



Mairelon the Magician

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Kim doesn't hesitate when a stranger offers her a small fortune to break into the travelling magician's wagon in search of a silver bowl. Kim isn't above a bit of breaking-and-entering. Having grown up a waif in the dirty streets of London-disguised as a boy!-has schooled her in one hard lesson: steal from them before they steal from you.

But there is something odd about this magician. He isn't like the other hucksters and swindlers that Kim is used to. When he catches her in the act, Kim thinks she's done for.

Until he suggests she become his apprentice. Kim wonders how tough it could be faking a bit of hocus pocus.

But Mairelon isn't an act. His magic is *real*.

Mairelon the Magician Details

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From Reader Review Mairelon the Magician for online ebook

Julie says

I'm actually reading the omnibus edition of both books 1 & 2, *A Matter of Magic* (which has the MOST BEAUTIFUL COVER!!). But something in me bristles at the idea of writing a combined review for two books, so logging separate editions it is!

So, *Mairelon the Magician*. I LOVED Patricia Wrede's *Dealing with Dragons*, so I was expecting a sort of similar airy witty writing? It's aimed at an older audience with more complex prose, but that just meant the writing is denser and more convoluted, and I found myself missing the slimmed-down style of the *Enchanted Forest Chronicles*.

The premise is so promising -- a Regency-era street urchin passing as a boy, taken in by a magician off to solve MYSTERIES -- but:

a) That utterly *abysmal* ending, where literally every single character ever mentioned spontaneously shows up and they all talk about the plot for a million pages. I was pretty good at tracking the 129387123 characters in the book, but utterly lost track of them and their schemes and plans and motives once you put them ALL in one single room together and had them all talking and expositioning over each other. It seemed like it was aiming for a comedic play on the typical British murder mystery & expository "parlour scene", but it was impossible to follow. I think if this had been adapted for screen, that whole sprawling scene would have played a LOT better when you could see who's who and follow the physical comedy.

b) There were so, so, so so many scenes of Kim or Kim/Mairelon hiding and watching things happen. SO MANY. The POV was third-person limited, when it seemed like the narrative really wanted it to be third-person omniscient -- but so much of the plot hinged on these eavesdropping/spying scenes. Which is such a passive way to drive plot forward. The leads never really *did* anything, besides be in the right place at the right time, and pass messages back and forth.

c) Mairelon and Kim seem barely fleshed-out as characters. As an example: (view spoiler)

d) The narration browbeat you with information sometimes, and mysteries that aren't mysteries. Most notably: (view spoiler)

e) The thieves' cant was really frustrating and overdone. It's possible to drop in lots of slang in a book, but when each sentence was loaded with like 4 of them, it was so distracting.

f) I thinnk the sequel is going to include (view spoiler)

I have a huge love for street thieves and urchins (*The Lies of Locke Lamora*!!), but this one just missed the mark with me. I'll probably read the sequel because, again, it's a combined edition, and it sounds like I might like that one more plot-wise.

Amy says

This was a fun story and yet, if you are familiar with Patricia C. Wrede, it feels a bit like...every other Patricia C. Wrede book you've read. Especially *Sorcery and Cecelia*. Lots of convoluted thieving cant, ridiculous characters, and an improbable climax all designed to heighten the absurdity of the situation. I

think if I read this book years ago I would have enjoyed it more. As it is, I saw some traces of Georgette Heyer and some elements of fun but never quite fell in love with it.

I do like Kim and Mairelon, though, and I immensely enjoyed the sequel. This is worth reading for that.

Katie says

This book felt so thoroughly mediocre. Which is unusual, I think. Most books have something that make them stand out more (in good or bad ways!), but this felt like just a collection of things that I like well enough, but that never became more than that.

Like, Regency era with magic! Orphan girl falls in with mysterious magician! But it never really sparked for me. There was stuff that was supposed to be all farce-like, but . . . it's not even that it felt flat. It was just THERE. Mediocre.

Oh well. I'll still read the next.

Mary Catelli says

In an alternate Regency, Kim is scouting out a wagon where an itinerant magician is performing his tricks. Once she knows how long he is out, she goes inside to check what he's got, a spying mission a real toff sent her on. When she tries to open one chest, a ward explodes, and she thinks she should have asked for more money, since she hit on a real wizard.

