



The Captain's Door

C.S. Houghton

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

The Captain's Door

C.S. Houghton

The Captain's Door C.S. Houghton

At the helm of a tall-ship stands Mina Paradis. She may look young, but Mina's spent a lifetime serving her family and country. Now she's tired, so tired, of following orders and watching her friends grow old and die while she never ages a day.

Desperate to escape the slow suffocation of a circumscribed life, Mina prepares to break the terms of her indenture. Such treason threatens to propel her through an intensely personal struggle to save herself, spare her crew, and face an adolescence long-delayed.

The Captain's Door opens the Mina Paradis series with a unique exploration of obligation and independence set in an alternative 19th century. Fans of character-driven fantasy, like that of Ursula K. Le Guin, will appreciate the slower pace and literary build.

The Captain's Door Details

Date : Published June 1st 2013 by Createspace Independent Publishing Platform (first published May 31st 2013)

ISBN : 9781482689921

Author : C.S. Houghton

Format : Paperback 246 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Adventure

 [Download The Captain's Door ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Captain's Door ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Captain's Door C.S. Houghton

From Reader Review The Captain's Door for online ebook

Nicolas Wilson says

I want this book to be a stronger 4 than it is. The tone of the writing is often beautiful, and there's some interesting ideas in the story that can be very engaging...

But you have to make a firm commitment to it to get all of that. Despite the fast opening, on one of Mina's missions, it then slows down until 35-40% of the way through the book. So don't expect to be engaged in the story until that long- expect to be engaged in the writing. There's a lot of beautiful elements to Houghton's writing, but they're dense- so much so that I found myself slowed down considerably. I'd read a sentence, or a paragraph, and it would take me so long to assimilate the imagery and ideas, that I'd get distracted and return to whatever else was on my "to do" list.

Despite the abundance of details, the world, and most of the characters weren't as realistically fleshed out as it could have been. Mina's relationship with her handler was particularly fascinating.

(view spoiler)

It felt like there were a lot of plot elements that never got followed up on. That lent the central conflict a kind of manic energy, as you watched it forcibly shove other stories to the side. I do wish there'd been some other resolution, even if it was just Mina's handler manipulating Mina with it, as she did during the anecdote about the arson against a slave trader.

A lot of elements to the world could have been more cohesively fleshed out, as it was hard to peg a real societal structure or lifestyle to the alternate universe described. And that amplified it later in the book when the author adopted modern swear words, rather than looking for more period appropriate phrases, or getting creative and designing distinctive ones. I've got a pretty vile tongue, and would be the first to argue the value of actual cuss words in literature, but it still can be jarring seeing modern anachronisms like the "we're screwed!" use of the word, and "fuck". It detracted, since the dialogue patterns and the cadence of the writing had a much more antique tonality.

I enjoyed it a lot, and will be interested in seeing if some of my concerns over the cohesiveness of the worldbuilding are resolved in future novels. And it's worth reading for the lyrical quality of the prose. Just expect to work through it slowly, when you have a lot of time and concentration to put into it.

I received a free copy in exchange for my honest, non-reciprocal review.

Enrico Antiporda says

Let me see if I can explain what this book is about because it took me quite a while to figure it out. As far as I can tell, it is about a 19th century woman named Mina, the captain of a frigate disguised as a merchant ship called the Transcendent who sails around the world performing espionage missions, including assassinations, at the bidding of the New England government. Mina is able to remain forever young, maintaining her preteen appearance through a copper or quicksilver-fueled artifact interchangeably called the lamp or the torch, issued to her (through her mother) by the government. In exchange, she is contractually obligated to go on dangerous missions at the government's behest. Her girly appearance is her secret weapon, the look of

youthful innocence allowing her to penetrate targeted enemy strongholds without suspicion. As an ironic twist, Mina's controller is her own mother, New England's powerful Secretary (of what, it was never explained), whom Mina despises and rebels against. Having performed these oft-nefarious missions countless of times and feeling guilt over some of them, Mina becomes jaded by her predicament. She wishes to become a normal person with a normal life. Her static non-aging self also compounds her rebellious mood. Many times, she is tempted to extinguish the flame of the cursed lamp by depriving it of the copper-like fuel, except the penalty for such a treasonous act is death. (just a glaring question: wouldn't one want to live forever young?) But of course, she eventually does so, forcing her and her crew to escape and go into exile. What she discovers is that her actions not only endangered her crew but also her entire family, as proven when the government "took" her beloved older sister Charlotte to parts unknown.

