



The Masked City

Genevieve Cogman

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Librarian-spy Irene is working undercover in an alternative London when her assistant Kai goes missing. She discovers he's been kidnapped by the fae faction and the repercussions could be fatal. Not just for Kai, but for whole worlds.

Kai's dragon heritage means he has powerful allies, but also powerful enemies in the form of the fae. With this act of aggression, the fae are determined to trigger a war between their people - and the forces of order and chaos themselves.

Irene's mission to save Kai and avert Armageddon will take her to a dark, alternate Venice where it's always Carnival. Here Irene will be forced to blackmail, fast talk, and fight. Or face death.

The Masked City Details

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Author : Genevieve Cogman

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From Reader Review The Masked City for online ebook

Liz Barnsley says

When I read “The Invisible Library” last year it was a purely pleasurable read, one that I absorbed in one sitting – a darkly humorous and incredibly clever tale of a super Library overseeing a range of worlds, all of them different in their own way – and followed the story of Irene as she went after a particular book in a particular place (yes I’m trying to NOT with the spoilers) . Highly imaginative, if you love reading and books generally then you can’t possibly go wrong here, these are stories that speak to stories and as such are better than chocolate.

The follow up – The Masked City – if anything is even better. We know the eclectic and highly entertaining cast of characters and due to the mythology Genevieve Cogman can do with them as she likes – and she does! Kai was one of my favourites from The Invisible Library and this time he is in peril, Irene is determined to go to his rescue no matter the cost and it is a rich gallop of a tale that absorbs you into a magical yet often brutally realistic world and engages you utterly.

Irene is a kick ass super heroine when it comes to the books and she is not too shabby when it comes to the physical either, she has a great depth to her character and as such is the perfect anchor for such a mystical and fun tale. I’m also a big fan of the Fae as a concept – they are entirely fascinating, cleverly intriguing and you never know quite what is going to happen. All the various factions and interactions are really well done, we fairly race along to an ending that had me absolutely desperate for more.

Overall this series (which I hope will run for a while) is really superb **ESPECIALLY** as I say if you are a total bookworm as many of us are. You can nod along sagely at the lovely little book asides and overall I’m just a little in love with these.

Highly Recommended.

Happy Reading Folks!

Carolyn says

I loved Genevieve Cogman's first book in this series The Invisible Library, where she introduced Librarian/spy extraordinaire Irene Winters and her student Kai. Their role is to visit alternate worlds through a network of Libraries and secretly bring back dangerous or vulnerable books to the Library for safe keeping. The alternate worlds come in all forms of low and high tech, with magical beings such as the Fae and their enemies, the dragons infiltrating various worlds to different degrees. Fortunately the Library has its own magic to help protect its agents in the field and Irene also has a Sherlock-like detective, Vale who helps in her investigative work in her steampunk version of London.

In this second episode, Kai is captured by the Fae and Irene must travel to an alternate Venice to free him and bring him home before a war breaks out that will destroy worlds and millions of innocent human lives. Along the way she must talk to a dragon lord, combat powerful Fae, tell a fairytale and use all her wits and magic to survive. All good fun and now I need to read book 3 to see what happens next!

Skyler Autumn says

2 Stars Generously

Honestly the only reason I didn't DNF this novel was pure stubbornness on my part. Also for god sake the concept has so much freakin potential it is like THE PURGE of urban fantasy novels. Great concept - poorly executed.

I thought the first novel for a urban fantasy series at least was usually exposition city then the books following ease off the info dumping so you can enjoy the characters and storyline. The Masked City revolved around Dragons and Fae so numerous chapters were just designated to describing the intricate politics of those two creatures. That'd be fine if I found these two creatures the least bit interesting but spoiler alert I do not!! Especially the Fae which is odd because I like the Fae in Darkfever by Karen Marie Moning but the Fae in Invisible Library are dull and needlessly confusing.