When she rouses again, the wizard and his servant have caught her. Whereupon the wizard takes her on, over the servant's objection (there are hints later that he's trying to atone, but nothing much comes of that), and sends her back to report on what she found. And he takes her out of London on a mission to the countryside, involving a search for something stolen. She works out the details as the rest of the story progresses through events that include a mad race of carriages, a silly order of would-be druids, a meeting that doesn't meet, a request that someone not ask that a wizard turn him to a frog because that's a lot of work, repeated attempts to burgle a library in one night, an elopement, a priest hole, and the illegitimate half-brother of a nobleman.

Suzanne Vincent says

I wish I had a ton of good things to say about Mairelon the Magician, but I don't. In fact, I did something with this book that I have NEVER done with a book before--I gave up on it in the middle of the climax.

If you aren't interested in scathing reviews, stop here!

I had just slogged through a cliched 'gather all the usual suspects into one room' scene that was loooooong, boring, and confusing, with a good dozen characters (many of them called by more than one name) running around in the dark, when the main character was asked to explain what's going on, and what does he say? 'Sure, but it's a long story!' I just about lost it.

My favorite character was Kim, the POV character. But she turned out to be little more than the POV character, her only purpose in the story to be in the right place at the right time to witness all the happenings

of the book. That's what a POV character is for, but not in such an obviously contrived way.

It's too bad. I like Patricia C. Wrede's Dealing With Dragons series. Maybe she's just not cut out for mystery.

Eris Vianney says

I desperately wanted to give this four stars, but the ending happened. By Jove, that was tedious.

The protagonist? FABULOUS. Kim was interesting and fun and didn't take any crap. Mairelon was enjoyable and his character complemented Kim's adorably. I ship it.

The problem was that their relationship was often pushed aside for a wordy, often confusing, and slightly boring mystery plot that culminated in one of the most boring couple of chapters I've ever had the displeasure of reading. For the first time in a while, I was actually skimming the pages instead of chewing over the words in my mind. I couldn't take it.

I was also frustrated with how Kim was sidelined through a lot of the book. A lot of her action was overhearing long conversations from characters she generally had no connection with.

Despite the ending, I did enjoy most of the book, and Kim and Mairelon were definitely worth it. I've heard that the next book is much better (and has more of a focus on Kim and Mairelon, yesssssss), and I am excited to read it!

First Second Books says

Regency heist capers! This book is amazing -- magic and manners all wrapped up into an amazing package filled with thieves cant and not a single person who is what they seem.

I love this book! It's a perfect winter reread.

David Ottenstein says

I have to say, I was pleasantly surprised. After the good reviews I thought I might go into it expecting a little much, but it delivered.

The protagonist was sympathetic and developed well during the story. The antagonists were quite dislikable, in a likable sort of way for an antagonist. That may sound strange, but I've read way too many books where the bad guys were just bad and that was all. There was some development here, and I appreciated it.

Not exactly what I was expecting, but well done and a very pleasant diversion.

Denaë Christine says

I was quite disappointed with this book, mostly because I loved PCW's Enchanted Forest Chronicles and this book wasn't nearly as good. It had loads of potential, with Kim going from gutter thief to a crime-solving magician. But it didn't deliver.

1st, it was third person, and I feel the story would have been stronger from inside Kim's head. Do much of the story is about the old guy Mairelon anyway, and I wish the story was actually about the main character instead.

2nd, Mairelon seems like a girl's name, and it bothered me throughout the book that he was a guy, although it would have been okay if Kim called him by his real name, Richard.

3rd, Kim's street slang was over the top distracting.

4th, Kim does almost NOTHING to further the plot. Come to think of it, Mairelon himself does little. They eavesdrop a lot. And talk a lot. And Kim (view spoiler). Oh, and she overturns a table. And then they do some more talking.

5th, the conclusion did not come off as funny ridiculous. It was just dumb ridiculous. The guy with the pistols (loaded, as we find out when he accidentally shoots the ceiling), waves the pistols around and orders everyone to silence . . . and (get this) no one listens. Well, they listen, frightened, for about a second, then they start arguing again. People keep arriving on scene, at this out of the way cabin which half of them shouldn't have known about. And the bad guy just keeps waving his pistols around. He has killed before, but these people, whom he does NOT need alive, just annoy him. Why doesn't he shoot one or two or ten of them? No, he chooses to shout at them and wave his pistols around.

