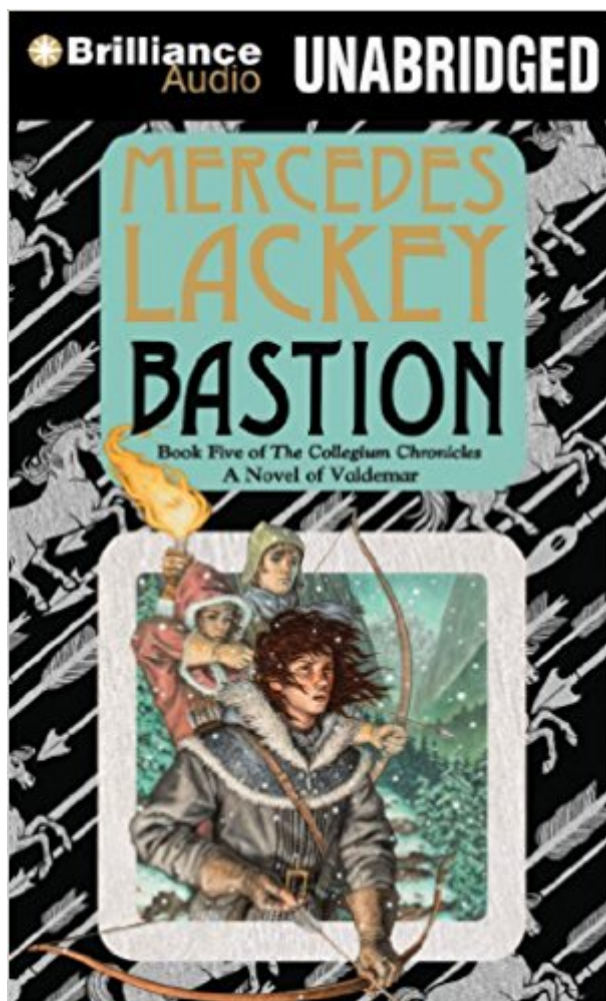


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Bastion: The Collegium Chronicles (Valdemar Series)



Synopsis

When Herald Trainee Mags was abducted by two magical foreign assassins, he thought his life was over. Drugged, robbed of his Mindspeech, and unable to communicate with his Companion Dallen, he felt he had no chance of being rescued. Carried south by these unknown enemies, he was trapped in terrifying, drug-induced dreams. His only moments of peace came from brief visions of a woman whom he felt might be his mother. Though he finally managed to escape his captors, it was only to fall victim to Karsite demons. When all hope seemed lost, he was rescued by a fugitive Sun Priest and his Suncat, Reaylis. This magical creature gave Mags back the power of Mindspeech and helped him contact Dallen. But before Dallen could reach him, Mags was recaptured by the assassins, who revealed that his parents had once been part of their sect, and they had been charged to bring him home. Dallen and Reaylis once again interceded, saving Mags and bringing him home to Haven. Mags knew, however, that after searching for him for years, the assassins would not give up. Mags had powerful allies in Haven, and together the heads of Herald's Collegium came up with a plan: to send Mags, all of his friends and loved ones, and other trained fighters into the hills to a stronghold called The Bastion. If they were all together, they were less vulnerable to the assassins, less likely to be picked off one by one. The Bastion was the same stronghold where his parents had been murdered by bandits. The drugs he had been given opened up memories that couldn't be his and gave him knowledge of styles of fighting that were unknown in Valdemar. Perhaps his new-found memories would spark recognition in the place where his parents had once been imprisoned. Mags might finally unlock the secret of who his parents had been and why they had fled so far to the north and, in doing so, finally discover his own identity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for the Collegium Chronicles:â œReturning to her beloved Valdemar universe, Lackey opens her new series at a pivotal time in the history of Valdemar, when the education of Heralds is changing and dangers from other lands are felt in the court and on the training field. 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 •Â â "Library Journal â œA real page-turner.... Outstanding characters, especially Mags, will greatly please Valdemar fans.â •Â â "Booklist â œAn enjoyable and pleasant read.... Mags is an appealing protagonist facing challenges (and successes) with which readers will empathize."Â â "RT Book Reviews "Top Pick! ... A wonderful amalgam of fantasy and character study."Â â "Night Owl Reviews Â --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Mercedes Lackey is a full-time writer and has published numerous novels and works of short fiction, including the bestselling Heralds of Valdemar series. She is also a professional lyricist and a licensed wild bird rehabilitator. She lives in Oklahoma with her husband and collaborator, artist Larry Dixon, and their flock of parrots.