The Fae's whole deal is that they gain their power from being within stories and playing a part and electing others to become archetypes within these dramatic storyline (that may or may not play out for their benefit or detriment it was confusing to figure out how Irene was using the story aspect for her benefit). I found their motivation for being villains and capturing Kai to be as dull as their characters. They were crap villains and I found myself not caring for the protagonists either because honestly the protagonists were not much better.

Vale decided to up his annoyance from the first novel by now being a whiney undermining bitch, Kai was non-existent almost the entire book which sucked cause he's the only character I liked, Irene whose suppose to be this badass Librarian spy just kept have long info-dumping conversation with people or getting beat up. I just found everyone to be a one note wonder character-wise and to be deeply unlikeable.

AND (I know complain city) this book was set in a alternative Venice and at no point do I want to buy a trip to Venice because this book did nothing to bring you into the city. There was no vivid descriptions and picturesque scenery. If you are going to pick a setting so unique for your story you better make the environment like another character in the novel.

This book was surface, the storyline was dull, and the background information was too much. I know really harsh but I had such HIGH HOPES for the premise and I'm also suffering a wicked book hangover from Pop Goes The Weasel by M.J Arlidge. So maybe I'm not in the best head space to read this book but I can't help comparing to some great novels I've read lately and this has been found lacking! I may read the third in the series because I'm a masochist or maybe I can't fully turn away from the concept of Librarian spies because you know LIBRARIAN SPIES how awesome is that!!!

Paul says

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher to read and write an honest review.

Hoping for a quieter assignment than the last one, Irene is now working in an alternative London. All seem to be well until her assistant, Kai, is kidnapped. She quickly discovers his abductors are a faction of the fae.

Given Kai's dragon heritage, this could be considered an act of war by his Royal family and the impact for entire worlds could be devastating.

Irene feels completely responsible for him being snatched, and returns to the library to seek advice from them. They suggest a visit to his uncle to gain extra insight to finding him. Returning to her alternative London another faction of the fae reveals to Irene that Kai has been taken to Venice. This stronghold of the fae is dark and is always carnival, full of masked people and seething with power struggles, and she learns that Kai will be auctioned to the highest bidder in the next few days. Irene needs to break a few library rules, go undercover and use all her skills to try to rescue him, but even with a little assistance this will be the toughest, and potentially most lethal assignment yet.

This second book in the series is definitely a step up in action and danger from the first in the series. Cogman seems to have a measure of her characters and worlds that she is building, and I felt that this was a better read than the first book. The plot was good, fast paced and with well thought out detail to make everything seem realistic. However, I was a little disappointed that there was not enough about the library in this volume compared to the first; as I was hoping it would shape up to be a comparable to the Thursday Next series by Fforde. 3.5 Stars overall.

Wanda says

The Masked City is definitely more focused than *The Invisible Library*, which was seething with ideas, not all of which actually contributed to the plot line. This installment has fewer distractions and more Fae, which is always a good thing in my books.

Irene is faced with a lot of challenges in this book: a kidnapped apprentice, a trip into a highly chaotic alternate world, an uneasy alliance with the notorious Fae Lord Silver, uncertain support from the Library hierarchy, and having a large, extremely powerful dragon sitting in judgment of her actions. And yet, she does what so many people have to do—she just keeps moving, keeps thinking, keeps doing, despite what life throws at her.

May I say that if I could get the very cool Library tattoo, I would. I, who have steadfastly refused ink for 55 years. I wish that real-life library work was remotely as exciting as Irene's world (she says as she sits surrounded by old, grimy military tomes). Also, if I was Irene, I'd be pursuing Mr. Vale, the Sherlockian detective, and seeing where his restrained, Victorian admiration would take me.

