



# A Wild Light

*Marjorie M. Liu*

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**A Wild Light** Marjorie M. Liu

**View our feature on Marjorie Liu's *A Wild Light*.** For too long Maxine Kiss has felt an inexplicable darkness inside her—a force she channels into hunting the demons bent on destroying the human race. But when she finds herself covered in blood and crouched beside her grandfather's dead body with no memory of what happened, Maxine begins to fear that the darkness has finally consumed her.

## A Wild Light Details

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Author : Marjorie M. Liu

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## **From Reader Review A Wild Light for online ebook**

### **Melissa Hayden says**

It's Maxine's birthday. Her and the boys are on their way to perform their special ritual, no one knows of, to celebrate her birthday and the death of her mother ~ as they are the same day. Then off to her party with her family, even her thousand million year old Grandfather is excited to celebrate a birthday with his grand daughter. Zee warns Maxine there are whispers of troubles to come. Then, Maxine wakes the next morning before dawn feeling every fiber of herself exhausted and weak. Curled up on the floor and blood around her with the dead body beside her... With loss of memory and an empty feeling in her heart, Maxine needs to solve the mystery. Along with the loss of memory of how this person died, she had one important person erased from her memory... Why? All this with the weight of the failing veil on her as well.

This is another great installment to the Maxine Hunter Kiss series. Marjorie is great at starting a new book with the new story, mystery, and dropping you right into the plot. She adds in through this story history to refresh your memory of the past happenings and relationships, but she doesn't reiterate completely to bore you or retell the previous. She brings you in quickly to a new story and dedicates the time to it.

You don't have to read the previous two books to read this one, but I would say you should. You do get brief refreshers on what you need to know had happened to keep you up with the happenings. But I found them great memory joggers to remember the happenings in more details.

I enjoy this series with the strong character Maxine is and the boys at her sides. Maxine is also joined by a few other strong characters. Maxine is a character with weaknesses, and flaws, but she makes it through a stronger person. You get to watch Maxine grow more in this book, more in her own way other than what is expected of the Kiss women. Many of the characters of past come back in this book; Grant, Jack, Byron, Crazy Mary, and a few others.

You learn more of the scar under Maxine's ear, and her ancestor she resembles. I learned much more of Maxine, the boys, and all the great magical characters. I felt like more pieces of the puzzle of Maxine, her family, and the veil started to fall into place, pieces I didn't realize I was missing before.

I am glad to hear that Marjorie will be doing more books in this world with Maxine and the boys and I will be looking forward to them.

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### **Kt says**

It's Maxine's birthday and the anniversary of her mother's death. Before going to her birthday party, Maxine and the boys remember her mother by killing a demon. The party goes off great despite the heavy heart Maxine has. However, when she wakes up the next morning next to her grandfather Jack's body, covered in blood and missing most of her memories, she goes into utter shock. But the biggest shock is the man named Grant who tells her he is her lover yet she has not one single memory of him. With everyone gunning for her and Grant she must figure out what happened to Jack quickly before someone finally succeeds in destroying them.

Ah, finally things are starting to become a lot clearer. If you've read my reviews on the previous books, you know just how frustrated I was. I was able to enjoy this book much more now that so many questions have been answered. I really loved how even though Maxine has a destiny, it isn't set in stone. She has the ability to shape which direction the power takes as it is her heart that controls it. It seems that "good heart" her mother worked so hard to raise Maxine with, will finally show its real importance.

Although parts of this book were heartbreaking, I think the bad moments between Maxine and Grant will only strengthen them. It will just take some time. The relationship between Maxine and her grandfather really seemed to solidify in this book. I'm glad the two of them are finally starting to trust each other and that he is learning from his mistakes, even if it has taken him thousands of years to do so. The boys were even more adorable in this book, and I love the amazingly strong bond they have with Maxine, and now Grant as well. If there was one thing I could say that would make the entire series worth reading it would be those boys.

This book is extremely fast paced and now that so much has been revealed, the stakes have stepped up a major notch. I was on the edge of my seat for most of this book, and I enjoyed every minute of it. I'm really happy with the "new" direction the series is taking even if the revelations have been completely shocking. Maxine and the boys are such amazing characters that have great strength despite their flaws. I am eager to see where their story goes.

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### **Keikii Eats Books says**

83 points/100 (4.25 stars/5) [revised from 5]

*After celebrating her birthday, Maxine wakes up with no memories of the past night or of Grant, and her grandfather is dead on her floor. She has to figure out what is going on, why she can't remember anything, and what to do from here.*

Damn do I enjoy reading this, and I'm not 100% certain why (I suspect it is because I love the relationship between Maxine and Grant). Not a whole lot happens in this book: there is no one big bad guy to defeat, there is no big event that has to happen. Actually, most of this book was pure infodump. Yet, even still, I enjoyed reading it. Captivated by it.

