



Competence

Gail Carriger

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Accidentally abandoned!

All alone in Singapore, proper Miss Primrose Tunstell must steal helium to save her airship, the *Spotted Custard*, in a scheme involving a lovesick werecat and a fake fish tail.

When she uncovers rumors of a new kind of vampire, Prim and the *Custard* crew embark on a mission to Peru. There, they encounter airship pirates and strange atmospheric phenomena, and are mistaken for representatives of the Spanish Inquisition.

Forced into extreme subterfuge (and some rather ridiculous outfits) Prim must also answer three of life's most challenging questions:

Can the perfect book club give a man back his soul?

Will her brother ever stop wearing his idiotic velvet fez?

And can the amount of lard in Christmas pudding save an entire species?

Competence Details

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Author : Gail Carriger

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From Reader Review Competence for online ebook

Melissa says

Competence, book the third in the Custard Protocol, very much lives up to the adventurous frivolity of the series. I enjoyed watching Primrose evolve and come in to her own. I can't wait to see how the Spotted Custard crew handles the new challenge aboard the decks. I loved meeting the new creatures in the world and finally getting a plausible cause for California's inane beauty standards. Brava, Miss Carriger, you've done it again!

All Things Urban Fantasy says

Review courtesy of All Things Urban Fantasy

COMPETENCE, the third book in the Custard Protocol series continues the excellent adventures in frivolity, fun, and danger that the crew of the Spotted Custard find themselves on. I absolutely love the world this series is set in and the expert combination of steampunk and romance is key to that for me. There is always more world for the Spotted Custard crew to discover and and it was fun to see a different take on vampires and vampire lore in Peru which involved dangerous yet amusing cultural clashes and misidentifications as one has come to expect from this series.

COMPETENCE shakes things up a bit and gives over the narrative to Primrose and Percy Tunstell which was a great idea as we get to see the characters we've grown to love from a different perspective and get to know the Tunstell siblings better. COMPETENCE is a turning point for Primrose as she comes to terms with her sexuality and the fact that keeping up appearances of propriety isn't all that important, especially with those she cares for. I liked seeing Primrose's journey of discovery and seeing her be the hero of a story in this series for once.

Her brother, Percy Tunstell takes on the other half of the narrative and he is an absolute delight! While he has always come off as slightly awkward or oblivious to social cues he is surprisingly insightful-much to the consternation of his sister.

I adored COMPETENCE and the story ends pretty neatly, or as neatly as this wonderfully quirky series can. Luckily this is not the end for the crew of the Spotted Custard since there are still some loose story threads that need to be tied up. I'm especially excited to see what is in store for Percy in RETICENCE.

Roo Barb says

can't wait!

Gianna says

I think I'm falling a bit out of love with this writer. I still love the world she created for these books, but I don't like the characters as much as with her other series, so it all becomes a bit... silly. If not frustrating. The plot of the book is almost forgotten, so the drive of the book is the romance and the two pov's, which I both didn't enjoy, an issue that this entire series has had for me. Such a shame, since I loved the first two series so much.

iam says

4.5 stars

What a delightful addition to the *Custard Protocol* series!

I knew from the very first book that I would love Primrose and Percy, so when I heard that books 3 and 4 would be from their perspective I was delighted. *Competence* focuses more on Prim, while book 4, *Reticence*, will have Percy at its center.

The story is closed in itself and only loosely guides the book's events. The crew of the *Spotted Custard* starts out in Singapore with a dangerous lack of helium in the dirigible's balloon, but eventually takes course towards South America, specifically Peru, where they are to find and save a local species of vampires from extinction.

The plot is very much driven by the characters, mainly Prim, who is a delight, but who's ever present armor of propriety is in danger of cracking under werelioness Tasherit Sekhmet's not-so-proper attentions. She doesn't know what she wants, or maybe she does, but what she's sure of is that she DOES want something that she really shouldn't. All while organizing the current adventure.

Percy is equally delightful and I adored the parts written from his POV. Other than his twin sister he doesn't care what others think about him at all. He knows he is intellectually superior to everyone on the ship, and it's not arrogance when it's the truth, right? He's always in pursuit of new scientific discoveries and can be overly direct bordering on rude, and he cares about little else besides that, while at the same time he is also incredibly perceptive about what is going on with the people around him - sometimes even knowing what they want better than they do.

