



Candidate

Rachel E. Carter

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Welcome to the Candidacy. Where dreams go to die.

Twenty-year-old Ryiah is a black mage of Combat, but she's not the Black Mage. Yet. She's had her eyes on the legendary robe for as long as she can remember, and in just one year, she will have a chance at her country's prestigious—and only—tourney for war mages... Too bad she is going up against a certain prince—the one person she has yet to beat.

The Candidacy finally arrives and a winner is robed, but something dark is lurking in her kingdom's midst. Rival nations are closing in, and it's time to make an alliance.

Unfortunately for Ryiah, that's only the beginning. The worst enemy resides in the palace.

Candidate Details

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From Reader Review Candidate for online ebook

Aj the Ravenous Reader says

AN EPIC IN LENGTH REVIEW FOR AN EPIC SERIES!

I am truly honored to have received an ARC of the third book of the epic fantasy series called **The Black Mage** and to be one of the first lucky people to have read this. **Rachel E. Carter**, I will be forever grateful for this series and for the friendship you so humbly and willingly offered despite your grand awesomeness.^^

Non-spoilery glimpse at the first two books.

Book One:First Year(The Black Mage #1) introduced us to Ryiah, a young heroine who dreamed of becoming a warrior by enrolling at the Academy, a School of Knighthood giving students a chance for apprenticeship in preparation to becoming a mage. A mage is someone capable of summoning different sorts of magic and casting spells and is meant to serve and protect the Kingdom of Jerar. The students selected their factions- **Restoration, Alchemy and Combat** through different tests and challenges. Of course, our heroine is a certified kick-ass and wanted to be trained for Combat. The tone of the story was playful and even a bit flirty especially with the adorable jerk of a prince called Darren. It had this Harry Potter/Divergent/The Selection feel to it and the reader simply enjoyed every bit of the story. **Haven't read this yet? What are you thinking? Go read this now!^^**

Book Two:Apprentice (The Black Mage #2). The few carefully selected students from the School of Knighthood who passed the trial year moved on to apprenticeship which meant four years of hard and rigorous training under strict and harsh masters. The plot became more intense and action-packed not only because of the difficult training and the impossibility of becoming an actual mage, but also because of the brewing conflict between the Kingdom of Jerar and its neighbor, Caltoth. Add to that the really cute love triangle and rumors of rebellions. **This is breathtakingly good and if you haven't read this yet, what are you seriously thinking? Go read this now!^^**

REVIEW PROPER (non-spoilery too)

The ultimate challenge for the former students now turned mages is for them to join the Candidacy which is a competition of the mages for the title of the lead mage role in the Council of Three, one leader for each of the faction. The story is so much more than that but I'm keeping my mouth shut because anything more will ultimately spoil your reading so instead, I'll talk about how the story was written.

Candidate (The Black Mage #3) is by far, in my personal opinion, the best book in the entire series. The turn of events in the story made me want to beg for oxygen. I was completely taken aback and was totally amazed at the author's boldness when she decided to take the course of the plot to somewhere I would never ever have predicted. The themes on politics have become so strong; it has become the core of the plot. It was fascinating to witness how the characters (even the bad ones) develop and completely mature here. The settings and events have become more exploratory and I couldn't help notice the slight resemblance of the settings to certain places at Westeros because If I'm not mistaken, the author is a hardcore Game of Thrones fan. It isn't very obvious, but I am too! High five, Rachel!^^ Paige actually reminded me so much of Brienne of Tarth.^^

Click this to see an adorable photo of Jaime and Brienne. (Brienne is one hot momma!)

The first two books have already made me a fan of this author but after reading the shocking plot twists and surprising every other element in this installment, my respect and awe for the author went way up to a different level especially with her emphasis on girl power. Commander Nyx-woman, Paige who is a guard-woman, one of the best combat mages-woman! Yeeha! Perhaps my only complaint is my lack of preparation for the tragedies that happened in the story. I so didn't see them coming AT ALL. Oh my fragile heart! The deaths! The rebellion! The deception! Dayum, the feels! I was gutted really hard. My heart shattered to pieces and I was so not ready for that. *glares at author*

The greatest news though is there is a fourth book! There is a fourth book! I have never been more grateful for a cliffhanger! **So I'm guessing you haven't read this yet, right? What in the world are you thinking? Go read books one and two now in time for *Candidate*'s release date on October 27.**

P.S. Sorry for sounding like a bully. I'm just really, really enthusiastic. Lol.^^

Inge says

I may be a little late with writing this review, but never any less enthusiastic. First of all, I have received an ARC from the author in exchange for an honest review. And while I'm good friends with the author and would gladly have her babies, this in no way affects my opinion of the book. You'll find that in *Apprentice*, I wanted to chuck frozen egg rolls at Ryiah, and would have gladly done so if it was required in *Candidate*.

