



# Arrows of the Queen

*Mercedes Lackey*

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**Arrows of the Queen** Mercedes Lackey

**Follows the adventures of Talia as she trains to become a Herald of Valdemar in the first book in the classic epic fantasy Arrows trilogy**

Chosen by the Companion Rolan, a mystical horse-like being with powers beyond imagining, Talia, once a runaway, has now become a trainee Herald, destined to become one of the Queen's own elite guard. For Talia has certain awakening talents of the mind that only a Companion like Rolan can truly sense.

But as Talia struggles to master her unique abilities, time is running out. For conspiracy is brewing in Valdemar, a deadly treason that could destroy Queen and kingdom. Opposed by unknown enemies capable of both diabolical magic and treacherous assassination, the Queen must turn to Talia and the Heralds for aid in protecting the realm and insuring the future of the Queen's heir, a child already in danger of becoming bespelled by the Queen's own foes.

## Arrows of the Queen Details

Date : Published March 3rd 1987 by Daw Books (first published 1987)

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Author : Mercedes Lackey

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# From Reader Review Arrows of the Queen for online ebook

❁angela says

[Talía won't end up with Skif? I know that Dirk saw her first and that usually is a good indicator of who the real love interest is, but still! Skif spent so much time with Talía, was a more developed character. I feel like Dirk just suddenly appeared out of nowhere, he doesn't get any page time until the end. And I am going to admit I'm pretty shallow when it comes to the hero

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**J.G. Keely says**

I've read a lot of fantasy, and I've spent a lot of time looking for fantasy that won't disappoint. When fantasy disappoints me, it usually does so predictably: either the world is poorly-built, the entire story is derivative, it is filled with creepy repressed sexuality, or the Hat Trick.

An equestrian friend of mine suggested this series: it was one of her favorites. However, her suggestion was somewhat tentative. She had previously passed *Eragon* and *Eye of the World* along to me, which are so derivative and poorly-written that they just felt like babelfish translations of Tolkien. However, she had also forced me to read the Potter books (I was recalcitrant due to their popularity) and Pullman's *Dark Materials*, which weren't bad.

Now, I am as disappointed in modern Feminism as your average gender-queer culture-jamming existentialist transhuman chaos magician, so I am slow to suggest that the gender of an author should inform us about their ability to write. However, I will concede that in this culture, the way you are gendered will have long-lasting effects.

Apparently, as a man, you end up entirely unable to write sex in a fantasy novel; maybe sex full stop. Tolkien just kept his romantic leads a few thousand miles apart the whole story. Goodkind creeped us the fuck out with lots of fetishized stabbing. Jordan made spanking a part of his world's justice system. Gor.

Of course, there are female authors guilty of making their books into lewd, plotless sex romps, like Anne Rice and Laurell Hamilton, but at least the sex is still mostly about the characters; and sex should be. It should be an event in the character's life that causes some emotional reaction, and reveals something about the character's personality. Reading most popular male authors, you get about the same emotional depth as a child smacking two naked barbies together. There were times, particularly later in their careers, when both Rice and Hamilton managed to make sex almost as impersonal as their male colleagues, and I'd suggest in Rice's case that her (less and less) latent Christian repression did a passable job standing in for male sexual discomfort.

The sex in Lackey's work is of another breed. It feels human. It feels pleasant. It doesn't make you feel frightened that you might be a bad person if you're turned on by it. In short, it blew my fucking mind. I mean sure, there are male authors like Gaiman, Moore, or Mieville who can write a complex, personal, natural sexual interaction, but they are all authors of allusive, thickly-textured works that draw from literary tradition. What makes Lackey remarkable to me is that she writes a fairly standard, fun piece of pop fantasy and somehow, the sex isn't terrible.

But it's not just the sex. It's all pretty naturalistic and refreshing. Except for the magic--and the psychic horses. The world building is not grade A, but it isn't chicken feet. The magic is pretty new age touchy-feely, but so is the world, so it mostly works. In fact, the only thing that tips off the escapist fantasy is the psychic equine love-bond. However, I'm not going to look into that too closely: I don't want to find that Lackey's sexual repression was staring me in the face all along.