Yes, the plot was thin in this book. There was no real conclusion to the book, in my opinion. No real reason for this book having to exist at all. But, damn did it finally answer a hell of a lot of questions that needed answering. Sure, it also introduced some new elements to the world, new characters, new ideas. Yes, it was basically a long, 80k word long info dump. But hell, we really, really needed that information that was being hidden from us. It was less confusing because there was less to be confused about, but more enjoyable for it. There were still moments of "wait what just happened??" in this book, but it was way, way less.

I really liked Maxine in this book. I really, really hate random memory losses in books. It comes up frequently enough that I actually have a hatred of the plot device. However, I still managed to like Maxine this book. Even if she was utterly terrified of Grant most of this book. It really shows just what a bond these two characters have.

Because I don't have much more else to say about this specific book, I'll take this time to talk about the secondary characters. They're awesome. I love her grandfather, even though he is a part of the problem with holding back information. He is such a cool character, even though he does tend to get on my nerves. I love Byron, he is so innocent and needing help, and Maxine and Grant instantly step in to act as parents to him. I truly love that they already feel like parents already. Maxine already felt like half a parent to her demon family, Zee and the boys (who are absolutely amazing additions to this series. If I only ever remember one thing about this series, it will always be those boys). But, Byron adds more. Lastly there is Mary who is just hilarious, even if she is still confusing now.

I really enjoyed reading this book. Has its problems, but personally enjoyable.

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## **Kelly says**

Reading the Hunter Kiss series is rather like having a strange but wonderful dream. You're sometimes confused about exactly what is happening and why, but the vistas are breathtaking, the emotions are intense, and when you wake up, the only words that come to mind are "What a ride!"

In the hands of a lesser author, confusion can be a dealbreaker that leads to the book hitting the wall. But Marjorie M. Liu is not a lesser author. Her poetic prose and beautifully drawn character relationships keep you reading even when you — and Maxine — aren't quite sure of what's going on.

*A Wild Light* begins with the murder of Maxine's grandfather, Jack. Maxine wakes to find Jack dead, and it appears that he has been killed with a blade that only Maxine can safely wield. Maxine has no memory of the murder, or of her boyfriend Grant. We follow Maxine as she tries to solve Jack's murder and as Grant does his best to piece their relationship back together. At about the halfway point, *A Wild Light* goes from good to unputdownable when Liu drops a huge bombshell about the true nature of Maxine and of the "boys," her five guardian demons. We also get some tantalizing glimpses of Maxine's mysterious father.

Maxine faces some tough decisions that will determine the kind of person she will be. She is tempted by unimaginable power. Pitted against that is love: not just the romantic variety (though Maxine and Grant are one of my favorite UF couples) but also Maxine's love for the boys, her late mother, Jack, and her friends at the Coop.

The phrase "a wild light" is used twice, once to describe something terrifying, the second time to describe something sublime. I think this juxtaposition is absolutely intentional on Liu's part.

I recommend this novel, and the Hunter Kiss series in general, to readers looking for something a little different in urban fantasy. If you like sumptuous prose and lots of symbolism and metaphor, and if you don't mind the occasional moment of confusion, this is the series for you.

This review originally published at Fantasy Literature

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## **Emily says**

The Hunter Kiss series has been on my list of books to read for a long time, but, like so many other things,

has fallen to the wayside. Having the opportunity to review *A Wild Light* definitely jumped my attention and upon finishing this book I immediately requested the other two books currently released from the library, rendering my "no library books" pledge pretty much in tatters.

Maxine Kiss is a demon hunter with some seriously badass body armor- tattoos that assume forms at night and then stand between her and peril. Maxine is immortal during the day and defended by her armor beings at night, and the existence of a demon hunter is certainly a tough one, a fact of which Maxine is reminded when she finds her grandfather, Jack, murdered, and her own memories erased and in tatters. These include the memories of Grant, the love of her life; thankfully he doesn't give up on her and instead tries to unravel the mystery of just what the hell happened while Maxine was unconscious.

What happens next is a deeper exploration of the supernatural goings-on in Maxine's world. There are forces at work that even she never anticipated; history and ancestry play a huge role in determining her courses of action. Furthermore, Maxine has to become comfortable with herself and who and what she is again; Maxine is a lot of things but a stone cold killer is not among them.

This story was certainly enjoyable all on its own, but I think the experience will definitely be enhanced by reading the first two books in the series first. I fully plan on coming back to *A Wild Light* after I've read the first two installments for a deeper understanding of all the factors that are in play. If you're looking for an introduction to the series then you certainly won't go wrong here; be aware, though, that this is a connected series and not a sequence of independent novels, so starting at the beginning wouldn't be a bad idea either. You win either way!

Overall Grade: A-

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### **Khalia Hades says**

I wish sometimes that we could give books 6 stars. There are some books that are better, deserve an outstanding - even more than I loved it. This is one of them.

