



# Ars Magica

*Judith Tarr*

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Magic is still the most powerful seducer of all as young monk Gilbert knows. He risks his soul as a sorcerer's apprentice, only to steal the magic books--and the Head. The Head prophesies the rise of his power, and it is shadowed by death.

## Ars Magica Details

Date : Published August 1st 1989 by Spectra (first published January 1st 1989)

ISBN : 9780553281453

Author : Judith Tarr

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Genre : Fantasy, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Science Fiction, Alternate History, Historical  
Fantasy

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## From Reader Review *Ars Magica* for online ebook

### Tess says

This is a historical fantasy of how a young peasant monk rose to be the Roman Catholic Pope in the 10th and 11th century. Ms. Tarr based almost all her characters on real people and real historical events. History also records rumors which said Pope Sylvester II, known to the readers as Gilbert, used magic and the forbidden Arts. Ms. Tarr took this rumor and turned it into a fascinating story of a young monk's rise to power helped by friends, his own resourcefulness and dedication, as well as a little help from his study of magic. The story also emphasizes that nothing comes without a price, as Gilbert is always haunted by death and suspicion. A great story, especially if you enjoy historical fantasy. Anyone who knows the time period would probably love Ms. Tarr's references to historical information.

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### Judith Weshinskey-Price says

I normally love her books, but just couldn't get into this one, I didn't even finish it.

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### Milele says

Recommended by Doug R

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### Estara says

I love the knowledge Judith Tarr's professional background brings to the historical periods she uses for her historical fantasies. They sound and look authentic to me. And how rare is it for a German to find a historical fantasy set practically at the founding of the *Heiligen Römischen Reiches Deutscher Nation*.

I wouldn't mind hearing about great-grandfather Heinrich and not just Otto III. Or about Otto's mum - Teophanu's life at the Saxon court, but it was an enjoyable view at church life, at the recovery of the Arts of the Antiquities (I loved the opinionated Richer, the mule Alba and what little we were allowed to see of the Jinnayah).

Of course (and historically correct) not many women have an impact on this story.

(view spoiler)

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### Lis Carey says

A real, historical person, Gerbert de Aurillac started life as a farmer's son in an unimportant town in tenth-century France. He died Pope Sylvester II in 1003.

Along the way, he became an important scholar, teacher, mathematician, and by tenth-century standards, scientist.

According to legend, he may also have been a master of the magical arts. This is that story, starting with young Gerbert meeting his first tutor in the arts of magic.

This is a good, solid, engrossing story of mediaeval magic, politics, and history, with really excellent characters. Tarr as always knows the history more than well enough to do believable but interesting things with it, and make a stronger story overall.

Gerbert, his friend Richer, his rival Arnulf, his first teacher of magic, the Saracen Ibrahim, Emperor Otto II, and the other significant characters all have the complexities, mixed motives, strengths and weaknesses. For this reread, I listened to the audiobook, and the narrator is very good.

Recommended.

I bought this audiobook.

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### **Jim Babcock says**

I've had this for some years, and finally dusted it off. A good read if you like historical fiction with a twist of fantasy. Rumor had it that Pope Sylvester II was a practitioner of magic. This is his story.

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### **Timothy Boyd says**

Not a bad historical fantasy story. Good mix of the religion and politics of the day. Recommended

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### **Mike says**

Pretty standard fantasy fare, with at least a slightly new take on magic. Much heavier emphasis on characters and personal struggle rather than battle or adventure. Overall average at best.

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### **Deirdre says**

An interesting history of Gerbert of Aurillac later Pope Sylvester in the years before 1000 ad. About him and magic and politics and it reads like history as most Judith Tarr novels do

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### **Myra says**

Picked this up at a yard sale at a friend's house when they were moving. Not exactly my cup of tea, but it was

OK. The story centers around the monk who would become Pope Sylvester II. It tells of how magic (The Art) played such an important role in his life even while the church frowned upon sorcery and magic. The novel follows his education from a young monk and through his life into the early years of his papacy. It is NOT a history, although Pope Sylvester II did exist. It was based on the "legends" surrounding him, not on the recorded history. It was an easy read, or I probably wouldn't have finished it. It didn't really grab me and draw me into it as my favorite stories do. But, if you have nothing else to read....

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### **Michael says**

A story of the temptation and corruption of power based on the real-life Pope Sylvester II. It was considerably more entertaining than I'd expected, mostly because the mood of the book was so similar to the Ars Magica game. I don't know offhand which came first. Worth checking out if you have an interest in high magic or medieval history.

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### **Jennifer (bunnyreads) says**

This was a bingo read. I'm not a big fan of historical fantasy, so this is a little outside my normal reading.

This is a very quick read. I didn't particularly enjoy the book, but I can appreciate the great writing. It felt like every word was chosen to give you a feel of the time, while not losing you in the prose.

I wish I knew more about the time period it took place, I think it would have helped me to enjoy it more. As it is, I feel a little unfair even rating it, but it's as much for me to keep track of my likes, then anything.

I'd recommend this to people who enjoy historical fantasy. It's a beautifully written, quick read, just not quite my cup of tea.

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### **Valerie says**

This was a somewhat interesting historical fiction. The author took some actual historical figures and gave them some magical abilities. It was a little hard to follow at times, but I did enjoy it.

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