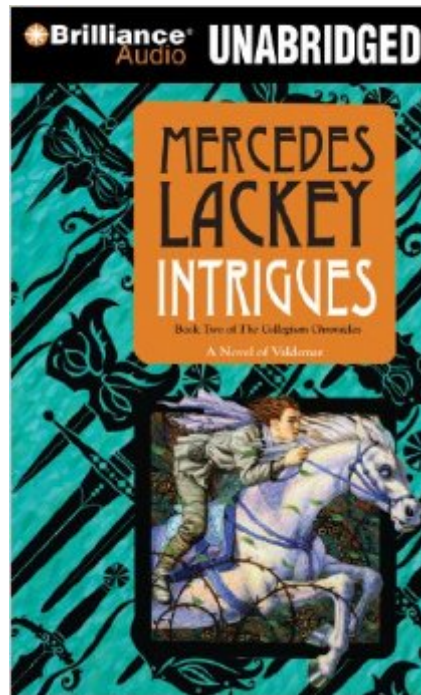


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Intrigues: The Collegium Chronicles (Valdemar Series)



Synopsis

Mags was an orphan and slave of a bad blood who toiled a gem mine all his young life. He would have died before adulthood, had he not been Chosen and taken to Haven to be trained in the new Herald Collegium. Now, Mags was never hungry and never cold. He slept in a real bed in his own room and, most importantly, he had Dallen, who was like another part of himself. And yet, aside from Lena and Bear, both loners like he was, he couldn't relate to most of the Herald, Healer, or Bard trainees. He was the only trainee who came from what to the others was unimaginable poverty. There was another factor that contributed to Mags's isolation. Foreign assassins, masquerading at court as envoys were discovered. As they fled from the Guard, one of them seemed to recognize Mags. Now, Mags was an object of suspicion. He had always been curious about his parents, but after the incident it became urgent for Mags to discover exactly who his parents were. And at Haven, he had access to the extensive Archives. Poring through the Archives, he got only incomplete information: his parents, found dead in a bandit camp, had been two of a number of hostages, some of whom had survived. The survivors had told the Guard that Mags's parents spoke a language that no one understood or recognized. This information did not help, for the ForeSeers had been having visions of the king's assassination by one of the foreign blood. Some had even seen Mags with blood on his hands. How could Mags defend himself against a crime that hadn't yet been committed?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book needs a warning: Do not read it if you are dealing with depression or at risk of being triggered for suicidal impulses. Mags spends most of the book being systematically tortured by the hostility and suspicion of the minds around him (he being a Mindspeaker you will recall). Meanwhile, Bear and Lena deal with family being abusive idiots. At the crisis point, both Bear and Lena break and verbally attack Mags, viciously and inexcusably given the fact that he has done nothing the whole book but try to help them. Understandably, he runs from this attack, now sunk deep in depression and explicitly suicidal, brought by Bear to believe he is insane and expecting Dallen to repudiate him any day. And when Rolan finally contacts him, does he offer Mags protection against the mental assault he's dealt with the whole book or even a little human sympathy? No! He lectures Mags very briefly about how he was, essentially, a coward for running away, and Mags spends the end of the book being "tested" to see if he's still trustworthy! On top of that, neither Bear nor Lena apologize for their unprovoked attacks on him, despite their having been instrumental in driving Mags to suicidal despair. It's covered over in two pages, all is magically better, Mags actually apologizes for the things he said to them when they finally pushed him to snapping. I find this especially unforgivable in Bear's case, given that he supposedly fears he might have had something to do with a patient dying on him. So the Healer is going to go and scream filth at someone he knows is unstable? And there are no consequences to this? What? There is no closure. There is no recovery. There is nothing to help the reader get back out if they fell down the extremely graphically described pit with Mags.

I loved Foundation. It introduced my third favorite protagonist in the Valdemar series, the first being Alberich and the second being Karal. Mags has a horrific existence until meeting his big, white, talking horse. Like all Lackey protagonists he is unique in his abilities, the best of the new Trainees. Each Valdemar novel focuses on a Gary Stu or Mary Sue, for crying out loud. It is to be expected. But Intrigues felt rushed and incomplete. SPOILERSSo Mags finally gets fed up with Bear and Lena, two of the biggest whiners Lackey has ever inflicted on us. Given pre-ability Vanyel, pre-mage Elspeth, Pol, and An'desha, that is saying something. So he explodes, and gives them a piece of his mind rather than cater to their fragile little egos. And they give it back to him, taking him to task for not fitting in. Really? Were they raised as slaves in total ignorance for the first 12 years of their lives? Oh, that's right, they just have difficult parents. Boo-freaking-hoo. So Mags accidentally hurts Dallen, and runs away before he can be repudiated. After all, he feels it is what he deserves. When he finally comes back, does he get an acknowledgement of how unfairly he was treated?

Nope. He gets a lecture on doing his duty as a Herald, and has to save the day - AGAIN - to prove his worth. END SPOILERSThe editing is problematic as well, though that didn't bother me. It just felt hurried. We don't get any really solid character development. After reading Changes, I wish this could have formed the first part of that novel, with the middle of this book being totally excised. While I'll read this anytime I go back through Mags's story, it is close to being my least favorite of the Valdemar books.

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