This is the third full length novel in the Hunter Kiss series. It's intense. It's Lyrical. It's poetic horror and dark fantasy. It's great.

Maxine Kiss wakes up in a room, feeling like something is wrong. Slowly, things come to her, the smell in the room, the dread feeling, then she sees her grandfather. He's dead. Her demon protector "boys" are all there and behaving erratically - stressed out. They don't remember or won't tell her what happened. She doesn't remember what happened. Then someone walks in that she doesn't recognize...

That's just the beginning (not a spoiler since the back of the book tells you this happened). This is an amazing, intense wonderfully written addition to the Hunter Kiss series. If you've read the other two books, you will recognize the returning characters. Byron, Jack, Killy, Father Lawrence, Mary, Grant.....and you will meet some compelling, dark characters.

There are answers to questions raised in the first two books. But...more is going to happen. I look forward to reading more of these novels.

It's possible to read this book and enjoy it if you haven't read the first two - but it's better to read them in order. Ms Liu gives you just enough information in each book that you can read it as a single book, yet I don't feel like I'm suffering from information overload, aka info-dumps.

The veil is weakening even more, more things are escaping the veil prison. Maxine is suffering some memory loss. The ring that we are introduced to in Iron Hunt grows - traveling up her wrist and becoming a little bit elaborate. New characters are introduced and it's not apparent if they're trustworthy - but there is a bit of help from them.

Grant learns some more of his past, as does Maxine. Maxine in fact, learns a lot in this novel.

Well worth the money to buy, a definite keeper. If you haven't read the first two books, Iron Hunt and Darkness Calls, I recommend them highly.

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## **Adam Duclos says**

I enjoyed reading the book, but I was disappointed by the new track of the storyline, as well as the propensity of the author to have every serious discussion where the main character is about to gain vital information take forever. The informant, no matter who it is, hems and haws for paragraphs on end, which in book time is invariably just long enough for some terrible event to interrupt them before whoever it is can spit out a simple sentence or two. Honestly, sometimes you just want to step into the book and slap these guys until they start talking again.

As for the plot points I had problems with, spoilers below.

### **SPOILERS**

This really seemed like a filler book to me. The first and second books both had nifty revelations, but in this one that took a back seat to setting up then next book.

In book one, we get introduced to Maxine, who is linked to five little demons that protect her as bodyguards at night and merge with her skin as super armor during the day. They hunt zombies, which are humans possessed by demons. We learn that the demons are really aliens, and most are trapped in a extradimensional prison created by other aliens, who at this point we assume are good guys. The 'good guy' aliens created 'wardens' to protect humanity, but all of them died out, leaving only Maxine's family line, passed from mother to daughter in an unbroken chain. The zombie demons are weak compared to the others, so they can enter the world and do their thing. We also learn that they are worried about Maxine because of some unknown property of hers that manifested when she was a little girl and scared the heck out of everyone. This book is cool because the whole situation is laid out for us, and things are not what they seem!

In the second book, we find that the 'good guy' aliens, the Aetar, are just as bad as the demons. Maxine's boyfriend Grant, a man who can alter people's outlook by singing, find out he's actually an 'original human', and his power makes him a 'lightbringer'. In this universe, the Aetar are energy beings existing as pure soul, and long ago they found the home world of these 'original' humans. They found out about the lightbringer's power, the power to not just change an outlook, but the very soul itself. The Aetar, being pure soul, freaked out and started a war to subjugate them. Grant was sent forward in time as a baby, so he avoided that, but we find out that the Aetar took those humans, destroyed their home world, and started altering them to suit their

every whim. They traveled by using a special 'labyrinth' that transported them through both time and space, so they could make their changes, drop a bunch off on a planet, the pop back thousands of years later to see how their experiments came out. Earth is one of those planets, and our lack of lightbringer powers is the proof that we aren't the originals. In the book, they actually have to fight off a rogue Aetar that was imprisoned along with the demons, and he was warping humans into monsters, but the coolest part was finding out that in a way, all of humanity (except for Grant and his crazy old bodyguard) had already suffered the same fate. Oh yeah, she also gets a cool magic ring that can manifest a magic sword, cover her with armor, and teleport her through space and time using the labyrinth, at the cost of slowly but irreversibly covering her body with living silver armor. Neat!

This book, however, doesn't get a revelation as good as the first two. We find out more about the power that lies within her, but not really enough to satisfy me. It turns out the army of demons are all different clans brought together by the 'reaper kings' even before their tussle 10000 years ago with the Aetar to fight an even tougher enemy. The reaper kings were the same five demons that are with Maxine, although at the time they possessed the power sleeping inside her, and they were the size of buildings instead of the size of teddy bears. The power is actually talking to Maxine now, and talking to others using her mouth, offering her easy ways to solve her problems if she'll just use the evil power. One of the Aetar slaves comes to earth and Grant turns her to their side, but Maxine finds out that the Aetar will probably show up soon, plus the former slave accidentally cracked open part of the demon prison, letting a bunch of them out.