And Jon Aberwhatever was not a comical figure. Maybe because too much of the story was about adults; I don't know why. He would wench and get drunk and bungle both his robbery attempts. And generally get in the way of everyone else.

Oh, there were just too many people in general, and it was hard keeping all their names and relationships straight, especially because everyone had a first and last name and a title, and some had nicknames or (like Mairelon), fake names.

At least the actual ending (after the loooong conversations) was actually decent, with Kim finding out she could learn magic (um, yeah, we knew that from beginning, big surprise).

Kim was dressed as a boy the entire time. She did almost nothing, just observed. And she didn't even prove to be an interesting character. I never felt like she was in danger, and the brief paragraph when I did, I didn't care.

Cassie says

Kim has played the part of a thieving boy for most of her life, hiding her gender being the safer alternative to revealing herself as a girl in the dark underbelly of Regency London. But she knows this career path will soon come to an end, as at seventeen she is quickly outgrowing her disguise. When a job leads her into Mairelon the magician's wagon, she finds real magic and an opportunity to become someone new.

Following Mairelon as he flees from the city, she quickly finds herself lost in a plot of stolen magic artifacts and aristocratic intrigues. Soon she'll have to give up the freedom of being a boy forever and try to figure out who she really is, so that she can become Mairelon's student and enter London Society as a real magician. But being a girl brings new problems, marriage proposals, and a definite notion that nothing fun also falls under the heading of being Proper.

I'm reviewing these two books together, because odds are the easiest copy of the books to find is the combined version. Really, I think they work much better together, as the first ends with an incomplete

feeling (all right, fine, that's code for no real romance). In addition, I liked the second book, *Magician's Ward*, much better, but I think you need to start with the first book, *Mairelon the Magician*.

In essence, reading these books is pretty much just like reading *Sorcery and Cecelia*, except with different characters and plot. The feeling and world are the same, and while I can't find anything that says the books all take place in the same world, they easily could. In fact, how magic is treated in the worlds, history, etc., all seems to be pretty much the same, except in *Sorcery and Cecelia* magicians create focuses, which is at least never mentioned in the *Mairelon* books. What all this means is if you haven't read these yet and love *Sorcery and Cecelia*, these might need to be next on your to-be-read list.

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Donna says

When Kim is caught snooping in the wagon of a traveling illusionist, she's shocked that her target reacts by offering her a job. Helping Mairelon on stage sounds like the perfect way of getting out of town for a bit, but it soon becomes clear that the man she's joined up with is no ordinary performer.

This one got off to a promising start with Kim's introduction to Mairelon and her encounters on the streets of a fantasy-world London. It's a little coincidence-heavy and I feel like I've read one too many girl-who-dresses-as-a-boy stories, but I try to give YA more of a pass on those kinds of things.

Unfortunately, the book starts to get off track once the characters start traveling. Based on the setup, I was really expecting Kim to spend at least a little time playing magician's assistant, but after finishing the novel that whole idea felt like an excuse to get her along and teach her some trick knots. I wish the early part of their trip had been expanded a little and actually made use of the interesting premise.

The mystery had some cute moments, but it ended up as a bit of a mess thanks to putting nearly every character ever mentioned in one large room and having them talk the plot to death. Far too much of the story was just told to the reader, with Kim acting mainly as an observer of bigger events.

The twist at the end for Kim wasn't much of a surprise. Not a huge deal, but it made a lot of this book feel like setup for the sequel, which I'm not sure I plan to read.

Amy says

I saw that someone on my Goodreads list had put this book up and I thought, "Hey, I think I have that on my shelf somewhere." Sure enough, it was there. I don't know where I got it, I've had it for years and never read it. It was either something I inherited from my mom's collection of books when she was downsizing or it was a gift from my aunt who is a librarian and has given me many cool books over the years.

