



Changes

Mercedes Lackey

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Enter the thrilling third volume in the epic *Collegium Chronicles*.

In Mercedes Lackey's classic coming-of-age story, the orphan Magpie pursues his quest for his parents' identity with burning urgency-while also discovering another hidden talent and being trained by the King's Own Herald as an undercover agent for Valdemar. Shy Bardic Trainee Lena has to face her famous but uncaring father, one of Valdemar's most renowned Bards. And Healing Trainee Bear must struggle against his disapproving parents, who are pressuring Bear to quit the Healers' Collegium because he lacks the magical Healing Gift.

Each of the three friends must face his or her demons and find their true strength as they seek to become the full Heralds, Bards, and Healers of Valdemar.

Changes Details

Date : Published October 4th 2011 by DAW (first published October 1st 2011)

ISBN :

Author : Mercedes Lackey

Format : Kindle Edition 400 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Young Adult, Magic

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From Reader Review Changes for online ebook

Dee says

3.75 stars

Reread extravaganza continues! Previous parts were reviewed here
<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

So I'm continuing rereading the series in readiness for Closer to Home Valdemar The Herald Spy 1 and things are getting a bit more interesting here in book 3. Mags is helping Nikolas in the city, there are fresh baddies (*or should I say of the same origins but better versions? Bad guys mk2?*) and everyone is growing up and facing up to things - hence the title I expect. We still get vague mysterious hints alluding to Mags' origins and possible connections to the baddies but we focus on Lena, Bear and Amily a bit more in this volume which actually adds considerably to the story I think as well as seeing Mags demonstrating some action scenes to keep it all exciting. Lena's dad's part was obvious from the beginning; but then from all we'd seen in previous books it was exactly in his character. The heartstone interactions.....well, they served a purpose but I have to admit they seemed weird and out of place somehow.

On the whole however this book shows the series and the characters of Mags and his friends really coming into their own and developing into the type of people I definitely want to read more adventures about and the rereadaganza luckily continues with Redoubt Valdemar Collegium Chronicles 4!

Harry Kloss says

This a well crafted tale, nice plot turns and a great addition to Lackey's "Collegium Chronicles". My only complaint is that Daw Books has apparently let all their proofreaders go. I understand a typo or two but this edition, especially the second half is rife with inconsistent tenses, misspellings and missing words. I'm not complaining about Lackey's creative spelling to indicate Mags' accent, they left in a semi-colon in place of the letter 'I' in one word. Sloppy.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

I wondered at times reading this if Mercedes Lackey has gotten so much worse, or it's just my tastes have changed this much since she thrilled me in my early twenties with her tales of Valdemar, with its sentient "companions"--horse-shaped magical beings who partner "heralds" who help police, defend and act as judges for the kingdom. But no, it wasn't that long ago I did a reread of Valdemar, and the earlier ones, especially the books with Vanyel and Talia, were still great comfort reads for me I loved immersing myself in, and not just for nostalgic reasons. I felt Lackey jumped the shark over a decade ago (with *Exile's Honor*) and phones these in now, yet I did like the first two volumes of the Collegium Chronicles series, *Foundation* and *Intrigues*, quite a bit more than this one.

It didn't begin well. An entire first chapter of a game of Kirball, and let me tell you, it ain't Quidditch. Of course, I'm not one to tolerate even ordinary spectator sports, but really. No. Just no. Much too much Kirball in this book. But that wasn't the worst. I was tempted to rate this even lower than I have, and the reason

really is Mags. Mags is the protagonist and main point of view character of this series. He's very close in character to Skif of the first Valdemar books. He's an orphan who was saved from crushing poverty when he was "chosen" to be a herald by his companion Dallen, and he's helping the kingdom even as a trainee by using the seamier side of his background undercover. However, Skif at least wasn't made to think and speak this way: "Tis like mebbe when 'e was s'posed t'be hangin' 'bout th' others, but whatever made th' furst mad sent 'im mad too." This style of writing with its elisions, apostrophes, deliberate misspellings and tortured grammar nearly drove *me* mad, and I found myself skipping and skimming over any passages where Mags would speak or think in this style--which was very, very frequently.