I had a difficult time being grounded into the story. The first seventy-five pages are totally confusing as Mina goes on a mission to retrieve a set of documents (of which she does not know the relevance) in a heavily guarded building in Pomin, Italy and escapes her pursuers by changing garments with a street urchin. I get that she is a captain of a ship except I couldn't figure out why she was given the ship's command in the first place or why she possesses the special lamp that keeps her looking like a ten year old or for what purpose. How exactly did she earn her respected standing with the crew? A little back story would have helped to avoid the confusion. To make matters worse, seemingly advanced artifacts are introduced in the story without regard how they came to develop such science in the 19th century, like the tube that allows them to talk long distance not unlike a telephone or the watch glass that allows Mina to see obstructed places, somewhat like a sonar or even a remote controlled camera. And then you have the do-it-all sun cloth which is described as "a bolt of material that has since been cut up and used for a myriad of purposes." What does this mean? Among all these things, throw in the fantastic sink line and the magical captain's door that is supposedly a portal to a stone tunnel within the ship, and you become befuddled by the whole thing. Instead of developing the character's motivations and offering a bit of back story, thus giving readers some grounding on the narrative arc, the author elected to keep readers in the dark for fear of revealing the mystery of the door and the torch and of Mina's complex sub rosa relationship with the government and her powerful mother. Maintaining these mysteries at the expense of clear storytelling is too high a price to pay, in my opinion. Also, I never had a clear idea of what the New England government is. Are we talking about the original New England colonies? It couldn't be because the story is supposed to be taking place in the 19th century.

The thing is, absent of these confusing clutter and convoluted familial plot points, the underlying adventure story is a good one, especially when Mina scrambles to escape with her crew after she destroys the torch artifact. Intriguing questions arise: Will Mina survive? Will they make a successful escape on the rogue ship? Where can they go to find safe haven? How far is the reach of the government? Elements of a good adventure story are there with clear storytelling. The prose is quite competent with the narrative voice jiving with the dreamlike mood of the story, so it is not all bad.

I do feel this novel needs to be rewritten in a major way, especially the first five chapters so that Mina's call to adventure is concise and uncluttered, to ground the readers. In the condition it is now, I can only give this book a three-star rating.

Underground Book Reviews says

Mina is a hundred-and-four-year-old woman in an eleven-year-old's body. Despite all the years she has

sailed as Captain of the Transcendent, she often feels like more of a passenger than a leader. Appointed with no shipboard experience, Mina is Captain only so that she can fulfill her mother's secret wishes in faraway places.

Fed up with being sent from port to port to do morally questionable jobs, Mina decides it is time to distance herself from her powerful mother, even if it means losing eternal life. This proves to be a difficult task, because no matter how many evil deeds her mother does, a part of Mina still loves her. What makes the story truly interesting is the dynamic between these two women. Mina's mother is not only powerful, corrupt and manipulative, she is also driven by a desperate sort of motherly love and will do anything to keep her eleven-year-old daughter young. Forever.

...read more at [UndergroundBookReviews \(dot\) com](http://UndergroundBookReviews.com)

Michael Gardner says

I don't think I've ever found a book so challenging to rate and review. My subjective heart wanted to rate it five stars. My objective head is stuck at four. The reason is this; there is so much about *The Captain's Door* that is very good, but it could be better. It occupied my mind even when I wasn't reading it for both reasons.

A short breakdown to explain.

Plot: Good. Coming of age story done with a fresh telling and plenty of varietal extras. Some threads remain unresolved though, which suggests there may be a sequel coming.

