



## From a High Tower

*Mercedes Lackey*

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*From a High Tower* is the newest adventure in Mercedes Lackey's Elemental Masters series.

When a man is caught stealing from a walled garden owned by a strange woman, he bargains away his youngest daughter in return for food for his family. The woman, rumored to be a witch, takes the golden-haired child and locks her away in a high tower. Sixteen years later, Giselle has lived an isolated life, but her adoptive mother has trained her in Air magic, and Giselle must use her new skills to keep herself and her new friends safe...

## From a High Tower Details

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Author : Mercedes Lackey

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## From Reader Review From a High Tower for online ebook

### **Lisa says**

I've been a longtime reader of Mercedes Lackey. The (unofficial) first Elemental Masters book, "The Fire Rose" was one of my favorites as a teenager, and I eagerly read each following installment. Around the fifth book, diminishing returns started setting in and there has been a slow decline ever since. Every volume has had the tendency to rush the climax and resolution, but in this book the final battle is literally the next to last chapter. Honestly, I should have never even started this book after the inner jacket described the entire plotline, but nevertheless I persisted. The villain appears in the first few chapters and doesn't show up again until the big confrontation, which leaves about 200 pages of Giselle wandering around with the circus. I very rarely feel like I wasted my time with a book, but this was one of those times.

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### **Christine Johnson says**

Don't get me wrong. I absolutely love Mercedes Lackey. I own practically every book she's written in either dead tree or e form. But in this latest addition to the Elemental Masters series, she...rambles is the only word that comes to mind to clearly describes what I felt while reading it.

\*\*\*SPOILERS AHEAD\*\*\*

After establishing a heart-breaking opening with a tragic family, they completely disappear. Gone, poof, with no sense of completion to the departure.

After the near-rape, her guardian, Annaliese, emphasizes the need to make sure an Air master be brought up in a peaceful, cheery homelife. Nowhere else in the series has this ever been mentioned or even hinted at.

Doesn't that extreme volatility seem to necessitate some mention to the magus as training takes place?

Giselle has hardly a novice in the use of her powers. Annaliese has been mentoring her. Emotional stability and the need for isolation should have been addressed and explained \*before\* she was attacked.

Then her mentor dies suddenly, she learns to shoot, kills a man in self-defense, runs away and joins the circus of all cliches and nary a nightmare or errant breeze?

The villain and his crew show up again at the end in an obligatory manner and are so quickly dispatched in the expected "oh, look who's behind you" twist that it just felt tired. Perhaps Misty needs to set this series aside to rest a while and freshen itself in her imagination. Of, course, I'll rush out to buy the next one, and the next, but this is definitely not one I would recommend to anyone looking for an intro to what she can do with a story.

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### **Maria says**

This is retelling of Rapunzel, deep in the Southern German forests. Through in a touring wild west show and you have an entertaining tell of bravery and magic.

Why I started this book: I've started several books in the past couple of days, not able to focus on anyone of them.

Why I finished this book: This one is a better example of the Elemental Masters series. Maybe it was the change of scenery, country and an introduction to the German's love of the wild west.

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## **Kirsty (Amethyst Bookwyrm) says**

Thanks to Netgalley and DAW for giving me this book to review.

After Freidrich is caught by Annaliese stealing vegetables from her garden to feed his starving children and pregnant wife, she makes a bargain with him. He and his family will be able to eat their fill from her garden, and she will take his unborn child. Giselle grows up in an isolated tower, but with company from the Bruderschaft and her mother, learning about the uses of her magic. After Annaliese dies, and Giselle is left to make her own way. She takes the guise of a young man, and travels the festivals earning prizes for her marksmanship. At one festival she catches the eye of the local recruiter, who gets violent whilst trying to conscript her into the army, and Giselle's Sylph's accidentally kills him, she goes on the run. She comes across a Wild West show, where Captain Cody, the ringleader, and Leading Fox, the Native American's medicine man also have magic. Will she evade the law, and make a home for herself?