Are there some good things about this novel that I suffered to the end? Sure. I do like how through Mag's friends Bear the Healer-trainee, Lena the Bard-trainee and Amily--love interest and daughter of the "King's Own"--Lackey gives us a wider look at the collegium than just through the eyes of the Heralds. The friendship between them was a particular highlight of the last book. But I'm scratching my head in vain trying to think of a way this novel distinguishes itself from other books set in Valdemar other than Mags incredibly annoying patois. And given the book ends with several unanswered questions, I don't think Lackey is done with Mags, though I suspect I may be done with him after this one.

Jeffrey says

A continuation of Lackey's Valdemer series. This latest book is the third book in her series about three trainees in the Collegium, Mags, who is clearly being trained to become a spy or the King's Own, Bear, a gifted non magical healer, who has to fight bigotry on the part of his family -- who think healing is for only the magically gifted, and Lena, a shy bardic trainee, who has to suffer at the hands of her obnoxious bullying self indulgent father.

Really however, it feels to me that the Bear story and the Lena story are just there as filler. The main story and the only one worth reading is the Mags story as he is a non traditional trainee but (as many of Lackey's character's) a powerful magical mindspeaker.

The nub of this tale is that certain agents of another land are trying to kidnap Mags because they know something about his unknown past and/or Amily, the King's Own daughter, so they can blackmail him into doing things their way. At the same time, Lackey uses Bear and Lena to illustrate how Valdemer has to change to adapt to new influences.

The back and forth espionage battle between Mags and Nikolas on one side and Stone and Ice (the enemy agents) is not a bad story but its all so predictable, and the ending just augers another volume in this tale.

As an aside, I have read many of these books and there is a use of a strange stone in the bowels of the Collegium, which vaguely, ever so vaguely I think was in another novel. It makes me think that the past of this land is like the past books in my mind -- vague whisperings.

I am invested in this Mags story, but luckily I have been able to take the books out of the library, as I cannot recommend paying money for these novels.

But if you have read the first two books, you probably should read this one -- just know that what little is resolved will be primarily with respect to minor characters.

the main story resolution -- well that's still in the future.

Mirjam says

The first time I read a Valdemar novel I fell in love with the magical and enchanting world Mercedes Lackey created. Lucky for me, she wrote quite a number of series that take place in Valdemar! The latest one being the Collegium Chronicles. Changes is a terrific addition to the chronicles and quite the page turner! I opened the book as soon as I arrived home and didn't stop reading until I finished it. Like most of Lackey's Valdemar books it's the kind of book I Just know I will return to many times whenever I am in the mood for a trip to Valdemar.

I loved Mags from the start when I joined him in the mine. I was with him when he was chosen, when he made his first friends and was by his side through the good times and the bad. The threat to Valdemar we learned of in book one still remains. Minions may have been taken out, but the puppeteer is still unknown. I suspect that it is tied to another mystery, that of Mags' heritage. I'm sad to have turned the last page, and sadder still that I will have a long wait ahead of me for the next book in the series. It's at times like these when a time machine would be useful!

Jana says

I have been a Mercedes Lackey fan for years. I own almost everything she has published and absolutely everything from her Valdemar series, many of which I've reread numerous times. Unfortunately, I have noticed a downward slide in her writing and the latest installment of *The Collegium Chronicles, Changes* (which everyone assumed to be the third in her typical trilogy) was more of the same.

While there is some character development and anticipated romances blossom, the characterization was uninspired. Mags is still the same scared little boy who seems to whine regularly about any and everything, which I found rather frustrating. Also, his dialect has not improved, which is curious. He has been at the Collegium for nine or so months, but the way he speaks is unchanged. I would have thought that by book three his speech would have improved to readability with a few choice words keeping the rough dialect, even slipping back into it when angry like anyone who grew up with a pronounced accent does, but nothing has changed. Not only does it point to more questions on the development of this character, it makes for a trying and unenjoyable read.