## My Fantasy Book Suggestions

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### **Octavia Cade says**

An entertaining, easy-read coming of age story in which Talia escapes her difficult family to train as a Herald, complete with magical powers and an even more magical horse. The main strength here is the protagonist - Talia is sympathetic and I enjoyed reading about her, but I did feel that the more talents got heaped on her in the second half of the book the less interesting she was, and the more she started to feel like a fantasy heroine rather than an actual person. Another positive is the general atmosphere of kindness that surrounds her in Herald training school - obviously there's conflict in the story and enemies to be defeated, but they're often almost outside the text, and it's nice to read a book where pretty much everyone who spends any time on page is a decent person. I have to say, though, that in many ways the book struck me as a very long introduction. A pleasant one, don't get me wrong, but when I came to Goodreads to rate and review and saw that it was the first in a series, I felt absolutely no surprise. The rest of the series will be going on my reading list, though, and I hope they're as likable as this one!

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### **Alyssa Finnegan says**

3 1/2 stars. Arrows of the Queen was a light little fantasy read that I truly wish I had picked up when I was younger; it was exactly the sort of story I used to day-dream about. This is no mind blowing piece of work, but it definitely had enough to keep me enchanted despite its many clichés. This was also very clearly a set-up book, and I have faith that the rest of the series and works of Lackey improve in writing and in plot.

Probably my least favorite part about this book were how many characters there were that I was supposed to keep track of, and I was more than a little lost trying to keep them all in order. I didn't exactly love Talia (our protagonist) either, though she seems to change a bit as she gains a few years towards the end of the book. The other thing I really disliked about the book was how often Lackey tells without showing. Again, I'm hoping this changes somewhat in the future books.

But now, on to the good stuff! Horse lover that I am, I am unashamedly in love with the idea of Companions. I've got a bit of a weakness for human/animal mind bonds and this was definitely up my alley, although I could see it being a bit off putting for some. Also, there is some blatant wlw relationships going on here, something I was surprised to find in a book written 30 years ago! The magics of this world are briefly touched on but seem intriguing, and I am curious to find out more about them.

Overall, I really enjoyed this little fantasy book and recommend it to anyone looking for light, easy read. Fans of Diana Wynne Jones may also enjoy this book, for that is the author she reminded me of.

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## **Bibliotropic says**

(Reread in 2015 just because.)

This book introduces the reader to what I consider a sort of proto-Valdemar. It's the author's first book of the series, her first novel entirely if I remember correctly, and after having read some of her later works, I can say that it shows. It's not quite as polished and refined as what she writes later on down the road, but the seeds of an expansive world are sown here and it's interesting to see.

It isn't very action-heavy, so those looking to this as a sword-and-sorcery type novel will end up disappointed. Like many of the books in the Valdemar series, it's very character-driven, and can at times appear slow. Even I've thought sometimes that the books could have stood a little more action... until I glance down at the page number and realise that I've spent 100 or more pages being too engrossed in the character development to even think about it until that point.

This does serve as good background reading to a lot of the more technical aspects of Valdemar and life as a Herald-trainee. Details only briefly mentioned in other books get a full explanation here, which often are done fairly seamlessly as Talia, the main character, is a sort of blank slate. She's had a very sheltered upbringing and starts off the book knowing only the barest things about what Heralds are and what they do. So other characters get the chance to fill her in and tell her tales and legends and details. Not an uncommon trick in stories, to fill in the reader without resorting to pages and pages of narration and history, though it does get a little bit tedious at time.

It is always a bit strange to me, going back and rereading this novel, because so many tiny little things contradict for many larger things that Mercedes Lackey established in later books. The cause of death of the previous King, the timing of the Tedrel wars in relation to Elspeth's birth, possible relations with Karse at the time of this novel (mostly glossed over, I admit, but still somewhat suspect), the implication that Vanyel and Lavan lived and died at roughly the same time in history, and these are just a few I can name. Taken on their own, within the boundaries on this book in this particular trilogy, not a single thing is contradicted, but within the confines of the series as a whole, there are lots of little things that change, and some rather large things.

Why yes, I have read this series to the point of near-memorization.

