



## The Book of Atrix Wolfe

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Twenty years ago, the powerful mage Atrix Wolfe unleashed an uncontrollable force that killed his beloved king. Now, the Queen of the Wood has offered him one last chance for redemption. She asks him to find her daughter, who vanished into the human world during the massacre he caused. No one has seen the princess-but deep in the kitchens of the Castle of Pelucir, there is a scullery maid who appeared out of nowhere one night long ago. She cannot speak and her eyes are full of sadness. But there are those who call her beautiful.

## **The Book of Atrix Wolfe Details**

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Author : Patricia A. McKillip

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## From Reader Review The Book of Atrix Wolfe for online ebook

### Margit says

Another wonderful book by Patricia A. McKillip. This one is a wonder of language, the way she puts words together to form sentences to make thoughts to tell the story. She paints pictures without rambling on incessantly. In my opinion, Ms. McKillip is probably one of the best fantasy authors writing today. There is nothing typical about her stories and they are not derivative of those fantasy authors who spawned the lot of fantasy we get all to often these days.

This book is the story of a mage who, in pain and horror, creates a horror to stave off an even worse one.

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### Angie says

Originally reviewed here @ Angieville.

It was my friends at Readerville who convinced me to give Patricia McKillip a try. This I remember very clearly. I'd never read any of McKillip's books, though I'd run across them plenty of times what with her books being shelved right next to Robin McKinley's on all the shelves ever. And then there was the matter of her covers. Somewhere along the line, they paired her up with Kinuko Craft and decided it was a match made in heaven. For the most part, I think it is. Craft's luscious, romantic dreaminess blends perfectly with McKillip's sort of stream of consciousness fantasy. Occasionally, I long for something a bit more solid and grounded on one of her covers. But they do fit the bill in the What You See is What You Get department. I started off with The Riddlemaster trilogy and was instantly enamored. Where had this writer been all my life? I loved Morgan of Hed with the three stars on his forehead and the High One's Harper at his side. I could not get enough of that trilogy and still wander into my library from time to time to stroke the pretty omnibus edition I own. Utterly epic in scope, the Riddlemaster books set the bar high. And while I was a bit surprised to find her standalone volumes somewhat quieter affairs, I was no less impressed with the writing and reach. The second book of hers I read was this one. THE BOOK OF ATRIX WOLFE.

Sorrow is a word that means nothing until it means everything.

In a world where the mortal and the magical exist side by side, a young mage killed his king. Desolate from what he'd done, Atrix Wolfe retreats to the woods. Living as a wolf, he hides from the horror of what he wrought. But the Queen of the Wood is not about to let him disappear completely. Not until he performs a task for her. Find her daughter who disappeared into the world of men at the same time as the massacre. Meanwhile, in that very world of men, a kingdom is at war. Terrorized by a horned Hunter, the beleaguered land of Pelucir struggles to survive. Until their orphaned prince Tallis unearths a book without a name. A book whose spells do not always mean what they seem. And behind it all, a girl named Saro scrubs pots in the kitchen below the castle. They called her Saro because she cannot speak. Because her eyes are full of sadness and she has no words to tell them where she came from. But Saro hears everything that goes on in the castle as the swirling parade of rich foods and savory concoctions make their way from her domain up to the feasting tables above. And her part to play in the raging conflict between mages and armies, between mortal and immortal, will not be a small one.

There are no simple words. I don't know why I thought I could hide anything behind language.

THE BOOK OF ATRIX WOLFE is one of Ms. McKillip's headiest designs. From the decadent descriptions of castle cuisine to the throbbing lyric of losing your voice and finding it once more, I was buffeted about by beauty. I may be something of a sucker for books titled after an actual book within the book, if you follow me. Ever since *The Book of Three* and *The Neverending Story*. Which is probably what prompted me to pick this one up after *The Riddlemaster* to begin with. What landed it on my keeper shelf its layers upon layers of meaning. A book about a book. Beautiful words used to explore the value and power of language itself. The spiderweb of horrific events that creep out from one moment of impossible hubris. It doesn't hurt that there are living trees and shapechangers and medieval mythology galore. But it's the tapestry of words, in the end.

