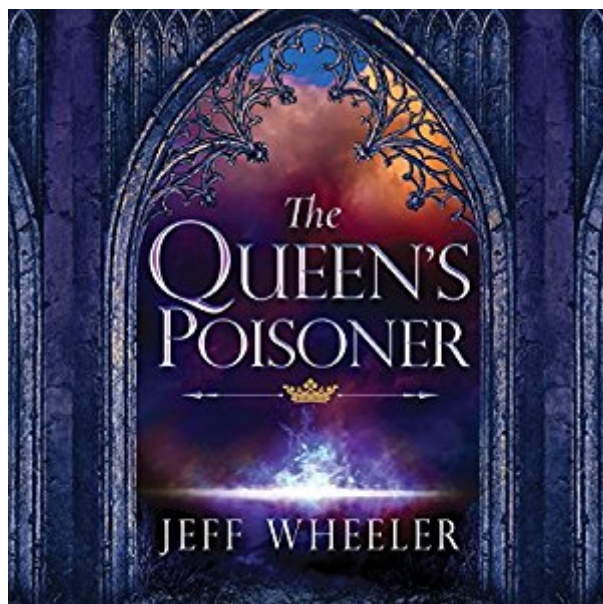


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The Queen's Poisoner: The Kingfountain Series, Book 1



Synopsis

King Severn Argentine's fearsome reputation precedes him: usurper of the throne, killer of rightful heirs, ruthless punisher of traitors. Attempting to depose him, the Duke of Kiskaddon gambles...and loses. Now the duke must atone by handing over his young son, Owen, as the king's hostage. And should his loyalty falter again, the boy will pay with his life. Seeking allies and eluding Severn's spies, Owen learns to survive in the court of Kingfountain. But when new evidence of his father's betrayal threatens to seal his fate, Owen must win the vengeful king's favor by proving his worth - through extraordinary means. And only one person can aid his desperate cause: a mysterious woman, dwelling in secrecy, who truly wields power over life, death, and destiny.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was very different than what I expected, but not in a bad way. I'm a fan of Jeff Wheeler and have enjoyed his 3 trilogies in the Muirwood and Mirrowen worlds, and came into this book expecting *The Queen's Poisoner* to be much of the same, but it was surprisingly different and unique. Although Wheeler's writing style is clear throughout, unlike his other books, this story follows a child, 8-year old Owen, as the main character. This lent to a different overall feel from his other books as you learn about this new world through the eyes of a young boy. Owen is thrust into conflict and must learn to adapt, build courage, and make alliances/friendships to help him survive and save his family. The characters are entertaining (Mancini is my favorite), bringing humor and intrigue to the story. As Owen begins to feel the magic of the Fountain, we get a lot of foreshadow,

hints, and small demonstrations of what the magic entails, but the magic is not what drives the plot in *The Queen's Poisoner*-- it's the characters. In this way, I felt like I was reading more of a historical fiction, albeit in a fantasy kingdom where the magic of the Fountain Blessed is evident, but running in the background. Magic is not necessarily how kings keep or enforce their rule. It's not the traditional fantasy story (at least in this first book) with some overwhelming evil or tyrant that must be overthrown or an impossible quest. Nearly all of the characters have done good and bad things, with real motivations and consequences, and we get to see what makes them tick. Basically, this is an origin story that sets the stage with a focus on the characters. It reminds me of how I feel reading Megan Whalen Turner's, *Queen of Attolia* series, or Sherwood Smith's, *A Stranger to Command*.

I purchased this book as my Kindle First book for March; if there is a Fantasy book listed at all, chances are that's the book I'm going to go for. The premise for this book sounded interesting so I grabbed it first thing this morning - I knew I was going to have a long day at appointments with my mother-in-law and I needed something to do with all of that time spent sitting. It wasn't until I went to put it into my Goodreads for my Currently Reading that I realized who the author was. Ah, Jeff Wheeler. It made me a little nervous; I struggled between loving and hating his *Muirwood* series ([[book:The Wretched of Muirwood|15954540](#)]). And I completely gave up on [[book:Fireblood|15954549](#)], quitting at 10 percent into the book. One of the things that I really struggled with was Wheeler's writing style, so I went into this book hesitantly. I devoured it. This book hit the mark for me so much better than the others I had read. It still had its issues, and some of those were the same issues that I had with his other books; his writing is a little choppy for my personal tastes. He often takes one statement that could be a smooth flowing sentence and splits it into two or three choppy and smaller sentences. Some of the interactions between the characters didn't feel very realistic, especially the interactions between adults and children. But I felt like the characters were so much more developed in this book - I was able to easily connect to the characters.

As a note: I am an avid fantasy reader, and spend WAY too much time on websites that dissect stories. I am also EXTREMELY familiar with the tropes. With that said: This was an interesting fantasy book. The last quarter increased the star-rating for me from 3 stars to 4 stars. I got this book as a "freebie-of-the-month" for Prime, and that was about a good price for me. Although it was moderately engaging, I am glad I did not pay full price for this book. Pros: 1) The magic system, from what I've seen, is interesting. It might be worth reading the next book to see what Jeff Wheeler does

with it. Wheeler did a reasonable job of showing how the magic system works, rather than telling. I don't expect that good fortune to last in the upcoming book, though, as this was more of a "discovery" story for our protagonist, rather than a "training" story.2) Reasonable Shakespeare allusion. *spoilers* The king in this story is clearly based off of Richard III. There were some blatant allusions to Shakespeare, but they did not distract too much. It was a nice twist that the King's magical talent depends on him heckling people. I hope Wheeler delves into the moral dilemma presented here in later books, (sacrifice power but be nicer? Or keep being unpleasant, and still have the magic needed to rule?) but I don't know if he will.3) The character of Owen is not bad for a "Special Snowflake" / "SURPRISE TALENT!!!" character. I expect he'll turn more into a Marty Stu type "Special Snowflake" in the next book, but in this book, he has legitimate character flaws that do hinder him, and that he needs to overcome.4) There are still some mysteries, and were some subverted tropes. Yay!

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