



Agents of Artifice

Ari Marmell

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It is the dawn of a new age in the Multiverse. The balance of power is shifting and *Agents of Artifice* brings readers to the heart of a planeswalker struggle...

In *Agents of Artifice*, Ari Marmell reimagines planeswalkers, taking fans deeper than ever into the lives of the Multiverse's most powerful beings: **Jace Beleren**(TM), the prodigal son, a powerful telepath whose choices now will forever determine his path as a mage; **Liliana Vess**(TM), a temptress whose beauty belies a dark secret and even darker associations; and **Tezzeret**(TM), leader of an interplanar consortium whose quest for knowledge may be undone by his lust for power.

Follow these characters in their quests for knowledge and power. Will Jace's choices lead him astray of the right path? Will Liliana's past finally catch up with her? Will Tezzeret allow hubris to obscure his vision?

Agents of Artifice Details

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From Reader Review Agents of Artifice for online ebook

Leeanna says

Magic the Gathering: Planeswalker: Agents of Artifice, by Ari Marmell

I'm a little up in the air about "Agents of Artifice." I had never read a Magic the Gathering book before, but have played it and have read other Wizards' product lines, such as Forgotten Realms. So I wasn't sure what to expect, but I think the surprise was a good one.

The author is capable, and his characters are definitely interesting. Jace is a planeswalker, a magic user who can travel between worlds with the power of his mind. After being recruited by an all-powerful and evil organization, his abilities increase while his heart dies from the acts he is forced to commit. Jace finds a friend in Kallist, a fellow Consortium recruit, but his skills are with a blade. The two eventually meet Liliana, a powerful necromancer with an agenda of her own, one that will keep you guessing.

The first quarter or so of the book is confusing, until you realize that it's a type of flashback. There were a few other points where action jumped around a bit, but I just had to reread a section or two to figure out what was going on. This book is best if you can sit down with it for a while and take some time to get into it.

I wasn't overly impressed, but I also wasn't disappointed with the plot of "Agents of Artifice." The story is interesting enough, with a lot of soul searching for each of the main characters, and each make some surprising decisions. The villains are just as intriguing, and Marmell makes his bad guys extremely bad - they think nothing of repeatedly torturing their victims, or of mind-raping someone. It's a bit chilling, really.

You don't have to be familiar with Magic the Gathering to read this book; I hadn't played in 10 years or more and understood the magic system easily, thanks to the author's descriptions.

I would say this book is average, but it's a good average. It's a decent romp in a magic universe with some good characters.

3/5.

Leanne says

When I started reading I was a bit annoyed by the not so subtle references to Magic cards. Marmell obviously had a brief about characters, planes, and other things from the MTG universe he had to incorporate in the story. It felt a bit artificial, almost like fan fiction.

However, once I let this go and just decided to enjoy this as a nice quirk, the story actually became a lot of fun. It's a very decent fantasy novel, that would also be enjoyable for non-MTG players. The characters are sufficiently rounded, the descriptions of the world, buildings and things are quite good.

So yeah, this was a fun and recommendable read!

One small side note: if you can't stand books with loads of small errors and typos, please skip this one. It

would have very much benefited from another round of editing and proofreading.

Marisa says

It took almost 2/3 of the book for it to finally get my interest. After that it was fabulous, but it was almost painful how boring I found the beginning. I did not care for the main character and while I understand why he did some of the things he did I still think he could have thought it out better.

A.J. Culpepper says

Absolutely fantastic! By far the BEST Planeswalker novel I've read to date and one of the best books EVER! I love the twists and turns. Just when you think you have the story figured out, it proves you wrong and takes you on another wild ride of intrigue. The characters are remarkably well written, believable and relateable. There's even humor, which only adds to the enjoyment and never detracts from it. I can't say enough about this book! Brilliantly written!

I definitely plan on checking out more of Ari Marmell's books.

Martina Sanjaya says

Very enticing start of a series, I must say. Some spots and descriptions were rather confusing, but mostly good plots, all the twists and turns left me wanting for more.

Elaine Wong says

Interesting beginning. Agents of Artifice has a slow start for me: I was promised a fantasy-mystery-adventure involving Jace and Liliana, and felt disappointed when a no-name gets first dibs. I held in, though, and didn't regret it.

Characters are slowly developed as secret after secret is slowly revealed; I really enjoyed reading about the Infinite Consortium. I personally enjoyed Jace's realizations and descent, as he slowly discovers just what he has gotten into. Everyone really stuck in my mind, though Tezzeret wasn't as constant as I wanted him to be (comes from not being there all the time). I really liked Paldor, a non-mage controller in a group run by them. It was a unique perspective to the story that I could identify with.