Fortunately, that's not the case. *Candidate* is everything you've ever loved about the *Black Mage* series and more, so much more. It's most parts kickass and some parts swooning at their feisty relationship. Add a shitload of battle scenes, which are written brilliantly, and some really strong side characters, and this is what you end up with.

"Do you know the difference between a nation of merchants and a nation of warriors? Only one of them is prepared to fall on its blade."

I've said it before and I'll say it again, but I absolutely *love* Ryiah as a main character. First of all, she works her butt off to get where she wants to be. She doesn't get anything thrown in her lap, but she trains and trains and trains to become the badass motherfucker that she is (I may have to edit this one for the Amazon review hahaha). On top of that, she's not whiny, she's not defined by her boyfriend, and she has hopes and dreams and goals outside of her relationship. It's honestly so refreshing.

The events in this book were truly so exciting – we get to meet a new favourite side character in the form of Paige, who's three parts sarcasm and one part badass, and we finally find out who will wear the Black Mage robe in an epic arena fight that can only be described as the 77th edition of the Hunger Games, with magic.

And then the story punches you in the face. And laughs at you. Then laughs at you some more.

But overall, *Candidate* works excellently as a story in itself, while also building up for the awesome badassery that will be *Last Stand*. With war on our hands, I'm expecting Carter to make the finale exceptional.

Muse-ic ? says

4.5

What??

I'm sorry, that was unclear. Allow me to rephrase that....

Wut?!?

You see that read blob over there on the floor? The one that has been torn to pieces?

Yeah, that's my heart!

Throughout reading *Candidate* I was thoroughly enjoying myself. I wasn't unbearably in love, but I was hooked and wanted to know what the hell was going to happen.

And then the Candidacy took place and everything beyond that point....

You know how people say "be careful what you wish for"?

Yeah, I found out the hard way!

I'm not typically an emotional person when it comes to reading books. Yeah I get fangirly and excited, but by "emotional" I mean crying.

I do get sad and feel for the characters, but I don't often feel the need to cry.

Unfortunately for me, this book happened.

And I was sitting among my family members, **so I had no choice but to sit there, holding my tears at bay and silently suffering at the hands of Rachel E. Carter!!**

I will also add that the most magical books aren't the ones with magic, but rather those that can cause real emotions in a reader. The exact opposite of indifference. *Candidate* was pretty magical!

I shall not divulge the secrets of this book because (1) spoilers suck, (2) You need to read it! (3) Why are you still sitting there? (4) Get up! (5) Go acquire this book! (6) Read it. (7) Sob.

The characters are truly amazing, as much as I hate some of them! They are all dynamic and multi-dimensional.

One of the greatest parts of this whole series is Ryiah and Darren's relationship. And it's not because of the romance.

I mean, let's be honest here; the romance is pretty awesome! (and I'm still waiting for more....)

But I say that because of their flaws. Darren and Ryiah are both seriously flawed. Like normal humans (except for, you know, the magic and stuff)! They are both prideful and they both make mistakes. But their love for each other prevails because they both sucked it up and tried to work it out! Yay!

(view spoiler)

So I did some Goodreads snooping and discovered that some of my lovely friends have this on their TBR's but it's still in the "Want-to-Read" shelves.

As much as I love you guys, I have to ask.....

WHADDYA DOIN'!! LET'S GO! GET A MOVE ON PEEPS! THE BAND WAGON BE LEAVIN' WITHOUT YE!

aaaaand scene!

exits

Lo9man88 says

OK, this book snuck up on me , i didn't anticipate those series of unexpected events: treachery and betrayals and so on , it was too much to take in , really, it serves me right i suppose : going in underestimating the author and the book , i wasn't prepared, and this novel sucker punched me, it is a feeling that i treasure very much, i wish the author the best of luck in her next book : it's gonna end bad i feel it in my bones ... D:

Rachel E. Carter says

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Anna (Enchanted by YA) says

****I received the eBook free as a review copy from the author in exchange for an honest review****

Wow. Rachel as done it again! Just thinking about this book makes me grin, and also want to throttle something – an unusual combination but you’ll understand once you’ve read it (which you totally should. And soon, because I need to fangirl with someone okay? Okay)

There’s so much to say about this book and so much I can’t say for fear of spoiling, so I’ll start with the fact that everything has stepped up a level. The world, the character depth, the “oh my god that did not just happen” moments all got a whole lot greater and I couldn’t be happier about it. As a reader I often go into books (particularly sequels) excited *as well as* nervous but I found that I was only excited (jumping up and down excited no less) because I knew that even if the author threw in hundreds of curveballs and killed off characters, I’d still thoroughly enjoy it. And she did. And I did.