Despite this book being the first novel of Valdemar, I wouldn't recommend it to those who have never read anything of the series before. It is too slow at time, and doesn't really pick up pace until very near the end and then continuing into the next novel. I'd recommend starting with the *Winds* series first, or doing as I did and discovering Valdemar through the *Last Herald-Mage* series instead. Save this trilogy for a time when your love of Valdemar has been established, because sometimes it can be hard to remember that this book was written decades ago and that the author's style has improved greatly over the years. If I'd started here, I admit I may have been bored away from the series entirely. As it is, I enjoy this book for its backstory, for the expansion on characters I got to know from other novels, and for its simplicity.

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## **Wealhtheow says**

Talia is a peasant girl who yearns to be more than a brood-mare. She wants books and adventure! Alas, all

she has to look forward to is years of more abuse and hard labor. But then! A sparkly magical white horse comes by! The Companion (the shiny psychic horse) takes her to Valdemar, an idyllic kingdom where a wise, hard-working, common-sensical queen rules. Training montage! Everyone thinks Talia is the bestest evar!

Talia is a bit like Alanna, except infuriatingly humble.

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## **Kat Hooper says**

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT Fantasy Literature.

Talia is not like normal 13-year-old girls. She likes to read adventure stories and she fantasizes about being a Herald for the queen of Valdemar. She does not want to get married to one of the dreary men in her village. So, when a Companion — one of the blue-eyed white horses who belongs to a Herald — shows up without a rider, Talia is happy to help him find his way home and stunned to learn that she's been chosen to be trained as a Herald.

Published in 1987, *Arrows of the Queen* is Mercedes Lackey's first novel and the first in her popular Valdemar series. This is a coming-of-age tale in which a naïve and wide-eyed youngster who has endured a repressive upbringing is suddenly freed and enrolled in a special school, where she makes friends and enemies and discovers that she has magic powers and an important destiny.

Like many such heroes, Talia is a good and well-meaning girl who, despite being mature and wise beyond her years, neglects to tell adults when she's being bullied or needs help, thus getting into mishaps that could easily have been avoided. Fortunately, she deals with some equally unwise villains who tend to audibly rehash their evil plans at the exact moment that Talia happens to eavesdrop on their clandestine meetings.

Although I've read many books of this ilk and, therefore, found few surprises in this one, I must admit to being charmed by Talia and her story, though I'm certain I would have felt differently if *Arrows of the Queen* had been published more recently. Mercedes Lackey's first novel has a nice pace (though Talia's lessons were sometimes prolonged and too detailed) and an engaging heroine, and introduces a world I'd like to learn more about.

I listened to Albany Audio's version of *Arrows of the Queen*, which was narrated by Carole Edie Smith. She's a terrific actress, but she has a rather unsuitable Northeastern US accent which just doesn't fit the medieval setting of Valdemar. I managed to mostly listen past that. Unfortunately, the next 24 Valdemar novels are not available in audio format. I may pick up the next couple of Valdemar novels in print, completing at least the first trilogy. This series has the potential to provide many hours of mindless entertainment.

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## **Nikki says**

I've always vaguely known about Mercedes Lackey's work, but rarely read any, so this was my first experience with Valdemar. I'm aware that there are tons of problematic things about Mercedes Lackey's body of work, though I haven't looked at details. Still, *Arrows of the Queen* is a book I wish I'd had when I

was younger. It has a couple of queer characters, who are treated pretty much like the other characters — okay, things aren't all rosy for them, but not for other characters, either. And the main character is a young girl who loves books, and turns out to belong to something bigger than herself — that scullery maid to (almost) princess sort of transition which can be so fun (and which so often brings forth cries of “Mary Sue” when the character is female, and yet no such complaint is made if the character is male).

It's fun, and Talia is capable and compassionate, while also learning and growing throughout the book. There are some things which jar a little now, for example her casual use of corporal punishment with the spoilt young princess, even after coming from a rather abusive background herself. It's pretty commonly agreed now that corporal punishment doesn't really go any good, but here it's treated as a valuable tool in the arsenal of unspoilng a child. I'm dubious, and I'm sure there are people who would hate that section, but at least Talia has a general common sense approach to dealing with the Brat.

