



The Timeseer's Gambit

Kate McIntyre

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It's been three months since mild-mannered Christopher Buckley began working with Olivia Faraday, the eccentric Deathsniiffer. They've hunted killers, solved murders, and learned to work together. But their greatest challenges are yet to come...

As a brutal heat wave wracks an increasingly unstable Darrington City, someone is killing young priests. Worse, they are using bound elementals to do it. As Chris and Olivia contend with rogue spiritbinders and a church under siege, the clock ticks down toward the trial of Doctor Francis Livingstone, accused of orchestrating the fall of the Floating Castle and the death of thousands. Chris believes the doctor is innocent, but the tide of the conspiracy aligned against him is strong enough to wash away anyone who would stand for him.

How far is Chris willing to go to save the doctor? Can Darrington city survive the rival forces tearing it apart? And can Olivia find her first serial killer before another body drops?

The Timeseer's Gambit Details

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Author : Kate McIntyre

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A says

ARC received from the publisher in exchange for an honest review :)

thud <- this is me fainting because of the awesomeness that was this book :) I was a little bit afraid I wouldn't love the sequel as much as the first book, but that was sooo not the case :) because let me tell you... this story was fantastic :) we got to know the characters we already love much more, and meet some very interesting new ones... :) now I am even more curious about the next book in this series... :) full review on the day of the release :)

edited to add my full review :)

I received an ARC of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review and I am so glad for that... that way I was able to read this amazing story a little bit sooner ;) but I do feel the need to warn you, that this is a series where the books are pretty connected, so I highly recommend you to read the first book before diving into this one :) but worry not, it's just as awesome as this one, so it's not gonna be a chore for you ;) but since I'm going to talk to you about the sequel, and some of you may be new to the series, I will do my best not to spoil you important stuff :) that's why there may be some moments when I'll be a little vague, but hopefully you'll be intrigued enough to check this series, because it's absolutely worth your time :)

Ok, let me start with a little bit about the world and the whole situation of this series :) it's a mix of steampunk and paranormal vibes :) a made up world where most people have gifts that are awoken after the categorization process... it's a world filled with unique creatures and all sorts of interesting phenomenons :) Chris is the main character of this series, but I say it only because we follow him around throughout the books :) by any means, he is not the only important person in those stories... far from it :) but I will get to that in a moment :) Chris has to take care of his sister Rosemary after their parents died in a tragic event a few years ago... and when the money started to dry up, he looked for a job... the only person who wanted to hire him was Olivia Faraday, a deathsniffer :) sounds pretty cool, right? :) long story short, because really... the whole explanation would take way too much of our time :) so long story short, she's sort of a detective :) more about her in a second :) like I mentioned before, books in this series are pretty connected to one another :) yes, we get a case in each of them.. a mystery that is resolved before the end of that book, but there's sooooo much more going on... things and events that have consequences in future books... all the surprising connections you discover along the way between different characters... :) but let's go back to Chris right now :) he's an almost twenty-year-old guy who is definitely not perfect ;) but I loved the fact that he had flaws about him :) even though some of his decisions were really annoying, I understood where they were coming from... and besides those few mistakes, I adored how protective he was of his sister and the way he slowly started to change... ;)

Like I mentioned before, Chris is absolutely not the only important person in this series :) this second novel does a wonderful job of showing us more of the characters we already know and love as well as introducing us to a few brand new ones... ;) naturally I have to start with Olivia Faraday :) she's the deathsniffer and I adore her :) she's direct and very honest... usually she says whatever she wants... and I said usually, because we see a different side of her in this second book... well, maybe not different, but there is definitely character development :) that is actually an ongoing theme in this book... because we learn quite a few new things about people we met before... and I loved it :) mostly because I was finally able to get more than a glimpse of one of my favourite characters in this series, William Cartwright :) I can't tell you who exactly he is, because he was quite a mysterious figure in the first book, but I loved seeing more of him :) yet another character who showed us her new side was Maris Dawson, Olivia's boss in the police force :) again, I can't go into all

the spoilery details, but it was a very pleasant surprise :) I can't forget to mention Rosemary, Chris's younger sister and her governess, Rachel Albany of course :) there is a little bit less of them in this installment, for reasons that would spoil you the first book, but worry not... we do get to know some interesting things about both of them as well :) when it comes to brand new characters, I want to tell you about Emilia Banks... well, to be honest, I can just pretty much say that she exists, but who she is exactly and how she fits into the story is quite a surprise, so I will leave all the juicy details out of this review :) but be sure to keep an eye out for her ;)