However, I must say that the ending of this volume was a bit abrupt in my opinion. It had a definite cliff-hanger element to it, shall we say, which disappointed me. What appeared to be more pages of story ended up being little side tales—Irene's favourite book heists, an interview with the author, and a preview of the third book. That will teach me for being one of those people who never flips to the last page of the book before I actually get there. I would immediately rip into the third volume for satisfaction except that my public library still has it 'on order,' but not yet received or processed! Obviously I'm not the only one waiting with bated breath—I'm tenth in the line of people with holds on the new book, trying to be patient. **Just checked and this 3rd book will be published in December, that's why I can't get my grabby hands on it.**

Nikki says

The Masked City is a sequel to The Invisible Library, following the same characters... With possibly even less time in the actual library, which is my only real disappointment here. Technically, I received it to review — but only the day after I'd already bought a copy. I was eager to get my hands on it; the first book was a lot of fun, even if I didn't enjoy it as much as, say, Bastian's Book Reviews did. (Trivia: a quotation from his review appears on the back cover, and in the first couple of pages!) I'm actually thinking that based on reading The Masked City, I might have judged The Invisible Library too harshly — I think it quite likely deserved four stars, rather than the three I gave at the time.

The Masked City is a worthy sequel, with all the same intriguing worldbuilding, interplay between characters, and the sense of fun. It's fast-paced and plays with all kinds of tropes along the way — the master spy, the great detective, the enemy operative... and even fairytales. And dragons; non-conventional dragons, but dragons nonetheless.

And let's pause for a second to appreciate once again that Irene, the main character, is an undercover Librarian who is protected from deceitful Fae magic by her Library brand, who is tasked with stealing books to strengthen the connections between worlds and stabilise them, and whose magic and ways of travelling and understanding the world all revolve around books.

Sign me the heck up.

Plus, of course, the main character is a woman who knows what she's doing, who rescues her (male) apprentice and generally plays the hero's role with aplomb, and knows the power of words — and a good book. Hurrah, say I.

My only quibble is that the extra material at the back isn't that interesting. If you're going to give me Irene's best heists, I need at least a short story. Not a paragraph!

Originally posted here.

Paige Bookdragon says

started having difficulty in breathing

Melindam says

Warning: The review contains mild spoilers!

This has been another great read, absolutely on par with the first book with even more action, world-building that goes deep & lots of fun.

The story picks up where it left off at the end of Book #1. Irene works as Librarian-in-Residence in an

alternate, steampunk, Victorian London with Zeppelins, Faes, werewolves & most importantly Peregrine Vale (an alternate Sherlock Holmes with better-developed social skills, lots of money and a title).

When Irene's assistant, Kai (incognito royal dragon, youngest son of the King of the Eastern Ocean) is kidnapped by some Fae, it has far-reaching political consequences. A threat of war between Fae and Dragons is looming over all alternate worlds and humanity would be the loser, not to mention that Irene's position in The Library=her whole existence may be at risk. So she is willing to make a pact with the "devil" or in this case the notorious Fae of the alternate London, Lord Silver, who has his own agenda in assisting Irene.

Thankfully, Irene remains the awesome MC she was in Book #1: still level-headed, sensible, funny & "normal", though there are some hints that activate my special-snow-flake radar, but no cause for red alert yet. It is also delightful to see that both Kai and Vale (and even Lord Silver) respect & value her without her having to prove herself to them or to anyone else.

We get a whole lot of information concerning The Library, the Dragons and The Fae, which is intriguing and you end up wanting to learn even more.

And as I am also a sucker for -understated- romance, I hope Vale (=Sherlock) & Irene will become a pair, eventually. I have nothing against Kai, he is an awesome Dragon, it's just personal preference. :)

My Review of The Invisible Library

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

3.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2016/09/08/...>

The Masked City is another fantastic adventure chronicling the exploits of Irene Winters, a secret agent for an interdimensional library. I literally cannot find anything to dislike about the last part of that sentence. In fact, the only reason I'm not rating this higher is because of the reduced time we get to spend within the said interdimensional library, as well as some of the supporting characters (and if you recall, those were the elements I had wanted to get more of out of the previous volume as well). Still, it meant we got to see our protagonist grow into her role and develop further as a character, and I was happy to see this sequel tap into the same fun adventurous vein which provided the drive for The Invisible Library.