Someone living, he realised early, who had not been scarred by the siege or haunted by memory, was valuable to the storytellers. Having no memories of his own, he became their receptacle for memory, and, with his untroubled past, for hope.

Being a living receptacle for memory and hope. That is imagery worth your while. McKillip books are always worth your while. But this one is special. I hope that you read it one day, not only because the words are wondrous and the magic is tangible, but because reading it is like falling into a bed of soft linen and waking the next day to find you've dreamed, oh, the most beautiful dream.

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### **Laura says**

actual rating 3.5 stars

I don't think I have ever read prose as elegantly written as this. Mrs. McKillip's writing is wonderful just as the worlds she is describing. However, I wish the story itself would have been woven a little differently and perhaps had had a different ending.

If you love expressive elegant writing and ethereal descriptions of incredible worlds, this book is definitely for you.

If however you prefer a good old-fashioned fairytale with a perfectly happy ending, this is definitely not that type. Don't get me wrong now! It doesn't end bad! And it will even make you chuckle sometimes. It's just that for me, it held too much of Sorrow and too little happy ever after.

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### **Katherine says**

I've read McKillip's work before and loved it, this I did not love. The first clue that this was not going to be another love-fest for me was the strange phrasing and odd over-use of the comma. Annoying. If the plotline had not been so compelling I would never have kept reading (okay, I'll admit it, sometimes skimming), not when my strongest impulse was to discard it. Ha, what I really wanted to do was throw it at the wall. Hard.

I could see what McKillip was trying to accomplish and how challenging a task it was, to use language and words to portray a character who is *without* language or even a basic understanding of what words are or what they mean. Had she done that with just the portions we see through Saro's eyes it might have worked, however, she manipulates language throughout the whole book so the reader is required to constantly re-read sentences or paragraphs to decipher the meaning. What are meant to be dream-like images are instead a contrived jumble of awkwardness. What is meant to flow, doesn't. You know those disjointed dreams where you struggle and struggle to make sense of what you see, yet only infrequently grasp anything of substance? The entire book reads like that.

I'm glad this was not my first McKillip--if it were it would have been my last. Not recommended.

## Margaret says

This is my first Patricia Mckillip novel and I was amazed by her writing. One of the most lyrical and elegantly written fantasy novels I've read. I would easily compare her to Ursula le Guin in terms of both depth of ideas and lyricism of writing. The Book of Atrix Wolfe centers around; a young magician and prince, whose country is haunted by a battle that took both the prince's father and mother; a child named Saro who no longer remembers her past; and a mage--Atrix Wolfe--who is haunted by regret. All three characters struggle with the past in their attempts to redeem the future. Very well written novel.

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## mark monday says

all the world's a kitchen! a great steamy kitchen, full of cooks and servers, pluckers and cutters, a head chef and a tray mistress, spit-boys and a pot scrubber. all the food that is birthed there! so many tasty treats and delicious dishes, made for the lords and ladies and assorted gentry, but enough that can be picked at, pecked at, pulled from the bottom of a pan, enough of those leftovers to feed the loudly bustling world that lives in the kitchen.

a list of characters and events would make this novel sound like the grandest of sagas: full of shape-shifting wizards and doleful ghosts and fearsome enmity; a Faerie Queen in the wood and her stolen husband and daughter, both transformed; a battlefield full of slaughtered soldiers, a monstrous Hunter created by a curse and destined to return and slaughter again; whirlwinds of magic that transform and steal away. despite all of that grandeur, all of the fey and the strange... for me, the most magical parts of The Book of Atrix Wolfe was all of the time our lowly pot-scrubber spent in that world-within-a-world of a castle kitchen.