On the less positive side, the writing seriously falls down in places. Large chunks of time fly by, without any real framing, so that you think she's been at the school for a month and it turns out it's been a year, and such things. Worse, Lackey is — at least at this point in her career — very prone to “telling, not showing”. This sometimes wrecks the pacing and makes sections seem rather dry and didactic.

Still, I read it in one go and did enjoy it, and I'm planning to read more in the Valdemar universe. And I still wish I'd actually picked this up as a kid, and given it to my sister too. It might have made us feel less alone.

Originally posted here.

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### **Rachel (Kalanadi) says**

Solid feel-good fantasy about a young woman coming of age. Strongly reminiscent of Alanna: The First Adventure and Dragonsinger for me.

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### **Raquel says**

Otro para la lista de libros entretenidos que me habrían gustado más con doce años, pero que a esa edad no habría empezado ni muerta. Me imagino la cara que hubiese puesto si me llegan a dar entonces un libro sobre una chica especial y su caballo mágico telépata y me entra la risa. En fin, está bien aunque no sea su público objetivo.

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### **Angie says**

When I was a kid and my father was out of town for work, my mom and I got to have sleepovers in the big bed. We would curl up with our pillows stacked behind our backs and read books and eat ice cream and fall asleep whenever we wanted to. I loved it. And, unsurprisingly, the tradition continued on until I left home. One particular time I remember it was a Friday night and I was fourteen and my mom and I went to the base library to see what we could find. I wandered down the aisles and stopped when my eye caught on a pink and purple spine in the fantasy/scifi section. It seemed a bit...girly...for me and when I saw the pretty much opalescent horse on the cover I almost put it back on the shelf. But I liked the title. And the girl on the horse

looked pale and sad and interesting with her short hair and her threadbare scarf. So I checked it out and that night curled up with my mom and a bowl of mint chocolate chip ice cream and fell in love.

Talia is an orphan. Raised in a very claustrophobic, incredibly closed off family hold that her uncle runs with an iron fist, she longs for a kinder, more stimulating world in which "family" refers to people who love you and not people who revile and shame you. When a white horse straight out of her dreams appears one day, Talia climbs into his saddle and never looks back. The horse is clearly no ordinary horse. He can sense emotions and share his own with Talia. He takes her to Haven, the capital city of Valdemar, where her hidden talents are recognized and she is enrolled in the Collegium--a school for heralds-in-training. The heralds are an elite force who are trained to protect the Queen and the realm from threat or harm. There at the Collegium Talia makes the first friends of her life (and a few enemies as well). When she stumbles across a plot to destroy the Queen, she is forced to harness her wayward abilities and use the connections she's made to convince the Queen and her council that there is a traitor in their midst.

This series is a very dear one to me. My fourteen-year-old self completely empathized with Talia and her insecurities and longings. She has to be one of the most passive heroines of any I've read, which makes her unique as I generally find myself drawn to stronger, more forceful personalities. But Talia matures, both chronologically and emotionally in this series, particularly in book two, *Arrow's Flight*, when she gets shoved through the refiner's fire as she completes her Heraldic training and emerges prepared to defend her Queen. And yet, she retains that innocence and inherent sweetness which somehow captured my heart more than a decade ago and has not let it go. Each book in this trilogy gets better and better and you only grow fonder of this family of characters Lackey has pieced together. Among Talia's inner circle, there is a not-so-ex-thief, a spoiled princess, a gruff and intimidating armstrong, a crippled harpist, and Rolan--her horse and Companion. Mercedes Lackey's strength lies in these characters and how she is able to make you want so much for them. If you fall in love with the world you're also in luck as Ms. Lackey has written a whole host of books that take place in Valdemar, though this trilogy is by far the best, IMO, and definitely the place to start. Reading order: *ARROWS OF THE QUEEN*, *Arrow's Flight*, and *Arrow's Fall*.

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### **Laura (Kyahgirl) says**

3.5/5; 4 stars; B+

I have had a pile of Mercedes Lackey books sitting on a shelf in the basement ever since I inherited them from my sister years ago. I finally started working on them. I remember Joan telling me to start with these then follow with the *Magic's Pawn* subset.

This book had several strong female characters, including the main character. It reminds me very much of the Tamora Pierce series I read lately starting with *Terrier*.

This was good clean fantasy. I don't feel compelled to rush out and binge on the series but I will definitely read more.