When the story begins, Irene is a Librarian-in-Residence, having earned her position as an agent in the alternate version of London that we saw from the first book. She is in the middle of working on an assignment when all of a sudden, her apprentice Kai is kidnapped. With the help of her detective friend Vale, Irene is determined to uncover the mystery of who took Kai and why, unaware of the dangerous path this will set them on.

For time immemorial, forces of Order and Chaos have remained locked in conflict. The mighty dragons representing the former are always at odds with the Fae which represent the latter, fighting for control over the many worlds that exist in the multiverse. However, some worlds are inherently high in Order or Chaos, naturally predisposing them to one faction or the other. Irene has reason to suspect that Kai has been taken by Fae to one of their worlds, which would mean disastrous consequences for her apprentice if he is not recovered soon. To save Kai, she'll have to go undercover and infiltrate an alternate Venice, reputed to be the masked city because every day is the Carnival there and the party never ends.

Deep in the heart of Fae territory where Chaos is so thick that even the great Library cannot help her, Irene

has only her own skills to rely on to find and rescue Kai. In *The Masked City*, our heroine goes full-on secret Library spy, using all her knowledge of Language and subterfuge to survive a cutthroat world where the Fae are manipulative and merciless. We get to see her gain confidence and set aside the doubts that plagued her in the first book, where she constantly worried about her competition or questioned whether she deserved such a high profile assignment when she was only a junior Librarian. For one thing, this is Irene's mission and her mission alone; Kai is not only her apprentice but her responsibility, and that's not something she takes lightly—even if it means she will receive no help, and failure could cost her everything.

The story continues to be fast-paced and entertaining. The books in this series make for light, fun popcorn reads, and this sequel once again delivered exactly what was promised. Cogman further develops the world, expanding upon the role of the Library. She also fleshes out the conflict between the Dragons and Fae, and delves deeper into the lore of both sides. More importantly, we get to learn more about the motivations of these factions, whereas we only got to scratch the surface in the first book. Some questions are answered, and more mysteries are also introduced. I love how this series is full of potential, and we're just starting to explore the many possibilities. Our characters' journey to this book's astonishing version of Venice is a prime example.

That said, my only regret is that we didn't get to see much of the Library itself. Also, Kai spends the bulk of this book kidnapped and imprisoned, so we didn't get to see much of him in action at all, which is a shame because he was my favorite character from the first book (for reasons I can't go into in this review, because if you haven't read *The Invisible Library* yet, it would be a spoiler!) However, these are just minor issues based on my personal preferences; beyond them, it was difficult to find much fault with this sequel.

Once more, I am happy to recommend this series to all bibliophiles and fans of "books about books". As a book lover, I also saw a lot of myself in Irene, who just can't help but feel an affinity to all things literary and bookish! I really enjoy the characters, the story, and the concepts. I'm really looking forward to the next book, *The Burning Page*.

Althea Ann says

A very enjoyable sequel to 'The Invisible Library.' If you enjoyed the first book; you will undoubtedly love this one too. I would recommend starting with the first however - they're quick reads.

In this episode, Librarian/transdimensional-spy Irene, to her great dismay, finds her junior assistant Kai missing. Kai was under her tutelage, and was her responsibility, so she feels it's up to her to get him back. Raising the stakes is the fact that Kai is the scion of a notable, and immensely powerful family of shapeshifting dragons. They could hold the Library to blame. Even if Irene's theory is correct, and Kai was kidnapped by the Fae, this abduction could spark a war between Fae and dragonkind which could lay innocent worlds waste in its wake.

Plenty of twisty action ensues. I liked how the setting moved from the faux-Victorian steampunk-style world of the first book to a faux Venetian-carnival world; it mixes it up a bit.

I see that there are already three more sequels in this series planned - and I'd be happy to read them.