I absolutely loved this book... :) and I was a little bit afraid going into it, because the first one really left a great impression... :) and we all know that sometimes sequels can be... well, let's say problematic and just leave it at that :) but worry not, that was so not the case of this book :) again, we have one case that Olivia and Chris work on, and this time... it's a serial killer... dun, dun, duuuuunnnn :) I'm sorry, but the moment needed a dramatic music theme interruption :) but back to the book :) so not only we have this mystery to solve, there is a bunch of other stuff going on as well... there's the upcoming trial of a certain person... I can't tell you the name, because that would be a huge spoiler :) and we discover a few other very interesting events and connections between different characters... :) again, I know I'm being vague, but some of them were really great surprises, so I don't want to deprive you of the joy of reading them on your own... :) but I was very happy about certain things that happened between Chris and... another person :) not to mention that the growing friendship between Chris and Olivia was absolutely adorable to witness... yes, it's weird and unique and not everyone can truly understand the bonds between both of them, but I loved them together :) in this book it really showed how they influenced and changed one another in just a few months of their time working together :) this book did an absolutely wonderful job with introducing us to some new mysteries, as well as developing connections and events that we knew about before... the character and world development was fantastic as well, and the phenomenal writing style kept me glued to the pages, wanting to know what's gonna happen next... be warned, this book truly is a time-stealing little gem :) so if you are not familiar with this wonderful author yet, definitely give this series a try :)

XOXO

A

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Marjolein says

Read all my reviews on <http://urlphantomhive.booklikes.com>

In my review of the first book in the series, *The Deathsniffer's Assistant*, I remarked on Olivia's general unpleasantness, but I'm glad to be able to say that during this book she thaws somewhat and becomes bearable.

Another crime to solve, this one is more special in the sense that it has to do with the magical system of this alternative England. Young priests (those without a categorization) are being murdered by loose spirits, but why and by whom? This is set against the background of a very important trial that is also taking place.

I still liked the world best, it is so different but also not at the same time. Many nice details, like the Three and Three and there seems to be no end to what categorization people can get. Also, I feel it is only the tip of the iceberg. The only thing I think is not necessary, and slightly annoying is the renaming of the days. That

just doesn't make sense to me.

Would certainly recommend, but start with the first book!

Thanks to the publisher for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!

Kate McIntyre says

I wrote this, too!

Wontfor says

Disclaimer, I received an advance reader copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. Other disclaimer, I am going to be buying a hard copy version of this book anyway because hot damn.

A sequel to The Deathsniffer's Assistant which I thoroughly enjoyed, The Timeseer's Gambit starts off only a couple of months after the first, and Chris Buckley's trying to dig into whatever -- 'power' I guess -- that he felt in the ending of the last one. Also digging into his mentor's suicide a little. Also, finishing up a case with Olivia. Yeah, this book starts off with the bang -- wait, actually it starts off with another fascinating look into the events surrounding the floating castle, but after that it starts off with a bang.

If you were curious about the church in the previous installment like I was then you're in for a treat. The case involves Olivia's first serial assignment, and the victims all appear to be young members of this world's religious system. You get to see how it ties into the magic system, and you get more information on the magic system.

If you're here for the relationships though, you're in for the biggest treat of all. Gotta admit, it was the biggest draw for me coming into this one, to see the character interactions that I loved starting to see in the first one. The old set is present, and oh. my. god. there are new ones. There are some great new ones. And the old ones are still great. And Chris is still terribly frustrating in some aspects, but I love him anyway.

