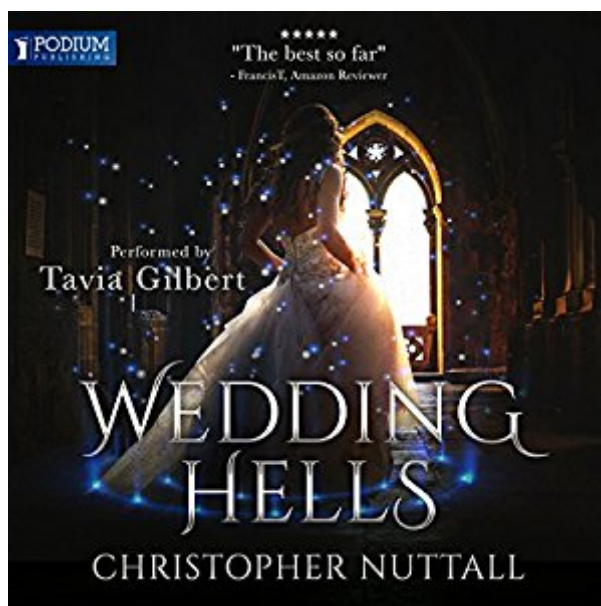


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Wedding Hells: Schooled In Magic, Book 8



Synopsis

After her victory over Master Grey, Emily wants nothing more than to relax and give herself time to recover from the duel. Her magic, pushed to the limits, is no longer reliable, forcing her to learn to control it from scratch. Every time she delays using her magic, she risks headaches...or worse. But she must return to Whitehall to complete her fourth-year exams and bid farewell to those of her friends who are not returning for fifth year. And then, she must return to Zangaria to play her role in Princess Alassa's wedding to Jade. It seems, if nothing else, a brief diversion before she goes off on a tour of the Allied Lands. But all is not well in Zangaria and the kingdom is fast approaching a major crisis. Junior aristocrats are demanding their rights and titles from the king, while King Randor himself is dangerously unstable and hiding a secret that could spark off a civil war...and the peasants are threatening to revolt. Emily herself is isolated, unsure how to balance her obligations to her closest friends with her belief in freedom, justice, and democracy. And, as Emily finds herself used as a political pawn by the different sides in the growing dispute and no longer sure who she can trust, she may find herself confronting a choice between doing the right thing, regardless of the cost...and losing everything she's built over the past four years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Love the book--great addition to the series. One of the best things about the series is the intermixing of classic heroic fantasy (boy or girl leaves home develops into great hero/mage to fight evil sorcerers/dark ones) with down to earth political/economic changes in the country that becomes the

heroine's home--Zangaria--as the heroine has to balance her own belief system and political conflicts with being a high ranking noble in the local power structure--Baroness of Cockatrice. If the book just had the former, it would be one of 10,000 other heroic fantasy novels--a cliché--so I hope Emily keeps her involvement as a Baroness of Cockatrice (even if temporarily banished) into the future. Emily's abandoning of Cockatrice at the end was the only major problem--people don't simply walk away from tremendous power and wealth--in any place or time. It's not realistic. This is especially as the author introduced Emily in the first book as someone who loved reading history--how could she be unaware that Kings approved the high nobility's courtships?? Or that Kings demanded military service from their nobles--this is the heart of feudalism!! Overall, this novel's plot felt "forced"--the author was obviously determined to get his heroine out of Zangaria--and it doesn't really work. Still, a fun read.

Emily continues to bumble her way through life, with everyone around her either thinking she's a monster or a saint, and debating whether to attempt to assassinate her or try to be her best friend. While the setup is getting a little cliché since its variations on a theme for Nuttall, the plot basically goes like the previous novels: Emily is introduced to a situation she barely understands through the lens of the culture and kingdom she's a resident of, everyone assumes she intimately understands and operates by the cultural norms, Emily makes a radical modification that to her seems like a modest step or at least a compromise, and everyone then assumes everything is a cleverly crafted insult or part of a larger political machination. Emily is finally starting to grow up, but it's getting harder to remember that she's 18-19 8 books in, meaning she's still barely able to legally drink, phantom edge knowledge of mathematics, chemistry, and nuclear physics or no. Despite literally being the smartest and most highly educated person in the world, she is still pathetically easy to manipulate, but it's not her fault. And it's easy to understand her frustration with a world that seems so radically backward that even though her stances on morals and values is self-righteous and holier than thou, she does happen to have the moral high ground in virtually every argument, but everyone knows a 18 year old girl is capable of being subtle, subdued, and willing to compromise, right? Magic is slowly starting to morph into a swiss army knife, and while I enjoyed the machinations of the system Nuttall first introduced, I wish that there was a simpler way to convey it, as it's still a murky haze as to why certain spells are simple and straightforward and others a multidimensional Mobius strip. The world is still steadily evolving, and Emily is finally starting to grasp the enormity of the bloodbath she is unleashing, and is finally starting to curb her desires to catapult everyone to 21st century morals. All told, 8 books into a series that started with the shakiest

of steps, I still can't wait for it to continue, as this is a vibrant living world that doesn't all orbit around the main character. There are still some struggles with conveying certain magical concepts, and some of the character interactions are becoming odd, but this continues to be consistently excellent.

For many series, around book 8 marks a low point, the plot, the formula and the characters become stale, you get "more of the same". Wedding Hells I am happy to report does not fall into this category. Both the book and the series show great growth of both the story and the main protagonist Emily who tries to navigate a world which is totally alien to her. This book feels like a culmination of the current arc for our heroine. It brings the day of reckoning for her actions. Some were intentional others were not but all had an impact on the world she now lives in. Now the time has come for the real consequences. The previous book dealt with those on a personal level as people and factions had reacted to Emily in a decisive manner. This time we truly see the chaos Emily has brought into the world with her modern ideas and values. A great addition to the series and a must for fans.

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