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### **Meg says**

This was the first Valdemar book that I read, which was sort of fortuitous since it was the first book about



the world that Mercedes Lackey wrote. It isn't my favorite (Kero's tale has that honor), but it comes very very close.

I re-read this book (and the rest of the trilogy) probably about once a year, and I never get tired of them.

Don't be fooled by the childish looking covers, this trilogy deals with some VERY adult themes.. child abuse, death, torture, sex, war, rape, murder... but it does it in a way that doesn't leave you feeling slimy.

Are there talking horses? Yeah, kind of. It's a fantasy novel. Animals frequently talk in fantasy. Narnia, anyone?

The Valdemar books are still my favorite series of all time.

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## **C.W. says**

Full video review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXJoy...>

3.5-4ish.

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## **Evgeny says**

A young ~~boy~~ girl named ~~Harry Potter~~ Talia had a very bad childhood until ~~Hagrid~~ Rolan came and took ~~him~~ her to the ~~wizard school~~ Collegium where ~~he~~ she studies, makes some friends and some enemies. By the way, I am sorry for comparing a half-giant (Hagrid) to a highly intelligent magical horse (Rolan).

Despite all of the similarities to Harry Potter - and there are more than those I mentioned already, this book is not one of the countless Harry Potter clones. For once it was written exactly ten years before Rowling's magnum opus. Another great difference is that while Harry Potter - at least in the first couple of books - is about sense of wonder of a normal boy who ended up in a magic world and his adventures, this book is about Talia's development and coming of age. A very good description would be something like: a young adult novel written at the time when young adult was not equal to non-stop romance.

Talia is an interesting character which is a big win and a big fail at the same time. She is an undisputed star of the novel and as such gets the biggest development. She is a strong woman written before readers start demanding at least one to be present in a book, to the point where some writers have to include a token character. As I said, she is strong, but also realistic. She is not a female Conan the Barbarian on steroids. She is not the best sword fighter and most probably will never be. She is not the strongest magic user and will never be. She is not going to win any physical strength contests.

So what makes her strong? She always overcomes her problems herself, or with some help from her friends. She found her place in the Collegium and made herself highly useful and irreplaceable. She does not spend all of her time suffering from her unrequited love to a sparkling vampire (there are no vampires in there - sparkling or any other, by the way). She does her job, and does it well, or tries to. She is kind and caring and not bitchy. Dear authors, take note: bitchy is not equal to strong!!!

Talia almost feels like a realistic human. "Almost" is the keyword here. The failing is that sometimes she feels like a Mary Sue, and sometimes comes too close to being one. I could not find anything bad about her, except for her excessive shyness.

While I am on the subject of bad parts of the book, I also would like to mention a fairly big plot-hole in the very end which feels like a *deus ex machina*.

Despite all of my criticism above, this is a very easy read. If you are looking for grimdark you will not find it here at all, but for anybody in the mood for light fantasy this should be the right place to look.

This review is a copy/paste of my LeafMarks one: <https://www.leafmarks.com/lm/#/users/...>

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## **Scott says**

Ugh, what? Get outta here.

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## **El says**

My partner has been working on a fantasy world for a while now, and one of these days he might actually put all of his scraps of paper together into a cohesive story. I love this, and I keep urging him to keep at it; one of the ways I encourage him is to ask him about his world which then sets him off on an hour-long discussion about some very important yet seemingly-small details about something that happened in this world a thousand years ago.

We got to talking about his main character, a female, and there was something that was bugging me about this character that I couldn't, for a long time, figure out. I finally managed to put it together - the character he is envisioning is pretty damn awesome. Like... *too* awesome. No one (myself included, har) is not that awesome all of the time. So we talked about that at some length, that when writing characters you don't want the protagonist to be so absolutely perfect, because then the story will lack tension or character development. And these things are important to a good story.

It bugged him at first, but he eventually came around to what I was saying and recognized my advice was probably accurate.

I'd like him to read this book as an example of how boring a character can be if she's perfect at *everything* she ever does.