Anyway, one night Seth and I were looking for something to read aloud together. We had finished reading "These Three Remain" from the Fitzwilliam Darcy series (which is totally fun to read out loud, especially if you get your husband involved. In my case, it had been his idea, so bonus!) We pulled *Mairelon the Magician* out next and started reading.

It was very clever and entertaining. As fantasy plots go, we liked it better than *Harry Potter*. It was a lot more

intricate and elaborate. We wanted to hurry and get our stuff done for the day so we could read the book together! I even tried out a cockney accent. It was a great cross between fantasy and a Regency era mystery. Totally fun and a fairly quick read. It took us about 4-5 days, and we were reading out loud.

Misty says

I'll try to review this in full later, but for now:

I read this as part of the A Matter of Magic set, which has this and the next book in 1 volume; since I'm not done reading A Matter of Magic, and don't know when I'll get back to it, I'll just talk about this individually for now.

Basically, I love Patricia C Wrede. She writes characters that I just adore, and this - mostly - was no exception. Everything was going along swimmingly until suddenly it WASN'T.

I'm giving this a 4 because I'm setting aside this HUGE WEIRD PERIOD at the end that went effing crazy. Turned into a total slap-stick sideshow. I'm pretty sure that EVERY character in the book was gathered in 1 room, and all under suspicion, at one point. And then they all Scooby Doo-ed.

You know that thing where everyone just spills their guts and WAY overshares, explaining away every damn thing?

That.

That happened.

I hate that.

But it was like some weird glitch, or something, because aside from that (and my sometimes-irritation at the slang), I really enjoyed this.

Karen Keyte says

Almost 17 (at least as near as she can tell), Kim has spent all of her life on the streets of London, living disguised as a boy and struggling just to survive. An orphan with no other means to support herself, Kim once belonged to a family of thieves but an unfortunate run-in with the law has left her more alone than ever, her taste for 'the cracking lay' utterly destroyed. Now she gets by as best she can, so she doesn't hesitate to take a commission to break into a street magician's wagon just to take a look around. The man who hired her might be a gentry toff (and therefore not to be trusted), but he's offering her the small fortune of five pounds and he hasn't even asked her to steal anything.

Too bad the toff didn't see fit to mention that the the street magician is a real wizard - one who easily sees through her boy's disguise. To Kim's utter amazement, Mairelon offers to take her on as an assistant. He'll teach her to perform stage-show magic tricks, as well as how to speak properly and to read, if she'll instruct him in the art of lock-picking. For Kim, it's a dream come true. She can leave the dangers of London and her life as a boy behind and live in the relative safety of a traveling magician's wagon. And if this toff's offer turns out to be as twisted as the last, she still has that five pounds to fall back on.

It doesn't take Kim long to realize that Mairelon is as familiar with living in disguise as she is. Immediately upon setting off with the wizard and his irascible man-servant Hunch, Kim finds herself embroiled in a world

of upper class double-dealing, sinister intrigue and slippery wizard politics. Mairelon is determined to set a past wrong to rights and Kim is equally determined to help him do just that - and if she satisfies her curiosity about the mysterious wizard along the way, so much the better.

The addition of magic to the colorful depiction of Regency England enhances this sweet and utterly charming historical romp through the countryside. Readers new to novels set in this era may find themselves temporarily thrown by Kim's use of the thieves' cant, but they'll quickly adjust as context makes meanings clear. Patricia Wrede is a master storyteller - it's virtually impossible not to be swept along with Kim as she gets caught up in Mairelon's world. Be prepared: as soon as you finish this one, you'll want to move on to the sequel, *The Magician's Ward*.

Christina White says

Wow, I haven't disliked a book this much in a really long time. There were too many characters and I just had no desire to keep track of them. The dialog was horrible and page after page was filled with what could have been said in less than one. I broke down and decided to skim read and then just started skipping whole pages. I would pick a page and read a few lines here and there to try and catch on what was happening and it was the same for about 50 pages!

"You have the platter??" "No.. I have the platter.. haha!" "Think again it was a fake!" "I know where the platter is!" "E's goin to get the platter!... No No E's not because I have snuck up on him and now I will get the platter instead!"

The mystery of the magic platter was just NOT that interesting to me and I was bored. I couldn't wait for it to be over.

YA fantasy is really hit or miss for me... and this one was a huge miss.