Characters: All good. Mina Paradis, the central character, is delightfully complex.

Setting: Needs fleshing out. An alternative 19th century Earth that has evolved differently including flourishes of magic, pocket dimensions, immortality torches and the like. Conceptually excellent, but readers need context. I'm fine with the fact that the magic remains unexplained – it's magic after all – but the story behind the magic and some of the settings is missing. There are also some inconsistencies and anachronisms, particularly in the dialogue, that have a tendency to jar the reader out of the story.

Style: Beautiful. Without a doubt, C.S. Houghton is a gifted writer.

Pace: I like a pacey book. I also appreciate a book that isn't afraid to take its time to unfold. Funnily enough, the blurb is almost apologetic about the pace, and unnecessarily so. I wouldn't describe the pace as slow, but measured. Readers who like action-jam on their literary-toast may find it so.

In my opinion, *The Captain's Door* would have benefited from stronger editorial input. The writing is of such high quality that the little faults become accentuated. In another book, these faults could be easily overlooked, but C.S. Houghton has set the bar high. There are passages in *The Captain's Door* that are nothing short of brilliant. C.S Houghton has a lot of talent and I'm a fan. I'm looking forward to seeing what he delivers next.

Mara says

Interesting world building with a strong female protagonist. The book is about a woman who does not age beyond her tenth year and is the captain of a ship. She is kept young by the burning of a torch that also binds her to a contract. Excellent descriptions of life on a ship. The book also looks at the dynamics between mother and daughter and between sisters (to a lesser extent), which I found to be one of the more intriguing aspects of the story.

Melissa McShane says

It's hard for me to say why this book didn't really work. The alternate-history setting is interesting, though not as well defined as I would have liked. The magic is solely in the form of Things of Power, which interests me, particularly the "doors" which are portals between two places. The main character, Mina, has a door that leads to a private stronghold buried deep somewhere in the mountains, and who doesn't dream of that? Houghton's also very good with the seamanship and there's always a good sense of what it's like to be at sea.

At the top of what dissatisfied me is the awkward and in some cases poor characterization. A lot of what we know about everyone, we know because Mina tells us so, not because we see it in the depiction of these characters. Mina's mother and sister are particular victims of this problem; her mother is secretary of state and supposedly powerful, but what we see of her is a whiny, weak, uncontrolled woman whose behavior toward her children simply doesn't translate into what a secretary of state needs to be. Her sister Charlotte...I started out thinking she was developmentally delayed, then that she was a slut, and on page 169 it's confirmed that no, she's just an opium addict. Houghton gives more attention to Mina's crew, who attain a little more individuality, but only Rohad comes across as truly unique.

Mina's character isn't that much better. She's a 104-year-old woman who's trapped in the body of a 10-year-old, so presumably she knows how men and women relate to one another (and she's got a sister who's been impregnated more than once) and yet she can't figure out why Rohad wishes she was physically ten years older than she is? She's supposed to be this experienced intelligence agent (I assume that's what she is) and yet a wizened old fisherman gets the better of her? I never really warmed to her, and I think that made it hard for me to stay connected to the book.

The writing craft is better than average, though I think the structure of the plot suffers because some things are fully explained later than they should be and are insufficiently foreshadowed beforehand. And this book *really* needed another editorial pass, starting with italicizing the ships' names. Two errors on the first page...not a good sign. There's a lot of potential here, and I see that the author intends this to be the first book in a series; a second volume, now that the world and the main character have been established, might be an improvement.

I received this review copy through First Reads.

Stephanie says

Mina Paradis is a woman who should be 104 years old, instead she has been bound in the body of her 10 year

old self captaining a ship in service to her mother, Madame Secretary, and the Government. Mina's ability to go through life without aging is held within the flame of a strange torch, this torch also binds her to carry out the work that the Government doles out to her. This work often involves maiming, stealing and killing. Mina has been struggling with the inner conflict of what would happen to her if she puts out her torch and any other consequences to her crew and her family.

