



A Hint of Hydra

Heidi Lang , Kati Bartkowiak

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Thirteen-year-old chef Lailu Loganberry must stop a war between the elves and scientists in this follow-up to *A Dash of Dragon*, which *Kirkus Reviews* calls “a recipe for success.”

It’s the Week of Masks, a festival held to chase away evil spirits. But Lailu doesn’t have time to worry about demons. She has bigger fish to fry—or rather, griffons, now that she’s been asked to prepare a mystical feast for the king’s executioner, Lord Elister.

Unfortunately Lailu’s meal is overshadowed by the scientists’ latest invention: automatons, human-shaped machines that will respond to their masters’ every order. Most people are excited by the possibilities, but the mechanical men leave Lailu with a bad taste in her mouth.

Even worse, the elves still blame the scientists for the attacks on them weeks ago, and Lailu worries that the elves might be cooking up revenge. So when she and her sorta-rival-turned-almost-friend Greg stumble across the body of a scientist, the elves are the prime suspects. With help from Greg, her best friend Hannah, and the sneaky, winking spy Ryon, Lailu has to discover the truth behind the murder, and soon—because hostilities between the elves and the scientists are about to boil over faster than hydra stew.

And just ask any chef: war is bad for business.

A Hint of Hydra Details

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From Reader Review A Hint of Hydra for online ebook

Meggan says

3.5 Stars. I liked it a little more than the first one. Interesting ideas and interesting magic

Kimberlee says

Lailu Loganberry is back! Since her last adventure hunting dragons and making deadly deals with elves, Lailu has continued to keep delicious monster cuisine at her very own restaurant. But hostilities between the Scientists and the Elves haven't simmered down! The scientists have unveiled a brand new invention that might be more dangerous than people expect, the elves are DEFINITELY up to something, and people are turning up dead. Lailu and her friends once again get pulled into a situation to hot to handle. Will they get through the Week of Masks alive? What secrets are Ryon hiding? Will Lailu ever become a Master Chef?

I'm really loving this series. Lailu is smart and confident, but still a little rash and stubborn. Her interactions with her friends are real and engaging. While there doesn't seem to be a ton of depth in the world building in the Loganberry series, the books are just plain fun to read. I'm definitely glad I got to read an advanced copy of *Hint of Hydra*.

Amanda says

-Thanks to the @kidlitexchange network for the review copy of this book— all opinions are my own-

A Hint of Hydra by Heidi Lang & Kati Barkowski is an unique, fun filled fantasy adventure! In the story, a talented cook called Lailu, who also hunts magical beasts for recipes, is faced with challenges as the scientists, led by Starling, create new automatons and inventions, and the elves living in the city threaten war. When a scientist ends up dead, the truth of what may be going on begins to come out. Lailu is forced to figure out the mystery and confront her own fears of losing her closest friends in this exciting tale.

As a lover of fantasy, I really enjoyed the twist on magical aspects of the elves and the magical creatures. The world is exciting and unique in the way that it is built. I enjoyed the story being told from a cook's perspective rather than an up and coming 'hero' as many fantasy stories tend to be told in. This book has fun characters and takes the reader on a journey of solving a mystery. Try it out if you would a new twist on a fantasy world!

Briana says

I didn't review *A Dash of Dragon* for the blog, but I enjoyed the characters, world building, and even the crazy plot line enough that I jumped at the chance to read the sequel when I saw it at the library. While the motivations and actions of the characters are still a bit unclear in this installment, a criticism Krysta leveled at *A Dash of Dragon*, I couldn't help but find that all the craziness really made me think.

Basically, although I read the book because I think it's entertaining and like the idea of a young chef running a top restaurant while also becoming involved with national intrigue, I kept reading because so much of it seems unique in middle grade, and I started thinking a lot about side points in the book.

First, I find the idea that protagonist cooks mystical creatures like dragon, griffin, hydra, etc. as "exotic food" really interesting. This is a world where few people eat dragon basically because dragons are hard to kill. However, none of the magical creatures eaten are the anthropomorphic, wise you get in other books. Indeed, a lot of them are basically pests, and Lailu and her fellow chefs are doing citizens a favor by hunting some down and turning them into tasty dishes. The book tries to be responsible about discussing hunting and the ethics of killing animals, but I was also just fascinated by the idea of a world where magical creatures are both awe-inspiring (you often need a hero to kill them when they're menaces) but also kind of boring (people regularly eat them when possible).

