



A Blight of Mages

Karen Miller

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Hundreds of years before the great Mage War, a land lies, unknowing, on the edge of catastrophe...

Barl is young and impulsive, but she has a power within that calls to her. In her city, however, only those of noble blood and with the right connections learn the ways of the arcane. Barl is desperate to learn-but her eagerness to use her power leads her astray and she is banned from ever learning the mystic arts.

Morgan holds the key to her education. A member of the Council of Mages, he lives to maintain the status quo, preserve the mage bloodlines, and pursue his scholarly experiments. But Barl's power intrigues him-in spite of her low status.

Together, he realizes they can create extraordinary new incantations. Morgan's ambition and Barl's power make a potent combination. What she does not see is the darkness in him that won't be denied.

A Blight of Mages is the new novel set in the world of Karen Miller's bestselling debut *The Innocent Mage*.

A Blight of Mages Details

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Author : Karen Miller

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From Reader Review A Blight of Mages for online ebook

Paige says

I remember when I found out there was a prequel to the Kingmaker, Kingbreaker books. The moment was full of that giddy "oooooooh" tingly feeling. Yes, I knew the ending before reading it, but that did nothing to detract from this book. If anything, it made me even more excited to dive in. Legends have always been a point of particular fascination for me, and all the bits and pieces about Barl and Morgan in the Kingmaker/breaker books engrossed me, left me wanting more.

And I got more!

I found it a bit implausible when Barl found out what had been happening in the wider world, and some of the conflicts between characters (Morgan/his dad, Barl/her brother) were hammered on repeatedly. But those are my only real complaints about the book.

It is otherwise a fantastic (in both senses of the word), epic tale - good and evil in the form of people, and full of intensely spot-on characterization. Plus the magic! The clocks make me drool, a little bit, for the thought of wanting to see a real one made by Barl.

Shira Karp says

This book started off lulling me into a false sense of comfort- I thought I'd picked up a pulp fantasy novel, an easy read where I know the cookie cutter plot and the joy is really in getting to know the new characters and how this world works. About halfway through this book I realized that they would accomplish everything I was expecting no further than 60% through at that rate and I began to get worried that they would just drag that part out through the rest of the book. Then I got slapped upside the head by a major plot twist... which just kept on coming. It was delightfully refreshing to not be sure what was going to happen next in a fantasy novel about mages.

I found the ending quite abrupt with some major unaddressed plot points, which I knew would lower my rating if a sequel was never written, but when I started reading reviews on Amazon I discovered this book is actually a prequel to a series Karen Miller wrote called "Kingmaker, Kingbreaker", the first book being called "The Innocent Mage". I wonder if I would have enjoyed this book less or more if I'd read that series first, but at least now I know I can look forward to those unresolved plot points being the basis for that series when I get ahold of it!

Britny Brooks says

This is the back story on Barl and Morgan that sets up the whole conflict for Asher in the Kingmaker Kingbreaker series(book:Kingmaker, Kingbreaker: The Omnibus Edition|13074864)and then again later in the Fisherman's Children The Prodigal MageThe Reluctant Mage This book was one of the best out of all five books combined. Why? Because of Morgan Delfrey, that's why. I don't think I have ever loved and hated a character so much that I think I made myself kind of sick about it (I also can assume that that might

be how Barl felt about the whole thing). However, my recommendation is that you DO NOT start the series with this book. This is one of those times where the prequel needs to be read at the end so that you don't spoil your original concept of the story. However, it is your decision in the end--just make sure you read it last.

You won't be sorry.

Connie53 says

Dit boek heeft voor- en nadelen. Het verhaal is spannend en vreemd, maar de personages zijn soms onuitstaanbaar in hun arrogantie. Zo vind Barl zichzelf de grootste magiër ooit en dat is ze ook wel, maar ze zegt het wel erg vaak. Morgan heeft precies hetzelfde probleem. En dat maakt dit boek voor mij een 7 en geen 8, maar halve punten geven kan hier niet.

Adela Bezemer-Cleverley says

I think this might have actually been the first time I've ever read a prequel to a series. It's kind of a unique experience (assuming you've read the series first) because you already know how it will end, and more beyond that; you know the future of the characters you're reading about as well as the future of their world. I expected this to cause me to be more detached from the story and not be as fully invested in the characters and their predicaments as I was with the rest of the mage books, but I soon discovered this was not the case.