So, now that she has access to this evil power, the demons thing she's their queen. She gives them some orders, but they don't follow them, instead going out and eating a bunch of people. She then bargains with them to make a new army following her, so they can fight the Aetar when they show up later. There is some other stuff that happens along the way... she finds out that her line was never a 'warden' like they thought, but was always a magic prison for the evil power, an even more important prison than the one holding the whole demon army (plus putting the former 'reaper kings' to work). Five thousand years ago, an ancestor of hers had access to the same evil power she did (it came to the surface for her too), only the other wardens tried to have her killed. She survived, escaped, then killed all the other wardens when she got back, and thats why there aren't any other wardens anymore. Neat, but not important to the story. Oh, and we found out in the first book that her grandfather was an Aetar inhabiting a human body, but now it seems her father was also less than completely human, and they end up describing both him and this other helpful demon the same way. So I guess her father may or may not be this demon that is the manifestation of the labyrinth they all use to get around. We don't know for sure, because Maxine never bothers to ask anyone in the book, and the way these books go, if you don't see it in the book, it never gets done. Its like their lives get put on hold between chapters, between books, etc.

Right, so we find out some unrelated info about an ancestor, she sets up future books by allying herself with brutal man killers, we find out that 'the boys' are the 'reaper kings', but they don't want to talk about it, and the power Maxine is harboring is scary and all, so scary that it could save the demon races against some threat way worse than the Aetar, but somehow couldn't do squat against the Aetar themselves. What?

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## **Carien says**

I am so in love with this series!

The books just keep getting better and better. This one is my favourite so far. It's emotionally intense,



suspenseful and totally awesome. Liu continues to amaze me with her world building, writing and characterisation. I must say this book had me worried about Maxine and her boys (Grant included) and I couldn't put the book down until I finished it. I'm now eagerly awaiting the next installment in this series and will be rereading the existing books as Liu got me totally addicted.

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### **Amanda says**

A Wild Light is the third novel in the Hunter's Kiss trilogy by Marjorie M. Liu, and concludes the ongoing story ARC concerning the veil being torn between the world of humans and the demon prison. Maxine Kiss wakes from a world of nightmares to discover the body of her grandfather next to her, covered in blood, and a man she doesn't recognise who tells her they are lovers. What follows takes Maxine to the very limits of her emotional resources as she discovers the secrets of her ancestors and tries to close the veil for good.

Strangely, this was my favourite of the trilogy. After reading the first two books and feeling generally underwhelmed and confused, I was not really looking forward to the third but wished to read it for the sake of completism. I'm glad I did. Although it wasn't great, it tackled some of my issues from the first two novels and presented a much more linear plotline.

My favourite part, by far (and has been my favourite all the way through), are the demons that inhabit Maxine's skin as tattoos during the hours of sunlight and become corporeal when the sun sets. Dek, Mal, Aaz, Raw and Zee are terrifying and cute in the very same moment – fabulously characterful as they hum Bon Jovi hits in Maxine's ears and eat cuddly teddy bears. Maxine's curious relationship with her 'boys' is the true highlight of the trilogy, and I was pleased to see more secrets concerning this being revealed in the course of 'A Wild Light'.

Marjorie M. Liu also deigned to explain more of the ongoing situation – dealing with Avatars, Wardens, demons and zombies. In The Iron Hunt and Darkness Calls, I found myself struggling to follow the events of the books – I understood that the veil was failing, but much of the detail was lost on me. In A Wild Light Liu recaps in a manner that illuminates many of the characters and situations so that my enjoyment was maintained through the whole novel.

My general impression of this book, and of the trilogy as a whole, is that it is written in stunning fashion but lacks a driving plot or any real tension. The concepts are wonderful – demons that live on the skin, zombie parasites feeding on pain – but they nestle in a trio of books that don't truly go anywhere. It is all style and no substance. Marjorie M. Liu's trilogy is beautiful but ultimately forgettable.

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### **Paranormalbites says**

When I was offered a copy of Marjorie M. Liu's A Wild Light for review I accepted without hesitation, even though I have not read any of Liu's previous work. I was aware of her strong reputation in the urban fantasy genre for her world building however and her books had been on my To Read list for some time so I was

excited to be given the opportunity.

A Wild Light is the third book in Liu's Hunter Kiss series. The series focuses on Maxine Kiss, a demon hunter who is herself host to five demons that she considers to be her family. If you have read any of my previous reviews you know that I value books that can stand on their own, even when they are part of a series, and because of this personal preference my first reaction to AWL was one of disappointment. I felt lost right from the beginning and had a difficult time getting into the book as there was no doubt that there was a great deal of back-story that seemed to be vital to understanding just who Maxine is and what it is that she does.

