



A Cast of Corbies (Bardic Choices, #1)

Mercedes Lackey, Josepha Sherman

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Enter once again the magical world of Mercedes Lackey's The Lark and the Wren with the first book in the Bardic Choices series. A strange pall has settled over Alanda. Everywhere representatives of the Church seek to ferret out unauthorized magic. Throughout the lands the Free Bards are choosing to flee or fight.

A Cast of Corbies (Bardic Choices, #1) Details

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Grace says

Wow, this book is horrible.

Lackey is never a particularly challenging read, but at least I can usually finish the book. It's hard to even get through "A Cast of Corbies", because the constant eye-rolling the writing prompts is giving me a headache. The characters are hideous little stereotypes, the Regina character is too Mary Sue to be true, and the plot... ouch. The potentially-interesting political intrigue angle is abandoned for huge stretches of time, and everyone gets dragged out of the Gypsy lifestyle into ACK-TING!

Basically, if you have some burning desire to be brought inside the exciting world of community theater, this book will give you a very thorough tour. If that doesn't float your boat, then you'll probably want to chuck this across the room by the time two characters are dimly discussing "how to paint a fake shrub".

Don't waste your time with this series.

Serena says

I have to say that is ugly and offensive cover art by Darrell K. Sweet! Who did the cover art for The Wheel of Time. He was also the illustrator for the well-known Xanth series by Piers Anthony, the Saga of Recluce series by L. E. Modesitt, Jr. and the Runelords series by David Farland as well as the original cover artist for Stephen R. Donaldson's series The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever.

The couple, who I can only assume to be Raven and Magpie are struggling through a fire to reach the other side of a river - something like that scene did happen, but Magpie was well aware and moving with Raven; she did not have a vacant doll like expression while being carried bridal style over the threshold of a river.

No, she didn't - but that sums up my interest of this book throughout reading and finishing it. So why finish reading it? Notes for how not to write a book.

The setting is prior to electricity, yet somehow there is decidedly modern slang unexpectedly thrown in - along with what could be modern inventions; which shows just how much the writers didn't care to make a story happen. Which is a great irony considering how hard the book actors and musicians are trying pull off this theater play, despite what "the Church" might wish otherwise. The Church might be better explained to be the writers.

TheCosyDragon says

This review has been crossposted from my blog at The Cosy Dragon . Please head there for more in-depth reviews by me, which appear on a timely schedule.

Raven has been made unofficial leader of the Free Bards. Little does he know that things aren't going to be the same at the faire - and that they might need to work harder than ever to make their livings.

Raven's a neat guy character. He's got that element of being rakeish that appeals to me, yet he's really an understanding bloke at heart. Magpie on the other hand, I don't feel much sympathy for her insecurities and wish she'd just get over it!

To some extent, this novel is not very interesting. There's no real antagonistic figure other than the Church and the Guild, and that's been the case in all the other novels of this series. The beginnings of the love interest between Raven and Magpie is ok, as is Jaysen and Linnet's, but again, it's nothing remarkable.

There's some really neat one liners and coincidences that make the novel for me. Plus, I really like the play, and the way the music would have fit in with it. I only wish I could have seen a performance of it.

I managed to knock this novel over in around 3 hours, which I think is typical for me, even though I have read it before. It wasn't a waste of 3 hours, and it made a nice change from the other Valdemar novels I have been reading recently.

Ms. Okes says

A Cast of Corbies is an extra novel in Lackey's Bardic Voices series. I fell in love with the possibilities of a universe where magic and music are intertwined and rooted for the heroes and heroines of the first few novels. By the time I reached this one, years later, I found some of the characters stretched thin.

In this novel, Lackey still includes key elements of the first novel: magic, a vibrant Gypsy community, and a fight within the church to control or eliminate those who refuse to conform. Music, indeed much of the magic as well, succumbs to The Theater in this book. To be fair, these characters are not the leaders of the Free Bard world, but even in their own story, they take more of a back seat to the conflict, seeking advice from higher-ups and relying on them for the brunt of the magical work. Instead, the protagonists are more observers and reporters of crucial information but little responsibility overall.

The plot in finding a theater, preparing a play, and finally putting it on drew out longer than I cared for. Even the love story(s) and Shakespearean allusions couldn't quite pull me back in. I do wonder whether I would have enjoyed it more when I first found the series, but don't plan on reading this one again.

Janika says

I liked it, but got confused because I read it after reading "The Eagle and the Nightingale" and "Four and Twenty Blackbirds" (both in the Bardic Voices series, books 3 and 4 respectively according to the covers), and only found out when I started reading this book that it describes events that happened before those two books. I would have preferred to read them in the order of actual events, rather than by overall series...

Annette McIntyre says

The Free Bards are finding they are being restricted in where they can perform. Initially they don't see it as a big problem but on arriving at the Kingsford Midsummer Faire they find that it is a worse situation than they believed. And someone is also trying to discredit or kill the Duke of Kingsford. Can they survive what follows the Faire?