I really like From a High Tower, as it has Mercedes Lackey's usual mix of action, fantasy and hints of romance. It is a bit slow paced, with the villain only being known about in the last third of the book.

Giselle is a very predictable character, and I found her character to be a bit boring. This however, was offset by Captain Cody, who is a womaniser and a bit of a cad, whilst wanting to do the best for his troop, and being a genuinely good hearted person.

I will definitely be reading the next book in this series, and I like what Mercedes Lackey is doing with regards to the romance in her books, it is not as obvious, and a bit more realistic. I would recommend From a High Tower to fans of Mercedes Lackey, and those who like re-imagined fairy tales.

This and my other reviews can be found at Amethyst Bookwyrm

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## **Shomeret says**

The re-telling of Rapunzel is a narrative frame that is fully woven in the opening of the novel. This is really a book about an Air mage who uses her gifts to earn a living as a sharpshooter. She eventually joins a Wild West show that is touring Germany. There are two perspectives to take on this character. One is that Giselle is an unethical fraud who is only pretending to be the equal of the real historical sharpshooter Annie Oakley. (Annie Oakley is mentioned in From a High Tower. She was also touring Germany in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.) The second is that Giselle is a feminist hero. She is a resourceful survivor who has found a really cool way to utilize her magical abilities. Do the ends justify the means? I will allow readers to make their own decisions about Giselle.

What interested me most about this novel is that Lackey portrays German perceptions of the American Wild West as being drastically different from American perceptions. Why should this culture clash matter to 21st century readers? The most important issue was the portrayal of Native Americans.

From a thematic perspective, I consider this a provocative novel about popular culture and national

stereotypes.

For the blog version of this review see <http://shomeretmasked.blogspot.com/20...>

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### **Lake County Public Library says**

I enjoy this series and author to begin with, but I especially liked the fairy tale twist for this one (based on Rapunzel). And it was great to see the main character from Blood Red again, too.

-- Jo, Merrillville Branch

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### **Kate says**

I don't even know where to start. From a High Tower has a fabulous premise. Rapunzel is all grown up and a crack shot, who ends up joining a traveling show. It also features Rosamund from Blood Red. But it didn't seem like the same character at all, which was one issue I had with the book.

There are also two assault scenes (one of which is attempted rape) which I found disturbing.

The biggest issue I had with the book was the depiction of Native Americans (referred to throughout the novel in the chronologically correct but modernly offensive term "Indians"). In many ways, the book accurately depicts the mindset of the the time, but without really examining the multitude of ways that it is problematic. Hispanic women play Native American women in the show (and even the blonde heroine dons a wig), the Native Americans in the show attack the wagons (until Giselle points out that it would be more profitable for them to rescue the settlers). Chief Leading Fox is portrayed as the stereotypical wise man. There are a few moments where Lackey mentions some of the issues the Native Americans face, such as having their land taken away and being forced into white schools, but it's only a few lines. There are some big issues here, but Lackey doesn't really deal with them, and it makes the book unsatisfying as a whole. It would have been a lot stronger if Giselle had been a crack shot for a different sort of show, or if Lackey had really addressed the issues she brought up.

There is also the way that Cody talks in an exaggerated drawl. "I reckon we gotta change th' show" and such.

This book is really a miss. I think I'm going to take a break from reading Lackey for a while. She has some excellent books, but it's very hit and miss, even within a series.

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### **Hilary says**

[She's also loved, protected and taught by the "witch" who took her in exchange for food, and an Air Mage in her own right. (hide spoiler)]

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## **Kathy Davie says**

Eleventh \* in the Elemental Masters historical fantasy series for the older middle-grade readers. We're still in Germany, and I am so enjoying this foray out of England \*grin\*.

\* I know it's listed as tenth, but have a peek at the chronological listing of the Elemental Masters books on my website and make up your own mind.

