



Ten Little Wizards

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As Good King John's wizards are killed, it seems that someone with magical talent of his own bears ill will towards the sorcerous society. Lord Darcy, Investigator-in-Chief for the King, and his sorcerer assistant, Sean, must piece together the puzzle before more lives are lost.

Ten Little Wizards Details

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Author : Michael Kurland

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From Reader Review Ten Little Wizards for online ebook

Barbara Wurtzel says

Though I love the Original Lord Darcy books, this one isn't quite in the same league. I give it an A for effort, a B for getting us back to Plantagenet-World, and a B- for character and plot.

Greg Rothenberger says

I found this book by accident at the library book sale. I had read the original series by Randall Garrett (in fact, I had just finished reading it again), so I was interested in how this would be.

At first, I was a little disappointed. Like so many sequels written by other authors, the writing just didn't quite measure up to the original. Then I started getting interested in the story. By the end of the book I found I had enjoyed it very much in its own right, and had stopped making comparisons to the original series. That's the sign of a good sequel.

Robert Gilson says

In all not a bad book. Even though Michael Kurland's writing style is different from Randall Garrett's he did a good job of recreating Garrett's style for this book. It was a good mystery but it wasn't hard to pick out who was the mastermind of plot. Still a fun read.

Libby says

2 Stars: Just Ok. Based on a fun alternate history concept (in 1988, the Plantagenets still rule and the dynasty has thrived and has an empire) and a fun mystery concept (magic exists as a science and is used to collect crime scene evidence but not to solve the case). The book is fun, but overall, the characters, dialogue, and narration are too wooden, and the setting too flat, to draw the reader into a full experience of the book's world. This book is an authorized sequel as the original author, Randall Garrett, has died. I plan to read the Garrett originals for comparison.

Fr. says

Just another bit of evidence that trying to write about someone else's characters is a task that usually turns out badly.

S.A.M says

Having read the original collection immediately preceding this one, it is obvious this one was written by author. This doesn't in any way diminish the characters or the story, however Kurland's Darcy is slightly less mysterious and he reveals much more about Darcy's background and circumstances. I was quite happy about this, as I was left impatient to know more about the characters at the end Garrett's stories.

Kurland holds true to the original setting and characters, while adding more detail and his own flair.

I am an avid fan of , so I was quite amused by Kurland's use of the poem. However, don't expect to be able to solve the crime based on that fact alone.

(view spoiler)

Virginia says

An enjoyable mix of mystery and fantasy! Michael Kurland has done a pretty good job of recreating the world inhabited by Lord Darcy originally featured in stories such as Too Many Magicians written by Randall Garrett. The style is the same although I thought the characters were perhaps not developed in quite as much depth. The plot was interesting although the denouement seemed to come about all in a rush at the end which seemed a little abrupt to me. Overall I enjoyed this book and will definitely read Michael Kurland's other story in the same series.

Scifimoth says

A decent successor to the Lord Darcy books, but I just cannot read this stuff any more. 80's fantasy just doesn't do it for me now (or almost any fantasy these days). With only a probable 4000 books left to me in my remaining reading lifetime (D.V.) they do need to be better than this.

Diane K. says

To begin with, I found this book a worthy successor to Randall Garrett's works, which I adore. The writing was well done, the plot was excellent. I enjoyed the return, if only at a distance, of the Marquis de London, Lord Bontriomphe, and Lord John Quetzal, who is not only now a Master Sorcerer, but the Chief Forensic Sorcerer of London. The idea of a serial killer targeting (gasp!) sorcerers was thrilling, set against the political strains of pulling together the investiture of a new Prince of Gaul. I liked learning more about the Secret Service (although, alas, Sir James le Lien is nowhere to be seen). The idea of groups of civilians getting together to discuss true crimes, past and present, with Darcy and de London being the favorite investigators to study was very amusing. I will admit that I caught on to the plot twist fairly early, and became pretty certain of whom the main villain must be well before the end, but it was still an entertaining read, and I include it every time I re-read the Lord Darcy opus.

That being said, it did have its flaws. One of my pet peeves about writers who continue a previous writer's series is that they should always begin by sitting down and reading through all of the works--and they never seem to do so. In this case, it wouldn't have taken long, as Randall Garrett, alas, left tragically few Lord Darcy works. It would have eliminated several contradictions that perhaps don't matter so much plotwise, but are really irritating to the devoted reader. I wonder just how many people wrote to Kurland to point out that "Formal wear for a sorcerer is light blue and SILVER, not GOLD!" He must have taken it to heart because

he corrected it in the next book. The next point involves the title itself. In all of Garrett's works, the term "wizard" is barely ever used, and then it's pretty much a disparaging term, in a class with "hedge magicians" and "charlatans". In that context, "Ten Little Wizards" works as a title and a piece of poetry, because the killer clearly regards sorcerers with hate and contempt. However...everybody else in the book is using the term, too. Sir Darryl is called the "Wizard Laureate" and refers to himself as such; ordinary respectful citizens use the term as well. It just doesn't sound right. Lastly, (spoiler) part of the book discusses what happens when the Sorcerers' Guild must deal with a member who has gone to the Dark Side. Kurland came up with an interesting term for it--"thrumming", and he also described side effects of the procedure. However, Garrett made it clear that this is not a matter of public knowledge; Lord Darcy is one of the very few non-Talented people around who know what the procedure is. During a private discussion, the Marquis Sherringford is informed of the procedure--well and good. But later, during the Guilds' Ball, right out in public, surrounded by a large group of civilians, one magician casually greets another with the statement that they had not met "since the thrumming", which of course attracts everyone's attention. Now, if he had immediately gotten flustered and embarrassed and quickly changed the subject, it wouldn't have been so bad, but Kurland made it seem like thrumming was nothing out of the ordinary.

