



Spy's Honor

Amy Raby

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Rhianne, mind mage and Imperial Princess of Kjall, cannot openly challenge the emperor. Instead, she acts in secret to aid the victims of his worst excesses. But now the emperor plans to wed her to the cruel Augustan, the man leading Kjall's attack against the nation of Mosar. Soon she will be torn from her supporters and shipped overseas, where she can help no one.

Mosari crown prince Janto is desperate to save his country from invasion. When one of his most trusted spies disappears while gathering intelligence at the Kjallan palace, Janto takes his place and continues searching for information that could save his people. But falling for the Imperial Princess was not part of his plan. Nor was having his true identity revealed...

Now Rhianne must make a choice—follow the path of tradition or the one of the heart, even if it means betraying her own people.

Spy's Honor Details

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Author : Amy Raby

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From Reader Review Spy's Honor for online ebook

Gina says

I kind of wish that this had been the FIRST book in the series, since the first book made the ultimate ending of this book VERY obvious. I think that's about my only complaint. I loved learning about the different cultures even as the characters learned themselves. I am eagerly awaiting the next book.

Minni Mouse says

You know what the latter half of this book reminded me of? The siege and spy games of *The Winner's Curse*, but more drawn out like if the siege and rebel takeover of *Curse* took place over a longer period of time. Out of automatic adoration for *Curse*, this book gets an immediate three stars. Just because.

I also glimpsed a few reviews first and, as a result, read *Spy's Honor* before *Assassin's Gambit* since apparently *Spy's Honor* takes place first.

THE STORY

We have two main characters: **Kestrel** Rhianne, the Imperial Princess of Kjall and niece to the Emperor, and **Arin** Janto, the Crown Prince of Morsar who's undercover as a slave in the Imperial Palace at Kjall. Why? Because Morsar is losing the war with Kjall and he needs all the information he can get.

There's also a magical element: twenty-five-year-old Janto is a shroud mage with a magical *familiar* (talisman) in the form of a ferret, and twenty-two-year-old Rhianne is a mind mage, which means she can cast confusion and forgetfulness spells.

Rhianne and Janto meet in the palace gardens, fall in instalurve, and somehow must bring peace between their two kingdoms despite the war and bloodshed.

THE GOOD

Entertaining! Again, parts of this story were strongly reminiscent of *The Winner's Curse* and anything having to do with that book is fine by me. I liked the politicking on the side -- Emperor Florian is a bad dude and poor Heir Lucien is caught trying to appease both his father and protect Rhianne at the same time -- and the "forbidden lurve between different classes" element is always delicious.

THE BAD

I had a hard time getting with the feel of this book. The unimaginative instalurve and clunky, simplistic narratives screamed "young adult" but the occasional language, sex scenes, and scope of the war made this an adult book for sure. It's a shame that none of the characters truly came across as early or mid-twenties nobility.

THE VERDICT

Instalurve, base character believability, and intermediate storytelling aside, this book was quite enjoyable. Probably more juvenile romance than fantasy, but there's also a halfway decent effort to establish the magic system and political tensions between countries. Sure, I'd recommend if you're looking for an entertaining book that doesn't quite manage to hold a candle to *The Winner's Curse* but still delights well enough on its

own.

Leo Hilde says

Rhianne is the Imperial Princess of Kjall and a mind mage. As she is the emperor's niece, she has to marry a brutal man she doesn't love. And, of course, she falls in love with Janto, heir of Mosar throne and enemy of her uncle, who comes to Kjall to spy on.

In this book, we find all romance's codes. A nice princess fall in love with a nice prince. They want to change the world and stop the war between their countries.

Rhianne has magic power but it is not very useful because she can't use it against others mages. She is sometimes very caricatural such as her love story with Janto.

Janto is more interesting than Rhianne. His magic power is useful and he uses it !

To conclude, Spy's honor (Hearts and thrones #2) is a good book but it is more romance than fantasy.

I would have like that there is more action and a little less of romantic scene.

I recommend to people who like romance but not to fantasy's lovers.

Christina Turner says

Spy's Honor captured me right from the beginning.

The book was very exciting. Who couldn't love this mix: Two kingdoms. Two unsuspecting royals. Both at war due to tyranny, bloodthirst and greed. Both royals fall in hopeless love, but cannot ever be together because of the war. . or can they?

It is easily to love her royal highness Rhianne, and to fall for cunning hero Janto who is a spy for his kingdom, and who is the crown prince as well. This book had a well constructed plot as well as a great romantic plot. The story's flow was very even. The writer went into enough detail (but not too much) to give the magical world a life of its own. I can easily picture every scene.

I would recommend this author to a reader who wants to be swept away in a magical world.