Talia is a 13-year-old who leaves her own corner of the world because she's about to be forced into marriage which is pretty ew considering her age. She runs away, finds a horse (or does the horse find *her*?; hmmmm...), and off they go. These two, Talia and the horse she intuitively is named Rolan, are pretty tight. He brings her back to his homeland, and everyone there is pretty excited because Rolan found his special friend. Rolan is now Talia's Companion. Cute!

Turns out Talia is pretty gifted in some other ways and the queen of this place wants her to be her own very special guard. This 13-year-old manages to be incredible at everything, and much of the story involves her

being awesome at things, and that not sitting well with some people, but who cares because *perfection*.

Sorry, the story isn't that great, I'm not going to lie.

The worst of it, however, is the attempt at writing sex scenes. Talia and a boy try to make the sex happen a few times, but they keep falling asleep which is totally realistic (NOT) for adolescents to continuously fall asleep before the actual act. And then!

"I hate to say this," Skif began with a sigh.

"I know. This isn't going to work, is it?"

"I guess not. It's either the gods, fate, or the imp of the perverse."

"Or all three. I guess we're stuck just being good friends. Well, you can't say we didn't try!"

Ummmm. Is this like a three-strikes-you're-out kinda deal? Cause that seems a bit harsh, even though they both seem to be on the same page about this. Like "Man, bummer we can't stay awake and get it in; oh well, let's just order pizza."

Unless the plot point implied here is that Skif or Talia are gay, or asexual, which then that's great because this book was written in 1987 and it would be refreshing if Lackey was leading the story along one of those lines. But I sort of just feel the possibility of sex was thrown in for, what, shock? Interest? Publicity? I don't know, but it didn't work here. AT ALL.

What *did* work, however, is a brief discussion of this land's version of birth control, which pretty much mirrors your standard birth control pill of our own day, except it's in powder form there. This actually intrigues me, probably more than it should because a powder birth control? Like... do you put it in your tea? Do you snort it? So many possibilities here.

The fact that I put this much thought into powdered birth control makes me realize that the story just wasn't doing much for me in the slightest. I had high hopes for this book because I read Lackey's Mage Winds trilogy back in college when a friend of mine claimed they were her favorite books EVER. I also enjoyed them at the time, and always meant to read more by Lackey.

I realized as I read this that after reading The Mage Winds trilogy, I *did* try to read one of Lackey's other trilogies (of which there are quite a few, actually), but the story never took off in the same way. So I wonder if I actually did try to read this trilogy (The Heralds of Valdemar) but couldn't get into it.

I do have the next two books that I got from the library at the same time as this first one, so I will stick with it to see where Talia takes us on her quest to becoming Herald. I hope the story improves though, because this was a pretty big disappointment.

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## **Abigail Parks says**

A friend gave me this book for my birthday and am I ever glad I didn't pay money for it. I rather wish he'd

just given me a Barnes & Noble gift card instead.

From a purely technical perspective, this is possibly the worst published book I've ever read. From an emotional standpoint, this comes in a close third after some horrible book whose title I cannot recall, and Frankenstein.

But back to Arrows of the Queen. Good grief.

The highlights:

1. I am forced to put the plot as the first casualty, as the author had time to kill, dismember, and bury all the little pieces of it before I even picked up the book. Plot? What plot? The first few chapters meander towards one but never quite make it. The rest of the book seems to try and get by on hit-and-miss character- and world-building. They never quite make it either.
2. I mentioned technicalities above, and here's what I mean by that: did anyone ever explain to Mercedes Lackey the proper use of a semicolon? What about putting chapter breaks (whether a new chapter or, say, a double-space gap within a chapter) when a notable amount of time passes? Pacing? Plotting? Show, don't tell? That last was especially egregious, with I kid you not at least two and probably more instances of 'little did he know' interspersed with leapfrogged third-person limited. And the vocabulary -- what grade level was this, third? Maybe fourth? Who was the editor, anyway? I don't think s/he was paid enough (or too much, if they let all this through).
3. The main character, Talia, is a thirteen-year-old girl who, as far as I can recall, never acts like one. (There's acting like a mature thirteen-year-old and then there's acting like a thirty-year-old. No.) I started out wanting to like her, because I too have some self-esteem issues, a fervent love of books, and occasionally daydream wistfully about someone coming and taking me away from my life. I found myself unable to like her because she's just too \*perfect.\* She's a Mary Sue of the first order, Special and Wanted and Humble and Good At Absolutely Everything. I think the only thing Talia fails at is losing her virginity. (I'm serious: she tries, four times IIRC, to have sex with a friend. One or both keep falling asleep before they can Do It. What?)
4. Was I the only one kind of repulsed/annoyed by the amount of implied sex in this book? Practically everyone (including the ~~telepathic horses~~ sorry, *Companions*) can have (and apparently does have) no-strings-attached sex with everyone else and that's totally cool with everyone at the Collegium. That was great to know, thanks. It really enhanced my feel of this world at large. I really wanted to know *that* as opposed to, say, *any other character trait of any other character*.
5. Speaking of other characters, I would have liked some. The cookie-cutter nature of every side character (and I mean literally every side character except maybe Jadus [?]) meant I mixed up who was who and was invested in exactly zero of them.
6. I neither know, nor do I care, what the sexual orientation of Mercedes Lackey is/was when she wrote this book. All I know is the lesbian-thumping (like Bible-thumping, but with lesbians) got very old fast. Protip: no amount of screaming about the normalcy of homosexuality is going to change the mind of someone who doesn't agree with you.
7. (view spoiler)