McKillip is a wizard with the words, as usual. perfectly formed phrases, pellucid prose, ah the elegant loveliness of it all. the novel continues her love affair with *words* themselves: words as evanescent things that may often define us but are just as often, in the end, unreliable and certainly subject to change - and update! The Book of Atrix Wolfe is primarily concerned with how we should acknowledge our mistakes while still forgiving ourselves and moving on. these are regularly appearing ideals throughout McKillip's works: we cannot run from our past actions, but instead must learn from them; despite how they may reshape us, those mistakes need not define our future. in her own fey, strange way, McKillip is a moralist. although not a strident, cold one that preaches; she is an empathetic and loving moralist, one that teaches.

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## Joe says

This is extraordinarily well written fantasy. Patricia A. McKillip is really the unsung hero of American high fantasy. I am here to tell you to forget the HELL out of most other high fantasy authors (especially Mercedes Lackey, Melanie Rawn, and Terry Goodkind) because Patricia A. McKillip just writes the shit out of them.

She is so concise and eloquent and purely otherworldly I would hesitate to put her even in the same league as most fantasy authors. She is definitely in the same class as Tolkien, LeGuin, and CS Lewis. That she is not better known is a travesty, for her work is both mythically epic and consistently genius.

In this volume, something I read years back, a young girl is lost, her memories a swirl of confusion, and none

of the characters came across as stereotypical of their station. Each was intriguing, regardless of the fact that you've seen these tropes before: magician, his student mage, the kitchen women and manservants, the young scullery maid, the forest queen. McKillip mixes these tropes up and repaints them vividly, with dreams expounding a renovated finale that is both satisfyingly familiar and dizzyingly new. Highly rare and recommended.

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### **Jen says**

I read this some years ago so the story line isn't fresh in my mind. However, the book made a huge impression on me. As with all of McKillip's books, it is full of enchantment, mystery and beautiful language. The story is about struggling for perception and understanding, it's about language and finding a voice. It's also about the destructiveness of war (intentional and unintentional). There are two stories going on, that of a young scholar prince and that of a mystical young lady yanked away from her family. The young man wears thick glasses. The young lady is mute and works as a skullery girl in a huge castle kitchen. McKillip's descriptions of the food being prepared are full of symbolism. These descriptions are sometimes overelaborate and drag on. It is one of only two flaws in the book, the second being an ending that feels contrived. McKillip's books are never about action, they're about unraveling mysteries and it's true here times two.

After reading this, I remember recommending it to a friend who teaches college composition as a book full of potential points of discussion. However, this friend was not a fantasy reader and probably had a hard time believing a fantasy would be intellectually stimulating. However, had I been teaching at that time, I would have jumped right in with it. I kept this book on my shelf because I expect to reread it one day.

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### **Joanne says**

I just finished reading this book for the second time. I remembered loving it the first time I read it because of the poetic writing style of the author. I love the images of castle life and the characters. It reads like a fairy tale including many moral messages which can be gathered if one would wish to think them through most especially the importance of atoning for bad deeds.

The first half of the book is much more exciting than the second. In the second half, one might begin to get bored as a cycle of events seem to repeat themselves. The only cure to that boredom is to relax into the beautiful words as you would a hot bath and don't rush it. Just enjoy the journey!

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### **Amara Luciano says**

4.5 stars

How truly beautiful and passionate and world-loving this book is. I don't know of many other books whose words enraptured me so. This book is about a book, about sorrow and light, past and future, about redemption and restitution, love that transcends worlds, magic that springs hope, beauty that lives in life.

I will never forget this book. Never.

It is a book I hope to share with the many, and the children I may have one day in the future. They should know the language of The Book of Atrix Wolfe. As for yourselves, maybe it's time to consider learning something new.

Page 220

"Who else have you got to listen to you up here?"

"Why do you want to listen to me?"

"Because I don't want to make your mistake."

Page 239:

"But I made something else... Where is it?"

They looked at him, wordless again. Burne spoke at last. "There was nothing else," he said. "There was only you."