Nice little details that pull this whole world together, and make it feel--I don't know, 'whole' is the best way to put it I think--are scattered throughout.

This is more of a gushfest than a review at this point, sorry, I love it, and I can't wait for the next one. Thanks so much to the publisher for contacting me about the arc request, this is great, I hope everyone else loves it as much as I do!

OwlKit says

Look, I'm still blown away by the first book in this series (which I finished 36 hours ago), so my mind is a little overwhelmed after now finishing this sequel (in less than 12), but oh boy. There is just so much to unpack, so much to love, about these books.

I've covered most of their appeal in my review for the first one, but a major thing I appreciate here is that

there's an entirely separate mystery in this sequel, while the overall story still follows from the first book. Which, in my experience, is rare when it comes to standalone books/episodes with separate arcs and mysteries to be solved. In this case, rather than just putting it all in the same universe, developments and events still carry over and continue chronologically from the previous installment, building upon and developing characters and relationships in such a lovely, perfectly paced way. Meanwhile, there's yet another thrilling murder mystery that keeps you turning page after page after page. It's the balance of it all that hooks me -- I've never actually been one for a story with *just* a mystery, as I find them boring. This one has so much more beneath and around it, and I adore how it all connects and weaves together so perfectly.

I'm intrigued by the religious aspects explored in this sequel, as well as the categorization system, societal rules and ideals, while what is essentially magic stays present throughout. Another huge thing for me personally is the exploration of different sexual orientations; the representation is lovely, and as a queer person myself, it means so much to see it handled in such a considerate and realistic way.

Needless to say, I am itching to get my hands on the third installment when it comes out. I can't wait to delve even deeper into this amazing, rich world and its complex characters and stories.

Natalie Sorrell says

I received this ARC from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. What follows is my own opinion.

This is a review of the second book in a series and as such will contain spoilers for the first book reviewed here.

Overview

I found it hard to get back into the novel at the beginning - I wish I still had my ARC of the first book then I could have got my head back around the terminology and the complicated political landscape. I would fully recommend reading *Deathsniffer* first - this is not a series that you can easily start part way through.

Characters

Will, the eponymous Timeseer of the title, is probably my favourite character. I didn't mention him in my review of the first book as we only saw a glimpse of him and he was fairly mysterious. His attitude towards Chris, his adamant belief that they had known each other previously and his determination to help him even when it meant breaking the rules all seemed to be leaning down a particular route and I'm glad that McIntyre actually followed this path as it made things very interesting. Outside of his role in the plot, he's just a very cool person: I love his categorisation, his certainty of himself and his principles. The glimpses we get of his past are fascinating and make complete sense with regard to his actions within the series.

There are still moments throughout the novel where I feel like Chris needs a really good shake, but he has developed a great deal as a character. He's still better at people than Olivia and his newfound personal grief allows him to connect with the victims in a way that he never could previously. I'm intrigued to see where McIntyre takes him in the next few books as he's still got a long way to go. I rarely enjoy reading books where characters are self-professed 'cowards' like Rincewind in Terry Pratchett's series, as they largely end up being comic and quite boring. But Chris - despite being repeatedly described by his family, friends and coworkers as 'delicate' - is different, he's naturally anxious about the world and sometimes shies away from

situations where his friends might just barge right in. But he's beginning to gain greater confidence now, as his safe world starts to unravel and his struggle to become something more is great to read.

Despite following Chris and Olivia on another case, we don't get that much more insight into Olivia's head. I think this is a very deliberate choice on McIntyre's part, rather than any sort of narrative failing. At the beginning of the book Chris is feeling isolated, unable to connect with Olivia on the level he has previously with Rosemary and Ferdinand, living alone for the first time in his life. So I understood the reasons for McIntyre doing this and it's not to say that Olivia is without any further character development - she's definitely a very different character from the beginning of the series. But there were aspects of her past that I had hoped to have some more insight into and we don't see that - hopefully this is something more for the next book.

Plot

McIntyre does a good job of describing Chris' mental state, after the events at the end of the last book it makes sense that he isn't in a good place. Everything in his life is upside down, he's been separated from his sister, his mentor has committed suicide and he's having to deal with the fallout of his parent's legacy.