Many thanks to Roc and NetGalley for the opportunity to read. As always, my opinions are solely my own.

Richard Derus says

Real Rating: 3.75* of five

An interdimensional Library, located outside the reach of Time's Arrow, hires minions to acquire by fair means or foul certain texts out there in the Multiverse for safekeeping or sequestration within its eternity-defining and -defying walls.

The idea of this series is compulsively readable to me. The experience of reading Author Cogman's thoughts about books, reading, stories and their effects and affects is addictive. But this second entry into the series suffers from a common sophomore slump in high-concept book series: The established characters have to get from one set-piece to the next somehow, and when the whole point of the story is that the core group is separated by Vast, Malign Forces, the danger of the story devolving into something that closely resembles the ghastly experience of staring into a fishtank at a rodent desperately clawing for freedom on a squeaking wheel while never making an inch of headway is very real.

Irene the Librarian (*Here's to being a secret agent of an interdimensional Library!* she thinks at a crucial juncture, to my jealous loathing) runs from pillar to post attempting to save her friend/student/lust object Kai the dragon, assisted and hindered by their mutual friend Vale the detective from an alternate steampunk London. That particular alternate is the one that was introduced in the first book, *The Invisible Library*, which also introduced the Fae (beings of chaos) and the aforementioned dragons (beings of order). Humans fit somewhere on the fringes, the vast horde of us existing as bit players in the dramatic tales of the Fae or obedient supernumeraries in the operas of the dragons.

Except, of course, for the Librarians. The Library is a human institution that, in some kinda way, allows us mere mortals access to the Great Game played between the ancient enemies across the many, infinitely numerous in fact, alternate Earths. Since the many-worlds interpretation of quantum physics is eminently sensible to me, agreeing with my innate sense of the Universe's functioning, I totally buy in to stories with multiverses. This particular one has another thing I intuitively recognize as necessary, beings who walk among the multiverse's reality the way we walk among the many worlds in a forest without too much bother as to whose nest/food source/war we interrupt/alter/destroy.

Author Cogman endows these creatures with familiar attributes by making use of the fairy/fae label and the dragon label. These bits of shorthand are most useful. What is less appealing to me is the eternal barely-undeclared war between these camps. The idea of the multiverse as a continuum of highly ordered worlds to highly chaotic worlds again suits my perception of the reality of existence being a set of interlocking continua. But the Grand Conflict of Order and Chaos isn't that simple once humans get their little hineys off the chess board and into the ranks of players. There is no three-person chess, and there is no element of chance in chess; thus the multiverse is transformed into a game of Risk. (I think that damned game has ended more friendships than anything except sexual jealousy.)

And that's where the problems with this tale begin. Alliances form along predictable lines. They're never seriously challenged. In Risk, alliance shift and bonds rupture; here, the end game is the same as the initial conditions, the same players in the same configuration, and somehow a mere human (and a girl human at that!) has averted a Great War by talking.

Um, no. This is a series set in a multiverse that requires conflict to exist. That's not served by this resolution to this book's peripatetic-but-pointless dashings from pillar to post. This is a significant letdown in a series so fascinatingly conceived.

All that aside, I felt completely and utterly Understood by Author Cogman when I read this:

"...People want stories. You should know that more than anybody. They want their lives to have meaning. They want to be part of something greater than themselves. Even you, Miss Winters, want to be a heroic Librarian—don't you? And if you're going to say that people need to have the freedom to be unhappy, something that's forced on them whether they like it or not, I would question your motivation." She paused for a single deadly second. "Most people don't want a brave new world. They want the story that they know."

And that's why I'll buy the next book, and the next, and the one after that. I'm down for rough bits if the smooth is this far into my own personal story.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

After reading and loving the first and third book in this series was I thrilled to get my hands on book two. After reading book three, The Burning Page, did I know the outcome of this book, but I still really wanted to read more about the kidnapping of Kai. And, yes, this book was good, but I also felt that I had some serious problem with really getting into the story. The whole, it's not you, it's me kind of situation that one can have with books now and then. I really wanted to love this book, but I just couldn't. It's not a badly written book, it's just that the story was not to my liking completely.