I was very intrigued by this book, the plot seemed very unique and Mina's character, seemingly a 10 year old girl, but who has lived a lifetime was excellent. Mina's abilities as a ship's Captain and her ability to carry out dangerous missions solidify her as a strong female lead. Written in first person, we were privy to Mina's thoughts and inner struggles with her torch that kept her from aging and feelings about her missions and family. I had a bit of a hard time placing the setting of the story, it seems like a 19th century alternate reality, but with familiar places like Florida, New England countries in Africa. Also, this is a first book in a series, so it may be explained later, but the workings of the mystical Doors, Lamps, and Tailors were slightly glossed over.

This book was received for free in return for an honest review.

laura says

You may have read the classic nautical novels *Moby Dick* or *Treasure Island*, where seafaring adventure and language meld in blended perfection. The Captain's Door is composed in this spirit – with a sense of love and respect for the ship and it's respective components. Houghton's attention to critical details regarding ship anatomy and proper language reveal his dedication to creating a sound literary presentation.

As the first person heroine, Houghton introduces the meager Mina, an old woman trapped in a child's body. Strangely, the thoughts, actions and emotions she conveys conflict with her numerical age. The author poses the question as to the possible implications of mental aging in absence of physical aging. Do the two exist independently, or does physical appearance to some degree imply a certain response both internally and externally?

Houghton furthers this theme by Mina's obvious manipulation of the external world. Her childlike implied innocence grants her passage and forgiveness in circumstances that she might otherwise be considered suspicious. Mina's mother also continues to treat her as a child. There may be more to this sordid tale than Mina's limited perspective. My speculation is that the subsequent novels will unravel the strangely intense and abusive relationship between mother and daughter. One is left to question whether Mina's characterization of her mother is trustworthy or if Mina could be a self-righteous megalomaniac.

Furthermore, I can see where this novel (and soon to be set of novels) could incite extremely polarized audiences and reviews. The fast paced action adventure reader might find the pacing too stagnant. Stuff is happening but there's a gentle passiveness in the delivery. Houghton's sophisticated, thoroughly descriptive action sequences may bore impatient readers. There is some intrigue around chapter four, but probably a questionable amount for the murder mystery captivation addicts. It's definitely not a Murakami or Philip K. Dick novel where weird random stuff jabs you from the rear. You're not going to find a find a lucky rabbits foot, dematerialize while sucking on a flap jack, contort into a unicellular micro-existence only to awaken into a bizarre love triangle that involves some weirdo who won't stop calling you and that twisted neck of yours that's so malleable it's like the old fashioned taffy that's become your brain (if you don't get the joke, go read something by the two mentioned authors). The passive, slow blows that Mina serves will dry up the

poetry house go-fuck-yourself types.

Yet the storyline was far from mundane or uninventive. At times the diction was exquisitely sweet, enthralling. The psychological, internal conflict that Mina experiences about her “job” was particularly intriguing. Houghton did excellent work describing Mina’s internal struggle in this particular sense. I would like to see more of that in the coming novels.

There’s an audience for the Mina Paradis series. I think it’s important to read outside of one’s usual comfort zone as it stimulates the mind and proves that there is not only one right way to write. The Captain’s Door did this for me. Writing is an art, and as such, is just as subjective as any other art form. I know, I know—the fine arts people with degrees sometimes love to argue about these definitions and compare precise checklist objectives that will TELL them whether or not everything fits together correctly. Whatever. Sometimes entering into the experience as a Gestalt instead of fractal-izing the minutia can make for an enduring and surprisingly exquisite venture.

I’m glad I read The Captain’s Door. I see great potential in Houghton’s writing and clearly his dedication bleeds through the precise nautical terminology and eloquent verbiage. Indie authors work hard to create an audience and following. In time, Houghton will obtain both.

Shirley says

I didn’t know what to expect but was pleasantly surprised to find it adult and read very well by K. Orion Fray.

Looking forward to many more so get busy C.S. and thanks for the reading/listening opportunity.