I liked the way she explored the history between Will and Chris that she'd only hinted at previously. I loved the fact that McIntyre picks up the threads of underlying tension in the first novel and fleshes them out further without giving us all the answers.

In terms of the case, I really enjoyed how Olivia's first serial murder is depicted. The motives are complex and the characters involved in it are equally well drawn, I also think it was a brilliant way to explain the predominant religion of this world. The concept of the holy families and the fact that the uncategorised are given to the church was really intriguing. I also loved the idea that due to the dying out of different categories the churches were overwhelmed by those joining, especially from more privileged families where they would usually be strongly powered and were now 'reduced' to a life of service. I liked that Chris was tied into it through his childhood friendship to one of the victims, the fact that the Floating Castle incident still seems to loom over everything.

Quibbles

There are definitely still issues with the series, I'm in two minds about how vague McIntyre is about what's actually involved in categorisation. I like the idea that it's a murky topic so people don't talk about it, don't like to even think about it. But as a reader things are still a bit too unclear for me. I'm hoping that one of the books coming up is going to be focusing on this in more detail.

There was so much in the first book that it was difficult to remember the myriad little details that McIntyre explores in greater depth here. I'd honestly forgotten about Rachel Albany and her brother's link to the reformists, I'd also forgotten who Doctor Livingstone was so it took me a while to remember that he was actually someone we had encountered before.

Please be warned there are elements of Love Triangle hanging about here, although it's dealt with quite well so I'm hopeful of avoiding the usual horrors!

My only other quibble is the prologue, which I felt was largely redundant and frankly, not as well written as the rest of the book. It all felt a bit like an overdone romance novel, largely because McIntyre's attempts to

hide identities keep referring to the man as 'The Doctor'. Personally I felt that we could have done without it, there was enough in the rest of the novel to pick up on about what had really happened in Chris' childhood. This was a bit too much like showing your hand too early.

Conclusion

There's still some issues that will hopefully be resolved as the series progresses, but I flew through the book and I'm already looking forward to the next one. Would definitely recommend.

Ozsaur says

It probably isn't fair for me to review this book because I skimmed so much of the second half. I got so tired of Chris being pushy, and forcing people to do what he wants. Then he went behind Olivia's back to strike a horrible deal with a person he knows is a murderer. That's the point when I wanted to punch Chris right in the face. He constantly judges other people, then he turns around, and does something pretty awful himself.

He also can't seem to make up his mind. I hate love triangles, and I see one starting in this book. It's a particularly irritating one, too.

What kept me going was Olivia, Will, and the world building. The universe is fascinating. It's sort of Victorian England, but with magic - and the magic actually changed historical events, and made society very different. Everything depends on a person's abilities. If you have no abilities at all, you're at the bottom of the heap.

That's where the mystery part of the story begins. What happens to young people who don't have any power at all? Many end up in the Church. The mystery itself was really interesting! It was what made me get the next book in the series.

Hopefully, the next book will have less melodrama, and more case solving.

Empress Reece (Hooked on Books) says

The Faraday Files-Book #2 - 4.5 stars...

The Timeseer's Gambit is the second book in The Faraday Files series by a fantastic up & coming author, Kate McIntyre. I fell in love with the first book, The Deathsniffer's Assistant, when I read it last year and I have been not-so-patiently waiting a whole year for this second book. I can't get enough of the brash Olivia Faraday and her sensitive and meek assistant, Chris. They are quite the dynamic duo!

In this new book, both characters are growing and developing. Olivia is showing a little more of a caring and sensitive side which is a side we don't normally see of her and Chris has grown more adept at handling Olivia's brashness.

McIntyre also tackles the complexities of sexuality and we get to see Chris as he deals with his desires for both his friend Will and his sister's nanny, Rachel. On top of that, someone is using bound elementals to kill

priests and Dr. Livingstone's trial for the Floating Castle murders is drawing near. Can Olivia and Chris find their first serial killer and free and innocent man before time runs out?? You'll have to read and see...