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### **Ryan Mishap says**

The titular wizard hides in wolf form from the mistake he made in the past: attempting to end a bloody and disastrous war, he called up a larger monstrosity. In doing so, he affected the land he was trying to protect and also faerie, where the Queen loses her consort and her daughter is taken into the world of humans. The prince/king's brother is learning to be a wizard and his path will soon cross the orphan girl's who works in the royal kitchen. Redemption, hierarchies, choices, and more make up the themes of this wonderful novel.

Ombria in Shadow: In the ancient city of the title, the prince dies and leaves his young son to rule—but his aunt Domina has other plans. She rules like a spider monitoring its web and has the young prince all to herself after she tosses out the beautiful young mistress who cared for him. Surviving the streets of Ombria, the former mistress returns to her father's pub and eventually stumbles upon a girl from the underworld—the other Ombria—who works for a shape-changing witch. Meanwhile, the dead prince's older bastard draws pictures of an Ombria not in this reality while caught in a feverish haze that could kill him. The characters converge and the story ends leaving me impressed by McKillip's skill once more.

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### **Carol says**

It's the secret fantasy book for foodies. The plotline has the fairy queen's daughter, Saro, lost within the real world of men and mages. But the best part is that Saro's lost as the pot scrubber in the palace kitchen. Every chapter, huge banquets are constructed and served with musical fanfares. Meringues in the shapes of swans with currant eyes, pot pies with hunting scenes baked into the crust, opulent meals gone cold when crisis hits, then re-purposed into sandwiches for the departing warriors. The production of running a palace kitchen, the

scrubbers and mincers, the plate washers, the pastry chefs, the spit-turner boys.

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### **Nikki says**

I don't know why this book didn't work that well for me; it's very much what you'd expect from McKillip, magical and otherworldly and dreamy, written in her usual meandering, allusive, dense style. I just... didn't really get into it that much, or follow the chains of events. I often have that problem with McKillip's work, to be fair, so this is probably a very individual criticism; people who enjoy her style effortlessly will probably enjoy this just as much as any of her other books.

For me, though... the story is compelling, and the style is pretty amazing — the way she depicts Saro's thoughts, despite the fact that Saro doesn't know how to speak, how to articulate in language, sticking close to what Saro is actually thinking/experiencing, for example. But other than that, I didn't really get invested with the story, the characters; I felt oddly fatalistic about it. My attitude was pretty much 'what will happen will happen', rather than worrying about what might happen or trying to guess it, or even having any strong feeling about what would be a good or bad turn for the story.

The problem is probably exacerbated by the fact that I'm writing this review quite a while after reading. But it definitely wasn't one of my favourite McKillip books; it was just too surreal, dreamy, disconnected, despite the quality of the writing.

Originally posted here.

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### **Susana says**

A bittersweet story about magical actions and it's direst consequences.

This is the story of Atrix Wolfe, a mage original from Chaumenard, but who now lives amongst wolves.

One day he starts having dreams.

Those dreams make him travel to the realm of Pellucir, where he finds the castle under siege by the ruler of Kardeth.

Everywhere he looks, there's devastation.

Death, famine and, scavengers surround the kingdom.

Being faced with such a despairing vision, Atrix decides to take matters into his own hands...

He decides to create a Hunter out of death, to destroy death.

In a green wood on a hill, the Queen of the Woods watches her consort and their child Sora.

On the night that the Hunter is created, someone stops to listen to the words of a Wolf...

That someone will be turned into the Hunter, a being of legends and terror.

On that night, the child Sora, daughter of the Queen of Woods disappears

Twenty years later, a young prince finds a book without a name.

The book contains strange spells, on which the words don't signify what they should mean.

Words with enough power to summon the Hunter.

Twenty years later Atrix is once again confronted with the results of his actions.

This time Atrix will have to protect a prince, discover a lost girl, and come face to face with its worst mistake.

Patricia A. Mckillip writing is like an never ending melody of perfection.

She creates the most lyrical scenes that i've ever read in my life.

In truth, if you want to read stories in which the words grab hold of your heart, this is the author to read.

