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The Last Mage Guardian (Guardian's Compact Book 1)



Synopsis

Her great-uncle, the mage Oron, bequeathed to her his oak-shaded chateau and a debt of magical honor. But in a world where women do not do magic, Miss Ardhuin Andrews must hide her magical talents. How can she repay the debt? When Oron's enemies attack, how can she survive? Political intrigue, duty, and echoes of an old war not truly ended combine to create a smoldering crisis in a world where magic and science coexist.

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Customer Reviews

Except for one issue, I would give this well-conceived and (mostly) well-written book an enthusiastic 5 stars. The setting is vivid and well thought out, an alternative Earth of perhaps 150 years ago in which both magic and technology work. (Think steam locomotives, guns, gas lighting - called phlogiston - but no electricity or internal combustion engines.) The geography appears to parallel ours; place and group names are different but mostly recognizable, for example Baerlen and Parys for Berlin and Parys. What are our historical states of Prussia and Austria have recognizable names

and customs. Jews are called Adarans and in Baerlen live in a ghetto called "The Closure." Compared to our sorry version of history, Native Americans (under another name) seem to have had a much more positive time of it and are well known and mostly accepted in Europe. The way magic works, for those with an inborn ability for it, is interesting and not quite like other fantasy books I've read. Plot and character building are mostly well done. The issue for me is the characterization of the two central characters, especially the heroine. She is a very strong Mage, maybe the strongest in the world but totally unsocialized, hiding from all interactions with other people. She "loves dearly" but is terrified of her mother, who is obviously totally clueless about her daughter's personality, abilities and needs. The heroine is "under age," but given that she saves the world with her strength and training and has readily entered a physically intimate relationship with the hero, a reader would assume a certain amount of maturity, Wrong! Even near the end of the book she is repeatedly whining like a 2 year old and terrified that her mommy is going to make her go home and go to social parties and marry a high-ranking husband not of her own choosing. This sort of thing, contrasting so drastically with any kind of maturity, almost ruined it all for me. It's exacerbated by another plot problem: though everyone apparently accepts that some girls are born with magical ability, there is an absolute, near universal assumption that NO women ever become mages because of their weak, undisciplined minds. This plot device goes way beyond simple prejudice despite the fact that many of the same men may know women who are strong-minded. It was not only irritating, it felt arbitrary and against common sense. So, except for the whining, spineless (except when she was angry enough) heroine and the not-to-be-understood business of nobody being able to believe she is a mage despite obvious evidence, this was a good read that I recommend. I am hoping that in the sequel the heroine, now married and accepted as a mage, will FINALLY stop whining and hiding from her mommy. I plan to purchase it and find out.

I very much enjoyed reading this book. The story takes place in an analog of Europe, during an era with trains and guns but where people are still using horse-drawn carriages and carts, and where magic has some place in culture and technology. There were a few humorous lines here and there, and a nice use of magic and action. I liked the sort of technical or scientific aspect applied to some of the magic, rather than a more mystical approach. The story was a fun read, and not too dark or dreary. I agree with another reviewer that the heroine of TLMG seemed a bit timid and nervous, not really heroine material much of the time, but given the circumstances it's not surprising, and there were a few times she showed some spunk under pressure so I think future books should show her personal development along those lines. The story was resolved by the end, but there's a very

obvious opening for a sequel or a series to develop from here. I highly encourage the author to continue this tale and develop it into a series, although at this time I haven't seen any plans announced.

A very high four stars for this well-written tale of a young woman who finds herself in charge of the magical defense of Europe, some years after a devastating war started by the French. It's set in an alternate world, not fully steampunk but sufficiently steampunkish that suggested it to me because I'd read Lindsay Buroker. The date appears to be mid-to-late 19th century, from scattered clues. There are trains, but it's magic rather than technology that gets the emphasis. The North American continent appears to be called Atlantea, and the countries of Europe have different names, their cities have different spellings, and there are other geopolitical differences like the continuation of a separate country of Bretagne distinct from France (or Gaul). The most similar thing I've read is James Calbraith's *The Shadow of Black Wings* (The Year of the Dragon, Book 1), though the history is closer to ours than it is in Calbraith. Although there's a romance subplot between the two viewpoint characters, the emphasis is on the adventure and the magic, with a great boss battle at the end. Flooding cellar, explosions, collapsing masonry, levitation, it's all good stuff. The editing (and writing) is fully as good as you'll find from any big publisher (and better than you'll often get from HarperCollins), and I'll have no hesitation in adding this to my Indie Books Worth Reading list on my website. There doesn't appear to be a sequel yet, but this was published in the middle of last year, so I have hopes. I liked both the main characters, enjoyed the world, and was happy to accept the more cinematic parts of the story in their own terms. I'll be taking a look at the author's other work, which is mostly science fiction that claims to be in the tradition of Lois McMaster Bujold. I'm a huge Bujold fan, and I approach that claim with a little skepticism, but this author does seem to have the skills to pull off a good military space opera.

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