### **My Take**

I know some of you don't like to read books targeted at younger audiences, and I gotta tell ya. I do adore this series. Remember that simply because a story is acceptable for someone younger than an adult to read doesn't mean an adult can't enjoy it.

Lackey's take-off on Rapunzel is a much nicer interpretation of the original fairy tale. Although why Mother never explained about the hair, especially at her end, I'll never understand. Lackey also brings in a touch of Hansel and Gretel in one of the girls' adventures.

That horrible incident near the beginning of the story is a nice set-up for Giselle's later activities and provides the excuse for her learning how to shoot so well. Turns out she's pretty good at figuring better marketing for the show as well when she explains the German attitude toward the Karl May books. It's a crack-up, and the Indians with the show absolutely adore it!

Lackey manages to slide some gentle scolding in as well when Chief Leading Fox explains to Giselle why their people need the money from the show so very badly. It's a good reminder of how poorly the white man behaved toward the Indians. I do love Giselle's suggestion that the Pawnee tell people they're Italians, lol.

I love it when Rosamund shows up. I enjoyed her story in *Blood Red* , 10, and she's gotten even feistier, lol. Cody is quite the macho man and doesn't take kindly to some frail woman showing him up. Rosa does have good reasons for it, but it's outside of everyone's experiences so they don't take her seriously, until...

Giselle is luckier than she first knew, as Rosa teaches her so much about her Gift. It's Cody who teaches her about stories and reality. That stories are about what make *you* feel good. Make you figure out what a hero is and what's right.

It's a good story for older middle-grade readers as Lackey has some good morals to impart. The most obvious one is kindness, of doing unto others. It's a behavior that proves beneficial in so many ways for Giselle.

### **The Story**

It's a cold bargain, one made in desperation. One that emotionally hurts the mother and the daughter. Still it is a better life that Giselle has with Mother. At least she does until Mother dies, then Giselle will have to seek her fortune.

One that will bring her into contact with her wildest dream. And her scariest moment when Hunt Master Rosamund forces her way into the show.

### **The Characters**

**Giselle**, a.k.a., Rio Ellie, was given away at birth, a bargain made to save her family. She has potential to be

a great Air Master. She has named the area sylphs who have befriended her **Luna**, **Damozel**, and **Linnet**. **Lebkuchen** is her mare. **Flitter** is a sylph from Neustadt who decides to tag along.

**Mother**, Annaliese Bundchen, is an Earth Master and lives in a former Benedictine abbey. **Griselda** was a brownie who used to act as nursemaid.

**Gunther von Weber** is a young man who is quite proficient at shooting. Enough so that he wins any contest he wishes.

*Captain Cody's Wild West Show is...*

...touring Europe, hoping to make their fortunes. **Captain Cody Lee** leads the band, and he has a small talent for Fire. He was a real Scout in the U.S. and speaks a variety of Indian languages. **Lightning the Wonder Horse** is his trick horse. **Heinrich Kellerman** is the show's manager. **Chief Leading Fox** is Pawnee with a very special interest in earning a lot of money. He's also a Medicine Chief with his own mastery of Air Elemental magic. **Maisy, Texas Tom** does rope tricks, **Ned Toller** is the stage manager, and **Little Fred** are with the circus as well. **Polly** is one of the Grand Quadrille horses. **Pitalesharo**, a Medicine Hat Pony, does some clever tricks. **Fraulein Ado Ellie** was their former trick-shooter.

*The Maifest is...*

...where Giselle's disguise is rumbled. **Tante Gretchen Wildern** is an Earth Master. **Hauptmann Erich Von Eisenhertz** was a pig and a bully. The soldiers sent out include **Hans Piedermann**.