Had I purchased AWL on my own I would have been tempted to put it down less than a third of the way into the book. I stuck with it however, giving some latitude knowing that not every series can be read out of order. I am quite glad that I persisted as I was rewarded with what turned out to be an enjoyable read and I can't wait to pick up the first two books in the series.

The beginning of the book finds poor Maxine suffering from partial amnesia, believing that she may have killed her own grandfather. She is understandably guarded with those around her and is perplexed to find that she has no recall whatsoever of the man who claims to be her lover, Grant. As she struggles to piece together the events surrounding her grandfather's death she slowly begins recalling bits and pieces of her life with Grant, giving the reader glimpses of both of their personalities and their relationship.

While the story played out, it was the secondary characters of Mary, Jack and Maxine's demons, (a.k.a. The Boys), who grew on me first. By the time that minor character Rex referred to Mary while talking to Maxine, "[She] told me to stand guard while she went to go cut a motherfucker", I was hooked! The secondary characters provided humor with their respective eccentricities while a nice love story came into focus for Maxine and Grant. Add in the assorted other demons (a slew of other-worldly races who may or may not be evil) and zombies (individuals who are possessed by assorted demons but not dead), along with a pending apocalyptic demon invasion and there is plenty of action to sweep the reader away into Maxine's world.

All in all, I found A Wild Light to be an entertaining read. Maxine's world is a fascinating one and I look forward to reading The Iron Hunt and Darkness Calls, the first two books in the Hunter Kiss series, to learn more about it. I also look forward to getting to know Grant better as a character as he seems to be both tender and strong at the same time and I can imagine that he just might steal a woman's heart.

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## Julia says

Review courtesy of All Things Urban Fantasy.

My experience to date with the *Hunter Kiss* series has been hit or miss. While I greatly enjoyed HUNTER KISS and THE IRON HUNT, I fought to finish DARKNESS COMES over a period of several weeks. Perhaps exacerbated by how often I put it down and picked it up, I found the book confusing and I had a hard time keeping track of Maxine's progress. In preparation for this review, I reread all the *Hunter Kiss* short stories and books. When I reread DARKNESS COMES over the course of a weekend, it became apparent to me that the confusion I had experienced on my previous reading was a critical part of the story. Maxine herself is being thrust into a confusing swirl of multi-dimensional events and time periods, and Marjorie Liu manages to convey those emotions without losing the reader entirely. I'm glad I revisited DARKNESS COMES, if only because it further heightened my enjoyment of the book that followed. **A WILD LIGHT** is

one of my favorite books this year, and the entire *Hunter Kiss* series has been bumped up to my top ten list.

As stated in the book description above, Chapter 2 of **A WILD LIGHT** opens with Maxine standing over the corpse of her grandfather with no recollection of what took place. Furthermore, it is soon revealed that she has no memories of Grant, the love of her life. While amnesia gambits are among my least favorite literary devices (Why not just tell the reader you want a “do over” on your back-story?), in Liu’s hands this opening unfolds to become an integral part of two of my favorite facets of the book, the first being the long overdue courtship between Maxine and Grant.

Maxine’s relationship with Grant Cooperon takes place largely “off camera.” I saw their beginnings in the short story *Hunter Kiss*, but their attraction up until this point in the series has a largely “trust me, we’re made for each other” flavor. Their relationship has a heavy foundation in their respective magical natures, which makes it less easy for me to relate to as a reader. With amnesia, Maxine reacts to Grant in ways both believable and original. In the “believable” category, there is a certain echo of their first meeting, the distrust and attraction rolled into one. One of my favorite details is Maxine’s reaction to Grant’s eyes, two parts attraction and one part “Dude, stop staring at me.” We also get to enjoy aspects of their life together as Maxine experiences them for the first time, all over again. The way her sweet boys lean against Grant’s legs for greetings and comfort resonated strongly with me. Up until **A WILD LIGHT**, my favorite love story in the series was between Maxine and her living-tattoo demon boys, Zee, Dek, Mal, Aaz, and Raw. A perfect mix of childlike enthusiasm and demonic mayhem, so many of my laugh or “awww” out loud moments in the series came from the boys and their relationship with “sweet Maxine.” The boys are Maxine’s family, her children and brothers and uncles all rolled into one. Their trust and affection is the strongest vote of confidence Grant could have hoped for. In Liu’s hands amnesia is not just a device that retreads old ground and brings Maxine and Grant back to where they started, she gives them a true clean slate. First impressions, a first kiss, and all the uncertainty, poignancy and zest of falling in love.