Robert Beacham says

I’m not sure how people take 3-star ratings, but I certainly wouldn’t want anyone to get the idea this book is badly written - far from it. There are some interesting and original ideas that are well explored, and an alternative world that is beginning to be well sketched out. In my opinion, anyone reading this would assume the writer was a professional.

It could do with another edit. There may only be a dozen or so errors, but they always seemed to crop up at times that broke the flow of the story. A bit frustrating.

I found the characters believable enough, but I never really adopted the main one. To me, it seems that the right-of-passage is dominant. Perhaps that’s the intention, but I’m not sure if it isn’t at the expense of the story as a whole. Maybe it’s just that I struggle with first-person narrative a bit.

I believe this is the first of a series - and it reads a bit like that: as if at the end we've only just got to the beginning. I would certainly read more from the author, but I would hope the next story rounded out the world more and gave us more insight into the motivations of the main protagonists. A bit more flesh on the bones?

Vykki says

A interesting fantasy with some wild twist. A good read. I won this book on Goodreads. Thank you

Elisa Blaisdell says

The Captain's Door begins mysteriously. The narrator, age, sex, name, all unknown, is troubled, downright obsessed, by something seemingly trivial--a burning torch...

The style is dreamlike, with vivid details. The narrator seldom tries to explain why things are happening. About the time that the nature of the 'Captain's' work becomes clear, the narrator makes a choice, and the pace of the book speeds up, so, you have a slow buildup, and a relatively action-packed second half, leading to a satisfying conclusion with plenty of room for a sequel.

I hated that the blurb reveals so much of the plot. (In fact, it reveals all of the plot! In this review, I'm going to avoid spoilers, anyway.) I'd recommend that you skip the blurb, or try to forget what you read. It's fascinating to see the details meticulously accumulate and create a world so original, so different/similar from our own. It takes a long time to have any real idea of what is going on, but I enjoyed that. Some of the payoffs were huge; the realization of the true nature of the 'Captain's' work was sickening. The book ended with many mysteries unsolved, everything from the true origin of those powerful artifacts, to the fate of the 'Captain's' sister. I'm fine with that. I'm hoping for a sequel.

I would describe this book as a historical fantasy, with a steampunk feel to it. The colonization of Africa and the Americas took a very different turn, in this world. I think we're in an alternative 19th century.

Unfortunately, there were more typos than I'd like to see. (In a book this good, I'd like to see the editing perfect!) They weren't scattered through the book evenly, either. It was more as though the editor had missed a few pages. The book's good enough that I'm giving the author a pass.

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Lauren Scharhag says

I was so excited about this book. I thought perhaps it would be like Phillip Pullman's His Dark Materials. You have magic, magical artifacts, an alternate version of our world set in a bygone era, portals, adventures on the high seas and a tough little chick at the helm.

You also have some fascinating potential with symbolism—a warped family dynamic between a woman

(Mrs. Paradis) and her two daughters, (Mina and Charlotte); Mrs. Paradis is a politically powerful woman who is not afraid to use her sexuality to get what she wants; Mina is in charge of a crew of sailors; and Charlotte is a pregnant drug addict. Then you have the sea itself as a symbol of femininity; you have puberty and menstrual blood. This could have been a powerful and dark commentary on women, womanhood, mothers and daughters and life-giving forces.

I wish I could tell you these elements all came together into the stunning piece that I had hoped for. I really do.

Alas, despite its very interesting premise, Houghton fails to deliver. If I hadn't agreed to do a review on this book, I would've stopped reading very early on. I can't remember when it's taken me so long to slog through a story.

First and foremost, *The Captain's Door* is sorely in need of some professional editing. It was riddled with grammatical errors which I found very distracting. The prose is absolutely torturous. In public speaking classes, I have heard that you should tell your audience what you're about to say, then say it, then tell them what you just said. But that's public speaking—not prose. I felt the whole time that that's what Houghton was doing. He over-describes and over-explains. He even explains things like a memory palace that I think most of us are familiar with, (or, if not familiar with, we are perfectly capable of looking up) in exhaustive detail. Early on, there are copious descriptions of Mina's magic lamp, which makes her immortal. I was glad when she finally snuffed the damn thing out because it meant I wouldn't have to read about what it looks like anymore.