If you're in the mood for something a little different, give The Faraday Files a try. The imaginative world building, complex characters and superb writing combine to make a one-of-a-kind series! I can't wait to see what McIntyre has in store for us next!

*I received this ARC from the publisher, Curiosity Quills Press, in exchange for an honest review. Thank you!

Mattie Schraeder says

I received an ARC from the publisher in exchange for this review.

The Timeseer's Gambit is an amazing follow up to The Deathsniffer's Assistant that leaves me satisfied and yet still yearning for more.

The story opens up following Christopher's mother at the Floating Castle, giving a further glimpse into the events of the devastating night that took his parents and shook Darrington City. I loved seeing Julia from the eyes of someone other than Michael and Christopher. McIntyre does a wonderful job of painting her characters how they are seen in various points of view, and getting a small glimpse into her own head provides a new view into a character I really wanted to know more about.

Fast forward three months from the end of The Deathsniffer and Olivia and Christopher are in the middle of their usual antics chasing another criminal through the city. The time skip from the first novel provided all the means necessary to put Christopher and Olivia into a state of a working friendship. Their idiosyncrasies have become old hat to one another, and it gives the reader a chance to really get to know them outside of their rocky first mystery together.

Timeseer also brings the character William further into the spotlight, who was easily one of the most interesting secondary characters in the first novel. Watching his relationship with Christopher grow is one of the best parts of the novel. With Rosemary out of the way in the countryside and the pressure of raising his younger sister not at the forefront of Christopher's mind, he really gets a chance to blossom as his own person and discover what it is he wants, rather than what is expected of him, or at least what he thinks is expected of him.

McIntyre also spends a good amount of time further explaining and going into detail about the magic within the world, how categorization works, the workings of the society in which the characters live, and what may be my absolute favorite part of the book: the music. I love how much music becomes a theme throughout the story, and gets woven into the very fabric of the world.

Jenessa says

I received an advance reader copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

"The Timeseer's Gambit" is an excellent followup on the promise of the first novel, delivering more of the

fascinating world of Chris and Olivia and the tremulous society that continues to slowly fall apart around them. I'd go so far as to say I enjoyed it better than the first book -- an impressive feat given how much I enjoyed "Deathsniffer's Assistant." Kate McIntyre has skill for making her world as much of a character as the people in it, and just as flawed -- which means that when it takes a step toward repairing itself, you feel the same sense of triumph. I'm rating it five stars and would highly recommend it! I couldn't put it down once I started.

"Timeseer" is set a few months after "Deathsniffer." With Chris' younger sister Rosemary safely spirited off to the countryside, Chris has resumed work under Olivia, taking on even more grisly murder cases and facing no small share of pistols aimed at him. A triad of stories begins to unfold -- the story of Chris' blossoming relationships with those around him; a serial killer targeting priests in the holy houses of Darrington City, and, tying all of it together, the upcoming trial of Francis Livingstone for the supposed sabotage of the Floating Castle years before. Even though Chris is determined to prove Livingstone's innocence, his time is limited and his hands are tied even further by the knowledge that, if he and Olivia don't work fast, more young priests will die.

I have to admit perhaps some small bias. William Cartwright, though a somewhat secondary character in the original, was a character I was thoroughly intrigued by and wanted to know more about, and this is his story. William's murky past, his odd behavior toward Christopher, and even his condescending attitude and haughty charm all come to bear in this book, and I ate up every second of it. William, the titular Timeseer, is out in force in this book, very much promoted to primary character. Nothing gave me more pleasure than watching him and Chris interact. Much of William's backstory is brought to bear here, and it's fascinating -- as well as adequately thought out to explain why he acts the way he does, both toward others and toward Chris.