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### **Zahra says**

General overview-ish? No spoilers, really.

As usual with any McKillip book, the language is like a bright garden. However she's fond of moving the plot along in dream-sequences (which I love, so, so much). But those not inclined to that kind of hazy broad-strokes style should stay clear. Also the food descriptions are divine, always feel really hungry after giving it a re-read. The way she plays with \*the actual\* topic of language itself is pretty intriguing. A lot of people gush over Alphabet of Thorn for the use of the same topic, but I much prefer Atrix Wolfe. Imo, the stuff McKillip did in the 80s-90s is by far her best.

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### **Derek says**

Even when the story is in the "normal", human world it seems dreamlike and fairytale-ish and a high contrast to the sort of stories that I usually read. It seems drawn from an earlier tradition of fantasy and there were aspects that recalled *The King of Elfland's Daughter* most specifically, but also *The Face in the Frost*.

McKillip produces powerful imagery, from the piles of luscious food continually produced by the ever-busy castle kitchen to the haunted tower to a definitely *Elfland's Daughter* inspired fairy wood.

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### **Elise says**

Patricia McKillip's language is incredibly beautiful and lyrical. I'm heading to the library to search for more of her books--it's been too long! One of my students saw that I was currently reading this book, however, and asked "What's it about?" I responded with, "Um..." It seemed very difficult to explain. It was full of magic that I didn't really understand and couldn't explain, but somehow that didn't matter. It was about a world where things didn't make sense, but that was perfectly okay with me.

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## Mary Catelli says

We open with the king pleading with the wizard Atrix Wolfe, to work magic that will enable him to overcome another king. Atrix makes it clear that this is Not A Good Thing and Not What Wizards Do. But he keeps up the pressure. Meanwhile Saro, the daughter of the Queen of the Wood, and her father, owing to their drop of mortal blood, watch the scene curiously. Atrix, finally infuriated, weaves together a terrible spell, and unleashes a dark rider on the battlefield.

That was the prologue. The story picks up years later, with Tanis, the son of the king who died on the battlefield, who was born that very day, arguing with another student of wizardry about which king was responsible. Given that one died, and the other was driven from the field, there's no good argument for either except that the other one wouldn't have. But Tanis is summoned home. He goes up on the mountain where he catches a glimpse of the famous White Wolf, Atrix Wolfe himself, and grabs a book from the library, and goes.

Meanwhile, there's a mute girl who works in his brother's castle, as a scullery maid. Her name is Saro.

And Atrix Wolfe is plagued by dreams that send him back to the kingdom.

In McKillip's lyric prose, we get dreams with messages, an enchanted wood, a haunted keep, a magical misleading book, visions in a full cauldron, brotherly love, secrets, and the need to undo what was done.

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## Mary-Beth says

This is my favourite book by McKillip, probably because the element of mystery that she always infuses her fantasy with is so strong here. The young woman Saro is a dishwasher in the castle kitchens who is under an enchantment. The kingdom is harassed by a frightening antlered enchanter. The prince discovers a spell book whose words mean something other than what they say. As usual, the author uses her beautiful and evocative style of writing to weave a spell on the reader much like the enchantments described in her books.

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## Althea Ann says

A beautiful fairytale.

Atrix Wolfe is a powerful mage. Years ago, in an attempt to stop a war between two kingdoms, he conjured a terrible Hunter through sorcery... causing more death than, possibly, the war would have. In remorse and shame, he fled to the life of a hermit...

But now, a young prince in mage training has found his spellbook, and old sorceries are stirring.. And, for some reason, the beautiful Faerie Queen of the Wood is sending visions to both a boy and a mage...

Meanwhile, in the castle kitchens, a mute kitchen drudge called Saro labors endlessly over her dirty pots... and sees visions in the washwater...

Remarkable, as always, for the vivid poetics of McKillip's language, and the purity of her vision... Plus, this one has descriptions of the castle feasts that'll have your mouth watering!

I don't think this is McKillip's best book, but it's certainly a very good one.

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