One begins reading *A Blight of Mages* from the frame of hating Morgan as the manifestation of evil and worshipping Barl as the saviour of the people you love. Then you are slapped in the face--and hopefully slightly amused, as I was--by Barl's abrasive and arrogant demeanour (something you expect and receive from Morgan, but you don't expect from Barl), her rashness and her somewhat selfish (at first) outlook on life. I felt so bad for Remmie throughout the whole book.

And then there's Morgan, who I grew to like in the first quarter or so of the book. Although we did see things from his point of view in the later books, that was the view of a man driven insane by grief and fear and power as well as a skewed sense of morality. The Morgan we meet early on in *A Blight of Mages* is not that man. But because we know what he will become, we are more sensitive to his actions and decisions, and we can clearly see when the spark of corruption begins to take. We can also see where Barl begins to become wary of Morgan's plans (even before she gets lost in them and blocks the unpleasantness from her mind).

I think because of the fact that we already know about Barl's inevitable betrayal of Morgan and Morgan's descent into wickedness it had less of an emotional impact on me (compared to everything in the other books), but there were still moments of shock and horror intertwined with the little nods as expected events were checked off the list. Rumm, for example... though I did suspect that his ending might come about in that way, that sense didn't change the horrificness (shh, I know that's not a real word) of the turning point which was his death. The abrupt loss of the councillors was a shock too, as well as the brief mention that all of Remmie's old pupils were lost before the Doranen reached Lur.

I liked the insight we get into the beginning of the Circle and Jervale, which was something I was not really expecting to be a focus-point in this book.

In terms of characters, I have to say my favourite character was Remmie. Yes, Barl was the one who saved the world, but she was also the one who helped to kickstart its destruction in the first place, and I was not happy with her most of the time--especially when she was being cold to Remmie.

There are two things I am curious about after reading A Blight of Mages:

- I'd like to know if anyone has actually read it before reading Kingmaker, Kingbreaker and Fisherman's Children, and what the experience was like in that case.
- I'm really curious about the development of the social/political system that we see in "modern day" Lur (ie. in Kingmaker, Kingbreaker). Yes, due to the power and arrogance of the Doranen mages it is not surprising that they become the upper class over the Olken, but I want to know how the monarchy began! I think I just assumed, when reading the later books, that the system was modelled after the way things were in old Dorana. But there were no kings in Dorana! The country was ruled by two Councils. So how did the monarchy come into place in Lur? This would be something to ask Karen Miller if there was ever a chance...

Anyway, if anyone actually reads this review you can maybe give your opinion on these matters? That would be cool.

In the mean time, I'm keeping my eye out for more of Karen Miller's books! I don't think I'll ever tire of them.

Erika says

It took me almost three months to finish the "Lur Saga" as I'm calling A Blight of Mages, The Innocent Mage, The Awaken Mage, The Prodigal Mage, and the Reluctant Mage. I read them backwards, starting with the Kingmaker, Kingbreaker books and ending it with A Blight of Mages. I recommend for anyone interested in reading the Lur Saga, that you do it that way, because the ending of A Blight of Mages is much more satisfying that way than if you read them in chronological order.

I honestly enjoyed A Blight of Mages, and after the Reluctant Mage I was a bit surprised.

It was fun picking out names of future characters and putting the pieces of the puzzle together, A Blight of Mages pretty much explains why Asher was born the way he was. But you won't be able to pick it up if you didn't read Kingmaker, Kingbreaker.

The first half was engaging, the middle was fast pace because you got so caught up in Barl's whirlwind mageworking/romance with Morgan and you kept wondering about that immortality spell, when will Morgan marry Barl, what is Morgan working on.

Then the third part, the ending arch... it was heartbreak, sad and painful to read, because if you read the other four books of the Lur Saga, then you KNOW what happens. You KNOW the consequences of Barl and Morgan's actions, the after effects of the Weather Magics and the Wall. All the things Jervale fears will come to past.

Hence when you read that last line of the book, your heart breaks. Because you know the entire sacrifice that Barl and the Olken are making. And... it's so... heart breaking.

Though over all, it was a great book and the reread value is very high. Though next time I read the Lur Saga I'll read it in chronological order.

I recommend it to anyone. The Lur Saga is definately more enjoyable than The Godsspeaker Trilogy. Hekat was just unlikeable about midway though Empress and Rhian... you liked in the second book but I couldn't stand her in the third.