In addition, I love the way this book really digs into the heart of Darrington society. Categorization was briefly dwelled on in the previous title, but here McIntyre actually pulls apart the mechanism and lets us see the ticking gears inside -- as well as the rust threatening to break said mechanism apart. In Darrington, after all, magic is failing. One character tells Olivia and Chris that there are no young spiritbinders, not anymore, and this book deals with the fallout of what it means that so much of society is coming out of categorization with weaker skills, and even, sometimes, without any skills at all. McIntyre takes her time exploring the boundaries and problems with categorization, and is honest about the way something so vital to this world's society may also be the greatest force to its slow destruction.

A few new characters are introduced here, and though I'm intrigued by all of them (notably Garrett Albany, Rachel's brother we've heard so much about), I think my favorite of the new cast has to be Emilia. A scientist and engineer who's determined to drag Darrington into the future without spiritbinding, even if it kicks and screams the whole way, Emilia is brilliant and engaging -- not to mention how nice it is to have a woman of color who's clearly going to be a major figure in the future books. It's also lovely to watch Maris interact with her -- Maris is also high on my favorites list, so I love seeing her get narrative attention, and she and Emilia have marvelous interactions with each other. This book has a lot of diversity in it -- diversity that I've been really craving from my fantasy lately and have had a hard time finding, no less. Emilia is only one example!

If "Deathsniffer" was meant to introduce us to the characters and let us see the beginnings of their character arcs, the growth yet to come, then this title is the first step on that journey. It's a faltering step for some of the characters, and of course everyone makes their mistakes as they struggle to cope with the situations they've been thrown into. (None more than Chris!) But when they recover from their stumbles it makes you want to cheer. Adding to this is the honest tone that McIntyre takes with some of the realizations the characters come to, and even moments where some of them say things or make promises they'll likely come to regret in future titles. (Where are the future titles? I want them now!) I'm as concerned for the characters as I am happy to see them grow -- and I'm both concerned and happy for them the way I might be for good friends.

I'm anxious to see what becomes of this world in future titles, but more than that, I'm anxious for the characters! What's going to happen to them? What choices are they going to make that I'll wince at or cheer on in turns in the third book?

I'm dying for the third title -- I need to know what happens next to these characters that I've come to love, and what the ultimate fate of Darrington society is going to be (though I care about that one a lot less, I'll admit.) I'll be watching for news about the next book every day.

Sarah (CoolCurryBooks) says

The Timeseer's Gambit is the sequel to fantasy mystery novel, The Deathsniffer's Assistant. While there is a separate mystery, I highly suggest reading the books in order since there are some ongoing plot threads and character arcs.

Three months after Christopher Buckley started working for the eccentric detective Olivia Faraday, they've got a new case. Across the city, young priests have died in apparent accidents, yet there appears to be a connection. If that weren't enough, Dr. Livingstone is about to go to trial, and it looks like he'll be convicted, even though Chris is sure he's innocent. And on top of everything else, he still hasn't figured out what's going on with those mysterious powers he displayed at the end of the last book? Oh, and his apparent past connection to the alluring William Cartwright.

The Timeseer's Gambit's major strength is its characters. While the mystery was twisty enough to keep me on my toes, the characters are what made this book such a delight. Chris and Olivia are my main stand outs, but I like the rest of the supporting cast as well. Olivia is just so gloriously weird! Not the quirky in a cute way, but genuinely strange. She can be standoffish and rude, but you can see her start to care about the people closest to her. Her growing friendship with Chris is one of my favorite parts of the book.

Speaking of Chris, I have to keep reminding myself how young he is. The Deathsniffer's Assistant takes place just after he got his categorization, which apparently happens when you're eighteen. This explains so much. In my review of The Deathsniffer's Assistant, I discussed the possibility that Chris might be bisexual. There's no longer any doubt. Chris is bi. He spends a lot of time lying to himself about it, but he does finally admit that he's attracted to Will as well as Rachel, even if he's got a ways to go before he accepts himself for who he is and for not being who society says he should be.

A major ongoing plot thread of The Timeseer's Gambit involves the political situation and the Dr. Livingstone trial. I actually think it would have been beneficial for me to reread the first book beforehand, but I was able to remember enough to figure out what was going on. I have a strong feeling that this will be an ongoing series thread, which is great by me since I prefer my stories tightly connected rather than more episodic.