He also seems surrounded by characters just as whiney and just as underdeveloped. They spend half of the novel arguing with each other and the other half throwing tantrums. While their families are interesting antagonists and they seem to have intriguing obstacles to overcome, the actual characters don't live up to it. It seemed like middle school all over again, not in a good 'live and grow' way, but in an 'I don't know if I can keep reading this' way. I found myself skimming over most of these chapters and missing little.

Kirball is another point in the series that needs addressing. I was intrigued in book two by the idea of war games, which are discussed in other Valdemar novels, but, when I learned more about the game, I quickly lost interest. Kirball is the Quidditch of Valdemar and, because it ties so closely to what another author has

done, I expected it to be more. It's not however, and the numerous chapters devoted to it were tedious.

Another worrisome aspect of the novel is the numerous questions that are, as of yet, unanswered. In fact, more questions have been posed in a way that seems as if Lackey is trying to stretch this series farther than it should have ever attempted to stretch. As if, by posing more questions and leaving others still unanswered, the cliffhangers will be enough to keep people reading.

Overall this was a very disappointing book from one who has shown herself to be a great writer. The last few Valdemar novels have had trite storylines with predictable and underdeveloped characters and *Changes* did not deviate from this. If you're a die-hard Lackey fan, like me, then read it because you can't not read something she writes, but borrow it from someone and prepare to be disappointed.

Rachel Lein says

The book is good, but it's not. Hopefully by the time I'm done with this review, I'll have clarified why I think that.

I admit it. It's been a long time since I read anything that was considered new by ML. Except for a collaboration book she did with another author in which the style and feel were so very NOT like ML's work that I wonder just how much involvement she really had with the project in the first place. Other than that, the newest ML book I'd have read came from the 90's.

Is this just how her work plays out now? Because if so, I might have to bid farewell to one of my favorite authors. She's just not up to the same fire and fury she used to be, in my opinion.

Or is this some attempt to appeal to the YA crowd? If that's the case, then I'm very disappointed there, too, because that feels like selling out to me. Keep it natural. Don't try to appease a different crowd because you think that's how you'll make more money. An established author like ML should never feel like they have to do anything like that.

The story?

It's okay. It's good, but not good. I suppose my opinions of ML and her earlier work has something to do with how I feel about that, and maybe I'm wrong for letting pre-conceived opinions like that have any influence on the present. But there it is. The story would be fine, I think, if it wasn't in a universe that has been well established over all this time. If it had been its own world or even within the same universe, but not about Heralds, Bards, etc, then I'd probably feel differently about it. But it is. And I don't think it should be.

Tournaments... NO! I literally skipped the first chapter of this book and have skipped chapters in the preceding books because of Kirball. It's ridiculous and, in my opinion, almost any time you see something like a tournament in a book, it's a filler. ML had the creativity to help incorporate the game into something useful in the plot, but I hate these things. They're stupid. And it reminds me of Harry Potter, which I can't stand (to the chagrin of my fellow fantasy lovers). I've mentioned in the reviews of the other books in this series that this whole thing feels like ML's attempt at a Harry Potter-style universe, and that's another thing that feels "sell out" to me, too.

The characters are mostly likeable. Though I don't have a high opinion of Mags. Everybody else has a pretty unique, if not predictable personality, but Mags doesn't, really. And he seems kind of "Mary Sue", though I'm not entirely sure I've been thinking of that term correctly. It's like he can do anything, he's good at nearly everything, especially when it's something important. He's good at that Kirball thing. He's good at weapons and fighting. He's good at his "other job" to the point it's actually getting completely unbelievable! He's just too good at everything!

The main characters are teenagers. However, they talk and act like seasoned adults. No, no, don't come for me with the pitchforks and the loose. I'm not saying teenagers can't be clever and mature. But that ALL of them, even the minor characters from Mags' Kirball team, act like they've had a lot of life experience, and based on what's been told about them in the story, they haven't. That's a pet peeve of mine in fantasy books. Children, teenagers, and younger adults acting like they've had 40 years of life experience. No, they haven't, and it's just getting to a point that it's a trope.