The book builds well into a cliffhanger-like ending - a surprise twist here, an epic battle there. Random thoughts and aside comments are dropped here and there like Chehov's armory, and it clicks together in the last third of the book.

For the non-MTG fan, this book does a good job explaining how magic works and what kind of world the characters inhabit. MTG-philes will enjoy the exotic locations and creatures summoned.

Jeremy says

Agents of Artifice is not great fantasy literature, but there are several reasons this may not be the author's fault. The most obvious is that he's working within predefined boundaries. I don't know what the exact relationship between an author of a Magic: The Gathering book and Wizards of the Coast is, but needless to say the author does not have free reign. First of all, characters such as Jace and Liliana are trademarked – the author didn't create them and he doesn't control their fate in the Magic multiverse. Secondly, the WotC design team sketches the outline of a story when each new expansion of the card game comes out. An author, probably contracted by WotC, fills in the details months after the cards and general background story of the expansion have been made public. In many ways a Magic novel is glorified fan fiction, but that doesn't mean it has to be amateurish or not entertaining.

The question then is how should Agents of Artifice be evaluated? Clearly it's not fair to compare it to great works of literature like War and Peace. For the reasons mentioned above it's not fair to compare it to other works of fantasy such The Lord of the Rings or Game of Thrones. The only option left is to compare the work to other Magic novels. The gold standard in the genre is undoubtedly Arena. Arena is one of the rare Magic novels that stands on its own as a solid work of fantasy without the card game. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for Agents of Artifice. Unless you're already interested in Magic this book is mediocre at best when compared to other fantasy works.

Overall the book does a good job of handling Jace and Liliana's characters. The author successfully adds layers of complexity to their characters without violating the characters' temperaments. For example, we see Liliana conflicted by her love for Jace and her own selfishness. In the end, she remains consistent and selfishness wins out. Another interesting aspect of the novel is how the narrative moves around in time. This is a standard practice in modern and postmodern fiction, but not one widely employed in fantasy works.

The major flaw in the novel though is the dialogue. It seems the author is pandering to a teen and preteen audience. For the most part the language is mild – only mild swear words and no graphic sex scenes – this is not Game of Thrones! But there are a few crude innuendoes and awkward conversations between Liliana and Jace that seem targeted directly to a juvenile audience.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in Magic: The Gathering or other Magic novels. If you have no interest in these though you can certainly find better fantasy literature to spend your time on.

Jamie Newton says

I have never played Magic The Gathering, nor do I care to in the future. That does not matter when it comes to this book. Everything you need for a very interesting Sci/Fi adventure is packed in this book. What makes this book is Ari Marmell. He has a way of bringing the story to life for you.

****Semi Spoiler:**** Since the main character does a good deal of mind reading and thought invasion, I appreciate how Marmell brought that to me the reader and displayed everything perfectly.

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I just wish that he could right more along the story line that is in this book and make it a series all it's own.

Very good book in my opinion. Has all the things I love about Sci/Fi.

Alex says

As far as franchise novels go, this one was actually pretty good. The characters are well developed and the plot does its job of pulling you along. The language and general sense of narration were a bit uneven, which was quite distracting sometimes, but it didn't take away from the overall fun.

Arguably the best idea of the book is the Infinite Consortium itself, and it's a shame that we didn't get some more fun interplanar heists before it all turns sour for Jace.

????? says

nothing yet lol

Steven Wilber says

"Agents of Artifice" tells the story of the Planeswalker Jace Beleren, a powerful mage capable of traveling between the many worlds of the Multiverse, and his adventures and misadventures with the Infinite Consortium. From the beginning the reader will discover that not everything is as it seems.

The story has a little something for everyone: lots of action and adventure, a large dose of magic, and a diverse set of characters. In addition to Jace, we are introduced to Khallist, a skilled fighter, Liliana Vess, a powerful necromancer, Emmara, the Elven healer, and Tezzeret, the leader of the Infinite Consortium. I found the characters interesting and well thought-out.

Overall the plot/story was interesting and well written. While a few of the plot `twists' were not really a surprise, the story more than made up for it. I found the story exciting and well paced. But as mentioned above, it was really the characters that made the book for me. One of the more interesting aspects of the book for me was the development of Jace's character over the course of the story and the emotions he experiences due to situations that were often beyond his control.

I enjoyed this book very much and would recommend it to readers looking for character-driven fantasy, especially if they like their fantasy heavy with magic. I'd also recommend the book to fans of the Magic the Gathering novel line.

I should note that it is not necessary to have any knowledge of Magic the Gathering to enjoy this novel. I had never played the game or read a Magic the Gathering novel before reading "Agents of Artifice" and I was

able to follow everything. In fact, I enjoyed the novel so much I plan to pick up some more novels in the line.

