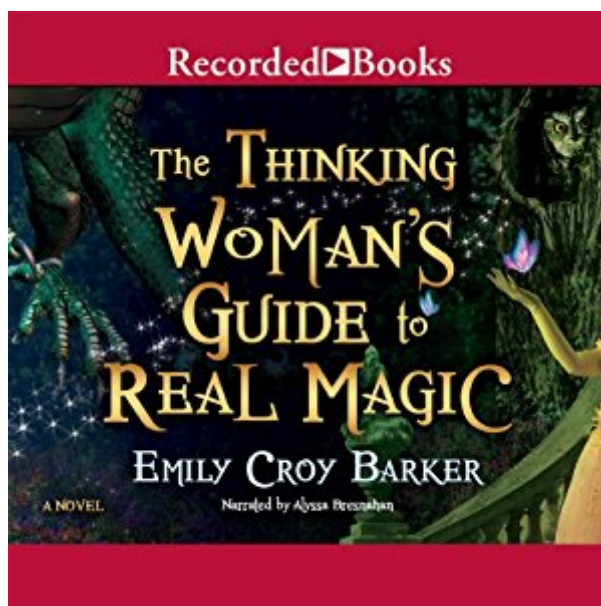


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The Thinking Woman's Guide To Real Magic



Synopsis

Emily Croy Barker's riveting debut novel is a must-read for fans of Lev Grossman and Deborah Harkness. *The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic* follows grad student Nora Fischer as she stumbles through a portal into a magical world. Having been transformed from drab to beautiful, Nora finds herself surrounded by glamorous friends. Life seems perfect. But then things take a terrible turn, and Nora must learn magic from a reclusive ally if she is to have any hope of survival...

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 26 hours 21 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: August 1, 2013

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00E9O1XI6

Best Sellers Rank: #62 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Romance > Fantasy #116

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fantasy > Paranormal #118 in Books > Audible

Audiobooks > Fantasy > Contemporary

Customer Reviews

This was shockingly good - I picked it up because it was about an English Major falling into the hands of faerie, and being a former English Major, having studied folklore a lot, I was prepared to nitpick my way through the thing. No nitpicking required. The author got her folklore right, and threw in enough BritLit treats to keep me chuckling throughout. But none of these are the best parts of the book. You know how some heroines just make you want to slap them? They're silly, or plain stupid, or say something that doesn't ring true and propels you out of the narrative? Didn't happen. Nora is smart. When she has something to say, it's usually what I'd say in the same situation. She's not overly socially backward (though that would have been an easy pitfall), she does her realistic best. Characterization-wise, Aruendiel is developed the most and there's still so much there (can't wait for book 2). With Nora, it feels like you slip into her skin. The romance aspect of the novel is frustrating - a really steamy scene or two wouldn't have been unwelcome - but I'll keep my fingers crossed for the sequel. Counting the days. But when a writer puts this much thought into her work,

these things take time.

After something of a slow start, this book thoroughly drew me in. Nora falls through a hole between worlds and is taken up by the Fairy Court. She loves the queen and is overjoyed to be married to the prince, until she discovers that nothing is as it seems. She is rescued by a magician, who helps her recover from the toll of living in the Fairy Court, giving her a place in his household and eventually training her in the use of magic. Many adventures ensue, with Nora becoming ever more resourceful. However, when offered the chance to go back to her (our) world, she takes it. The book ends just as she realizes that she must go back. About 100 pages from the end, I checked online to see about a sequel. Many other readers are waiting for one as well -- I think this came out in 2013. So, Ms. Barker, I know you've probably got lots to do, but don't go all George R.R. Martin on us and keep us waiting forever!

Yikes, there's some harsh criticism going here, it's not so bad as that. Yes, Nora has some flaws, is decidedly Average Jane, misses many opportunities to endear herself to others, but is not the whiny passive Mary Sue some would make her out to be, and Aruendiel is no picnic either- I do agree that the author got a little Rochestery with her wizardly Darcy- but Nora certainly did not have an easy time of it once she passed through that gate. Consider the dispute of the boots....did the romantic gods arrange a blissful excursion to Happily Ever After Land? Certainly not. So Nora didn't excel with intellectual and charismatic perfection to achieve a revolutionary one woman smackdown in Fairyland but honestly THAT would've been far harder a plot to enjoy that thief way it went. I found it enjoyable and engaging and although, yeah, the ending peeved me with its abruptness I do certainly want to bear the rest of the story.

Greatly enjoyed this. Well created, intricately, plotted story with fully developed believable characters. While the plot arc is "person from modern world stumbles into alternate fantasy world", ECB delivers an intriguing rationale (and storyline hook) for the transition. Kudos for excellent character development (without which one generally puts a book down); The heroine and supporting cast grow in depth, character and abilities throughout the story, with an underlying romantic tension woven in (Pride and Prejudice anyone?). Well done. This reviewer looks forward to the next volume.

This novel entertains a thinking woman. It has love, loss, ambivalence, desires fulfilled and dashed

once again. It has danger and purity. It has swords and sorcery. The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic comes from a literary perspective, yet it is most certainly popular fiction. In fact the author pokes gentle fun at Jane Austen's classic Pride and Prejudice whilst recreating a hidebound world that restricts female choices quite severely. I enjoyed the construction of the magical parallel world. The protagonist Nora had plenty of real life-and-death dilemma and was in and out of trouble all the time. Deeper questions of freedom, autonomy, scholarship, societal norms, and all different manner of romantic partnering are explored. Plus, it has fantastical illusions, rich depictions of the physical and emotional landscape, and hot guys. Recommended as a light yet substantial read for a young thinking woman exploring her own divergent choices in the world.

I loved wandering through the magical world and working out the world. It's pace may feel too slow, especially in the beginning for some, but this definitely felt like a world I wanted to explore. It has a little bit of the feel from Howl's Moving Castle, a bit of Pride & Prejudice, snippets of poetry, the harsher fairy tale traditions, and this is definitely a book that feels richer and fun if you're familiar with the fantasy/fairy tale tropes and systems -- though if you're too steeped in them you might feel the main character is just frustratingly foolish at times and missing the obvious connections. However, it didn't stop me from reading it again within a few days to savor the hints, foreshadowing, and fun shout-outs to literature, tropes and poetry. I'm glad I read it in 2016 and not when it first published as it means my wait for the sequel will hopefully be shorter.

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