There was the overall diction: while I appreciate Houghton's obvious knowledge of nautical terms, he didn't need to put so many of them in. I don't need to know that one of the sailors is an able seaman. I don't need to know what a topgallant is. I don't care. It did not add to the story and I was just annoyed when I looked up a word only to find out that it referred to a specific mast or whatever. I'm a layman. For my purposes, just say "mast." I didn't find out till I reached the end that he had put in a glossary. The only books that should require a glossary is if they contain a wholly invented language, like Elvish. If your book demands a jargon key, I think you need to really rethink your word choices.

And then, there's just bad writing. One example that stuck out for me was, "an expressionless smile." What the hell is an expressionless smile?

The structure and pacing of this book made no sense to me. The start is painfully slow. The exposition doesn't come till about a third of the way through. Why put it there? Why withhold important information like the purpose of the lamp, only to reveal it well after the reader has figured it out?

The world itself was not sufficiently realized. The job of the author is to create a living, breathing world. Then the author must be the tour guide by which we, the readers, navigate it.

I get that it takes place in some alternate version of Earth—again, I was thinking along the lines of *His Dark Materials*, where you had a Jordan College at Oxford, where you had the Magisterium instead of the Church, Gyptians instead of Gypsies, and so forth. This book had places that correspond roughly to Earth—New England, Genoa, etc. But the way this world works is never explained—New England has a court, with a capital city called Tremont. How does this government work? What is life like for the commoners? Are they aware of the magic and intrigues? He takes us to a city called Pomin. I don't know how Pomin and New England interact, what their relationship is. We see a guy with a "geologist" shop in Tremont. Do the people of this world utilize the magical properties of stones, or is it more like a jeweler?

The time period is not clear. Women wear corsets, but they're allowed to serve in politics? Sailors take orders from a child, and no one raises an eyebrow at that? No one raises their eyebrows at having a ten-year-old girl on board a frigate? Part of what would've made the story intriguing would have been to explain some of that—is this just an exceptionally liberal place? It didn't seem so. Also, I wasn't clear on whether it was supposed to correspond to our 17th, 18th or 19th century.

Then there's the magic and magical artifacts. Building a cohesive fantasy universe is more than just throwing in some mysterious items and calling it good. This book has people who are kept alive by being "bound" to a lamp. As long as the lamp is fed its "copper," some sort of liquid fuel, they remain immortal. The titular Captain's Door is a portable pocket dimension, created by "tailors" hundreds of years before. There are some other items, like sun cloth, a speaking tube, a special telescope. Any one of these items alone could have made for a fascinating tale. But the author puts them in and never explains them. How do they support and enrich this universe?

There was no real plot to speak of. Yes, it's Mina vs. her mother, but I don't know what either of these characters' histories or motivations are. I don't know anything about their relationship to each other, aside from the fact that they are family. They bicker and get into physical altercations, but I don't know why. Glimpses from Mina's actual childhood could have provided some insight.

I also don't know why Mina has, after a hundred-some-odd years, decided to defy her mother. I guess we are to assume that Mina is tired of being immortal? Because young and healthy forever—must be tough. In Interview with the Vampire, Claudia was trapped in the body of a child. It is made clear why Lestat made her that way. It is clear why she hates it. Perhaps Mina was tired of serving someone else? But what alternate plans did she have in mind? There was some indication she was upset because her immortality was foisted upon her—yet, she seems to enjoy her life. She loves the sea, she loves her crew. She even has had, it seems, engaged in some sort of romance or flirtation. So what's the problem?