PS, Also. . . I loooove the ferret. What an honorable and cunning sidekick to partner with the hero. They match perfectly.

Jessi says

Kind, intelligent hero & an adorable, bloodthirsty ferret. In other words, fantasy romance at it's finest.

Janto is the crown prince of Mosar, but his country is succumbing to an unwarranted attack by the larger, greedier country of Kjall. In a last-ditch effort to save his country, he goes to Kjall as a spy on the trail of information that could alter the course of the war. Posing as a slave, he meets Imperial Princess Rhianne, whose uncle, Emperor Florian is responsible for the terrible war crimes against Janto's people. Rhianne is

nothing like her uncle. Where he is greedy, hard, and inflexible, Rhianne is generous, loving, and eager to learn.

When Rhianne becomes a pawn in her uncle's war, things take a turn for the personal where Janto is concerned. He and Rhianne both learn that sometimes there are no good decisions. But Janto proves a worthy hero. He makes decisions for the good of his country, even when it means denying his deepest desires.

Amy Raby puts her characters in a perfectly impossible situation. There seems to be no way these two can come together, but as this is a fantasy-romance, she pulls off a happy-ever-after that is hard-won, believable, and satisfying.

Raby excels at world-building. Using an admirable economy of words, she paints vivid scenes and situations with clean, efficient brushstrokes. Her characters are flawed enough that they have room to grow and they worm their way into your heart within the first few pages. The pacing is swift, the story spellbinding, just like in Raby's first fantasy-romance, *Assassin's Gambit*.

The events of *Spy's Honor* take place before those of *Assassin's Gambit*. It was a delight to see the hero of Raby's first book, Lucien, as a younger man before he became ruler of Kjall. It was also exciting to see the consistency of Raby's magic system, my favorite aspect of which is the animal familiars used by some of the mages in her world. The hero in *Spy's Honor* has an unlikely familiar, a ferret named Sashi, who steals every scene he is in. The bond between Janto and Sashi is endearing and plays an important role in the story. I especially love Sashi's bloodthirstiness as he chants "kill, kill, kill," whenever anyone threatened Janto.

The romance to plot ratio in this book is about 50/50. The story is intricate but not complicated. Raby shows a mastery of weaving together several threads. There are political plots, family relationships, a war carried out on several fronts, and through it all, the romance develops beautifully. I flew through the pages to find out whether Janto could save his country at all and if he could do it while not alienating Rhianne, who has as much loyalty and love for her country as he does for his. I also HAD to find out if these two get the happy-ever-after they both richly deserve.

A highly-recommended read from a fantasy-romance author who is proving she has the sticking power to help shape the genre.

Britney (BookDrunkSloth) says

Wonderful!!! I loved every page of this book. I got it from the library, and I will be purchasing it soon along with *Assassin's Gambit*.

Amy Raby shows such talent with her ability to create a world so detailed with a magic system that is also very unique. She was also smart to leave that magic system not completely explained, and we can learn more and more about it as we continue to read the series. This shows promise as a fantasy writer.

On the romance side, Raby captures the emotions of both the hero and heroine perfectly. I love that neither of them were willing to give up their morals or their kingdoms for the other. This made it more real because that's how good monarchs would actually behave. She also showed growth in her characters in that they can forgive and admit when they themselves have done wrong. This made the romance more truthful and beautiful.

I am eagerly awaiting Prince's Fire which will be released April 2014 (which happens to be my birth month, so maybe it'll be my birthday present to myself;)). This series is phenomenal on it's own and then to add in that this is the author's second book, shows that Amy Raby will become one of the greats!

I highly recommend this book to epic romance enthusiasts (who are adults!).

Denise Always Awry says

The full review can be found at my blog.

I was a little nervous to read this book because of the time frame of it. This one occurs before the events in the first book and tells Rhianne's story. Aside from that I really enjoyed this book. I loved Rhianne and Janto as characters and it was nice seeing them interact and how they got together. The one thing I wish we had gotten to see with this book was Mosar, their people and the life that they lead. From what we were giving about the country they seem to be very interesting and I would love it if we got to see more of them in the future, with a book set in their country. Raby is a wonderful story teller and I had a hard time putting this book down, I cannot wait for the next one!

The Window Seat says

In this the second book of the Hearts and Thrones series, we actually take a step back in time. This book occurs before the events of Assassin's Gambit. I am not really sure why they were written this way, but it works for me!

Rhianne is a Kjallian princess and the cousin to the emperor. As such, she is expected to make a political alliance more than a marriage. Her country is in the midst of political turmoil, primarily because her uncle the emperor is a vicious tyrant (which you know from reading the other book...) but for some reason, Rhianne supports her uncle publicly and tries to help his victims in secret. When her uncle wants her to marry another evil tyrant, she turns to a most unlikely place for aid. Little does she know that the person she turns to is a spy for her uncle's fiercest enemies. He is the crown prince for the very country her fiance is planning to destroy. As a political prisoner, Rhianne is priceless and Jan, the crown prince, wastes no time in taking advantage of that.