Then there's Tasherit, fierce werelioness who's absolutely smitten and determined to claim Prim as hers; Rue, captain of the ship and adventurous as ever, knowing she can rely on her best friend since childhood and there for her when she needs her; Anitra, a drifter born in the skies living her life the way she never dared to hope for; Rodrigo, technically not a member of the crew but their prisoner given that he tried to kill them, templar upbringing and all; and many more old and new faces (though mostly old ones, so I wouldn't recommend reading this as a standalone despite the story being rather self-contained.)

I loved the interactions between all these different characters, the nuanced friendships between each set of them: new-found allies, deep bonds of affection and trust, rivals with a long history, long-suffering but loving siblings, and many more.

I particularly enjoyed Rue and Prim's friendship, Prim and Percy's sibling relationship, and Percy's bond with his cat Footnote.

The writing is excellent as always from this author, and the typical humor is there as well, with countless great quotes. I marked a lot of places in the book because they were funny, insightful or simply wanted to be able to revisit them.

What I especially adored about *Competence* was the way it explores these young adults' sexualities (all protagonists are in their early twenties). The previous books already did a good job of that with Rue, but there it was more about a young woman who wants to discover the pleasures of sex, while in *Competence* it focuses more on the actual sexuality.

Percy is very self-assured in his sexuality (he conducted thorough research and experiments in the past) but Prim is.... not. At the start of the book she has a lot of internalized homophobia, and it's heartbreaking at times. She knows what society expects of her and is very concerned with how she is perceived and what is considered 'proper' - and she's very well aware that her lack of interest in men is *not* considered proper at all. How her lack of DISinterest in women is considered... she doesn't even want to think about it. Which is hard with a beautiful and very distracting werelioness prancing around her, doing everything to get her attention...

It was heartbreaking to see her struggle with self-acceptance, but I liked how it was handled in the (happy) end and overall the book is light-hearted.

Something that I want to mention is the treatment of a trans character, specifically how they revealed they were trans. Detailed descriptions under the cut. (view spoiler)

In these books, "modern" labels as we use today are not used. Characters don't say they are gay, lesbian, or trans for that matter, but express their identity through other phrases, means or words. I guess this is to blame on the historical setting. I don't know which or if any labels were used in the mid to late 1800s, but some of the descriptions used instead are extremely questionable, and I found a few of them to be very trans exclusive and they might be considered harmful.

Ultimately I enjoyed reading *Competence* a lot. I liked the big queer cast, the characters, plot and setting, but some of the queer aspects could have been handled a lot better.

I'm very much looking forward to a lot of things in book 4: More of Percy, Prim and the (growing!!!!) crew, Percy's love interest, who of Sophoronia's schoolmates has a child that will join the *Spotted Custard*, and I hope Captain Lu makes a reappearance!

Kate says

Audio Version

As always, wonderfully read by Moira Quirk but this time it just wasn't enough. I was bored. I feel like the author had a lot to say about love and relationships and social pressures, but also had a lot of adventure to write. Unfortunately, there was about 70% love and relationships (and endless conversations about them), 20% etiquette/ fashion and 10% story. There were so many interesting things presented and then dropped. Or presented and then wrapped up off stage. While I love all the characters, it is likely because I fell in love in either the preceding series or in the first book in this series. If I had come in here, I'd have had no idea what type of person anyone was, why they were floating, or why they spent so much time yelling their intentions to each other when bag guys are within hearing range.

If your preference is for romance over story, then you may well still enjoy this installment. I give much support to the author for presenting a varied mix of loves, preferences and feelings, but I came here for the

adventure and was left wanting.

Wendy says

“Competence” revolves around the adventures of the crew of “the Spotted Custard” as they face a crisis with a slow leak in their dirigible; Prim Turnstell schemes to replenish the lost helium; the ethical reform of Prudence Akeldama’s cousin Rodrigo Tarabotti; and the rescue of a new type of vampire in Peru.

Revolving mainly around Prim Tunstell the plot tends to deal more with her romantic entanglement with the werecat Miss Sekhmet than the madcap adventures which seem to be secondary. Yet it’s intriguing and humorous, the action overflowing when chaos brews as a helium filled dropsy falls on the dirigible terrifying its passengers; the crew faces off with an enemy airship in the aethersphere; and Prue, Rodrigo and the werecat confront an enraged dying vampiric race. Intensity and suspense escalate near the end when Prim, Prue and Professor Perceival Tunstell set their minds on working out a plan to approach and save the Pistachos after the violent clash that send the Spotted Custard hovering out of reach above the hacienda.