*The Bruderschaft der Förster is...*

...also known as the Brotherhood of the Foresters, and they act as sheriffs to protect the populace from bad elementals. **Pieter Meinhoff** and **Joachim Beretz** are Mother's most frequent visitors. The very firm **Hunt Master Rosamund von Schwarzwald** is an Earth Master (we met her in *Blood Red*) come to investigate the charges against Giselle. **Graf von Stahldorf** is the Master of the Munich Lodge. **Elfrida** is the housekeeper Rosa engages for the abbey and a minor Earth Magician, a kitchen-witch.

**Johann Schmidt** is Giselle's visitor at her tower. **Dieter** is his younger brother and a *berserker* who can shapeshift. Their mother is a witch while their father has elemental power, I think.

*The Winnetou books are written by...*

...**Karl May** about an Apache chief. **Old Shatterhand** and **Old Firehand** are other primary and beloved characters in the books.

**Friedrich Schnittel** is a beleaguered father struggling to find work to feed his eight kids and pregnant wife, **Maria**. **Pieter** is the oldest. Another **Pieter** is a troll who has been an ally of the *Bruderschaft* for centuries. **Hans** is one of the children in the cages.

The Great Air Elementals are the **Four Winds**. There are Storm Elementals, djinns, pixies, and bird spirits as well. An **aether** is a powerful, aloof air creature. The **Hu-Huk** is the **Thunderbird**, an Air Elemental, who comes to Chief Leading Fox's aid.

A **Magdalene convent** is where unmarried pregnant girls were sent to repent. Evil, evil places. **Vilis** are the restless, angry spirits of young women. A **Blood Witch** is an evil thing that must be put done wherever they may be found. A **frost giant** can ignore magical protections. The **Breath of the Ice Wurm** is the very essence of cold.

### **The Cover and Title**

The cover reminds me of her Valdemar covers. The background is a grayed-out lavender and a windy rain as Johann twists in the air falling *From a High Tower*, where Giselle's witch mother keeps her safe.

It's Giselle who is the German Annie Oakley in a black-framed rectangular window set on the left with air sprites swirling around her, the background of the window a circus poster, and "Annie" herself in a green loden jacket, a full brown skirt, a darker loden green hat, and black ribbons tying up her looped braids of hair. It's a rifle she's carrying, carrying out her role in this Wild West show. The author's name is in a gold embossed fancy font while the title is at the bottom of the cover in a light yellow green.

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### **Lisa Williamson says**

From a High Tower by Mercedes Lackey Another of her retold faery tales/elemental masters series, this book was very different than I expected. It starts off with a father looking for food for his heavily pregnant wife and his eight children. In the time period in Germany there were many families in just such a straight. A hard working father just not making enough to feed his family. He finds what he believes is an abandoned home and garden and decides to raid it to feed his family. Of course it belonged to a witch..or more an elemental master who demands his most current child as payment.

Unlike the usual run of this story the elemental master is actually a good woman who knows that the child will be an elemental magic user and decides to step in to save both the child and the family. She gives the father and family the home and takes the baby girl far away to raise her. As you can imagine a child in the 1800s with magic in Germany would be ostracized if not out right killed.

Now mix into this the research part. See Ms Lackey always does a ton of research and you can tell. In that century there were a collection of books by an German author about the American wild west. They were hugely popular but well...not accurate. She has mixed in those books and real history along with the magic we all crave to give us a great tale.

I could write tons about this novel and how much I enjoyed the mix of wild west show, German myths and legends and faerie tales but why not just read it and enjoy. This series just keeps getting better and better IMO

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### **Steph says**

The new installment in the Elemental Masters series is a very loose retelling of Rapunzel. In that the only similarity between the original tale and the heroine of this novel is a tendency to hirsutism. There's no villain to speak of, no urgency to the plot, and random creature encounters supply some mild peril at intervals. Unlike the rest of the series, there's no romance, and the majority of the story takes place at a wild west show in Germany. It's a pleasant read, but definitely not one of the best in the series.