Anyway, The Timeseer's Gambit was a lot of fun, and I'm really loving this series. I actually think it deserves far more attention than it currently has, so I would encourage you to check it out.

Originally posted on [The Illustrated Page](#).

?I received an ARC from the publisher in exchange for a free and honest review.

Nell Brown says

I am loving this series - the concepts, the characters and the world the author has constructed. This second book contained more intriguing background and brought more understanding to light. She fleshed out the characters a bit more along with new mysteries solved and I cannot wait for the next in the series! She brings modern issues into her story but makes me realize they are human issues that have been present throughout time. I did receive a copy of this book for an honest review.

Debra says

Sequel delivers!

I enjoyed the first book of this series enough that when I saw the sequel listed on Amazon, I preordered it. I was not disappointed!

Frustrating events and odd reactions confounded me through the beginning, but by the end, growing to know these characters more through their mistakes and fumbles, they have become some of my favorites.

If you enjoy a little bit of steampunk, Victorian mystery, with some elemental fantasy, then this world will captivate and make you desperate to know more of their stories. I cannot wait for another Faraday novel.

Kenya says

I received an ARC for this book and agreed to write an honest review.

I am really enjoying this series! The Timeseer's Gambit is the follow-up to The Deathsniffer's Assistant, a steampunk/alternate history series created by Kate McIntyre. While the stories focus on the coming of age of Chris, a young man who has to fend for himself and his sister, they also tell of a society that's struggling with political conflict, energy issues, and unemployment. As I read, I was sometimes charmed, sometimes repulsed, but almost always fascinated. I really look forward to seeing how the societal problems continue to play out in this series.

Chris is still working for Olivia, and there's a new, bizarre closed-room mystery to solve. While Olivia is still flinty, chaotic and irreverent, Chris's more sensitive nature is having a softening effect on her. Olivia seems amusingly uncomfortable with her feelings of affection toward Chris, but her intuitive genius is still in full force. Chris is a little bolder in this book, and turns out to be a more valuable assistant than Olivia or even Chris expected. The more Chris discovers about who he is and what he is capable of, the more uncertain he becomes, yet his personal growth has a tremendous impact on his work.

The investigation of the central mystery sometimes moved a little slowly for me, but once the action and the plot twists got rolling, I couldn't stop reading. I'm looking forward to seeing how Chris's relationship with little sis Rosemary develops - she looks to be a debutante demigoddess in the making. Can this possibly end well? I also want to see what happens with Chris's best friend Will, and with Chris's understanding of what he wants for himself.

Now for the characters that really intrigue me – they are the owners of the gifts upon which this world's

infrastructure rests – the undines, fiarans, salamanders, and various other “wild” spirits who power and support the world that the humans inhabit. They are held physically, magically and, apparently, legally in check, and are required to use their abilities upon request and to the degree desired by the members of this society, distinguished and crass alike. The good citizens of Tarland do have legitimate problems and are at times woefully victimized by crime and injustice. But at least they’re free, and not stuck inside water pumps and light bulbs, existing apparently for the sole purpose of being called into service. At first I thought their situation might be a metaphor for slavery, but with the contractual aspect that’s presented in this book, I think it’s more like indentured servitude. There may be good reason for the salamanders to look a little surly.

From the prologue of the first book in the series, it was made clear that the wild spirits are dissatisfied and potentially rebellious, and their “savage” nature strikes fear in the hearts of Tarland citizens who are fighting to reclaim the days when human rule over lesser spirits was a given. The ability to manage to these often unhappy creatures is fading, and it’s clear that something is about to break. This is what I truly love about this series. Yes, I like the clear-eyed approach to Chris’s discovery of his sexual and romantic identity; I like the Sherlock-and-Watson sort of relationship between Olivia and Chris; I like finding out more about Maris, the steely-tough detective supervisor with a romantic heart. But I love the buildup of social turmoil (in a book) and I want to see if there are any ethical questions for Chris to wrestle with.

So overall, I’ve enjoyed the time I’ve spent with this series, and look forward to seeing what comes next.

