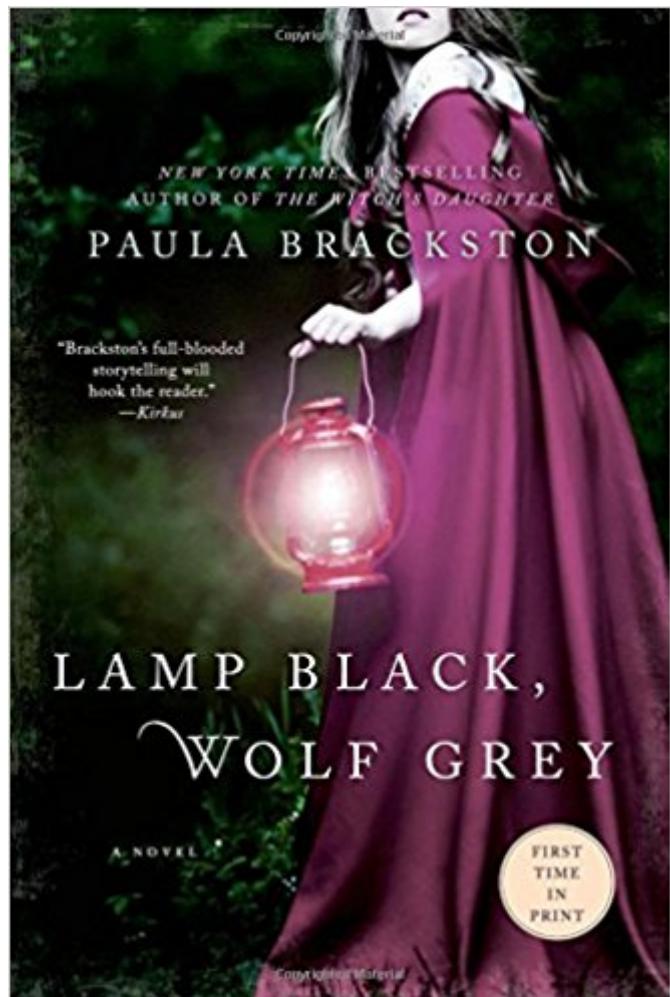


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Lamp Black, Wolf Grey: A Novel



Synopsis

Artist Laura Matthews finds her new home in the Welsh mountains to be a place so charged with tales and legends that she is able to reach through the gossamer-fine veil that separates her own world from that of myth and fable. She and her husband Dan have given up their city life and moved to Blaencwm, an ancient longhouse high in the hills. Here she hopes that the wild beauty will inspire her to produce her best art and will give her the baby they have longed for. But this high valley is also home to others, such as Rhys the charismatic loner who pursues Laura with fervor. And Anwen, the wise old woman from the neighboring farm who seems to know so much but talks in riddles. And then there is Merlin. Lamp Black, Wolf Grey tells both Laura's story and Merlin's. For once he too walked these hills, with his faithful grey wolf at his heel. It was here he fell in love with Megan, nurse-maid to the children of the hated local noble, Lord Geraint. Merlin was young, at the start of his renowned career as a magician, but when he refuses to help Lord Geraint it is Megan who may pay the price. From New York Times bestselling author Paula Brackston, Lamp Black, Wolf Grey is an enchanting tale of love and magic featuring her signature blend of gorgeous writing, an intriguing historical backdrop, and a relatable heroine that readers are sure to fall in love with.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin (August 4, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1250069688

ISBN-13: 978-1250069689

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.9 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (74 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #332,750 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #119 inÂ Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Arthurian #648 inÂ Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Myths & Legends #2050 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Fantasy

Customer Reviews

(Trying hard not to put spoilers here: Two stories that converge make up this almost-a-fairy-tale of a novel. Full of atmosphere, romance, sexuality and magic, the lives of two women living hundreds of years apart perform their pas-de-deux in a misty ravine in Wales. Is there any place more conducive to flights of human imagination and supernatural phenomena? Merlin, the man of Arthurian tales,

plays a pivotal role in both lives. Here's where the story fumbles for me. Megan loves Merlin, and lives in a time appropriate to make this a prequel to *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Thomas Mallory, and events in the story are meant to propel him to the life we've read about in that and other tales. In modern days, Laura loves Dan, and they've moved to the Welsh countryside so she can renew her painting career and conceive a child. Only, she meets Merlin, and falls into a lusty crush on Rhys, who looks like Merlin, and might be him, but isn't, only he seems magical, and is certainly mystifyingly sneaky. The emotions Laura expresses are lovingly rendered, but just like in so many horror movies where the frightened teenagers decide to hide in the basement where the killer/ghost/madman lives, she makes some really bad choices at the end that make the reader want to reach into the pages and slap her sideways. While her marriage is hanging on a thread and the lives of everyone she cares about are endangered, she decides to visit the stone cottage where a psychotic person whom she suspects as having shoved her friend off a cliff, lives, to deliver a message - at midnight. While Dan sleeps soundly. And no one can hear her scream. And there is no light, no electricity, no way out. That was the main reason I didn't give this the full five stars. However...

Paula Brackston's "Lamp Black, Wolf Grey" starts out with promise and then dissolves into the mists of the Welsh countryside that stands as a backdrop to this tale of Merlin and the lasting power of storytelling. Brackston, an author popular for her novels revolving around magic and witches, tries to underscore the importance of keeping legends alive while writing an underwhelming plot that fails to be memorable. Laura, a modern day artist, moves from London with her husband Dan to the rural Welsh countryside where she intends to indulge in her artwork while fulfilling the couple's dream to conceive a child. Instead she meets up with the reclusive Rhys--a passionate soul who immediately mesmerizes her into infidelity. In a parallel story, Megan from the time of King Arthur, meets Merlin the Magician--Brackston's Merlin is of the Pierce Brosnan variety--dark haired and blue-eyed--no long white beards or sorcerer's apprentice robes for him--and falls in love awhile acting as a nanny of the lord of the manor's two children. Politics abound and sadly, roadblocks are put in the way of Megan and Merlin's love. Brackston pulls the reader into the story initially but fails to develop any of her characters--all are stereotypical at best. Where she succeeds is creating the Welsh landscape--a place of dreamy unreality where magical things can happen. Brackston wields her magic, but this, too, is ineffective; the story flails, plunging into trope as both Megan and Laura's hearts move in directions that lead them to their eventual and very predictable fates. Appearing in both story lines is Merlin--Brackston's portrait seems off as one would think the clever magician

would employ more wily devices to charm and control his hosts and enemies.

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