Primrose Tunstell the airship's chief organizer and best friend of amiable, honest and shrewd Captain Prudence (Prue) Akeldama is self-effacing, fearless and insecure in her love life. Constantly she talks about wanting a husband, home and family to care for only to face a broken engagement and being romantically pursued by a lovesick werecat. Miss Tasherit Sekhmet an immortal is disciplined, fierce, loyal and stubborn in her pursuit of Prim whose twin brother Perceival Tunstell is a delight with his brilliance, arrogance and acerbic personality. While I wasn’t drawn into the quirky romantic aspect of the story which felt like nothing more than a strong statement about unconventional relationships, I did enjoy the family closeness of the crew and the complexity and depth of characters who added color and excitement to the adventure.

“Competence” is not my favorite of Gail Carriger’s novel but it is well-written, witty and a fun adventure. I would rate it a 3.5 but have given it a 4.0 because of the scale.

Carolyn F. says

Audiobook

Quirky funny book, like all of the other books I've read by the author. Very enjoyable. New kind of supernatural introduced. Slow moving romance came to fruition. I recommend the book/series.

Ashley *Hufflepuff Kitten* says

Oh gosh oh gosh oh gosh there's a cover and a synopsis and a release date eeeeeeeeeep <3 <3

Lizzy (Bent Bookworm) says

squee I can't waaaaait!!

Alicia says

Why does Miss Gail DO THIS TO ME

Linniegayl says

I listened to this in audio. As always, Moira Quirk was a delightful narrator. I wasn't convinced I would enjoy this entry in the Custard Protocol series, as I knew it was Prim's story (the daughter of Ivy Tunstell, Vampire Queen and best friend of Alexia from the Parasol Protectorate series). And I'll admit, the opening chapters in Singapore were a bit slow for me focusing almost completely on Prim and Tasherit. Tasherit is clearly still in love with Prim, and Prim -- while attracted -- is resisting her.

However, I was quickly won over to the story, as we learn a lot more about Prim; I never guessed that she's as close in personality to Alexia as any of the other characters could get. We also get a number of sections told from Percy's point of view, which was fun.

Once Prim and Tasherit get back on board the ship, they learn they're being sent to Peru to investigate -- and perhaps rescue -- a rare group of vampires under attack there.

I enjoyed the character development, not just of Prim and Percy, but also of much of the rest of the crew.

My only problem? The end of the book wraps things up so neatly for most of the major characters, that I'm afraid this may be the last in the series! Oh NO!!!!

This is an A- for me, and I can't wait to read Ms. Carriger's next book, no matter who it features.

Asia says

I don't know what it is with "Custard Protocol" series but I don't enjoy it as much as other Gail Carriger's books. I like them but some things bother me and sadly, it's just not on the level of "Parasol Protectorate" (which is one of my favorite series ever!).

Siobhan says

Gail Carriger is my go-to author for steampunk reads. Her Parasol Protectorate series was insanely addictive, a total joy to read. Her Finishing School series was also a wonderful read, and whilst it wasn't to the same level as the Parasol Protectorate series it was really enjoyable. In truth, The Custard Protocol series is my least favourite series from the author. For me, The Custard Protocol is lacking in the punch that made me enjoy the prior series so much. It's enjoyable and has the usual Gail Carriger elements, but it is not what I'd hoped it would be.

Despite how The Custard Protocol series is my least favourite, both Prudence and Imprudence were enjoyable enough for me to round my three-point-five-star ratings up to four-star ratings. With all that was opened up in the first two books in The Custard Protocol, I'd been hoping book three would be a solid four-star rating. Sadly, for me, Competence is my least favourite Gail Carriger read.

Although fun, Competence has a very different feel to it than the other Gail Carriger books I have read. Usually, Gail Carriger offers up a variety of things in her stories – mystery, action, romance, drama, humour, and plenty of supernatural goodies – yet it felt as though Competence removed some of these elements to focus on just one.

You see, Competence was a great read exploring sexuality and identity in the steampunk world. I cannot fault Gail Carriger for diversity and exploring aspects that are often overlooked in these kinds of books. However, I feel as though the focus on this meant other aspects of the story were not as well done as they usually are. In particular, I feel as though the adventure and supernatural worldbuilding was rather lacking. These things were there, but they were minimal, preventing me from loving the story in the way I had hoped to.

As I said, Gail Carriger brought in the diversity and explored it really well, I cannot fault her for this. I simply feel as though the rest of the story was lacking the usual elements that leave me loving Gail Carriger's books. Hence, Competence was not what I had hoped it would be and disappointed me to some degree.

I'm curious to see what the fourth book in The Custard Protocol series brings, but I'm not as excited about the continuation of this series as I was about the Parasol Protectorate and Finishing School series.

Bart says

Actual rating: 4.00