Now, this can be because I knew the storyline and some of the things that happened in the book in advance. However, I do not think that the whole problem because I have read books in different order before and that has been OK. I'm pretty sure that the story in this book just didn't work out for in the same way as the other because the villains in this book just didn't rock my boat. I loved to once again read about Irene, Vale, and Kai, but my heart wasn't really in this story. But, I often felt that I lost the focus while I read, it got a bit better when Vale was introduced into the story again after being left behind when Irene traveled to Venice to find Kai.

I do think the best part of the book was in the beginning when Irene wasn't sure of whom had kidnapped Kai and had to visit his (very dangerous) relatives. Also, the other books I have read in this series was funnier (and more engrossing) than this was. The whole Venice part of the story, well it just didn't really work for me. I didn't feel it interested me, and as I wrote before did I missed Vale and thankfully the story got better when I showed up, at least a little better...

Still, The Masked City is not a bad book, it has its moments. I especially liked the last chapter where Irene listed her five favorite book-heist tales.

I want to thank the publisher for providing me with a free copy through Edelweiss for an honest review!

Erin Clemence says

I have rounded up a 4.5 star rating to a 5 star for the purposes of Goodreads.

“The Masked City” is the second novel in Genevieve Cogman’s “The Invisible Library” series. In this novel, Kai (Librarian Irene’s apprentice) is kidnapped, and Irene must travel to an alternate Venice (where all patrons are masked for a twisted version of Carnival) where she must battle the Fae that hold Kai captive, while trying to prevent a catastrophic war.

This novel lacked the presence of books and literature that existed in the first one. Irene and her counterparts are still Librarians, sent to rescue elite works of literary art, however this novel was more “spy adventure” than the previous one had been (hence the 4.5 rating). This novel was still entertaining though, with lots of action and underworld creatures (including the powerful Dragon King). Irene and Kai are just as charming and likable as they were in the first novel, and the increased presence of Peregrine Vale is a positive addition to the novel.

“Masked City” introduces new characters and a new setting, with most of the lovable charm of the first novel. Each chapter ends in a cliff-hanger, which contributed to this reader’s utter inability to put this book down. I thoroughly enjoyed the “ending” of this novel (setting the storyline up for the third novel in the series) and continue to be blown away by Cogman’s work. I am (im)patiently awaiting the arrival of the third installment of this series, and am hopeful it will be as delightfully creative as its predecessors. Cogman knows how to tell an addictive tale, and maintains a unique connection to her readers, based on the mutual love of reading and books. I cannot say enough positive things about this series of novels, and will recommend them wholeheartedly to anyone and everyone!

Auntie Terror says

We meet Irene again where we left her: in a slightly more "chaotic" alternate version of London, with her student Kai and private investigator Vale. They are warned by one of the more powerful resident Far, Lord Silver, of an unspecified danger, and soon enough Kai is kidnapped and Irene has to give chase into a high-chaos Venice and into the middle of age-old Fae-intrigues and high politics that might affect even the Library itself.

What I liked very much about this book is the constant play upon the difference between reality and story-reality inside an actually fictional world. In seeming contrast to the orderly worlds the Fae worlds work on the basis of stories and can be influenced by story-telling. But at the same time all this of course only is a story between two bookcovers.

The story as such gives the reader more insight into Fae and Dragon society and so gives a lot of interesting background information to Cogman's story-universe. Also there is a short additional section at the end with further bits of Library-lore. I enjoy such things a lot as I often wish for and miss such expansions on the actual setting in fantasy fiction.

I'd recommend the book to those who enjoyed the first one, and to fans of Kai Meyer, and maybe to people who enjoyed the Stravaganza series as a teen-ager.

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life.