Bob says

I was expecting simply an interesting read. The author was more interested in an epic. Endless conversations & political machinations. Might as well read Ludlum. Intriguing concept, and very well written, but so much was simply boring, and it took almost 200 pages to start to get anywhere. Also, it would be nice if the publisher would say somewhere that this is one of a series, with no real ending. All-in-all, a very frustrating book.

Kevin says

Another case of being thwarted by Goodreads's integer-only star system. I'd like to give this a 3.5 or 3.75.

Elizabeth Giosia says

First and foremost, I must say this: While this book may technically be a prequel to the series *Kingmaker* / *Kingbreaker*, for the love of all that is holy, at least read *The Innocent Mage* and *The Awakened Mage* before reading *A Blight of Mages*. I've noticed an alarming number of reviews that give the book a low amount of stars, because they weren't prepared for the violence and changes in one of the main characters, which easily would have been remedied if the original series had been read before the prequel. Additionally, there's also a second series in the same world, called *The Fisherman's Children*, with two books called *The Prodigal Mage* and *The Reluctant Mage*, both of which are fantastic and continue the story of Lur and its people magnificently. Personally, I suggest reading all of the other books before reading *A Blight of Mages*.

So, let's get down to it. *A Blight of Mages*, as I've said, is a prequel to the story set out in *Kingmaker* / *Kingbreaker*, which was continued in *The Prodigal Mage* and *The Awakened Mage*. (view spoiler)

This book was like a train wreck for me. I knew what was going to happen, but I didn't expect it to happen the way that it did, and I couldn't look away. *A Blight of Mages* made me sigh like a giddy schoolgirl, and sob as though my heart were fit to break. A few reviews I've read mention the "explicit" sex scenes, but I'll

be darned if I could find one that was actually incredibly detailed. Overall, I enjoyed this book quite a bit; it was good, and tugged at my heartstrings, and made me angry, and ... I'm glad that I read it. It gave me insight into the characters who came after, and deepened my love for this fictional universe.

Kate says

I'm not sure how to rate this book, because I liked the first half or so, and yet really didn't care for the second half (which I basically skimmed). I picked it up at the library because it sounded interesting, and I liked the first few pages.

For the first half, I found the characters likeable, although quite flawed. I liked the setting, and found the world fascinating. The magic is interesting, and I enjoyed the idea of magicians as artisans, who not only create standard spells of warding and such, but use specific magics to create specific items, such as glass clocks that keep perfect time.

I should also note that the sex scenes were fairly explicit (something I dislike reading).

The second half I found horribly dark. I tend to shy away from books that involve things like entire countries being destroyed, and the crazy evil magician who was responsible working to free himself to create further destruction. I understand how it fit into the story, but it was much too dark for my taste.

I did enjoy the complexity of the story, how (view spoiler) But overall it was so dark and depressing that I don't think I'll be reading anything else by Karen Miller.

Christoffer Lernö says

Horrible.

The story of two greatly flawed and arrogant persons growing more arrogant and flawed, and finally destroying everything. It might be an accurate prequel to the Innocent Mage, but there is nothing of the sympathetic characters of that book contained in this book. Maybe others enjoy their protagonists mean and self-destructive, but for me there was no joy in reading this story.

I put off reading this book many times, and eventually had to force myself to finish it, just so I could put it behind me. Not a good sign.

Craig says

Really just not very good. Page after page, chapter after chapter of several very unpleasant characters doing very little, and when they do, it's as unpleasant as you might expect. 400 pages in and it was clear it wasn't going to get any better. I liked the Innocent and the Awakened Mage books a great deal, but the author's readers would have been better served by a 10 page prologue than this 600 page unpleasant and uninteresting prequel.

Robert says

Seems I should have read The Fisherman's Children first, but as far as I can make out, this is the same world but unconnected. I enjoyed the Godspeaker series, I laughed my way through the Rogue Agent series, but this book is a bit special - almost two books' worth and very powerful. I don't think I'm giving too much away to say I felt a premonition of tears to come through most of the book, but I kept hoping for a happy end and we nearly made it.

I've given it 5 stars, but I do have a few reservations. Quite a few of the characters are thoroughly unlikeable, but it's OK while I'm in their heads. When I see them through the eyes of other characters, it is more difficult to maintain my sympathy. There was a point near the end where I almost lost it with Barl. Talking of which: the names puzzle me. Most of them, like Barl, are very inventive and new, so why a Welsh name like Morgan? Authors are funny at times.