For the full review, please go to <http://www.thewindowseat13.com/2014/0...>

Tiffany says

I loved it!

Anna Richland says

This was so good I need to go back and reread Assassin's Gambit, but I lent it to a friend, so I'm hosed.

I realized what this series reminds me of: Pern. The politics are intense, the world is amazing and the details bring it all to life. Without the structure of the caturanga game, I didn't think Spy's Honor could be as intensely detailed as the first book in the series - but I was wrong. I really liked the way the hero and heroine developed a relationship over language lessons, the battles, the sibling rivalry and sibling confrontations on both sides, etc.

My only tiny itty-bitty disappointment was that a particular character was exiled rather than dispatched permanently ... but the weasel makes up for it. I want that bloodthirsty weasel to show up in every book I read.

If for no other reason, read Spy's Honor for the weasel.

Here are the two questions I need to ask Amy Raby: (1) How many times have you seen Beastmaster? and (2) can you write two Hearts and Thrones books per year? What about three?

Penny says

Should be book one in the series since it takes place before Assassins Gambit and sets the world and a couple of the characters. I enjoyed the verbal sparring and would have liked more and a little less battle strategy.

Janelle says

This book was awesome. A perfect blend of heart wrenching romance and political intrigue, all in a unique and interesting fantasy setting. It fit my tastes to a tee, and I stayed up way too late finishing it.

sparklyunikorn says

3 stars

It's Book 2 and it should have come out first, not Assassin's Gambit. Anyway, it was a good read.

What I liked.

1. The world.
2. The politics.
3. Jan-Torres for his intelligence, kindness, and mercy.
4. His bloodthirsty ferret.
5. The brindlecats.

What I disliked.

1. It was too slow-paced at the beginning.
2. Insta-love dull romance.
3. Rianne was stupid, ignorant and spineless.

.....

Read the excerpt of Book 3 and it didn't sound promising. But then, that might change.

Read on your own peril.

Sam says

I don't want to wait until April for the next book! Spy's Honor is technically a prequel to Assassin's Gambit, but I really think it makes more sense to read them in publication order. Even knowing the outcome of the story I was still sucked in and obsessively thinking about what had happened and would happen next. I loved watching the relationship between Janto and Rhianne develop. It was also nice to see the events leading up to Lucien becoming the emperor.. and of course there was the briefest mention of a female Caturanga player who I'm guessing is Vitala.

My only question is...how do you pronounce Janto/Jan-Torres?

I am seriously a huge Amy Raby fan and I hope that the Hearts and Thrones series proves to be much longer than three books because everything I've read so far is absolutely stunning.

Marlene says

This joint review was originally published at The Book Pushers

Marlene: First of all, let me say that the Romans gave great empire! Where would epic historical fiction and epic fantasy be without them? Amy Raby's Hearts and Thrones isn't the only epic fantasy series that owes a lot of its inspiration and overall situation to some of the best and worst elements of the Roman Empire. There's also Crista McHugh's Deizian Empire series (its awesome too) as well as Lindsay Buroker's The Emperor's Edge series and Jim Butcher's Codex Alera series. The Romans are as big as they ever were.

Has: I definitely agree with you that I love this element of the world-building in the Hearts and Thrones series. Spy's Honor is more of a prequel story because it is set before the events from Assassin's Gambit and I liked that it delved more into the backstory of some of the characters such as Lucien and his autocratic father. In this book, Amy Raby's world is a rich tapestry of a kingdom who is hungry for resources and it explains much more into that background. I definitely think that Raby's world-building is very detailed and well thought out and it is definitely cemented that the world of Hearts and Thrones series is one of the best romantic fantasy series out at the moment.

Marlene: Two things that stand out: this is the second book I read this week that is a prequel to the first book in its series, and this is the second series I read recently that starts with a female assassin falling for her target. Those are not the same book, but still make for interesting trends. Ahem. What makes Amy Raby's world in Hearts and Thrones seem so realistic, or makes her worldbuilding so easy to fall into, is that the condition of the Kjall kingdom that we discover has a basis in history. What her spy Janto learns and takes advantage of is part of what caused the Roman Empire to both rise and eventually fall. This device works because it really did work. Or not work, so to speak. Raby knows her history, and understands how to exploit

it for the purpose of a great story.

