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The Golden Spider (The Elemental Web Chronicles Book 1)



Synopsis

London papers scream of dirigible attacks, kraken swarms, and lung-clogging, sulfurous fogs. But a rash of gypsy murders barely rates mention. Lady Amanda is tired of having both her intelligence and her work dismissed. After blackmailing her way into medical school, she catches the eye of her anatomy professor from the moment she walks into his lecture hall. Is he interested in her? Or only her invention? A clockwork spider that can spin artificial nerves? Lord Thornton, a prominent neurobiologist, has been betrayed. Secret government technology has been stolen from his laboratory, and a foreign spy is attempting to perfect it via a grisly procedure using gypsies as test subjects. The last thing he needs is the distraction of a beautiful and brilliant new student, even if her spider could heal a deteriorating personal injury. Until her device is stolen and used in the latest murder. Lord Thornton has no option but to bring her into his laboratory as well as the investigation where they must fight their growing, yet forbidden, attraction. Bodies accumulate and fragile bonds are tested as they race across London, trying to catch the spy before it's too late.

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Customer Reviews

THE GOLDEN SPIDER hits on all its cylinders - mystery, suspense, romance, and steampunk. (I only put mystery first because that's what I notice first. The story is a satisfying romance, too.) When real life intervened and I had to put the book down, I kept thinking about the characters. I'm looking forward to the next book in the series. I won't talk too much about the mystery for fear of blabbing a spoiler. The setting is well-imagined and detailed. I could easily visualize the world Amanda and Thornton move through. At first, I stumbled a bit with kraken in the Thames, then I remembered Asian Carp overwhelming the Mississippi. That said, many of the story's fantastical steampunk elements are grounded in science and are easy leaps for the imagination to take. It's a great read full of sass and derring-do! Give it a whirl.

I bought this book on a whim - primarily because I like steampunk romance and it was cheap. I must say, I took a while to get into it, but I read the last half quickly and ultimately enjoyed it enough that I'm about to purchase the second one (and pay an extra whole buck for it!). In essence, I thought the series shows potential. The world is a little derivative (Meljean Brook seems to be a particularly strong influence), but there was enough that was distinctive about it to keep me interested. There were krakens and steam-powered inventions galore, but they didn't seem to be just thrown in (well, maybe the krakens...). Renwick definitely builds a picture of a larger, and intriguing, steam-powered world. If I have any criticisms on that front, I'd say that the science is more developed than the society itself. I struggled to get a sense of the larger social and political context of the world in which the book is set - there are some hints about an arms race with Germany, and the Queen seems rather involved in her agents' lives, but I didn't get much more than that (although perhaps that will be fleshed out in later books). In any case, I thought the characters were intelligent (in the sense of intelligently drawn as well as smart) and well fleshed out. Although I wasn't overly keen on the professor/student dimension of the romance, given the power dynamics involved (such relationships are frowned on for good reason), to her credit Renwick does acknowledge that and make it a plot point. In sum, if you like steampunk romance and want something more intelligent than some of the fare out there, this one is worth a try.

This is a read in a night book that keeps the reader turning the pages to find out what happens next. The descriptions of the time and place and the machines are very appropriate and do not get

bogged down in attempting to world build. The reader follows along and the world becomes apparent. I love it when an author is able to pull this off without wasting time and pulling the reader out of the story. Lady Amanda enters medical school to learn the expertise needed to finish her medical innovation to save her brother. One of her professors, Lord Thornton, has both the expertise and the funding to help, but won't--until the Roma bodies start piling up and the device is stolen. Lots of twists, but still a light, easy read.

Steampunk is my favorite genre. As a pharmacist and a daughter of neurosurgeon I was thrilled by all ideas used in the story in terms of biology, chemistry, neuroscience and phytopharmacy. It has romance, believable one despite rather short span of time allotted to our couple. Steamy scenes as well. Mystery part was not quite mystery after chapter 15, at least not for me, but it did not detract from the story and suspense was there till the end. I think this is even harder to accomplish than to conceal the real villain to the end. So, all my boxes were checked and it would be 5 stars if not for somewhat inappropriate place and timing of the first steamy encounter and a bit slow start. Also, there were some loose ends and out of character behaviors or it felt that way for me. Some loose ends will be tied in a sequel but villain... well, it's hard to explain the feeling but thoughts that come to mind are unnecessarily cruel, inexplicably hateful of other nations and minorities etc. I do understand parabola and that the character is a German spy and all that but still. Too much of a leap in behaviour to be convincing. All in all, a great read and this author will quite possibly land on my auto-buy list.

First, I love that the heroine is smart and not afraid to hide her femininity, which is refreshing. Second, I really like the hero - wounded, brilliant, and of course handsome. Okay, I have a soft spot for academics. He of course fights falling for her, but the process of their relationship and seeing how they both gradually bend and adjust is one of the most fun parts of the book. Yes, there's some sex, but not too much. And lots of adventure, intrigue, and espionage. I found some of the science stretched my suspension of disbelief, but it's plausible enough, and the author's background as a biologist shows through nicely. Overall this is a great new start to the series.

From beginning to end it was very good although it took me a few days to read (i.e. I was very busy at work and at home for a few days so it made it hard to read a whole lot in a short period of time). I loved the mixture of murder, mystery, steampunk, romance, and espionage all rolled together as a whole in this story. The medical speak was ok but then I didn't understand all the terminology since I

never have and never will work in the medical industry. However, it didn't turn me away since I've watched my fair share of medical shows in the past. At some point in the near future I plan on reading the next book to find out what happens to Olivia. As for all those who love a combination of romance, steampunk, murder, mystery, and espionage just like me, I'd recommend it.

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