The mystery aspect of it is okay, I guess. It keeps a reader interested. I just feel like it's being PUSHED, you know? Like, ML feels like she can't keep this series on its feet if she doesn't keep dangling the figurative carrot in front of us, but it's not even all that good of a carrot, ultimately. It's just that we're in this now, and we might as well follow it and see where it goes.

I like the book well enough. I like the series well enough. It's just that it doesn't seem like it should be centered on Heralds and such the way it is, or at least it should've been marketed transparently as YA if that's what it was supposed to be. I'm used to ML's adult work, so seeing this is just... well, it's just watered down! It's missing features I'm used to with ML and it disappoints me so much!

It's a fine book. Just... that's all. It's just okay.

Dena says

Awesome way to distract the mind when it is threatening to set off an anxiety attack.

Branwen Sedai *of the White Ajah* says

sighs blissfully Ah, Valdemar...that wonderous and fantastic land that has brought me so much happiness over the years. As soon as I bought this book and ran my hands over the cover I felt tears welling up because there are just so many beautiful memories associated with Valdemar and Heralds, and Companions. This is the third book in Lackey's Collegium series, and it is much like the last two. There is a lot of Kirball, lots of action scenes, lots of mystery and political intrigue, budding romance and strengthening friendships. This book is another gem written by Mercedes Lackey. If you love her works, then I have no doubt you will love this as well.

The one and only complaint I have with this book is Mags' dialogue throughout the text. When speaking of dialect, he reminds me a lot of Skif (a young Herald from the earlier books who lives much of his young life as a thief). But whereas Skif develops a 'cleaned up' dialect after living in the Collegium for some time, Mags does not, for whatever reason. It just looks very strange written out and it's slightly hard to understand at times, which can slow down the reading and throw off the book's pace. But other than that, this story is

amazing and you will definately treasure it as I did!

Cole says

Book 3 of the Collegium Chronicles was just like the others. Well written, fast paced; I liked it very much. However, it seems that I am forever to wonder about my previous concerns; mostly not knowing Dallen. The world is expanding a bit, but still not enough for me. The stakes are getting higher and Mags is maturing. But I still know little about his ancestry, which I was hoping to be reveiled now. Alas, the author is instead making sure that I read the next one to find out. But you know what they say the sign of a true author is one that keeps you reading against your will. (Hehehehehe)

One thing that caught my eye though was the crystal, if you read it you now what I mean, but I think it extends the characters abilities nicely and explains much. I still am not sure about the Bond with Chosen and Companion but the crystal leaves nibbles for me to chew on. I also enjoy Amily and Mag's relationship, it is the very little romance needed to complete the tale. Lastly, is it only me who thinks Mags deserves his Whites? I mean how many students actually do what he does, except maybe Harry Potter.

Another 8/10, good job Mercedes Lackey. Sad am I that i will have to wait so long for the last book in this tale.

Melissa says

Another fabulous installment in the Valdemar series. I am very much enjoying the Collegium Chronicles.

Christine says

I'm just going to cut to the chase here and confess my extreme disappointment in this book, and indeed, in the progression of this "trilogy." If my review of *Intrigues*, I said:

"The story was slow, tedious, and it involved long descriptions of a made-up sporting event that reminded me of Quiddich (at least in terms of how little I wanted to read long passages about it)."

I'm afraid this sums up my impression of *Changes* as well, especially because the "trilogy" is not yet over. That's right — there will be a fourth book in this series. A fifth? A sixth? I can't say, but definitely a fourth.

This series may have lost me. I have been a fan of Mercedes Lackey in the past, but there's something missing from these books — and I don't just mean a conclusion. She does tend to spend a lot of time dealing with society, politics, and relationships, and it has never bothered me before. In fact, those are usually some of my favorite parts, but in this series I am not feeling a particular connection to the characters, not even Mags. I did in the first book, when he was rescued from slavery in a mine, but since then he has become someone different, and many of his changes are kind of brushed away by the idea that his companion shielded his mind early on. To me, this feels like it goes beyond the role of the companion (as established in her other books), and it actually makes heralds less interesting. Makes them seem more like a tool of the companions, and less their own people.