One of the biggest surprises for me was the amount of time spent away from my beloved Darren (granted it’s probable that I would have wanted more scenes even if we saw him every other page...) This isn’t a “romance” series and so their relationship didn’t take centre stage, which made me treasure those moments even more; while also opening the story to many different directions.

In this instalment tensions are rising throughout the world, revealing secrets and characteristics people would prefer to be kept quiet. True colours are starting to come through... My non-spoiler low down of characters: love bad-ass female protagonist, want to marry 1 prince and kill the other, a certain king is full of ****, the kind best friend is someone everyone should have in their life, MC’s parents break my heart, the brothers... Yet to be decided.

What it comes down to is the fact that this book has everything I could have asked for, so if you’re like me and love an epic fantasy series with a kick-ass heroine, momentous plot, complex characters and enough action/romance to be satisfying, picking it up is a no-brainer.

Posted on: <http://enchantedbyya.blogspot.co.uk/>

Melissa (Ever So Mela) says

First Year Book 1 review
Apprentice Book 2 review
Last Stand Book 4 review

Oh dear Lord was I scared. I mean First Year was awesome and then Apprentice came rolling along blowing second book syndrome out of the water with its freaking awesomeness, so you can imagine me, the pessimist that I am, waiting for the shoe to drop. It's not that I don't trust Rachel, it's that no matter how much I love

series there is *always* that one book to bring down the parade. But *Candidate*?

Candidate blew my freaking mind.

As a whole, this series gets more complex and daring as it progresses. Each one able to stand in it's own light and right. Amazing characters developed with actual depth. Twist and turns you *will not see coming*. Literally, Candidate mocked my attempts at guessing any outcome. Just when I thought I knew what would come to be, Rachel pulled the rug from under my feet and showed me a chasm I couldn't even begin to fathom.

This book had me:

- ★laughing
- ★losing sleep
- ★bawling
- ★swooning
- ★raging
- ★biting my nails (thanks for that btw --)

My feels are frayed. My shock, my glee. Will these books ever cease to amaze me?

Remember how I said Apprentice overshadowed its predecessor by miles on end. Well, Candidate blew those two to bits.

I will no longer doubt the epicness you can bring to life and I will never hesitate to read anything you write. This has undoubtedly become one of my favorites YA fantasy series. Hands down, no competition.

P.S. Totally random but...

"You, you are a cockroach."

I totally inspired that lol I called her "resilient as a cockroach" when I read the first book. *My words have been immortalized!* *cackles* :P

Also arc was provided by the author but that in no way swayed my opinion. Trust me, I would have been the first to point out that it sucked if it had. She knows that very well.

Pre review:

How dare you end just like that? *HOW DARE YOU?!?!? WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!?!?*

Review to come...when I can actually think straight...

Ashley says

first read: October 30-31, 2015

first reread: February 3-?, 2017

.....So.....I just finished this book.....and I think I will just sit here for a while, because.....I am just so.....oh my god, this book fucking broke me.

I am seriously at a loss for words. I have NO IDEA WHAT TO SAY. I am both elated and traumatized, and in total disbelief about a few different things that came to light during this third book in the series. Just look at my status updates, haha. This book made me bipolar.

I am totally serious, I can't wrap my head around it all....so, I will not be writing a coherent review right now. THANKS RACHEL....

come find me:

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Natalie (Never trust a duck) says

I won an ARC of this book from the author! (THANK YOU!)

The first book made me want to tear my hair out in frustration and punch certain characters in the face. (All punching would've been done lovingly)

The second book did indeed rip my heart to shreds and scream a bit more. (THE ENDING THOUGH)

The third book made me shout HALLELUJAH!

It was EVERYTHING I NEEDED AND WANTED.

This is the book where we get into the nitty-gritty political details and learn what Ryaih's and Darren's world looks like. And, as a bonus to us readers, Ry and Darren are actually *together*. Yes they fight and have to separate for a chapter or two, but finally FINALLY, they're a thing and Darren is too darn cute.