Has: This is what I found really interesting about the series. She made it feel alive especially with the build up on the ongoing wars and the conflict this has with the kingdom and its neighbours. There were no easy outs and there were repercussions for the characters. And while I am not a huge fan of the spying premise, Janto was a fantastic leading hero. Again, Amy Raby painted another multi-dimensional character and I loved the fact he was a beta hero who was sensitive and understanding towards his heroine as well empathic to her plight because she was being forced to marry the man who decimated his Kingdom.

I also enjoyed the world-building with the magical system. with Janto's people their use of magical abilities are linked with animal familiars instead of rift stones which the Kjallans use. I liked the different contrast of cultures and philosophy which really made the world vivid and vibrant. I also loved the scenes which Janto shared with his familiar a ferret who produced some humourous moments which helped to balance the tone of the book which was pretty dark in places.

Marlene: There was an interesting switch in the character's perspectives past the midway point in the book, and Raby did a great job pulling it off. At the start of the story, Janto is definitely a beta hero, not just because he is more sensitive and empathetic than the average, but because he doesn't believe in himself and his people question his authority. Rhianne appears to be the alpha heroine, not just because she is an Imperial Princess, but because she seems to be doing mostly as she pleases. Then Janto's kingdom is conquered and his parents are murdered, and they switch.

Janto doesn't merely become king, he takes his throne from his younger and more popular brother through a trial-by-combat of their familiars. Janto visibly takes on the mantle of leadership, and it changes and isolates him. Rhianne, on the other hand, is forced into a lower status as the fiance of the conqueror of the Mosari, a man who is not just prepared to break her spirit, but who is looking forward to that task.

Has: I definitely agree with you about the switch and the power dynamics between Rhianne and Janto which I think developed an interesting factor with their relationship but without falling into the usual roles. A similar thing happened with the first book, with heroine being more alpha in the relationship as well.

However, I did find the plot and pace especially in the first half wasn't as fast paced compared to the first book, although I definitely was engaged with the characters and the world-building which felt more fleshed out, which kept me drawn into the world and story. But I think this was more about the premise with Janto being established in his role as a spy and I am not that keen on plots with this premise. I always find it slow going because it is not that action packed and it does affect the pace and tone of the story for me. The second half of the book, picks up in pace and flow and definitely becomes very action packed with the war between the Mosari and the Kjallans in full force. I think Raby has a great voice in painting battles but with a good eye on the small details.

Marlene: I agree that the first half of the book was heavy on the worldbuilding and a bit slower on the action, particularly in comparison to the first book. And again, in comparison to the first book, it felt disappointing to see more and more of Rhianne's agency get taken away as the story moved into the second half. She starts the story as one of the movers-and-shakers, even if it is from the shadows, and spends too much of the second half being locked up either because she's being disobedient or for her own good, depending on the perspective of the male doing the locking up. Including among those males the hero.

One of the things I liked most about the first book was that the heroine moved as much of the action of the story along as the hero did. It's more than not true in this story, Rhianne goes from being active to

imprisoned, while even when Janto was locked up, he was able to still use his familiar to be an active participant in the action. This does not mean I didn't find Janto's story compelling, because I did, but the "lock her up for her own good" thing bothered me more than a bit.

Has: Yes! I definitely agree about Rhianne's agency takes a back step in the second half although I can see why because so much was happening with the war and conflict. However I did find Rhianne to be more naive and the people around her used that to hold her back. I wished she could have managed to do more in the end to break out of the box some of the characters placed her in. Although I liked Janto realised and recognised this and gave her the space and the ability to decide about the direction of her life. But like you say I wished she could do it by herself and breakout because I think it hindered her characterisation.

Overall, I enjoyed Spy's Honor, it does lay out and set up the world of Hearts and Thrones with more details and it did offer some surprises about the fate of certain characters who I hope appear in future books. Nonetheless, I did find the pace and plot was slow in the first half, and even though the rich world-building, setting and characters were vivid and entertaining – it didn't capture the magic of the first book for me. But it is a very solid installment in the series and I think this is one of the best Fantasy Romance series out right now. Amy Raby has a freaking fantastic imagination and I love how much thought and depth she puts into this world and I am definitely hooked!

I give Spy's Honor a B-

Marlene: The worldbuilding in this series is stellar. And unlike my friend Has, I find Janto's spy role every bit as fascinating as the assassin that Vitala played in Assassin's Gambit. It is also very cool to see Lucien before he becomes the Lucien that we met in Gambit. And speaking of gambits, Janto's tactical ability to exploit the weaknesses of the Kjallans were very well played. The action in the second half of this story was well done. The weak point for me was the character of Rhianne. There are tremendous story possibilities in her conflict between her family, her established role and her conscience, but she gets sidelined by imprisonment for the second half of the story. She loses her agency and the story is poorer for it.

I give Spy's Honor a B-