The romance in this series is just plain awful. This is yet another thing I normally enjoy in Lackey's books (except for the fact that she has a horrible tendency to skip important moments in a relationship), but I have no idea why Mags is with Amaline (sp? audio version) nor why Bear is interested in Leena (sp? audio version). All I know is the book tells me it's so — I don't feel it in the least.

But despite all that, I might have given this series an overall 3-star "eh, read it if you like Lackey" rating if it had just done one thing for me: ENDED! The end of this book reminds me so forcibly of the end of book 2 that I might as well not have read this at all. The people are still having the same problems, and spinning the same wheels. They learned nothing new about their enemy. At the end of book 2, they capture an agent and he dies before saying a word. At the end of book 3, they capture 2 agents and they die before saying a word. Come to think of it, at the end of book 1 they capture an agent, and he dies without saying a word.

Anyone annoyed yet? I am. I can't honestly recommend this series any longer, not even to Lackey fans, and I'm not at all sure I will finish. I might *IF* book 4 is really the last book and if I have nothing better to read.

www.christineamsden.com

V. Briceland says

I find insulting the suggestion that Lackey's latest Valdemar entry is more suitable for young adults. Insulting to the YA audience, that is. They're better than the weaksauce plotting here, and the book's bland characters. Nor would they tolerate the protagonist's spoken dialect—an apostrophe-laden mess that makes Mark Twain's use of dialect in *Huckleberry Finn* look positively light-handed, and which had me praying for chapters at a time that the protagonist would be gagged, rendered mute, or would sleep so that I wouldn't have to read it. And any generation raised on *Harry Potter* would see through Kirball as the blatant Quidditch rip-off it is.

I rather enjoyed the first two books in Lackey's return to Valdemar. It's a shame that the third not only progresses the series not an inch, but makes absolutely no sense at all .

Jayme(the ghost reader) says

This is the third book in the Collegium Chronicles. Our main character Mags is still looking for foreign agents that want to bring Valdemar down. His mentor, Nickolas is training him to be a spy for the king. All of Haven seems to be at each other's throats. Is it because of the heat or is it something more magical and sinister going on? Is the enemy the same people or is it a new group? The enemy seems to be after Mags and will stop at nothing including kidnapping his girlfriend to get at him. Everywhere Mags turns there seems to be someone after him and a new threat.

Jen A. says

Changes, another Collegium novel featuring the orphan Mags, was about as pleasurable to read as the previous two (*Foundation* and *Intrigues*).

I LOVED the many trilogies that Mercedes Lackey has written, all taking place in Valdemar. But this particular series seems like it was intended for a young adult audience. Much is spelled out by way of Mags thinking to himself, or talking to his friends or Dallen (his Companion). [Don't get me wrong; I love books where the characters have to actually THINK, it's just that in this series the plot (and thought) tend to be even more spelled out, which can ruin suspense and/or action sequences.] Kirball is Lackey's equivalent of Quiddich, and the main characters are either students or teachers.

One major complaint: Mags has a dialect that is AWFUL to read. Now, I have seen dialects done right -- *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett is one such novel, where the dialect actually transports you. In this series, Mags' horrible dialect should've gotten better after being taken out of the mine and brought to school. I don't mind his made-up words, but there are so many apostrophes and omitted letters when Mags talks that it interrupts the flow of simply reading the book. You had to stop, re-read and decipher what's trying to be said, and it's annoying. A little bit lighter touch on the dialect would've kept the character in place without having been so jarringly different from the rest of the writing.

Bottom line is that I still enjoy stories set in Valdemar, but the Collegium series is light and fluffy compared to other series/trilogies. These books are good, but they're definitely not Lackey at her best.
