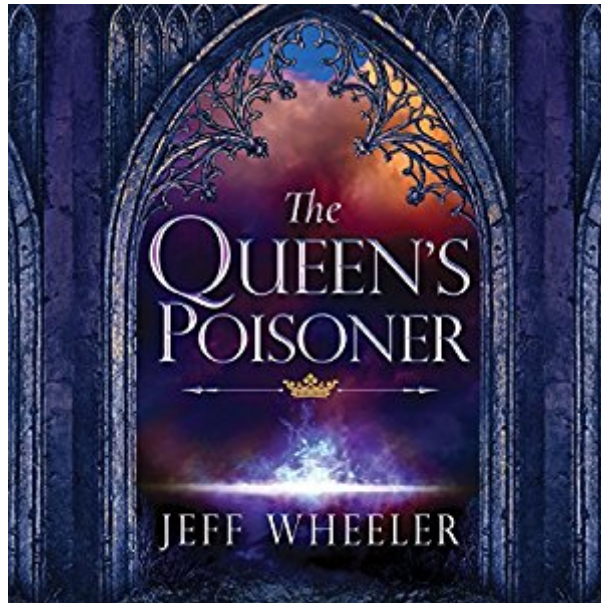




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The Queen's Poisoner: The Kingfountain Series, Book 1



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*. At the end, I was left wanting to know where, and what, Owen's gifts will sprout into and where the conflict will go. In the afterward, it appears book 2 will jump seven years into the future with Owen now fifteen, having been trained and taught the last seven years. I'm looking forward to book 2. Lastly, as with all of Wheeler's books, I enjoyed the clean aspect to his writing. *The Queen's Poisoner* is devoid of the graphic violence, sex and language that so easily turn me away from many other fantasy books. But while doing so, it doesn't compromise in the storytelling that I enjoy. I would give it a PG rating since people die, there are some intense situations, threats made, thematic undertones, etc...

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. I felt torn between liking and hating some, which felt like a natural response to the characters Wheeler was developing (I did worry about this from the very beginning of the book, as Wheeler started us out with a list of characters that felt like it was intended to tell us who we were supposed to like and who we weren't; thankfully, the characters were much more developed as the story moved on). I love that you aren't 100 percent certain whether you are supposed to hate the king or pity him; whether he is going to commit atrocity after atrocity or if he is going to allow himself to turn into a king worthy of the throne. I didn't know by the end of the book where Wheeler was going to take that portion of the story. For the most part, Owen was a believable character - although at times he acted in ways that weren't consistent with his age. Owen, at this point in the storyline, is 8 years old; as the mother, currently, of a 9 year old, there were a few times in the story that his age just didn't vibe right with me. This was more an issue towards the beginning of the story; in the first few scenes where we are introduced to Owen, his demeanor was more that of a 4-5 year old. As Wheeler got into the story more, he got a better hold of who Owen was, and Owen moved to acting in more age-appropriate ways. I was able to connect with Owen, and care about what happened to him. The supporting characters are equally well developed and each come with their own surprising traits; Wheeler did a fantastic job of presenting one side of the characters to you early on in the book, but letting you look deeper into who they were and what they were doing where other eyes couldn't see them as you moved further into the book. By the time I reached the end of the book, I knew that this was going to be a series that I would be eagerly waiting for the next book to come out for. And if an author can genuinely pull me into the story to the point that I am invested in the characters and I HAVE to know what happens next, it negates so many of the smaller issues in a book. I need to know what talents Owen is going to express as he grows, and what his relationship with both the king and Evie will develop into. While the story wrapped up this part of Owen's life well (you are told in a blurb after the end that the next book will occur 7 years from the end of book one, so it makes sense for the first book to not end in a cliffhanger), there are enough unanswered questions and possibilities yet to be answered or seen. I thoroughly enjoyed this book so much more than I thought I would.

This is a genre busting read--it feels loosely based on medieval English history, specifically the time of the War of the Roses, when the sons of York were ascendant. King Severn Argentine echoes Richard III, even down to being a usurper who is thought to have murdered his two nephews. This does nothing to detract from the story; on the contrary, it gives one a sense of time and place that wraps the reader in a warm blanket of comfortable, familiar surroundings. However, in a subtle,

almost lyrical fashion, the author begins to weave elements of magic and myth into the story, with threads of intrigue and mystery as well, as the fate of the Duke of Kiskaddon, and his family falls upon the shoulders of his son, Owen. Sent as a hostage to the court at Kingfountain, Owen is inserted into a complex tapestry of secrets, conspiracies, and competing agendas that is both threatening and overwhelming. Lucky for Owen, he meets with the mystical and fascinating Queen's Poisoner, who acts as his guide and teaches him what it means to be fountain-blessed. Unique, like a fusion of silk and wool, the book blends colorful, believable characters with filaments of enchantment and enigma. The story flows like white-water rapids, unpredictable, but enthralling. Kudos Mr. Wheeler - you've created a remarkable read. I cannot wait for the next book in the series.

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