And it's time for the Candidacy!!! The big tournament to choose the next top mages and naturally Ry and Darren both want to be the Black Mage. That's as far as I'll go into *that*, but know it was.....yeah, stuff happened. Boy did stuff happen. Cause and effect, people. Cause. And. Effect.

Now, I don't want to give anything away, so just know it was amazing.

A little quote for you before I go.....how about meeting the parents?

“Mom, Dad, this is Darren.” I couldn’t help but notice how stiff and quiet our audience had suddenly become.

My father was first to break the silence. Unfortunately for me it was in the most embarrassing way possible. “Well, well, ‘tall, dark, and handsome.’ I can see why my daughter picked you. She certainly has a type.”

Alex guffawed, and even Derrick had to hide a grin as the prince’s face shot up in flames. Not even Darren was prepared for my father.

Happy Reading!!!

Avy (Book Looney) *? says

I haven't cried that hard since the Clockwork Princess Epilogue... I sobbed. Ugly sobbed. With snot dripping and snorting and loud keening.

It was bad.

That ending...THAT ENDING. Holy crap. I couldn't even look at another book for a week after I finished Candidate. Rachel played with my emotions. But it's ok, she's just such a great writer that I'm ok with it.

Candidate was compelling and so much more. I'm scared to see what happens in Last Stand, but we all know I'll pre-ordering it the first opportunity.

majo says

WOW.

W
O
W

I've had heard that the third book was the best of the series but i certainly did NOT expect what happened. Dear Rachel E. Carter, **you blew my mind.**

4,5 stars

This book begun with Ryiah and Darren wanting to go to the competition to be the new Black Mage. The

first half of the book, was ok. I mean, there were a lot of angst and drama, but i really liked that in this book we finally discover Darren's past. Let me tell you, his father, King Lucius is a fucking MONSTER. i HATE HIM SO MUCH. And I liked a lot that Ryiah has to be part of the court. Yeah, she doesn't feel comfortable at all, with all the royalty surrounding her, but she prove herself a lot of times in the book.

But in the second half, with all that happens in the Candidacy, the book becomes a lot darker. We discover a lot of conspiracies and alliances that make everything GO TO HELL.

This book made me cry a lot, because in the last 30% something happened and my heart was breaking alongside Ryiah's. I felt her so much, because all the things she were, were destroy. Things she cared about.
(view spoiler)

. **I couldn't believe what I was reading and that doesn't happen to me often.**

THIS BOOK BROKE ME. It was THAT good.

Dannii Elle says

Wow! Just wow!

I had wrongly assumed my adoration for this series would nose-dive once it was removed from its magical academy setting, but boy was I wrong! Ryiah's character arc throughout this series has been momentous, and it is heartening to still share her journey even after her school days are over. She continues to learn and continues to grow, just as this series continued to evolve from strength to strength. Her ambition and her desire to succeed made this book an inspiring one and although I may have not been finally convinced of this series romantic focus I am sold on the badass female this centres around.

Lucía says

Son pocos los libros que me aceleran el corazón por la ansiedad que me causan. Este libro estuvo del carajo.

Katerina says

Did you hear an ear-piercing noise? **That was me screaming.** Did you hear something shattering? **That was my heart.** Did you hear that somebody stole all the ice-cream from your neighbourhood's convenience store? **That was me trying to eat my feelings.**

“Two longstanding rivals.”

“And only one robe to bear.”

“Who will win? The handsome prince?”

“Or his valiant betrothed?”

Ryiah is finally a black mage, but she is not *the* black mage. Yet. With the Candidacy approaching, she pushes herself to her limits in order to defeat the only person that stands in her way. The boy she loves. But nothing is ever easy, and she has to prove her value time and time again, while trying to maintain control of her life. To make matters even worse, the royal family hates her and her country is on the brink of war against an enemy they cannot win, unless they secure the support from every other nation. But the real enemy remains unknown, until it is too late.

“That’s the thing about enemies. You never know who they could end up being.”

Does loving Candidate even though it was a **brutal and tear-jerking roller-coaster that made me forget how to breathe** make me a masochist? Whatever the answer is, it doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is that this book tore me apart piece by piece and at the same time it completed me. It filled me with strong, devastating love. Love towards the plot, the characters and Rachel E. Carter. After this ending though I am not so sure about the latter. I can imagine Rachel writing the last chapters rubbing her hands, with a smirk in her lips and an evil gleam in her eyes.