Kelly says

I enjoyed it, but since the ending was so rushed I couldn't give it more than three stars.

Eliška says

I'd read this one before, years ago (sixth grade? Seventh?), but had completely forgotten everything but the ending, so I went back for a reread.

I love the Free Bards, but this one fell a bit short of the mark. The plot wasn't bad, and I appreciate that for once, the day was not saved by *deus ex machina* in the form of Elves, magic horses, or Mary Sues, but the dialogue didn't feel realistic, and the characters were not consistent in their reactions or motivations. Overall, not one of Lackey's best, but not one of her worst, either. I think if her editors had paid attention to the flaws in this one, we might have avoided a travesty like the *Collegium Chronicles*.

Luseride says

In this Bardic Choices novel a group of musicians team up with a theater company to put on a play. A series of "accidents" lend that little bit of mystery and intrigue.

A touch of magic, commoner and noble love story, evil group in the church, light, fun reading.

Scratch says

I'm comparing this to Lackey's more recent work, "Home from the Sea." Now, I gave that more recent novel 5 stars, even though from a writing standpoint, it was not as good as this. But the problem with "A Cast of Corbies" is that even though it has some decent sense of suspense and mystery (unlike Lackey's more recent works), in that there are actual *problems* and *villains* apparent throughout the novel, there also isn't that much to like. Very few characters in "A Cast of Corbies" had supernatural abilities whatsoever, and even for those who did, their limits were not clearly defined.

Overall I love Lackey, but oftentimes her works seem unfinished. Whereas her more recent novels can be formulaic and lack a sense of suspense, older novels such "A Cast of Corbies" lack a clearly defined magic system and are overly concerned with somewhat juvenile arguments about individual choice.

Nicole says

The fighting was cute in the beginning, and annoying later on. The various romances were cute, as was the look at Raven's past. Wish there was more in this series, which is an offshoot of another.

Sallie says

I really liked this book when I was a teenager, but have read it in many years. Um, it's story is still interesting and I enjoyed the various machinations, but this story is really missing something in the character development area. I don't remember noticing that years ago, but it was very apparent when I was rereading it today I'll give it 4 stars for how much I enjoyed it back in high school.

One problem is that the authors never give us any insight into the characters. We don't really get to see what makes them tick. The authors also do an info dump. When a secondary character Regina befriends the heroine, Magpie, it's ridiculously easy. As another reviewer states, Regina is a too-perfect Mary Sue-ish character. Magpie and the hero, Raven, argue a lot and this is blamed on Magpie being liking him and being jealous of the attention he gives other girls. At one point, I guess the authors feel we need more insight into Magpie so they have Regina explain Magpie's history to Raven. What gets me is that if the characters were more real, Magpie would be REALLY unhappy with Regina for violating her confidences. If she wanted Raven to know her history, then she would have told him.

There's also the problem with the paper-thin romance between Raven and Magpie. While I can believe that Magpie is attracted to Raven, I can't believe that Raven feels anything more for her than the attraction he seems to feel for any woman. They argue at the beginning and she's snippy with him after he doesn't show any attention to her and he likes how she looks when she gets dressed up at one point. Then he later confronts her about her snippiness and they argue and he tells her she doesn't need to be jealous of the beautiful Regina and kisses her. The only other interlude the duo share is when Magpie has a nightmare and he comes into her room to comfort her. It ends with her offering to let him 'stay' and him leaving. There really doesn't seem to be much of an attraction or even affection between the two. They aren't even friends for most of the book.

SPOILER ALERT

At the end of the book, there is a huge fire and the Bards work to help people survive it and when the fire is over, Regina is re-baptized as a new person who is noble and can thus marry her ducal lover. This is really hard to believe, that simply baptizing someone with a new name, can make them a different person who is then noble enough to marry the Duke. Regina spends the rest of the book as his street-born mistress who loves him, but cannot marry him since she isn't noble. The thing is that her being his mistress isn't exactly a secret, how is marrying her under a different name going to render it more acceptable?

The other eye-rolling romance moment at the end of the book is between the hero and heroine, Raven and Magpie. He actually tells her he loves her and proposes. Seriously. Based on their interactions up to this point, the chance of him loving her is practically nil. He just never seems that 'into' her and since the book ends on this proposal scene, it's hard to like this book.

Susan says

I really liked finding another book in the Bardic Voices series. But this one just didn't have the Lackey voice. Her books usually grab me right from the start and I don't want to put them down. This one just seemed slow, somehow. It was great to get the story of the Kingsford fire mentioned in the other books, as well as meeting Raven and Magpie, the Duke and Regina. It would be interesting to know how much of it was written by Lackey and how much by Josepha Sherman (listed as co-author.)

Derek says

A reasonable start to a series, but a very poor start to this book. I was ready to throw it at the wall when poor Rune bemoaned her life in a country inn for the first 10% or more. Once she finally got out of there, the story looked up.

If only the rest of the series had more Bards...

Doris says

[The only down side I had was that it