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### **? BookAddict ✎ La Crimson Femme says**

Having just finished the previous book in this series, I am not surprised to read the latest interpretation of

Rapunzel. This one is much more to my liking than the original. It still carries a similar dark theme to it as Giselle is orphaned and penniless. What I liked about this story is how a popular writer in Germany is incorporated into this book. It is amusing and I love what Ms. Lackey did with the Indians and Cowboy theme. I also liked seeing Rosanna in this book as a carryover. This world of elemental masters in Germany are more to my liking than the bloody Brits. This brotherhood of protectors with their lodges is better than the stuffy aristocratic English.

I like these series because the main characters are all females. And the females are different. Some are really strong some are not. This makes it more appealing to me to see the different types of women who can and will succeed independently.

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### **Kat Hooper says**

I'm probably done with this series.

review coming soon at [www.fantasyliterature.com](http://www.fantasyliterature.com)

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### **Wednesday says**

Like Blood Red (Elemental Masters #10), this book was another break from the old "sweet damsel in need who doesn't know she's magical comes upon the man/men who will save her and teach her about her magic and love while fixing all the problems" formula. Rosa from "Blood Red" also makes an appearance. This heroine also doesn't have a stated romance plot, though potential for one is alluded to at the end, which only increased my enjoyment.

This book is an allusion to Rapunzel, but it subverts most of the story, and the hair part is really only lightly touched upon. I think there could have been more done with that. Overall though, Giselle is a capable heroine just coming into her Mastery. Definitely read the Foreword if you like context for references. A lot of references are made to Karl May.

(view spoiler)

There's a near-rape in the book, so warning to anyone wishing to avoid that.

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### **OpenBookSociety.com says**

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/fr...>

Brought to you by OBS reviewer Omar

As the book's small description says, From a High Tower, has as the main plot the fairy tale of Rapunzel, but like all of the Elemental Masters stories, this story is more than the one you have seen in the kid's movies. The beginning of the book starts more closely to the original tale, as Giselle (our Rapunzel) is attacked by the man that she lets into her tower; he is about to rape her but her mother arrives in time to save her and

sends the man out the four floor tower window. Even though Giselle shows signs of becoming an Air Master in the future, her mother decides that she needs to know how to defend herself without the help of her magic or elementals, so she asks her friends of the Bruderschaft to train Giselle in the arts of hunting.

Years later, after the death of her mother, Giselle takes the persona of a young man to be able to enter shooting contests, and win some money to live by. But when her name doesn't appear in the logs of the army, a captain learns the truth and tries to take advantage of her. In her fear and rage, she ends up killing the man and flees the scene leaving behind the persona. With the help of a local Earth Master she is able to escape and ends up in an American traveling show. A couple of Slyphs point her to the direction of the shooting act and she is able to impress them, getting a job until winter with the show. But the shadow of her past still haunts her, as they never found the body of the man that attacked her in tower.

I liked this story in the Elemental Masters series, and the characters were great to read. Giselle over the course of the story changes a lot and manages to help her friends of the show. I liked that a reader could relate to her because of her fondest for books, and gets to experience and meet American people that she only read in them.

This time, there is not the same amount of magic being used compared to the other books, but the magic shown is very interesting. We learn of more types of spells, charms, and even about the special properties of Giselle's hair. I also liked the scene where they encounter magical creatures, good and evil.

For fans of the series, we are able to see Rosamund again. Rosa is a Hunt Masters and the main character from the previous book, Blood Red. We see her as an agent of the Bruderschaft and later she becomes friends with Giselle. She is able to help Giselle finish her magic studies and summon greater forces.

The only things that I would have liked to see was Giselle's family in the background or just a mention of them by the author. Even though, some stories portrait the woman that takes the girl as evil; in this story, Giselle's mother ends up saving her life.

If you are a fan of Mercedes Lackey's work or the Elemental Masters series, I recommend you From a High Tower. In this story, a girl learns how harsh the world outside her comfort zone can be, that looks can hide evilness under them, and that her views are not always correct, but is willing to learn better.

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