**A WILD LIGHT** allows Zee and the boys to shine, and highlights my second favorite aspect of the book: Marjorie Liu’s story building. Rather than feeling as if Maxine is being pulled forward on rails towards an inevitable destiny, Liu creates the sense that there is no one right answer. In fact, I think much of the difficulty I had in reading **DARKNESS COMES** was the result of Liu’s masterful portrayal of Maxine’s confusing world. With flavors of *Jane Eyre* meets *Dr. Who*, Maxine moves through both time and dimensions, and the reader is very much along for the ride. In my opinion, the majority of Urban Fantasy books can be read from a certain mental distance, even as you’re getting a first person perspective of the protagonist’s life. I usually feel like I’m putting together clues and following along (or ahead) of the main character’s logic. By this generalization, the *Hunter Kiss* series doesn’t read like a “typical” Urban Fantasy. Liu’s writing contains a poetry and mystery that reminds me of classical fantasy, or straight up classics. While this most recent *Hunter Kiss* novel does shed some light on the nuts and bolts of the forces in Maxine’s life, it more powerfully illuminates a realistic world with no one right answer. I can’t wait to read the next book in the series, but in the meantime, **A WILD LIGHT** has given me a lot to mull over and discuss.

Sexual Content: An explicit sex scene.

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## Carol. says

Three and a half stars. I think Ms. Liu is improving with each book. One of her strengths is the beautiful prose and well-drawn characters, from the small role Mary and Rex play in this book, to the demons that

love and guard Max. Like other readers, I found the confusion surrounding Max to be a barrier to a whole-hearted endorsement of earlier books. I understand that Max herself was also confused, but when the reader is plopped into a world that doesn't have many explanations, it creates an even greater sense of disorientation with the protagonist's identity crisis. In *A Wild Light*, much of the confusion becomes clear. By the end, we know more about her heritage as a Warden, how and why Wardens were created, and more about her mother's history. Although in the interest of keeping character mystery developing, we are given a teaser between Max's mom and her as-yet unknown and powerful father.

Near the beginning of the book, Max suffers a selective bit of amnesia that causes her to forget Grant. This unusual plot point works beautifully in giving us a chance to experience their relationship almost as if it was happening as a "first time" meeting. As previously mentioned, this also helps clear up more of Max's personal history and gives the reader a stronger sense of Max's character and decision-making.

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### **Sharon says**

Love this series.

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### **Kerry says**

the story felt too jumbled and everything was dramatic. if u don't have lows, the highs don't feel as dramatic

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### **Shelley says**

Summary: For too long Maxine Kiss has felt an inexplicable darkness inside her; a force she channels into hunting the demons bent on destroying the human race. But when she finds herself covered in blood and crouched beside her grandfather's dead body with no memory of what happened, Maxine begins to fear that the darkness has finally consumed her.

Maxine is the last of a unique bloodline of women warriors (Wardens) protecting the Earth from an other-dimension prison full of demons and other nasties, with the help of five demons of her own. She is part demon and part human. During the day, Zee, Dek, Mal, Azza and Raw, cover and protect her body by embedding themselves as tattoos, and at night they separate from her into their own unique identities.

My review and thoughts:

Maxine, of course. On the anniversary of her mother's death, she and the boys go out and hunt a zombie and devour its soul. It's supposed to be some kind of tradition that they do every year. She then loses her memories of Grant, and struggles to get them back. She finds her grandfather Jack lying in blood and thinks she had something to do with his death. 1. He's not really dead, and 2. No, dear girl, your little demon boy killed him but he doesn't remember why either. (NOTE: Still not explained why she lost her memories)

She may, or may not be the Evil Queen that the Mahati have been searching for, and her darkness is making her do some crazy things. Maxine faces some tough choices and decisions. First and foremost is the fact that the darkness is driving a hard bargain. The voice wants her to lead the Hunt as it collects souls. She has the

ability to wield some awesome powers if she gives in. She still wields awesome power with her soul and the fact that she's pretty indestructible. Maxine learns a lot more of her past in this book than in the previous two. We also see that she is losing most of her right hand each time she travels across time, and she doesn't really seem to care.

Grant aka Father Cooperon, or Lightbringer. Maxine's main squeeze and could it be; ::gasp: Husband? Grant's lightbringer abilities help prevent the Mahati from invading the earth. He also has the ability to change evil demons into good ones. (IE Rex) The Lightbringers were guardians, judges, truth-sayers, and warriors. They soon became hunted, and murdered by the Avatars. Grant also learns more about his abilities in this book as he seals the rift between the earth and the prison that was opened by The Messenger. Grant's back story of how he injured his leg is finally told. Thank you!

Byron is the 15 year old former runaway that has been manipulated by the Avatars (and her grandfather Jack) and given immortality in the process. Byron's body is used by Jack throughout most of the storyline. Of course, he gets his own back in the end.

Jack Meddle (Old Wolf), of course, the former Avatar who met and fell in love with Maxine's grandmother, which led to Jolene, Maxine's mother..Confused yet? Jack is killed (not) in the first chapters, but it's really confusing what happens to him. He really isn't a nice guy. He's done some really creepy things in his long life, but his one constant is he loved Maxine's grandmother and Maxine as well. He then leaves at the end, and we're not sure when, or even if he will return...naturally we can presume he will.