Jordan says

I loved this book up until about 90%. I think having read the rest of the Kingmaker, Kingbreaker series and knowing the end result made it very 'euhhhh' for me. I pretty much skimmed through the last 10% and caught bits and pieces. I loved the character development throughout the rest of it. Reading the other two books you know what Morgan Danfey is like. Then trying to reconcile that with the one you see it's really sad actually but it entralls you into it even more as you watch his relationship with Barl grow and transform.

Jen Kayna (Habitat for Happiness) says

I am officially a huge fan of villain backstories!!! A Blight of Mages is the story of how the villain Morg and the ancient saviour Barl from the Innocent Mage series came to be. This story is set 500 years before The Innocent Mage and is a fascinating story of how Morg and Barl went from lovers to enemies. What I loved most about this story was how so many questions that I had left over from the original series were answered. It all wrapped up so nicely and made the world Karen Miller created seem so authentic. I definitely recommend reading this book AFTER reading the entire Innocent Mage Series (Kingmaker Kingbreaker duology and Fisherman's Children duology) since it was so great being able to connect key moments from the other books to things happening in this one. I would have given this book five stars if it hadn't been for the slow start of the story. It's worth pushing through the first 100-200 pages to get to the good stuff though!

Elaine says

I enjoy Karen Miller - but I do understand some of the complaints about her work. She does have a tendency to replay the same conversation between 2 characters again and again like Morgan and his Father and Barl & her brother - I think she was trying to show us the character development ie. how Morgan could do nothing right by his Father but it could have been handled much more succinctly. What I did enjoy was that there were no heroes in this book - all the characters were unlikeable in one way or another - Barl was so arrogant

and blind to the worth of anyone else including her own brother who was at least as powerful as she and she never learnt her lesson. Her brother Remmie though an upright citizen was as dull as dishwater and as timid as a mouse. The other characters were all unlikeable snobs. One glaring fault in the world Ms Miller created which irritated me considerably, was that no-one other than Barl questioned the unfair class heirarchy that was in force, a heirarchy based on birth not magical power. The unranked mages were at least as powerful as the ranked mages even if they didn't get the same level of education - Barl would not have been the only rebel - in fact that sort of system would not have been sustainable!

Putting that irritant aside I enjoyed reading how Morgan gradually fell into madness - how his evil actually came from a desire to do good or what he thought was good, but got corrupted by his own bigotry. Overall enjoyable - If Ms Miller could just sort out some of her character dialogue issues it would have been an excellent book

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flag

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

Originally posted here.

Despite its length, I got through the book in four days, even though I've been busy with other things as well. The writing, characters and world-building all caught my imagination and would not let me go. Before I was even done reading the book (a couple hundred pages in), I went onto Goodreads and marked her other books to read, because I loved reading this so much.

Miller's writing is fantastic. I love the way she strings words together. Her diction and syntax both resonate with me. Obviously, she's fairly wordy--otherwise filling up so many pages is tricky--but I love verbosity. Miller is also funny; it's not the main point of the novel, but there were several lines that definitely made me laugh.

Her characterization is like insanely good. Barl, the main character, if you can choose but one of the cast to focus on, is 22 and as fiery a heroine as anyone could desire. Possessed of mage skills that outstrip those ranked above her (because Dorana's rankings are based not on skill but on status, which sounds a lot like our world), Barl desperately wants to be judged for her talent. She dreams of attending the based college for mages in Dorana, but is repeatedly denied. Barl is passionate, hard-working, cleverer than pretty much everyone, arrogant, stubborn, and bemoans those with a 'child-ridden fate' (40). Of course, I loved her.

I use her solely to illustrate the awesomeness of the characters. In lesser detail, here are some other wonderfully drawn characters. Morgan Danfey is prideful, a bit sexist, alluring and powerful. Remmie, Barl's twin brother, lacks her overt strength, but possesses serious loyalty and steadfastness. Venette is a nosy matchmaker, but she has people's best interests at heart; she is loving, and blinded by those emotions. Everyone feels real and believable, and, like with real people, you don't necessarily always know where you stand.

Ordinarily, I am not often surprised by books. Most plot twists are like ummm, yeah, you foreshadowed that like crazy on page 10 and expect me to be surprised? Well, recently, there have been quite a few that have swept the rug from under my feet, and *A Blight of Mages* falls into that category along with the YA novel *Never Enough*. With Miller's book, it's not so much that I couldn't see these possibilities coming as her setup made me root so hard for the other outcome that I was still blindsided.