Conclusion:

There was something bothering me about this book from the beginning that I was able to ignore for a while, but finally crystallized in the last few chapters: Arrows of the Queen felt like an amateur self-insert fanfic in a fandom whose canon I hadn't read. The lack of plot, the cardboard cutout side characters who are either uniformly supportive of the main character and awesome or Evil Incarnate, the Special Snowflake teenage main character that has the Rarest Gift Ever and is fantastic at whatever she touches yet humble and self-deprecating (and apparently half-robot with the way she was able to fit *everything* into her schedule), the wildly uneven pacing, the level of detail that whips in close on some subject I didn't really need (finding out about menstruation dust and Herald!tampons was a very enlightening paragraph) and pulls out of the only thing I was actually interested in knowing (what was up with Griffon?), all of it felt like one of those really terrible Mary Sue fanfics you hear about, where Mary Sue is able to resist the temptation of the Ring and thinks she's nothing special really while every single other member of the Fellowship wants to keep her warm at night (except, we can hope, Gandalf).

This made, at its best moments, merely passable airport fiction. At worst, I suppose it would make pretty acceptable kindling.

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## Rob says

**Executive Summary:** This book is super trope-heavy and not always the best written, but I found it a light, fun, quick read that seemed to suit my current mood. 3.5 stars.

### Full Review

I've heard of Mercedes Lackey, but none of her books had made it onto my to ever growing to read pile. If not for Sword & Laser I probably never would have read this.

This is one of those books that read at a different point, I might have been bored by. I've been a bit burnt out on reading lately and this seemed to hit the spot. This is the classic chosen one trope mixed with the magic school trope. I'm a complete sucker for the Magic school trope.

It was obvious at times that this was Ms. Lackey's first book. The writing was decent, but could use some more polish.

The biggest surprise for me were all the social issues casually woven into the story, especially given the time this was published. It seems like only recently that books are dealing with things like gender equality, homosexuality or casual sex without negative connotations are more commonplace. This book covers all of those things, but in subtle ways. It could simply be that my own personal reading selection in the 80s and 90s simply neglected other works covering these kinds of things.

This certainly seems to be a book aimed at young women more than boys. Much of my reading was stuff my mom brought home for me. I doubt the cover with the girl on the magic horse was something I'd have been willing to give a try in my teens. That said, who wouldn't want a magic horse as your companion? If you don't, you might be dead inside!

If this book was published today, it'd be put in the YA section and might be lost in vast array of fantasy aimed at young girls. In many ways this book feels like it could be a prototype for those books. However, as

I don't read a lot of YA anymore I could be wrong there.

The book ends in a pretty good place. The major issues seem to be wrapped up (albeit a bit too quickly and neatly). I feel like I might be up for reading more, but could be perfectly content to stop here.

Overall, I'm glad I read this book. I'm not sure if I'm going to continue on with the series. I'll probably have to be in the right mood for it. Maybe this time next year.

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### **Anna says**

What fun it is, to revisit an old-time favorite and enjoy it just as much as ever.

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