Mary aka Marritine the former soldier and bodyguard who is lethal as well as an unknown. She grows and smokes pot like it is going out of business. Mary is not as senile as most people think she is. She is fierce and jumps into battles without a second thought.

Father Frank Lawrence who appears as a werewolf and has a craving for oreos. He also ate a cat!

Tilly, the psychic who owns Thunderdome and can't read anything from Maxine. We last saw her in China running away from demons. Tilly doesn't care much for Maxine, but Maxine bought the bar for her.

Aura aka Blood Mama aka Blood Whore - The Zombie Queen who is afraid of Maxine now that she knows that she has the darkness within her to destroy her world. There's a truce between Blood Mama and Maxine that goes back generations. It may all come crashing down on her in order to prevent the Mahati from slaughtering humans at will.

Oteru the Demon who marked Maxine as one of his returns and we get a glimpse into the past life of one of the first Hunters who lost her mind. Oteru has been a guide to past Wardens/Hunters.

Reapers Kings - Just call them the boys that have protected Maxine since her mother died. They supposedly have lost their way and aren't into reaping souls anymore.

New Characters:

The Messenger - is the voice of the avatar and has arrived to bring Jack back. Blames Maxine for not protecting him when his body lies dead in Grant's apartment.

Ha'an and the Mahati - Demons who are stuck in a jail cell as it were, when they suddenly find themselves free and hunting humans.

New questions: Will there be a fourth book, and why do we need to have Maxine and Grant get married? Will the Mahati and Ha'an keep their promise with Maxine, and subsequently will see end up being their ruling Queen as is promised? Will Maxine ever listen to Oturu and stop traveling back in time?

Finish: There was a different feel to this story. Maxine really doesn't act all that fierce for most of the story. She is grasping for straws most of the time, and she's an emotional rollercoaster struggling with the fact that she may or may not be evil. There are plenty of places in the book that kind of lost steam and left you wondering what the heck was the writer thinking about at that moment? I enjoyed the world building and the fact that more answers were brought to life in this book. Not sure if I would rate this book the best in the series, but it does the job in telling Maxine's story. The romance between Maxine and Grant, is obviously still smoldering as read when they travel to Maxine's home where her mother died. Yeah, having sex in the back of an old car tops everything off. And, ::gasp:: is that a wedding ring on her finger?

3.5 stars.

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### **Melissa says**

Maxine knows there is something lurking inside her, a darkness. But when she finds herself in danger and with missing memories, she must learn to embrace who she is... even the darkness inside.

I love the connection Maxine has with Grant and "the boys". They are the things which keep her sane in a crazy world. Ms. Liu shows how even demons can change. What an important message during today's society. We are more than who we were born to be. The choices we make are more important to the people we become.

I was sometimes lost in the story since it'd been a few years since I read the first two books in the series. Add in Maxine's time traveling and history... it can be a little confusing.

For fans of paranormal action and strong female characters... this is a must.

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### **Mardel says**

I wish sometimes that we could give books 6 stars. There are some books that are better, deserve an outstanding - even more than I loved it. This is one of them.

This is the third full length novel in the Hunter Kiss series. It's intense. It's Lyrical. It's poetic horror and dark fantasy. It's great.

Maxine Kiss wakes up in a room, feeling like something is wrong. Slowly, things come to her, the smell in the room, the dread feeling, then she sees her grandfather. He's dead. Her demon protector "boys" are all

there and behaving erratically - stressed out. They don't remember or won't tell her what happened. She doesn't remember what happened. Then someone walks in that she doesn't recognize...

That's just the beginning (not a spoiler since the back of the book tells you this happened). This is an amazing, intense wonderfully written addition to the Hunter Kiss series. If you've read the other two books, you will recognize the returning characters. Byron, Jack, Killy, Father Lawrence, Mary, Grant.....and you will meet some compelling, dark characters.

There are answers to questions raised in the first two books. But...more is going to happen. I look forward to reading more of these novels.

It's possible to read this book and enjoy it if you haven't read the first two - but it's better to read them in order. Ms Liu gives you just enough information in each book that you can read it as a single book, yet I don't feel like I'm suffering from information overload, aka info-dumps.

The veil is weakening even more, more things are escaping the veil prison. Maxine is suffering some memory loss. The ring that we are introduced to in Iron Hunt grows - traveling up her wrist and becoming a little bit elaborate. New characters are introduced and it's not apparent if they're trustworthy - but there is a bit of help from them.

Grant learns some more of his past, as does Maxine. Maxine in fact, learns a lot in this novel.

Well worth the money to buy, a definite keeper. If you haven't read the first two books, Iron Hunt and Darkness Calls, I recommend them highly.