When Mina extinguishes her lamp, she immediately starts puberty—with a horrible first period almost right off the bat. If her body is still ten years old, why does she get a period so quickly? Girls in bygone eras did not have their periods that young. Is having her magical immortality abruptly terminated causing her to age more rapidly? Does Houghton realize that a period is a gauge for a woman's overall health, so giving her a heavy first period with lots of cramping indicates that something is terribly wrong? And what of the flickerings of sexuality she displays—kissing Rohad, flirting with Dillon. Was she sexual despite being in a ten-year-old's body, or is she getting more sexual now because she's growing up?

Frustratingly, this book brings up question after question and does not bother to answer them.

In the initial pages, Houghton plunges us right into the action, taking us along on one of Mina's missions. We never find out exactly what this mission was or what was to be gained from it. I kept waiting for Houghton to reveal some major, over-arching design that would explain Mrs. Paradis' behavior, some glimpse into her goals or agenda. None came.

Then there was Mrs. Paradis herself. When we finally see her, she's tarted up like a whorehouse madame. I hated that. I understand that sexuality is one of the tools in her arsenal, but that doesn't mean she should lack all subtlety. This is supposed to be a woman who has achieved a major position at court, which I would think calls for some finesse.

Where was Mina and Charlotte's father? Why is Mina so protective of her sister, who came off as a whiny, useless bitch?

Houghton kept insisting that Mrs. Paradis and Charlotte were dependent upon Mina. Why? Why does everything hinge upon her? Why is Mina the one who gets sent out on dangerous missions? She does not seem uniquely suited to it. Her immortality does not seem to endow her with preternatural strength or intelligence. For example, she decides to snuff her lamp, and then go rescue her sister. Why not go rescue her sister, and THEN snuff the lamp? She is not a good decision-maker or strategist. She is neither witty nor compelling. Who am I supposed to be rooting for here?

If there was very little characterization for Mina and her family, there was no characterization for anybody else. The other politicians barely put in an appearance at court. The crewmen were basically indistinguishable from one another. I might've cared about some of them if they had actual personalities. I don't know why they are so loyal to Mina. I don't know what they've been through together.

The author has said that Mina is an unreliable narrator. To an extent, any first-person narrator is. But I'm unclear as to how she was supposed to be unreliable—is her mother really the victim here, then?

The author also keeps saying that this book is very "unusual." I'm not sure there are any particularly unusual or original elements here. Just a whole lot of stuff that doesn't really add up.

Ron Goodrich says

I'm used to books starting off with a bang. Trying to grab you, get you interested in reading the rest of the book. This one doesn't even try, and that's not a bad thing. It's not trying to "be like other books" and that is **ALWAYS** refreshing.

It's languorous, unfolding meticulously before you. Instead of a shocking hook, or an action sequence, it serenades you with language and description and a character that piques your curiosity with hints of some sort of otherworldliness. You are left to deduce things, through inference and clue, instead of having it all heaped upon you in bite-sized cookie cutter morsels. The author clearly wants you to think and puzzle things out. Trust me, the pace and the action **DO** pick up. There's quite a bit more than I expected, from the way it began.

I found myself not really liking the main character due to her frequent whining, except during the more action packed moments where the picture painted of the diminutive commando was entirely too satisfying to do anything but enjoy. The problem I had with her was one the author, I think, intended. He's making a point about physical age and mental age, maturity and growth, the milestones of our lives...and the tools he has at hand to do this lend to an unfortunately, necessarily, annoying character at times. To be fair, this was mostly during the first half of the book, with her resolve firming up and her settling to a course of action in the latter half...and by the quite satisfying climax and conclusion the setup had, in my mind, served its purpose.

Overall, it was a very original, very enjoyable book that I'm glad to have read. I'd be curious to read another in the series, if only because the alternate world that had been painted was interesting and I can't help but wonder of the source of all the fantastical elements, and if that aspect would be fleshed out or explored more.

Teresa Lavender says

Won this here on goodreads. All I can say is "WOW!" Very unique story. I loved it! It is so refreshing to read a story that is so unexpected, yet so very good. A unique spin on how a relationship between parent and child can go awry, as well as political misuse of power - all wrapped in a fantasy/sci-fi kind of cloak. Can wait to read more!