Emma says

Over the past year, I’ve grown increasingly familiar with a terrible, bittersweet feeling. It hit me first when Rey came on-screen in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. It hits me again and again and again whenever I watch *Steven Universe*. I can feel it creeping up on me from behind with *Ghostbusters*, though I haven’t even seen it yet.

It’s a nostalgic pang. I nearly always end up crying. I’m crying with joy for the kids like me who will grow up with these stories, and I’m crying with something else for the kid that was me who didn’t. That girl, who was hungry enough that she ate every story in sight, and who thought she was full up—it’s only now that I can look back and see that she was still, always, starving.

And that’s why it’s such a gut-wrench that before these books, I had never met Olivia Faraday.

I knew her cousins: Sherlock Holmes, Gregory House, Patrick Jane—eccentric geniuses, bombastic jerks, men. I even loved them, because tricksters are great, and clever assholes are my jam.

But wow—Olivia Faraday! How do I even begin to describe Olivia Faraday? Olivia Faraday is flawless. I hear her hair is insured for ten-thousand royales.

I especially love how unafraid McIntyre is to make Olivia off-putting. Partial as I am to the Holmes-archetype, I’m frequently annoyed whenever a story lets them get away with their jerkish-ness. And I don’t mean ‘any situation in which being a jerk facilitates the character’s investigation,’ more ‘the narrative ultimately upholds jerkitude as a fair price for genius.’ Olivia is, undoubtedly, a jerk. Her blackmailing of Chris at the end of TDA had me vibrating with glee. But god, she’s trying!

There’s this moment at about the middle-third of this book where Olivia and Chris have an argument, one in

which they are simultaneously mad at each other and conscious of the fact that they are both tense and upset for reasons external to their relationship, and all the while they're so, so aware of how much they fundamentally like each other, and how difficult it is for both of them to navigate an argument when at the end of it they don't genuinely want to hurt each other.

DELICIOUS.

I also admire the way McIntyre weaves together A-plots, B-plots, and meta-plots. There's never a dull moment in these books, and *The Timeseer's Gambit* leads to a couple of real showstoppers with regards to the ongoing political conflicts. I confess I occasionally had a difficult time sorting out which political beliefs (and characters) fell into which camps, but it's also been over a year of hard reading since I devoured TDA.

The world-building stood up for itself just fine, even in lieu of the reading gap. McIntyre's interest in making magic a part of social systems is like catnip for me—and finding out more of just what categorization entailed was simultaneously horrifying and so, so mentally satisfying. I'm so excited to see this system get shaken to the core and shattered to the ground!

MILD SPOILERS TO FOLLOW

On the subject of Chris and queerness: Oh, I feel for this boy, back to his questionable decision-making skills though he is. I'm shy of stories where a character is still embattled with their queerness, but the bitterness of that narrative is somewhat balanced by the inclusion of other queer characters who are able to love themselves and their queer partners.

****GREATER (THOUGH NON-SPECIFIC) SPOILERS TO FOLLOW****

I have mixed feelings about the portrayal of mental illness in this book. I think McIntyre has a great deal of compassion for those who suffer from various disorders and illnesses. She names trauma for what it is, she treats grief, depression, and suicidality with the solemnity they deserve, and I'm sure Olivia is intended to be read as neurodivergent, if not necessarily diagnosable.

But I didn't love the way mental illness was linked to certain violent actions. I wish there had been more of a parallel built up between the illness of the perpetrator and the illness of at least one of the victims—something a la Jake Peralta's "cool motive, still murder" that emphasized a difference between being traumatized and being violent.

One final note in spoiler territory: at one point, sexual assault is referred to although not depicted, and it's the kind of sexual assault that is so much more common in reality and so much less common in fiction. That is, perpetrated by someone who doesn't conceive of themselves as a rapist, and who is not perceived to be a rapist by anyone but his victim—and even she has trouble reconciling the truth of it. So, thank you, McIntyre, for that.

[[I was given a copy of this book in advance of publication in exchange for an honest review.]]