I loved the early Lackey, and some of her non-Valdemar stories. But this has just dragged out too far. Even though we now have an idea of the back story for our hero, i don't have the feeling that this is done yet. But I don't think that I will buy the next book in this series. I have spent too much already. But we do find out our hero's origins, and why he is in Valdemar. One of the problems with going back in time, as occurred here, is that when you create a new county, it throws out the cycle history. This group would have made an interesting party in the Winds series.

I've been a fan of Mercedes Lackey for longer than I can remember. And I always look forward to each new book in the Valdemar series, not to mention having gone back and re-reading all of the others more times than can be counted. But this one I'm sad to say just fell completely flat for me. I had a very hard time wanting to finish the book.

When I reviewed the 4th book in the Collegium series, "Redoubt", I said that the format might surprise Valdemar aficionados. "Bastion" uses a similar format -- a "novella" which continues immediately from the end of "Redoubt" and neatly avoids the shadow hanging over the heads of the main characters by sending them all off on a training trip which combines a Herald's mentored circuit, a bard's journeyman tour and a healer's trip to train outlying healers and semi-healers in the use of a new set of tools. In this part, long-time Valdemar fans will be drawn into the familiar ups and downs of a Herald's life with an extra plus in the hope (expectation?) of resolving a long-term mystery. Lackey's familiar (and excellent) descriptions and characterizations carry us along until -- we are shocked into the second "novella" by one gently spoken sentence. This plot turn makes perfect sense in terms of what has gone before, but I doubt that very many readers saw it coming. I also suggest that the reader who arrives at this point near bedtime, stop. It is the last possible place to put it down before the end. This time, the end is (probably) The End of the Collegium series. There are subplots that could be picked up and further developed (hint, hint), but the characters we first met in "Foundation" have become well-rounded personalities with rewarding lives ahead of them. All hail the pentalogy! (And thank Ms Lackey for introducing us to a new word.)

I love all of Mercedes Lackey's books. My problem is that I have read so many, I cannot remember which I have read and which I have not. She "grinds them out like sausage," as a friend says. It really makes me angry with myself to buy one of her books, only to remember that I have read it after a chapter or so. So, my only "safe" way to get them is to buy only the newest published -- hot off the press.

With Mercedes Lackey, one of my favorite SFF authors, I am always tempted to give her books five stars because she is so much better than many of the writers in her genre, especially in this era of self published and unpolished authors. (Example - Hunter's Academy series by Garry Spoor a rousing tale with so many proof reading errors that it is comical "gate" for "gait" being one favorite.) However, judged against her peers, such as Norton, Pierce, Briggs, Clare and her own best, I can still rate this book as a true five star outing. Especially in comparison to the lazily titled Redoubt. At least there is an actual "Bastion" of sorts in this book. I liked this one the best of the series since the first volume. I especially liked the descriptive passages of the journey out to the Bastion. It made me long for hot mulled cider, spiced crabapples and various picturesque inns and deciduous forests I have loved in the fall; Cade's Cove Tennessee, Pisgah National Forest N.C., Appleton Vermont, Banff, Smoky Mountain National Park, and many more. Also cave systems such as Mammoth,

Lewis & Clark, and Zion National Park. I always like the food descriptions in nearly any author's work and this one had me looking out recipes for Cornish pasties, Cassoulet, and blackberry pie filling. The crabapples unfortunately, cannot be found in our grocery stores except already canned. This book is mercifully free of some of the "sturm und drang" and purple plotting of some of the earlier volumes in this set. We finally get some plot and character resolution for both Mags and Herald Jakyr, as well as a new twist or two. Highly recommended.

Unfortunately this felt like a "let's just wrap this up so we can move on" book. I really like Mags and his friends. I felt a bit let down with how easily this one wrapped up. The mystery of Mags was solved but so much was left unsaid. It just felt rushed to me overall. I've read Lackey for a long time. I like her style. I like her works. I like her imagination. This book simply didn't give me what I hoped for. Still, I've already ordered book one in the Herald Spy series which is more about Mags. I'm hoping to see more of a certain shadowy character who turned up in Bastion... While this book didn't quite make it for me, the character arc of Mags was wrapped up. You could tell that he's grown as well as grown up. I was pleased to see Herald J show up who also had his story line from book 1 wrapped up. If you remember, he just kind of fades to black with a question about a certain Harper. I think I'm just spoiled. I was so in love with the Elspeth trilogy that I hold everything up to that. This is not up to that but I did love that the Hawkbrothers were mentioned here. Some have complained that Lackey borrows too much from other stories but that's a bit silly. Surely snow storms happen more than that and caves are all over that part of Valdemar. Who wouldn't go hole up in caves? So what if they are comfortable... that's the Hawkbrothers for you! So if you are a Valdemar fan, you may find this one just doesn't quite hit the mark but we will get more Mags.

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