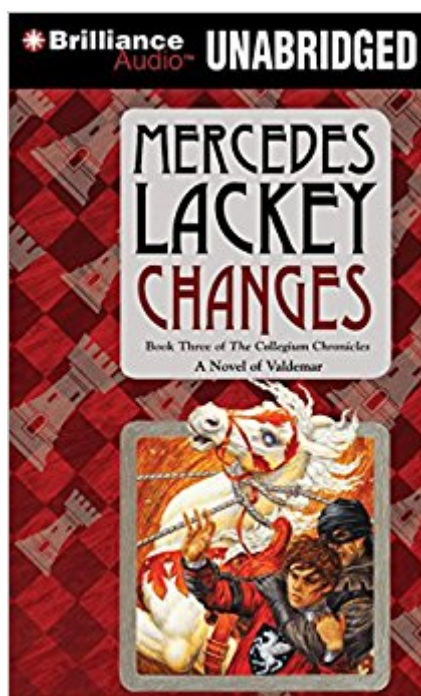


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Changes: Volume Three Of The Collegium Chronicles (Valdemar Series)



Synopsis

Mags was a Trainee in the Heraldic Collegium in Haven, Valdemar's capital city. Though his background of poverty and abuse at Cole Pieters' gem mine set him apart from most other trainees, nonetheless he had found his own group of friends. Bear, Lena, and Amily were all students whose situations in life set them apart from more usual Trainees. The four of them had found mutual support in their shared misfortunes, and together struggled to help one another find solutions to their individual problems. But Mags' friendship with Amily brought him to the attention of the King's Own. The seemingly immortal Companion Rolan had Chosen Nikolas to suit the specific needs of the current monarch, and those needs were for an agent who could collect information surreptitiously. Nikolas recognized the same traits in Mags that Rolan had recognized in him and because of Mags' friendship with Amily, no one would think twice about seeing her overprotective father spending time with Amily's suitor. So Mags began training as Nikolas' partner. They worked in disguise at night with Mags as Nikolas' deaf and mute helper, where his extensive knowledge of gems—especially his skill at separating the real from the fake—would be an added benefit. Hiding in the shadows behind the desk, pretending to neither hear nor speak, Mags could better observe the clients, and even the surrounding neighborhood. And Nikolas could send him out on errands to chase down leads. But this new job was far more dangerous than Mags had ever considered. For there were mysterious agents in the city—agents who sought to bring down the kingdom, and no one knew where they came from or who they worked for. They were smart, talented, and preternaturally fast. And most of all they were willing to do anything—anything—to bring Valdemar to ruin.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Lackey makes a real page-turner out of Magsâ™ and the collegiaâ™s development.... This bookâ™s outstanding characters, especially Mags, will greatly please Valdemar fans."â "Booklist" "Lackeyâ™s back doing what she does best, and the result is affecting and compulsive reading."â "Locus" "Series fans will enjoy the variations on a familiar theme, while enough information is presented for first-timers to discover a world of high adventure and individual courage. Highly recommended."â "Library Journal" "Leaves us simultaneously satisfiedâ "and longing for more. Not an easy feat.... Once you jump into this world, youâ™ll find yourself immediately involved, surrounded by new friends, and glad you made the trip."â "Realms of Fantasy" "Lackey is a spellbinding storyteller who keeps your heart in your mouth as she spins her intricate webs of magical adventure."â "Rave Reviews" --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Mercedes Lackey is the author of the Valdemar series, including Take a Thief and Exile's Honor. She is the coauthor, with Andre Norton, of the Halfblood Chronicles, including Elvenborn. Some of her other novels include The Gates of Sleep, Sacred Ground, The Firebird, The Black Swan, and The Serpent's Shadow. She lives in Oklahoma.

