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Mask Of Shadows

by Linsey Miller

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From the Publisher: "I love every aspect of this amazing book—a genderfluid hero, a deadly contest, and vicious courtly intrigue. Get! Read! Now!" —Tamora Pierce, #1 New York Times bestselling author I Needed to Win. They Needed to Die. Sallot Leon is a thief, and a good one at that. But gender fluid Sal wants nothing more than to escape the drudgery of life as a highway robber and get closer to the upper-class—and the nobles who destroyed their home. When Sal steals a flyer for an audition to become a member of The Left Hand—the Queen's personal assassins, named after the rings she wears—Sal jumps at the chance to infiltrate the court and get revenge. But the audition is a fight to the death filled with clever circus acrobats, lethal apothecaries, and vicious ex-soldiers. A childhood as a common criminal hardly prepared Sal for the trials. And as Sal succeeds in the competition, and wins the heart of Ellise, an intriguing scribe at court, they start to dream of a new life and a different future, but one that Sal can have only if they survive.

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About The Author

Linsey Miller

Linsey Miller is a wayward biology student from Arkansas who has previously worked as a crime-lab intern, a neuroscience lab assistant, and a pharmacy technician. Her debut novel is Mask of Shadows. She can be found writing about science and magic anywhere that there is coffee.

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What We Say

An interesting fantasy debut that falters at the end. Sal is a thief, an orphaned kid with pluck and smarts (of course) but most of all a burning desire for revenge. Their homeland was sacrificed during a terrible battle: one dominant kingdom allowed the shadows -- fierce spectres left over when people were slaughtered -- to destroy Sal's entire land so that others could escape the terror. Now Sal has a chance to serve Our Queen as an assassin...and get close to the evil nobles who let Sal's people die. Note how I referred to Sal as "their." Our protagonist is not the first gender fluid figure in fantasy (the Fool in Robin Hobb's fantasies is fluid in gender and/or desire, for example) nor is Sal's indeterminate gender the "issue" here. It's

just a fact. Sometimes Sal dresses as a girl, sometimes a boy and sometimes prefers to be just "they." A useful skill for an assassin who wants to blend in and it's interesting to see different characters deal with this aspect of Sal. But it's not a driving factor in the story, though Sal's attraction to several women certainly proves to be. Unfortunately, it is the only distinctive element in the novel and not quite enough to power us through the rote plot. The monarchy created by Miller is familiar and the fact that magic has been "banished" leaves it rather mundane and hard to distinguish from a thousand other kingdoms. Plus, Sal's fight to survive a competition where would-be royal assassins kill each other off isn't interesting on its own or revealing of Sal's talents. To top off the problems, the climax is a dull depiction of Sal-follows-someone-and-overhears-them-explain-it-all scene. And yet, Sal proves a memorable figure and deserved a better book. Perhaps a sequel will have surer plotting and a more vivid sense of who Sal wants to be; then we will care about Sal as much as they do. -- Michael Giltz

What Others Say

"An intriguing world and a fantastically compelling main character make for a can't-miss debut. Miller's *Mask of Shadows* will make you glad you're not an assassin—and even gladder Sal is." - Kiersten White, *New York Times* bestselling author of *And I Darken* and *Now I Rise* "Compelling and relatable characters, a fascinating world with dangerous magic, and a dash of political intrigue: *Mask of Shadows* completely delivered. Fantasy fans will love this book." - Jodi Meadows, *New York Times* bestselling coauthor of *My Lady Jane* "Miller's gritty, lightning-paced debut features a rough-and-tumble yet movingly vulnerable protagonist: Sal is uncompromising in their convictions, and doesn't hesitate to kill when necessary but wishes to be more than just a weapon of vengeance. A complex but intriguing start to this planned duology." - Publishers Weekly "This is a memorable, sharply written character. While readers who identify on the GLBTQ spectrum may be easy fans as Miller handles Sal's identity with aplomb, that's certainly not the only point of note here; the impressive, intricate world building, tense action, and fierce competitors are equally strong." - The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books "Gory, well-plotted, suspenseful on every page, and poised for the sequel." - Kirkus "This fantasy's gender-fluid protagonist, Sal Leon, makes Miller's book worth picking up for diversity's sake alone. Her treatment of the gender issue is most notable in that it isn't really an issue... Violent and action-packed, this offering by first-time novelist Miller will circulate." - School Library Connection "Teen genre fiction featuring a strong gender-fluid main character." - School Library Journal More Praise for *Mask of Shadows*: A Bustle Most Anticipated YA of 2017! "Compelling and relatable characters, a fascinating world with dangerous magic, and a dash of political intrigue: *Mask of Shadows* completely delivered. Fantasy fans will love this book."—Jodi Meadows, *New York Times* bestselling coauthor of *My Lady Jane* "An intriguing world and a fantastically compelling main character make for a can't-miss debut. Miller's *Mask of Shadows* will make you glad you're not an assassin—and even gladder Sal is."—Kiersten White, *New York Times* bestselling author of *And I Darken* and *Now I Rise* "I love every aspect of this amazing book—a genderfluid hero, a deadly contest, and vicious courtly intrigue. Get! Read! Now!" —Tamora Pierce, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

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