The good of the book far outweighs the irritants; if you're a fan of Lord Darcy, you should enjoy it. However, if you're a new reader, I would recommend reading Garrett first.

L.E. Doggett says

A good further tale of Lord Darcy. Not quite like Garrett but still a worthy read a welcome addition.

Good actions scenes, great descriptions and twists.

Aoife says

My first reaction on reading the blurb of this book was 'OMG a detective-story set in an alternate reality where magic exists! why haven't I heard of this sooner?' Once I started reading it was more a 'Yeah I wish I had discovered these earlier but mainly because a few years ago I wasn't overthinking (the logic behind) fantasy-novels that much and was overall less cynic about humanity.'

It's really sad but I simply have massive trouble buying the world the Lord Darcy-stories are set in. So the main point of it (apart from the existing magic) is that Richar Lionheart stayed longer on the throne, wasn't succeeded by his evil brother John but by his nephew Arthur who was so good and noble and so everything a man can wish for in a king that people started confusing him with the mythological King Arthur.

So far so good.

Now when I started reading Ten Little Wizards my first impression was that the book would have to be set during/some time after Arthur's reign, so I was really surprised when I learned that it's set in the 1980s. It simply doesn't *feel* like that. It feels like your typical pseudo-mediaeval fantasy-setting. The technology is far from what we had in the 80s. There are trains, but they seem to be rather unreliable, there is something similar to telegraphy but it doesn't work over water and generally seems to fail frequently so that ye olde medieval horse-messengers are preferred.

Now the explanation for the lack of any advanced technology is that it's a world where "the science of magic has replaced the magic of science." Yeah...when in doubt just say 'It is like this because MAGIC'. Don't get me wrong, I'd accept if magic would slow down science a bit...why spend ages trying to figure out how to make humans fly if wizards can use a spell? But that's the point: *Wizards* can use a spell. Magic is a rare talent. The majority of humanity won't be able to do that (or be able to perform forensic investigations, or

keep their food from going off without buying an expensive spell for a storage-box)...but still nobody seems to have any ambition to make humanity less dependent on magic...this is me being not really convinced. The other thing that gave me the whole middle-age-feeling was politics. We're in the 20th century and still have a feudal system and (as I got it) an absolute monarch. Of course that is not bad, cause you know, the monarch is *nice* or a Plantagenet, which seems to be a synonym. Because the whole Plantagenet line of succession is full of great monarchs, who knew what was the right thing to do, who didn't go insane, who treated their subjects with great respect and probably they could all read at night cause the sun was shining out of their arse. I am sorry...blame George Martin but I don't buy about 800 years peaceful reign of one family...it doesn't even seem that for good measure they had at least a few who were just average rulers...no the author shoves it into our face that every single one was great. This is me being even less convinced. The church plays only a minor role (at least in this novel) but for the popes it seems to be the same...no Borgias, no orgies in the Vatican, no abuse of power and therefore of course also nobody like Martin Luther...just like all these nice monarchs stopped somebody like Oliver Cromwell ever gaining any influence. That's just very much taking the easy solution.

I now I might be at least partially unfair because I guess you can counter lots of my criticism with 'Duh, well that's 70s/80s fantasy, and that was just very different from Martin, Barclay and whoever else is writing today.' Which is right...and usually when I read older fantasy I can make admissions for everything being a bit more brightly-coloured and fluffy back then, or rather *I simply do it* I don't need to force it and constantly tell myself that 30 years ago things were differently. I'm just too engrossed in the story to care. Which brings me to that. The detective-story is well a bit meh. The murderer was easy to figure out (in the 'I have read enough mysteries, I know what to look for, you can't fool me'-way), there were too many characters, Lord Darcy didn't make much of an impression on me and a reduced number of plot-threads definitely wouldn't have hurt. I did like all the shout-outs to other famous detectives but even those seemed occasionally a bit too forced in that look-at-me-I'm-oh-so-clever way.

Despite all that I am a bit tempted to give one of the original Lord Darcy short-stories a try, after all Ten Little Wizards is novel-length (well...180 pages) and not written by the original author, so it is possible that the original mysteries are engrossing enough for me to gloss over my issues with the world-building...but getting my hands on one isn't exactly high on my priorities-list.

Cris says

Kurland did a really good job of recreating Randall Garrett's style. (Who channeled Doyle's Holmes so well it was scary!)

Ten little wizards suffers only a little for being a full-length novel rather than Garrett's usual short story.

I'll admit I figured out the mystery before the end, but I enjoyed the trip. I'll probably read Kurland's other Lord Darcy novel if I can ever find it.

Jonathan Palfrey says

In this book, Kurland took over with remarkable aplomb the alternative history scenario and characters created by his late friend Randall Garrett, and proceeded to introduce new characters and background details, while maintaining Garrett's existing regular characters.

The generous amount of background detail gives a satisfying sense of immersion in this 20th-century Angevin Empire; the characters are varied and quite well presented.

The crimes in the book seem rather contrived to me, and crime fans may find better material elsewhere; the book will probably appeal more to fans of alternative history.

And also to fans of sf/fantasy: there's a kind of magic that works in this world, although it's a scientific kind of magic and there are limits to its capabilities.

David says

2.5 stars, this was fairly predictable. I'm tempted to reread Lord Darcy.

Cyn Mcdonald says

Very much in keeping with Randall Garrett's original Lord Darcy stories. One impossible murder is unusual enough, but four in the space of a month? Lord Darcy must solve the crimes while uncovering a plot against His Majesty's life, in a castle crowded with guests for the upcoming investiture of the new Prince of Gaul.
