



## A Queer Trade

*K.J. Charles*

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Apprentice magician Crispin Tredarloe returns to London to find his master dead, and his papers sold. Papers with secrets that could spell death. Crispin needs to get them back before anyone finds out what he's been doing, or what his magic can do.

Crispin tracks his quarry down to waste paper dealer Ned Hall. He needs help, and Ned can't resist Crispin's pleading—and appealing—looks. But can the waste-man and the magician prevent a disaster and save Crispin's skin?

A 16,000 word story set in the Charm of Magpies world, and a prequel to the novel Rag and Bone (March 2016). This story was first published as part of the Charmed & Dangerous anthology.

Cover design by Catherine Dair.

## A Queer Trade Details

Date : Published February 2nd 2016 by KJ Charles

ISBN :

Author : K.J. Charles

Format : ebook 59 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Historical, Fantasy, Paranormal, Historical Fiction

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## From Reader Review A Queer Trade for online ebook

### Chelsea says

That was a great introduction to these characters and their budding romance. I haven't read Rag and Bone yet and I'm glad I read this one first.

I really enjoyed this being about a warlock, someone the Justiciary hunts, it was interesting seeing the other side of practitioners, even though Crispin is far from evil.

Looking forward to seeing Ned and Crispin together in the next book.

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### Dα?ujα says

**Any day I get my greedy little hands on a KJ Charles book is a good day.** Especially if that book is set in the magical *A Charm of Magpies* world where a few characters very dear to me live. I didn't find them here, but that's okay because I enjoyed reading about Crispin and Ned, and the story was not only interesting, but it also reminded me the magical world of *A Charm of Magpies* can be a scary place.

Crispin, in search for his dead master's magical, and potentially dangerous papers, found himself in Ned Hall's shop. Ned was the waste-man who had bought those papers, and the only one who could help him find them. Looking for those blood spells wasn't all Ned and Crispin were doing; they were looking at each other and finding that they liked what they were seeing, which I always enjoy reading about.

Just when I was thinking their search mission would finish uneventfully, dead beings started walking around, a pen was a terrifying object, and Crispin learned some important truths. I'd forgotten how scary and complicated things could get in this world.

I can't wait to read what happens with the two of them next!

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### Erin \*Proud Book Hoarder\* says

A short prequel introducing the Rag and Bones next full length book.

It's an okay story set in the times of Stephen Day in historical time period where a magic council exists to keep order and peace...somewhat. Crispin finds himself in a bind when his magical master has died and his magical papers have been carried off. He finds himself at the shop of Ned, who is a business owner that deals with waste paper and the like, a "queer trade". Together they track down some of the sold papers and prevent worse mayhem than walking corpses, fish returning to life, and the like. Ultimately they find each other in the chaos.

It's a good introduction to the series. Both characters are likable, different off plays from each other. It was

also in the controversy of mixed race relationship, with was another taboo back then. There is instant attraction but it's realistic and not harlequin-lightning. K.J. Charles always writes with a talented hand.

I do have a small complaint their relationship felt a little rushed for my liking, especially since it's the first time they've met. Since she introduced them in a short, though, there's not many other directions the story could have gone to have them come across convincing.

I love the magical world Charles created in previous series, so I'm glad to see it continue with new characters and fresh blood. Each time there are not only new magic users, but new ways that magic is used. The finger bone thing sounds painful, but the pen with the magician's blood is wickedly intriguing. Looking forward to more of the story with these two.

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## **Ingie says**

*Review written February 2, 2016*

**3.7 Stars - Yay, it's here, a first in a new KJC series. As always superbly delightful M/M romance reading ...but short**

### **Book #0.5**

*A Queer Trade* Is the short prequel novella to K.J. Charles's new "Rag & Bone" series (#1-Rag and Bone is planned to be publ. in March 2016). A new book and series in the The World of **A Charm of Magpies**. — A marvelous great book-world to visit every single time. Highly recommended always.