I enjoyed this book quite a bit. This series has so many things going for it. There are dragons, the fae, werewolves, and librarian spies along with nearly non-stop action. This story started with a bang and kept me guessing until the very end. I love how unique this series really is and I enjoyed every part of this second installment.

Kai is kidnapped early on in the book leaving Irene to figure out what to do to get him back. When her normal methods of traveling to different dimensions won't work, she has to make plans to get to where Kai is being held. All of the great characters from the first book are back plus we meet some ones including member of Kai's family. Even the villains in this story are fun to read about!

Not only is Kai's life in jeopardy, there is a threat of war if Irene isn't successful. She is on her own in a chaos filled Venice trying to figure out how to save her apprentice. She relies on her quick thinking and ability to blend in as she works to rescue Kai. Her power of voice is pretty handy in quite a few situations as well. As the story progresses, the excitement builds and I couldn't wait to see how everything would work out.

I would highly recommend this book to others. This is such a fun and fast paced series with wonderful characters. This is the second book in the series and I do think it is best to try to read this series in order so that you have all of the background information. I can't wait to get my hands on the next book in this series!

I received an advance reader edition of this book from Penguin Publishing Group - Roc via NetGalley for the purpose of providing an honest review.

Initial Thoughts

Lots of excitement in this one! I love the whole concept of this series.

Bradley says

I'm on the shelf about this one. It's more 3.5 stars but I tend to round up when there's nothing overtly wrong with it. And there isn't. It is what it intends to be. A spy novel with interdimensional librarians up against the forces of Order and Chaos in the shapes of the Fae and Dragons.

There's a bit of romance, a lot of steampunk train-heist-y stuff, and talking. It's fun.

My only complaint is that there's not enough meat. I mean, the potential is there for some really wild and imaginative diversions, but it sits in the box of mild spy fiction with costumes and mild victorian intrigue.

Unfortunately, my wild expectations for something grand, grander, grandest, got in the way of what I was actually given, but that's my problem, not the book's problem. It was entertaining as it was. It just wasn't as wildly entertaining as I had hoped.

Aristea says

Full review @ <https://todaysdecameron.wordpress.com...>

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Just a great second book following The Invisible Library. It felt like a Tommy and Tuppence (yes, Agatha Christie's detectives) meet a fantasy version of McGyver.

The book takes stereotypes and shakes them, uses amazing locations to their fullest and it has worthy criminals. It is a great "lighter" read yet the author shows an impressive skill in the use of English - the words are used with a particular attention to details - and an amazing idea of two opposite worlds trying to collide.

Phrynn says

I enjoyed this book every bit as much as I did the first in the series, The Invisible Library. This one moves away from the library itself and becomes a huge adventure in multiple worlds with some amazing magic! Irene's own magical skills are just wonderful and we also see a new aspect of Kai which makes him a much more interesting character. I hope he features in a big way in future books:) I loved the whole concept of the magical train, the Fae versus the Dragons, the chaos worlds and of course the invisible library itself. The Masked City is full on action from start to finish and as a result is very hard to put down. Now how long till the next one comes out?

Book Riot Community says

I enjoyed the first book in this series, The Invisible Library, but The Masked City completely won me over. The series centers around Irene, a librarian/spy who travels through different versions of our world collecting books to maintain the balance between chaos and order. The Masked City has a very straight-forward plot: Irene's apprentice, a dragon named Kai, is kidnapped by the Fae, the dragons' mortal enemies, and taken to a Fae-controlled Venice that's a mix of fantasy, dream, and nightmare. First of all, I love stories that take place in Venice, particularly a Venice where Piranesi's Prisons exist IRL. Secondly, Irene is a total badass. While she gets help from several characters, including a version of Sherlock Holmes, the book really shines when she's figuring things out on her own. The story is fast-paced, with a nearly exhausting amount of action, and is chock full of geeky literary allusions. The ending was abrupt, but left me wanting more. I can't wait for the next book!