Oh who am I kidding? I still love her. I love her because Candidate was **different** from the previous books in this series but **equally brilliant**. Because she wrote a **solid high fantasy** book, featuring every single element that makes me love this genre so much; **politics, court intrigue, murders, betrayals, deception, magic battles, blood**. The writing was fluid and engaging, it got you with great precision inside Ryiah's head while uncovering the darkest secrets of the royal family, and the darkest secrets of her own family. While **tragedies** happened and **insane plot twists** took the air away from my lungs and punched me in the stomach and all I could do was watch. And suffer. And in my experience, if a book is capable of causing such a whirlwind of emotions, it is an **epic** book.

“Loyalty is never built upon honor, brother. It is built upon blood.”

I don't know how I feel about Ryiah. I spent most of the book angry at her for her recklessness and her decisions, judging her for being so darn competitive. But if I had to make the choices she made, if I was constantly deemed unworthy despite my efforts, if my nation and my family were falling apart, I don't know if I would act any differently. While flawed, she is realistic.

*“Darren wasn’t darkness, and I wasn’t his light.
I needed to show him he was fire. My fire. Something filled with light. Something good.
Something just like me but wrapped up so tightly in his own barrier of darkness it could
burn. Unless you knew how to unravel him.”*

What can I say about Darren? That my heart bled for him? That I shivered when his past was revealed? That I cried when he chose Ryiah? He is not one of the heroes who go easy on the girl they love, who try to change for her. He is far from perfect, and that's why I love him.

Dear Rachel E. Carter, I beg you to make things right in Last Stand and give my heroes the happily ever after they deserve, because I know that deep down you hurt when they hurt. ~~If not, I watch Bones and I know how to dispose of a body.~~
Until then, *I will die a thousand deaths.*

Hetal says

reread thoughts: 5/28/2016. Just as good as the last read. I had totally forgotten Ryiah's terrible epiphany at the end so I got to experience that again and it broke my heart. RACHEL PLEASE WRITE THE NEXT BOOK. I NEED IT.

I really wanted to write this review the moment after I finished it, but I was so overwhelmed I had to let myself think about it for a couple days, or my review would have seemed like 10 year old fan-girl gushing.

This is by far the best book in the series thus far. Ryiah is now Darren's betrothed. But, before they get married, she wants to get away from the castle and work for Commander Nyx in the north. She and Darren separate for a while, but are brought together again by the Heir's marriage plans, mutiny, love, rebellion...just a cornucopia of problems, really. Let's not forget the pending Candidacy where Ryiah, Darren, and others will fight for the esteemed position of the Black Mage.

Candidate really gave us a good look at who Darren was and how he got to be the person he was today. It's not secret that though Darren and Ryiah love each other, they are stubborn and fight like there is no tomorrow. This book gives some back story that helps Ryiah and Darren's relationship mature.

**"Darren wasn't darkness, and I wasn't his light.
I needed to show him he was fire."**

Oh my god that line. SLAY Rachel E. Carter. SLAY.

Candidate is also by far the best written book by Carter, in my opinion. Carter as a writer has REALLY grown and it is SO CLEAR in this book. We have watched Ryiah, Darren, and the others go from clueless students-to apprentices-to full fledged mages. Their emotions and personalities grow so much. I can't even say anything or I risk ruining the story, so I leave you with this line:

"People make mistakes all the time –some of us just are in more of a position to leave an impact when we do."

...just think about that for a second.

Second over. Other things you will find in this book: love, betrayal, and loneliness. I was not expecting the roller coaster of emotions that was Candidate, so I'm telling you now, be prepared. I suggest keeping a tissue box and a nice hot cup of tea by your side. Also maybe a fan for those steamy moments (thank you Rachel.)

If this had been a hard copy and not on my kindle, I would have thrown my book across the room and screamed at the ending in frustration and agony. What this book teaches us is that life isn't fair. That least scene at the end which I was looking forward to SO MUCH, was marred by LIFE BEING TERRIBLY UNFAIR. Like really though, IT'S NOT FAIR. The crap Ryiah goes through in the last 30% of the book will break your heart. My heart already breaks for Ryiah in the next book and it hasn't even come out.

All I can say is I am willing to build a temple in Rachel's honor and possibly sacrifice some puppies if it gets Rachel Carter to write faster. I will start saving up tissue boxes right now, because if The Last Stand is anything like The Candidate, one box will not be enough.