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The magician **Crispin Tredarloe**, with a "willowy frame and light voice" (makes me smile), returns from a visit to his parents in *Cornwall* to *London*. His master (like in teacher) is dead and a big bunch of important mystical spell papers has mistakenly been sold. Crispin tracks those lost papers to a 'waste paper dealer' (never heard of before), **Ned 'Neddy' Hall**. A dark skinned stranger living behind the 'Rag & Bottle Shop' in *St. Giles* a more poor and scrubby part of town.

'He had a West End life in his odd, specialised way. He'd only seen men of colour as itinerant street-sellers, never actually spoken to a black man before, certainly never touched one. Hall's hand had felt... well, Crispin was sure he should assert that it felt the same as any other man's hand, but..'

'Crispin might be scared and guilty, and a warlock, whatever that was, but his tongue was in Ned's mouth like that was the only thing that mattered..'

### **Aaaa!! K.J. Charles is the best**

This prequel novella had it all: sweetness, excitement and lovely characters. It was just way too short. (Sigh!!)

Last there were some promising sentences:

— “Warning: Contains a warlock who needs to go straight (but isn’t), a waste-man running out of patience, blood magic, bad-tempered justiciars, and a pen with a mind of its own.” —

Tempting words that makes me groan and eagerly yearn for the next part (Rag and Bone in just one month). I’m sure it will be a good, exciting, mysterious and yummy hot (longer) read ... as always when Ms Charles has delivered. And even better, I will buddyread it with lovely Sofia. What a threat.

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**I LIKE - to once again visit ‘The World of A Charm of Magpies’**

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**Erika says**

3.5 stars

This was a nice little amuse bouche before the main course. I’m so happy to read about a well written black protagonist in my favorite K.J. Charles series and can’t wait to read the full story. Exciting!

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**? Irena ? says**

First, I love the world of *A Charm of Magpies* series so I am not that certain it doesn’t play a role here. Maybe I wouldn’t love this if I didn’t read *A Charm of Magpies* stories.

You do get the exceptional writing (no surprise there) and occasional black humour remark here though. But *because* I know a lot about the world and *because* I didn’t need too many explanations, I am not sure if the story would be as great. For example, ‘a small man darted forward out of the crowd, arm up, finger pointed’ had more meaning for me than for someone who hasn’t read the series yet. Anyone would recognize who that is from that sentence only! It was like I was reading between the lines.

My point is, *Rag and Bone* series promises great things. I don’t know how *A Queer Trade* would stand on its own. I loved it but take this with a grain of salt. I may be biased.

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**Ami says**

*Read it first as part of Charmed and Dangerous: Ten Tales of Gay Paranormal Romance and Urban Fantasy Anthology. Review copied from my review of the anthology as well. Might revisit when the story is released independently as I plan to also buy it before reading the follow-up novel*

Oh, this is delightful! I think I had more fun reading short story in comparison to the last story of Charles that I read.

Crispin is a practitioner who is on a mission to look for magical papers of his departed Master, only to found those papers have been sold by his inheritors. This brought Crispin to Ned Hall, a waste-man (who buys

waste papers and sell them for other purposes). It feels like an 'finding an item" kind of adventure. There is time limitation in which Crispin and Ned need to find those papers before the magical words on the papers are making havoc. And making havoc they do!! I was very much amused when I read about the rising deads \*lol\*.

In addition to the quick partnership, the 'fun' at the market, some actions and magic, Charles also wrote Ned Hall as a black man, with a occupation uncommon in a romance story. I found those aspects to be wonderful indeed :). Oh, and I LOVED Ned's endearment for Crispin.

PS: The story is set in Charles' Magpies universe, and we have Esther Gold (Stephan's justiciar partner and friend) makes an appearance. However, you don't need to read those novels beforehand to enjoy this.

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### **K.J. Charles says**

The first story to feature Ned Hall, waste-man, and Crispin Tredarloe, accidental warlock. I really enjoyed writing this one, so much that the characters have got their own full novel coming (Rag and Bone, in March 2016). The Rag and Bone stories are set in the Charm of Magpies world, off at a tangent to the action of those books. Ned's profession was, incidentally, a real one, and I hugely enjoyed putting together a forgotten trade, Victorian recycling, and some magical mayhem.

