT and keep it and love it forever. OKAY I'LL STOP GUSHING BUT OMG THIS BOOK MEANS THE WORLD TO ME.

(**Note:** the audiobook is freaking fantastic by the way. BEST choice for the re-read. The actors are impeccable and Sean's voice = <3333 PLUS it has music on their by Maggie Stiefvater!! And this EPIC author's note about the behind-the-scenes of her building Thisby and AFJDADSKALD I LOVED THE

AUDIO.)

***** ORIGINALLY 2012 *****

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

They came in with the tide. The moon illuminated long lines of froth as the waves gathered and gathered and gathered offshore, and when they finally broke on the sand, the *capaill uisce* tumbled onto the shore with them. The horses pulled their heads up with effort, trying to break free from the salt water.

I had to restrain the squealing, fangirly Maja and shove her in the closet so that the adult, critical Maja can sit and write this review. Believe me, it's better this way.

With *The Scorpio Races*, Maggie Stiefvater has finally earned my complete trust. I promise never to doubt her again. I've read four of her books so far and I gave all four of them five stars. If there was ever an author who deserved my wholehearted support, it's her. She is an artist above all else, and if that alone isn't enough, here's another reason for my respect:

*Other writers might have different priorities, but for me, the chief goal of my novels is not plot or premise or pacing, but to evoke a certain feeling. **I will sacrifice most anything in order to change someone's mood in a certain way.** I can't do that without careful navigation of metaphor and character development.*

(From Ms. Stiefvater's blog post)

But I'll limit my praise to *The Scorpio Races* for now:

This time, Stiefvater flirted a little more seriously with the fantasy genre and created an amazingly gripping story.

People on the fictional island Thisby live and breathe for one thing and one thing alone: wild and bloodthirsty water horses, the *capaill uisce*. They are either directly involved in the races or they take care of tourists from the mainland. Even though the *Scorpio Races* are held only once a year, the heartbreak and the loss they inevitably bring are almost too big for one small island. People die in the races. They die because they are too slow, too vulnerable or too ready to trust the monsters they are riding on. The *capaill uisce* may be stunningly beautiful, but all you have to do is turn your back on them for one short second, and their teeth will already be deep inside your flesh.

It takes everything in me not to whimper. The creature is black as peat at midnight, and its lips are pulled back into a fearsome grin. The ears are long and wickedly pointed toward each other, less like a horse and more like a demon. They remind me of shark egg pouches. The nostrils are long and thin to keep the sea out. Eyes black and slick: a fish's eyes.

It still stinks like the ocean. Like low tide and things caught on rock. It's barely a horse.

It's hungry.

Kate "Puck" Connolly and her two brothers lost their parents when a bloodthirsty *capaill uisce* attacked them on the sea. Ever since, the three of them survive by fixing things for other people, making teapots, helping in the local store and doing anything at all to put some butter and flour in their mostly empty pantry. But when the oldest brother, Gabe, the only one with a steady job, decides to leave the island, and Benjamin Malvern threatens to take their house away, Puck sees no other choice but to join the dangerous race in order to save her house, and maybe even prevent her brother from leaving.

Sean Kendrick lost his mother to the mainland and his father in the race. Enormous talent and love for the *capaill uisce* made it possible for him to survive on the island, working for Benjamin Malvern and his obnoxious son Mutt. Sean has won the races four out of six times. He has everyone's respect and a decent amount of money saved. The only thing stopping him from leaving the Malverns is Corr, the *capall uisce* that is Sean's only family. This year more than ever Sean has to win the races because if he wins, Benjamin Malvern will finally sell him Corr, thus setting them both free.

Make no mistake: even though this story is told from two alternating POVs and it seemingly focuses on Sean and Puck, it's really a story about the water horses. They are what matters, Sean and Puck are just tour guides. If you're looking for romance, you could end up disappointed. It is present, but the emphasis is on other things this time. The writing is atmospheric and it feels like a thick mist, albeit one you're in no hurry to get out of. The island itself is a character: people, mentality and everyday struggles they face. The rich American buyer, George Holly, is there to remind us exactly how different the island people are.

Please follow the link above to find out more about Stiefvater's writing priorities. She is one amazing lady and she just keeps proving her worth over and over again with every new word she writes.