I am afraid that I might be getting a little too old for Valdemar in the current books. Ms Lackey's writing lately seems to be tending towards the youth can do everything better - a little too much leaning to the youth audience. "Old farts" had some role in the story but I would have liked a little bit of back story to them. The plot and the details of Valdemar life don't seem to be as cohesive as in the earlier Valdemar books. There is even a hint of "political correctness" or 21st century attitude at times that is not well blended into the plots. The books in this series have lost some of the magic of the Heralds, Companions, mind magic, and mystery that the earlier Valdemar books had. I like Ms Lackey's fairy tale books but have noticed that they, too, are starting to get a little less magical. Her books are getting to be like assembly line productions with repetition, loose ends and in need of quality control. Maybe she should write fewer books more carefully and be better edited. Please bring back the magic.

While I have some real problems with this book, I cannot agree with the one and two star reviews either. However, I have the benefit of knowing that this is not the end book of a series; if it had been, I would have been bitterly disappointed. The book is better than the first two with some of the mysteries being, at least partially, solved and others remaining for the future. The solutions do not necessarily result in happy ever after endings but provide realistic resolutions to the problems involved. Sadly, we see less and less of the Collegium and more of the city of Haven. There are, however, some matters that keep this from being on a par with earlier works by this author. 1) The matter of Bard Marchand is handled almost as an afterthought, as if the author was just tired of him and decided to make an end. There really is not sufficient explanation of his motivation in the actions he took (I am trying not to spoil this book for those who have not read it). 2) Mags' age? Mags was 11 or 12 when he was chosen. We have his own word for the fact that he had not yet reached puberty. He came to the collegium in the fall and the unusually cold winter started at the beginning of that book. The second book covered the balance of that winter and into spring. For the most part, we see Mags as an exceptionally mature young boy throughout. The third book starts with the exceptionally hot summer that follows so Mags should be about 12 or 13, maybe 14, at a stretch. But he is now acting and is being treated as if he were 17 or 18. The romance with Amilly is between young adults and not children and Amilly's father is treating Mags as an approved suitor. Ridiculous. 3) Mags' accent. When he came to the collegium, Max spoke with an uneducated accent and vocabulary. Perfectly natural, but it should be something the collegium is seeking to train him out of, not tacitly condoning. He should be required to use proper diction and vocabulary just to give him much needed practice in using the language properly. Heralds are required to interact with the nobility, to act as judges and to represent the crown. Failure to speak well will be a handicap when he becomes a young man but nobody seems to be doing anything about it. In the end, I have given it four stars but I think there is a decline in quality overall. For the rest, the book was fair and I am looking forward to the next - final? - volume.

If you enjoyed the first and second books of the collegium series Foundations and Intrigues you will enjoy this continuation of Mags' journey. Settled in to his life at the Collegium, Mags continues to ferret out the mystery of his origins and the weapon like assassins that have been stalking Haven. All of the favorites from the earlier books are still with us and they are growing up. In this chapter of the story, Mags is in his first test as a spy under the tutelage of Herald Nikolas. His courtship of Amilly continues and she has her own character arc development that gives her more depth and we understand her more as the book progresses. The pace is steady and the action is satisfying. You

get enough teaser of the mysteries of previous books to keep reading, but no conclusions so you are guaranteed to read the fourth book.

Although I love the Valdemar saga, one of my favorite series that I go back to over and over again, I have to admit that this installment of the Collegium Chronicles is my least favorite thus far. I still love Mags, as well his friends Lena and Bear, but this particular book dragged for me. Although his quest to find answers about his past was the focus of the novel, I think I enjoyed the stories of Lena and Bear and other characters more. Their stories had much more of an arc to them, whereas the main point of Mags' storyline was simply a carry-over from the previous novel. The other thing that dampened my enjoyment was Mags' dialogue. This is the third book into the series and, if anything, his accent was worse. And that made reading difficult sometimes as I had to stop to puzzle out exactly what it was that he was saying. I understand the point behind the accent, but it was almost unreadable at times. My Recommendation: While this is not my favorite book in the series, I still feel that it is an important part of the saga as hold. It is also a necessary read for the next two in the series.

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