Something to know: this book is seriously dark, which is part of what surprised me, because it's pretty light and then WHAM. Don't get too attached to anyone, because like a lot of good storytellers, Miller is not afraid to do terrible things to her characters, and there's a good chance some will not survive. There are some parts of this that are going to be haunting my thoughts for some time to come.

A Blight of Mages is a prequel to Miller's *Kingmaker*, *Kingbreaker* series, which I really wish I had on hand like RIGHT NOW, because THAT ENDING. Anyway, if you like epic fantasy, you should really, really go get this or *Innocent Mage* posthaste (depending on whether you like to read series in publication or chronological order).

Jo says

This was another book I picked up as a possible 2012 Australian Women Writers Challenge book, but which, due to my extra criteria, did not make it to my list of 10 books I read specifically for the challenge.

I loved this book. I have read the original two *Kingmaker*/*Kingbreaker* books (*The Innocent Mage* and *The Awakened Mage*, the latter of which is published as *Innocence Lost* in Australia) and enjoyed them, but I think I enjoyed this one a little more. It took me a while to get into, as I found it moved a little slowly, but once Barl and Morgan meet, the sparks really do fly.

While a reader who has read the *Kingmaker*/*Kingbreaker* books knows the final outcome, sie will not know exactly how the characters get there or precisely what happens along the way. This means Ms Miller is still able to create suspense within the story - and provide an explanation for certain aspects of the *Kingmaker*/*Kingbreaker* books.

Also, I really enjoyed the fact that one of the main characters - and the most important one - is a woman. One

thing that has frustrated me about Ms Miller's writing in the past is that every book of hers I have read so far has had a male protagonist. While her female secondary characters are present, important and interesting, this does not detract much from a book being all about a man, and in fact, led to my frustration, because she obviously could write such great female characters. This book proves that, if it needed proving, and it was simply refreshing to have everyone worrying and talking about a woman.

One thing I enjoy about Ms Miller's writing, whether she is writing as Karen Miller or K.E. Mills, is that, even though her books are not set in Australia, her tone and her characters' slang (especially, in these books, that of the Olken) takes much from Australian tone and slang. It makes the books recognisable for an Australian in the way many other books in this genre are not.

I'm now looking forward even more to reading the sequel series to the Kingmaker/Kingbreaker books, the Fisherman's Children books (The Prodigal Mage and The Reluctant Mage), and will definitely be seeking out other works as well.

Bookdragon Sean says

I read this (the prequel) before any of the other books in the series, and I must say it is by far the best one.

There were a lot of problems with *The Innocent Mage* and even more so with *The Awakened Mage* though here Karen Miller gets the tone just right. I would go as far to say that this works perfectly well as a stand-alone novel. You don't really need to know anything else about the series to enjoy this one. The story is strong and the characters are actually interesting (for a change.) So I would recommend ignoring the rest of the series and to just stick with this one (like I wish I had done.)

Character development is a word that gets thrown around an awful lot by book reviewers. Does a character need to grow for the book to be good? Food for thought, though these characters *truly* grow: they grow into gods. One is evil and driven by destruction and dominance, the other is benevolent and seeks to thwart her counterpart. This all sounds pretty standard, but what made this so compelling was the fact that in their mortal lives these two deities were once the best of friends and lovers: they were soulmates.

Seeing how they transformed slowly over time and eventually pushed themselves into disaster gave the plot a bitter resolution. From very early on it was so clear that this situation could never end well. The lovers were two different and their powers were pushing them in very different directions. The attraction was strong, and it was easy to see why it was there. In the beginning they brought the best out of each other, which made it even more painful and dramatic when things went awry. The ending was everything it needed to be.

I only wish that Karen Miller wrote the rest of the series this well. Perhaps her skills as writer improved with time or perhaps she finally understood what makes for a well written character. Barl was forced to choose between saving innocent lives and the madman she absolutely adored. He became corrupted by power, though she still loved him. And although they became enemies, the feelings were stronger than ever. As such the story was so very tense and the emotions very real.

I recommend this to those looking for a quick slice of fantasy action, and especially those who enjoy books about magic and magic schools such as *The Name of the Wind*, *The Wizard of Earthsea* and, of course, *Harry Potter*.

Claire says

Amazing book! Over 600 pages and I read the whole thing in a day because I didnt want to put it down. You could really identify and sympathise with the characters. Well most of them, two I just wanted to slap lol
Made me want to read the rest of her books which didnt appeal at first glance.