This was first published in the Charmed and Dangerous: Ten Tales of Gay Paranormal Romance and Urban Fantasy anthology; this is a standalone edition of the same story.

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### **Wollstonecrafthomegirl says**

*"Marleigh was dead: to begin with.*

*Hepzibah Marleigh, gentleman of the parish of St. Alban the Martyr. Bent-backed, blue eyes bright in a face like crumpled parchment, teeth as brown as the meerschaum pip they always clamped."*

Come on KJC, how do you do that?! Thirty-seven opening words of absolute perfection and I was hooked. She has so much talent it's just not fair. She should break it up and hand pieces out, like that scene in Mean Girls.

This is such a fantastic little novella. Magic conspires to bring together one of romance's most unlikely couples. Ned, the paper scrounging and selling working class Londoner. Big and beefy and gay. And Crispin, well-to-do, somewhat feminine, hapless magician, also gay. Ned has bought some paper, and it turns out to be ridden with awful spells cast by Crispin's former teacher. Together, they embark on a journey to find it all and figure out what is happening and how to stop it. And, of course, Ned proves to be just what (or who) Crispin needs and vice versa.

I am grading on a KJC curve. The story here was fantastic. The writing is some of her best. I think I wanted the romance to be a bit more explosive. A bit more Crane and Day, if you will. So, I cannot quite give this five stars, but it's a cracking, cracking read.

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**Tess says****4 stars**

Intriguing start to a new series with very unique characters in *very* unusual professions (waste man and warlock?!). Definitely whets my appetite for Rag and Bone!

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**Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says**

How the hell does she do that in just 5 chapters? 5!

Incredible. KJC's got skillz.

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**Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says**

I loooove the world of The Magpie Lord, so I was SO excited to see that there was a new set of books coming out that was set in that universe.

I actually had originally started with Rag and Bone but I was pretty lost with who the characters were and so I decided to backtrack and read this novella first. I'm REALLY glad that I did. This is an excellent introduction of Crispin and Ned, and it gives us all of the relevant background information that we need for the next story.

No steam here but REALLY well done, I think it's a necessary read for those who want to explore this new series.

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**Mónica BQ says**

I had read this one already as part of the Charmed and Dangerous anthology and loved it. I'm finally going to read Rag and Bone, so I re-read this one in preparation.

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**Nancy says****Cross-posted at Shelf Inflicted and at Outlaw Reviews**

Loved this charming, magical, sexy, and suspenseful story by a new to me author. Apprentice warlock Crispin Tredarloe's master, Hepzibah Marleigh, was hit by a bus. He left Crispin his books and documents, but the real important papers left on the floor were cleaned up and sold by the Burfords to waste-man Ned Hall who in turn will sell the paper to butchers, florists, or anyone that can use it. No one but Crispin knows

what the magical words and symbols on the paper are capable of. Once a sheaf of the paper gets into the hands of the untrained citizenry, strange things start to happen. Crispin and Ned must work together to retrieve the papers and stop the illegal magic before Crispin gets in trouble. Though the two men are as different as night and day, their interactions sparkled and chemistry sizzled, leading me to believe they will indeed be magnificent together. I look forward to reading the series!

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## Ele says

***“O, it's a queer trade, but there's many worse.”***

*London Labour and the London Poor*

I'm undeniably biased; I love studying this part of London's history, my master's thesis was about life and labour in the streets of London, based on Henry Mayhew's journals, and I've read the thing a bazillion times.

So, yes, I'm definitely biased. But Charles has undoubtedly done a terrific job introducing us to the new series, Rag and Bone, set in the Charm of Magpies world.

Considering that this is just 50 pages long, **the characters are amazingly well-sketched, and the balance between romance and action/magic, is perfect.**

So, this is a very intriguing start; a warlock, a black waste paper dealer, and lost magic papers! And freckles! Lots of freckles! I'm looking forward to reading more stories with Ned and Crispin, and exploring different parts of this world.

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