Second, I am fascinated by the magic vs. science narrative in the book. The plot line is somewhat convoluted and would be difficult to explain in a review, particularly without giving spoilers, but the gist is that the scientists (basically a new phenomenon in Lailu's country) are feuding with the elves. It would be so easy for the authors to make one of these sides "bad" and have a "science is the way of the future" narrative or a "the world needs magic" narrative. However, they don't do this. In fact, there are so many villains on both sides and so many misuses of both science and magic that you can't even say the message is that "science and magic both have their place." Well, the book does point out good on each side, but the whole issue is more complicated than one would think, and I've spent a lot of time pondering what the book is trying to say about science and magic.

Admittedly, I was actually put off by this at first because I couldn't tell if the science vs. magic think was complicated because the authors are trying to say something nuanced or if it's complicated because the authors are nuts and threw a bunch of plot points at the page that sound dramatic but don't really make much sense in the grand scheme of things. Ultimately, however, the English major in me decided it didn't matter what the authors intended to do: if the book says something interesting, it says something interesting, even if it's "accidental" and the authors weren't aiming for it at all.

This book series isn't perfect, but it's a lot of fun with all the drama and spying and intrigue and murder and explosions. I like the characters, and I like the adventures they go on. Most of all, however, I like that a book got me thinking about representations of mythical creatures in fantasy and representations of confrontations between science and magic in fictional worlds.

Amy says

At least 4.5. I loved it! And there's a nice moment with Greg towards the end that made my heart so happy!

Alexandra Ott says

I loved A Dash of Dragon, so I had high expectations going into A Hint of Hydra, and it didn't disappoint! There's just as much adventure, magic, and humor here as in the first book. Lailu continues to be an amazing heroine, and some of my favorite characters from the first book--Greg! Ryon!--make appearances here as well. Readers who love adventure fantasy should make sure not to miss this series!

Allison says

Great book! I love the continuation of Lailu's story, and how the world of the series deepens and grows. The magic in the cooking, but especially the characters, connects me to the story, and I can't wait to read more!

Wendy MacKnight says

Lailu Loganberry is back! Heidi has another winner here, as our intrepid heroine is forced to deal with automatons, griffons, demons, elves, and scientists running amok! The whole shebang!

I loved this book! Heidi's storytelling is clever and heartwarming and smart! A worthy follow-up to a Dash of Dragon, which I also loved!

Julianne Dunn says

Another quality installation in the Lailu Loganberry story - full of intrigue, magic, and just sheer pluck (courtesy of Lailu). I love her reactions to situations and how willing she is to just fling herself into danger for her friends and, more importantly, ingredients for her recipes.

The only thing that bums me out about this book is that there is only one more in this series.

Alyssa says

I loved A Dash of Dragon, so I had high expectations going into A Hint of Hydra, and the sequel didn't disappoint! A Hint of Hydra had just as much adventure, magic, and humor here as the first book. Readers who love adventure fantasy should make sure not to miss this series!

Tiffiny says

I'd give this one 4.5 stars - can't wait for the next in the series!

Tara Goedjen says

I loved this book! It's got a little bit of everything -- dragons, chefs, elves, scientists -- and it all comes together in a hugely satisfying way. A Hint of Hydra is imaginative, funny, charming, and set in an all-around utterly delectable world. I'll be recommending it and A Dash of Dragon to all the MG readers in my life!

Katie Nelson says

A thrilling sequel!

After freeing herself, and her restaurant, from the clutches of the evil loan shark Mr. Boss, Lailu thought she could focus on her restaurant and friends. But when she discovers a dead body in the forest while hunting, she realizes that the feud between the elves and the scientists isn't over, and she might be caught in the middle of it.

I adored everything about this action packed story! Lailu is fierce and determined, but also a sympathetic character who tries to be brave but still faces all of the challenges of a typical pre-teen girl: friends, parents, and confusing boys. The story expands on the world of the first book, and readers learn more about the kingdom of Savoria and its enemies and history. The steam punk elements are clever and feel fresh and unique to this world, which is also inhabited by elves, pixies, and all kinds of delicious magical beasts.

I'd follow Lailu on a thousand adventures!

Meg says

What a sizzling sequel! I'd been looking forward to more of Lailu's adventures ever since *A Dash of Dragon*, and *A Hint of Hydra* delivers.

The world-building is creative and unique, the plot is zippy and full of surprises, and the characters are as charming as ever. I was especially happy to see more of Ryon; he's fast becoming my favorite (after Lailu, of course). The combination of magic and steampunk is delightful too.

I'd recommend this fun fantasy series to readers of all ages. Can't wait to see what else Lailu cooks up on her adventures!