The Cover - I really like this cover. You can see the ring-come-gauntlet on Maxine's wrist. What I miss in this and the previous novel is something that was noticeable on the first novel. Maxine's Asian heritage. She had a beautiful nose and you could just see the Asian shape of her eyes. It was beautiful to see. I only wish that the skin reflected more accurately her heritage. Listen publishers/cover artists - it's okay to have a cover accurately reflect the heritage of the character described in the book. In this case, I would love to see more of her beautiful Asian features (like the first cover, Iron Hunt). I would love to see the beautifully shaped nose and eyes that were featured in Iron Hunt - if not more. C'mon guys - let's work on this!

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## **Renee Sweet says**

I had the opportunity to read an advanced copy of A WILD LIGHT, the fifth installment in Marjorie M. Liu's excellent urban fantasy series.

Let me just get right to it: Wow.

This book makes your breath hitch and your heart pound. It makes you take breaks to recover, to take it all in. It makes you ache. Maxine, the boys, Grant—they're all at their most raw, stripped down to gristle and bone, sheer force of will and strength of heart. Marjorie didn't flinch when she wrote this story: it's got sharp edges and everyone is tested again and again and again. The results are not always what you expect. But, boy, does this book have heart.

It's difficult to discuss the events of the story without giving things away, but I can say that A Wild Light

answers many of the questions that have been building in the series so far. Maxine's world is turned upside down yet again and she finds herself in an impossible situation: she must make a choice but it seems that either option will, in its own way, ruin everything she stands for and the only goodness she sees within herself.

The story is written beautifully, from the first chapter to the last. Marjorie's prose is lyrical and haunting, as it always is. The ending (and by this, I mean Maxine's choice) is brilliant. Clever, gritty, unexpected. I love it so much—it's so very Maxine and so very right for the story. Also? The final lines of the book made me squish Beatrice (my nook) to my chest\*. Just saying.

Fans of the series will love *A WILD LIGHT*. However, if you haven't read the series yet, this isn't the book to start with. These are best read in order, beginning with the novella *Hunter Kiss*, available both as a standalone e-book and as part of the *Wild Thing* anthology. For more info on the series, including excerpts, please see the *Hunter Kiss* section of Marjorie's website.

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## **Debbie says**

After having one of the best birthdays she has had in a long time, waking up next to Jack Meddle's corpse (her grandfather) made for the start of one of the worst days of Maxine Kiss's life. Not only was her grandfather dead, well his body was anyways, but she was finding holes in her memory. The largest of the holes seemed to be centered around the man she apparently lived with. Knowing his special ability couldn't help Maxine with her memory loss, Grant Cooperon held on to his faith that she would get her memories back soon. Being propelled by the need to find the person who had killed Jack, leads to realizing that the prison veil (the barrier holding the demons in another dimension) was tearing, leaving Max and Grant no choice but to figure out how to stop the demons from coming through, fighting them or dying themselves. With the help of Zee, Aaz, Raw, Dek and Mal (the boys), they hope to find the killer, restore her memories, repair the rip and save the world.

Book 3 ..... Sooo much, I am on overload with this one. Action and information flowed at such a rate that it was difficult to understand everything that was happening all at one time. All the labyrinth walks taking Max to the past gave her explanations and information she and Grant needed to understand what was happening, and what to do about it. I have to admit to occasionally being a bit confused with some of the why's and how's of it all, but I really enjoyed the relationships in this book. The character interactions with Max, Grant, Jack/Byron and even (to some extent) the demons was what carried me through to the end. I am not sure (especially after that ending) if Marjorie M. Liu is planning on another book in the *Hunter Kiss* series, but I would be interested to see if this series is of her typical writing style or if having a different subject matter changes things.

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## **Dorothea says**

[reread on 12/08/2013, the occasion of this review]

As I read through this series I get increasingly frustrated with all the people/demons/Aetars in Maxine's life



who know things that would be useful to her, but don't tell her, or tell her only in riddles. Sure, let her figure everything out for herself! Learning by experience is the best way! She's just trying to save the world!

I know that this is mainly due to these novels being very light reading -- given that most of these secrets involve the tragic destruction of entire fictional worlds, I'm kind of glad that Liu doesn't make me think about them in a really organized fashion. I'd rather focus on the awesome magic tattoos and so on.

However, in the case of the worst unnecessarily-cryptic offender, Maxine's grandpa Jack, Liu has made this kind of procrastination a character trait. In this book we get a sense of why Jack (who is, of course, an immortal being with immense power) puts off being honest -- from his perspective, he's not simply conveying useful information, but confessing his guilt in horrible schemes he's come to somewhat regret. This works for me! although it doesn't really make him less annoying.

The main plot in this book has to do with the consequences of Jack finally getting around to telling Maxine something. One consequence is that (view spoiler) I kind of like this subplot as a way of reassessing why Maxine and Grant's relationship works, since their original falling-in-love story (in the "Hunter Kiss" novella) is kind of underwhelming. However, perhaps because there's so much else going on in the book, the peculiar magical aspects of their relationship (e.g. are they really choosing to be together because of Love or is it the soul bond, etc.) don't get questioned as thoroughly as they might in a romance novel.

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