Richard says

Agents of Artifice is a book made of win and awesome and you should all go buy it.

I'll elaborate. I'm not a big Magic: The Gathering player, so I am not immediately familiar with the famous figures and places of the M:TG universe. Agents of Artifice is an excellent introduction to the Magic universe without drowning you in needless detail.

Author Ari Marmell, curse his hide, comes up with dazzlingly brilliant ideas that make me want to download his brain for game design purposes. The story centers on a group of mercenary planeswalkers and their new recruit. The characterizations do a nice job of avoiding fantasy stereotypes, creating, for the most part, fully realized people with a variety of motivations, both good and ill. If the story sometimes skimps on details to the point of sparseness (the organization that is at the heart of the book remains very nebulous throughout the story), that becomes a plus in my mind as it presents the very real dilemmas inherent in taking on such shadowy organizations. Too often the big bad guys in fantasy stories are so obvious and monolithic, you expect them to have office space on main street. Here such problems are artfully avoided and used to make the organization more troublesome without making the antagonists overly powerful in the process. He also makes excellent use of a few key plot swerves, some coming upon the reader and the protagonist simultaneously, some used to help build tension.

It also helps that his writing is just fun to read. Ari makes better use of the English language than a great many fantasy authors, both in description and in dialogue. His descriptions are evocative and paint excellent pictures of the fantastic buildings and cities of his setting. His description of an artificer's lair is enough to make me declare that he's taken far more than his fair share of creativity and needs to return some for the rest of us. He depicts the magical battles between planeswalkers in a way that makes me want to go out and play Magic, building decks around his principal characters. His writing of martial combat is quick and evocative without endless descriptions of this maneuver or that, which makes it read more like an actual fight would look.

If I were to quibble over anything, it would be the use of the story's protagonist, Jace Beleren. Jace comes across to me as Luke Skywalker if Luke had first encountered Palpatine rather than Obi-Wan. While the plot does keep moving, it moves using the same formula repeatedly:

- 1) Jace resists making a decision or taking an action, bemoaning his fate
- 2) A crisis erupts
- 3) Jace takes said action or makes said decision

While I understand the need for crisis moments to help ratchet up the tension, I got the sense through the book that Jace was not going to ever do much of anything without a crisis moment to force his hand. He reminded me of an RPG protagonist – spending most of his time reacting rather than acting and very rarely planning for anything other than subsistence.

In attempting to make the hero of the story an atypical sort of non-hero, I think the author goes a bit too far, making him unsympathetic. By the time the book was about half over, I found that I didn't really care whether Jace met a grisly fate for his actions or not and I cared more about fairly incidental characters than

anyone who spent a great deal of time "on screen." I kept reading because Ari's ideas are clever and the writing is fun, but I just found that I didn't care that much what happened to the main characters, especially as their behavior seemed to do the most damage to those in their proximity.

But those are really minor points in what is an excellent book. It's a nice quick read that I finished in a single day (mostly thanks to a flight I had to take) and beats the hell out of much of the fantasy fiction that comes out in support of this game or that. So go get your own!

Rhockman says

Más allá de lo entretenido, no está escrito para neófitos: todo el tiempo sentí estar perdiéndome de algo que no estuvo explicado en ningún rincón del relato ¡Y es el primer número de una colección! ¿Dónde está toda la información que me faltó y se da por sabida de antemano?

Por el otro lado sentí un poco de incongruencia entre el tono terriblemente épico de los mundos enteros envueltos en una aura de muerte y decadencia con el tono terriblemente vulgar del departamento sucio con dos universitarios peleándose por una minita. No digo que esté mal mezclar las cosas, nomas que en este libro parecen dos cosas inconexas.

Patrick says

Ari Marmell is not a strong writer, or at least he needed a stronger editor to eliminate most of his adverbs and clarify some of his more confusing sentences. Indeed, this book read more like a penultimate galley for all the sentences that had missing or repeated words. Sloppy, which shouldn't be the case since Agents of Artifice was published by a company with at least as many resources as the Big Six Publishers: Hasbro. Is the story entertaining for Magic the Gathering fans? Certainly, but only in the way that a Michael Bay film is mindless popcorn fare for cinephiles.

Patty says

If you like supernatural thrillers mixed with espionage and magic, then this book is for you. The author's description of setting and magic is phenomonally written, almost like prose.

Although I enjoyed this book, my major complaint is the plot's continuity. It starts off at point B, switches to point A, and then goes to point C. With no separation of chapters, I think this could be a bit confusing for readers unfamiliar with Magic the Gathering's plot.