—Tasha Brandstatter

from The Best Books We Read In October 2016: <http://bookriot.com/2016/10/31/riot-r...>

Carol. says

Dear Carol:

Someday, someone is going to enthusiastically mention this series to you, and you are going to find yourself making that scrunched-up-nose-face that means either the dog has gas or someone is cooking asparagus again, and you probably won't remember why. Actually, let's call it like it will be; you won't.

But why? you will be asked. It has a librarian as the Strong Heroine .™ There's a Great Library that helps connect and stabilize the human worlds. There's a shapeshifting dragon! A detective! Magic spells!

You know what else there is? The (mercifully) agonizingly slow development of a love triangle, with one side between a teacher and her intern. **"If something has happened to Kai, then I wish to investigate. I have a great deal of respect for him.' And friendly affection, and desire, and irritation for the number of times he's suggested we go to bed..."**

A Strong Heroine™ that defies characterization. Literally, I mean. She's supposed to be a librarian who uses her resources before heading out on an adventure, except she doesn't here, because she has to rescue her friend, Kai. But instead she rushes off with absolutely no preparation, with her only gear a knife. This is after we are told Kai is in a high-Chaos environment, which is anathema to the Librarians. She goes in with literally no plan, no idea where Kai is held or how, or how to get him out of that particular world. I get that this might add to the perception of suspense, but it really just makes Irene look dumb. Particularly when she needs rescuing later.

How logical is she? When she tries to describe the power the Fae have, well, witness: **"She took a deep breath. 'Dangerous enough to shake worlds,' she said as calmly as she could. Facts would be more use than losing her temper. 'That's an extremely good way of putting it. Although I have never encountered any of the truly powerful ones myself. That is because they usually inhabit the ends of reality, where chaos is the deepest. There, the Fae take over whole worlds and bind their power to the very fabric of these worlds. In your world we are in the shallow end... I have never encountered any of the great powers of chaos, and I hope I never do."** Explain to me how that provided facts proving how dangerous the Fae are to Vale.

And, once again, a heroine that defies habit and training to rush into saving a friend: **"When Irene reached the Bibliotheque, she created an unobserved passage back to the Library out of sheer instinct, far too busy visualizing threats to Kai to worry about being seen."** Yes, that is the epitome of planning and cool-headed logic, isn't it? Compromising her entire career? The existence of the Library?

What the real problem is is a writer that prefers dramatic sentences over consistency. Thus in one conversation, we have Irene's blood draining from her cheeks, two blushes (including one **"crawling over her face"**), a couple of head bows, loud breathing, a head shake, **"something go cold in her stomach,"** blinks, **"a stab of apprehension"** and **"reminded of posture lessons from childhood."** I must be in a particularly spare mood, because it feels like all she is doing is describing a conversation six different ways instead of crafting a spare, tense scene.

A good measure of a book's deliciousness is the amount of time it takes to finish. You stalled around page one hundred or so, setting it down and taking your own dear sweet time picking it up again. Then, when we are finally beyond the prep work and into the rescue, there's an extended fantasy/ altered reality/trudging-

through-the-landscape sequence that is likely just supposed to be a metaphor for a tough journey, but which inevitably annoys you. It's even more annoying when it starts to shake apart. If it's annoying when Zelazny does it, it isn't going to go down any better when a YA writer does it.

The end was potentially the most interesting thing about the book. (Since I'm writing this to myself, it's clearly not a spoiler, unless I forget and want to read it again, so don't read this). The concept of Irene telling the/a story in the 'high-Chaos' world to help determine reality is extremely intriguing. I want to know the end of The Ghost and the Rider tale. The face off between the dragon and Cordelia is bizarre and anti-climactic. The ornate writing will annoy during the adventures, and the development of the relationship issues is almost certain to become irritating.

But I know you, and know that you will likely pick up the third, just to be sure. And just to see what happened for Irene's punishment (it was a bit of a cliff-hanger there). Just don't re-read this one, okay?

Two and a half stars, rounding down because even writing this review is annoying me.
