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Gwenhwyfar: The White Spirit (A Novel Of King Arthur) (Arthurian Novel)



Synopsis

Gwenhwyfar moves in a world where gods walk among their pagan worshipers, where nebulous visions warn of future perils, and where there are two paths for a woman: the path of the Blessing or the rarer path of the Warrior. Gwenhwyfar chooses the latter, giving up the power that she is born into. Yet the daughter of a king is never truly free to follow her own calling. Acting as the "son" her father never had, when called upon to serve another purpose by the Ladies of the Well, she bows to circumstances to become Arthur's queen-only to find herself facing temptation and treachery, intrigue and betrayal, but also love and redemption.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Prolific writer Lackey (The Phoenix Endangered) tackles the complex legend of King Arthur's queens in this compelling and heart-wrenching retelling. When warrior-woman Braith announces that the Young Princess Gwen is marked by Epona, the goddess of horses, Gwen's father allows her to train on the warrior path. Although Gwen is deep into training, in the background of her life lay the tales of two other women with the same name-Gwenhwyfar the Golden-both of whom were married to King Arthur. The story of Arthur's kingdom unfolds as Gwen's path as a warrior involves Lancelin, Arthur's closest Companion, and Medraut, the illegitimate and magic-born child of Arthur and his half-sister, Anna Morgause. Lackey places the story in the early dark ages, rather than in the romanticized Camelot of the later Romances. She creates a vibrant world where

the old religion and culture of the Celts vies with the invading traditions of the White Christ's followers and Roman influence. Gwen is an independent and formidable woman, determined to follow her dreams, but also dedicated to her duty and to the good of Arthur's kingdom. Though the ending of Arthur's story comes as no surprise, the way that Lackey reweaves old tales to create something new and powerful, with a compelling and sympathetic heroine, is this retelling's strength.

--This text refers to the Mass Market Paperback edition.

"The way that Lackey reweaves old tales to create something new and powerful, with a compelling and sympathetic heroine, is this retelling's strength." ---Publishers Weekly Starred Review

This is a 3.5 stars for me and decided to be generous and give it four. I love reading just about anything relating to the Arthur legend and this time period, so this was an interesting variation of the Arthur story. Actually Arthur played only an indirect role in the story, and it was based around Gwenhwyfar and the premise that Arthur actually had three wives during his reign, all with the same name. The author quoted some references at the end that brought her to exploring this theory of this legend. The book is about the third of these wives, and is mostly about her life prior to the marriage and in fact before she ever laid eyes on Arthur. She is the daughter of a king and has chosen the "warrior's path" becoming a skilled horsewoman and leader of the scouts of her father's warriors. Horses play a part in this as her father is famed for his fine war horses. I did like Gwenhwyfar as a heroine, but was disappointed the almost total lack of romance in the story, so if this is important to the reader, you have to wait a long time to find just a brief bit of it. This in itself is unusual for an Arthurian tale. I felt the book was slow in some parts especially early on, the last 100 pages were intense and flew by. It was the most enjoyable part of reading the book. I was glad that I came away really liking the latter part although it was tragic as this tale always is, because I have the hard cover version and it is a beautiful cover - making it a book I wanted to have on my shelf! If you love this legend and this era, you should read this book. If you are just looking for a great read in general, perhaps not.

Despite learned pedanticisms to the contrary, there isn't much more of a restraint around Arthurian legends than there is around the Robin Hood fable, but this tale does a good job of reconciling the various virtues, integrities, slights, infidelities and mischief of the habitual Guinevere(s) into one enthralling tale. Lackey's Gwenhwyfar knows her own mind from childhood, and is most confident and buoyant as the warrior she trained to be and eventually

excelled at. Where she is less confident, even baffled and annoyed, is in matters of the heart or when compelled to dismount her trusted horses as a woman in the alien gibberish of life at court -- and variations on this tension rears its head numerous times throughout the tale. This was my first read from this author and the sometimes scrawny development of the sub-cast is countered by a very composed development of the object of the story: Lackey's Gwenhwyfar. I read this via audio book, but I got roped in by mid-book as the story gains momentum and found myself extending my road trips just to get through the various subsections.

A wonderful read. Interesting and different with a plot that kept me interested.

Lackey takes the story of Guinevere from the King Arthur tradition and turns it on its head. Far from being the dainty, romantic queen, this woman is a warrior, a scout, and a very reluctant queen. It's about time someone writes a fantasy novel featuring a female heroine as the main character and give her a vibrantly detailed personality and story. Gwenhwyfar is her own hero. She is a key figure holding up the structure of not one, but two kingdoms and chafes under the pressure of fitting into a traditional female role...so she redefines her role at every turn. Excellently written.

I was pretty sure I would like her delivery of the story, because she does tell her stories from a different angle than most. No plodding along until the "same old story" is haggard with the retelling. Some interesting twists, some unexpected angles to the ideas, upbeat, hopeful. I've read many of her books for that very reason. One of my favorite authors.

Great plot from the female eyes. Engaging. you do not want to put down the book. Needless very sexist at times, but the drama more than compensates for that

I have read about Arthur, Camelot, Merlin, and the priestess' and druids, the ancient keepers of the old way since I was only nine. From Victoria Holt, to Steven Lawhead, and many others, yet this is the first time I read of the Arthurian legend having three queens, and all having the same name, Gwenhwyfar! Not a bad book to read if you are in between series and waiting for a new book to be published.

Although the book starts out well, by the time I got halfway through it, I had to keep putting it down.

Any Arthurian legend that has ever been published seemed to be thrown into the mix, whether relevant or not. Sometimes a name would be mentioned without relevance to the traditional Arthurian plot. I never really understood where "The Merlin" really was in all of this mess -- did he help poison Gwenhwyfar's mother? There was a lot about his ability to read minds, but it didn't go anywhere. Although the main character was interesting, the odd presentation of Mordred, and the absolutely annoying younger sister, Gwenhyfach, just didn't seem real. All told, I am sorry I bought this book, and have already donated it to my library. I will probably wait a long time before buying any more of Mercedes Lackey's book, although I have been a longtime fan.

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