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In the age of the Mazonians women rule through magic - and men suffer what they must. Magical creations only last for a single day (magical food is great for dieting), but that is quite long enough for casting a giant wet blanket (if you're feeling kind) over a would-be rampaging male - or a block of granite (if you're not). No uppity males in Mazonia!

But then as now some people rise above what they've been taught. One such is Xylina; somehow she has always understood that being of the wrong gender, or even lacking magical power, is no reason for stripping a human being of dignity. How ironic, then, that the Queen has ordained that in order to avoid execution Xylina must use her magic to publicly conquer the most glorious male Mazonia has ever seen - and how doubly so that together he and Xylina will transform their world.

If I Pay Thee Not in Gold Details

Date : Published July 1st 1993 by Baen Books (first published 1993)

ISBN : 9780671721756

Author : Piers Anthony , Mercedes Lackey

Format : Hardcover 398 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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From Reader Review If I Pay Thee Not in Gold for online ebook

Deborah Ideiosepius says

So, I liked this book while I was reading it, I have re-read it a time or two and I remember the story well, so to me that is a four star rating.

However the novel has problems;

- 1) The writing style is not consistent throughout the book, a couple of times the style jumps, as though the authors had put it aside for a few months or so and really, I do not much care for this jerky reading sensation.
 - 2) The characterisation is . . . odd. It feels as if once the authors had the characters defined to their own satisfaction they abandoned any further character development, and just put them through the motions. This means that their behaviour is often inconsistent with the character that the reader thinks they know.
 - 3) Like some other great writers, (notably Heinlein), Piers (or maybe Mercedes?) seem to have fallen into the wet dream trap: All the sex switching and open relationship embracing ect and after a while it feels a bit like perving on someone else's sexual fantasy. I am not saying this is necessarily a bad thing, I like a good bit of literary porn as much as the next person. However in the throes of all the sweaty-writhing-around-gender-bending the writing, characters and plot tend to get left for dead and that happens a fair bit in the last part of the book.
 - 4) Call that a demon? pfft.
 - 5) There are a few assumptions about women, sex and relationships that are more than slightly disturbing in a nebulous sort of way.
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Kristin says

Alright it's not up there with Lord of the Rings, but I really enjoyed If I Pay Thee Not in Gold. It's an original look on sexism. The society is matriarchal instead of patriarchal. Men are either "husbands" (think a male harem) or servants. The heroine must learn that men can enrich her life as friend, brother, and partner.

Alice M. says

[Take it away, Piers!

"When I agreed to do "If I Pay Thee Not In Gold" there collaboratively, it was to be the first of a series. But when my collaborator dumped an insultingly s

Sanalith says

I can't believe I never added this to my books! I originally read this back in high school, and for some reason decided to pick it up again this year while deciding which of my new books to read next. For anyone looking for a very traditional, early 90s fantasy, this is definitely a good book for you.

Xylina is a member of a society where women dominate society through their magical powers of conjuration, while males are regulated to the status of slave. In order to become a full citizen, every woman must battle a man in the country's central arena, to prove she has the physical and magical power worthy to enjoy the privileges of a full, ruling-class adult. Plagued by misfortune, poverty and the whispers of a family curse, Xylina enters the arena prepared to die. Instead, she suddenly discovers a deep-seeded will to live, and powers of conjuration beyond her wildest dreams. Throughout her struggle to fit into society, Xylina is accompanied by her slave/friend Faro, and a dangerously fascinating demon called Ware. Together, the three of them set out on a dangerous mission beyond their homeland to save Xylina from a fate worse than death.

After almost 20 years, the prose and writing style does show its age, but as a throw-back to what I consider to be a better era of urban fantasy, this book shines. The characters are lovely, the plot - while somewhat stereotypical of the times - is engaging, and the relationship between Xylina and Ware is wonderfully sweet. And honestly, as a collaboration between Piers Anthony and Mercedes Lackey, you pretty much can't go wrong.

Magda says

I don't know why I like this book so much. It doesn't seem like it's that good.

David says

I got about 150 pages into this humungous waste of time. I really don't give up on a lot of books, but this one was just so poorly written, so maddingly slowly plotted, so carelessly coordinated, as to be a colossal waste of time. I wanted to care about the heroine, but could not. The evil queen idea was beginning to perk up and might eventually have brought some interest to the book-- but her only motivation was that the heroine was supposedly stronger than she in the magic arts.

The motivation of the slave to help his mistress was so absurd as to test the patience of Job himself. If he was so clever at plotting, etc. why couldn't he find a way to manipulate her into granting him his freedom instead of assisting her.

The name of the people, the Mazonians, (a rip of off Amazons if ever I see one) I should have known that this was going to be poorly written pulp of the sort that was churned out in the 30's by hacks who reworked every idea for the pulp magazines.

I wouldn't recommend this one to someone who was stuck on a desert island with nothing to read. Their time would be better spent fishing, looking for fresh water, or simply basking in the sun while they die of thirst. Yes, this one was that bad!

Jennifer says

This is one of my all time favorite books. I have read it too many times to count. Piers Anthony / Mercedes Lackey - Good strong female main character, demons, magic, crystals, queens, battles. Good stuff.

Wealththeow says

The Piers Anthony bad-touch is strong in this one, but I love the title!

Happy Medium says

The only good thing that came out of my reading of this book was my adolescent realization that mystical sex-change shenanigans are pretty hot. I have forgotten everything else except for the excruciating passage where we find out that Our Heroine keeps her figure trim by eating ephemeral magically generated food.

MrsJoseph says

<http://bookslifewine.com/r-if-i-pay-t...>

This book...is pretty bad. On all accounts. The humor is not really there. The world-building is close to non-existent and the attitudes toward women is...disgusting. Its hard to imagine that two best selling novelists managed to put out this dreck and not have mud all over their faces.

Mazonia is a land ruled by women. Only women have magical powers so only women rule. It seems that - because women have the right to rule - almost all the women have turned into sexist pigs who believe in slavery. Because all men are slaves. WHAT? That's right...all men are slaves to be cast aside - even if they are fathers of their Mistress' children - when no longer useful. I did not try to figure out if there was a hidden social reason the authors decided to go this route. It seemed that it was for plots only.

I would have thought - that with all the women being in control...the book would manage to avoid the misogyny that can be prevalent in a lot of Fantasy. Nope. That was not to be. It turns out that the "good ladies" of Mazonia realize that their slave men have sexual urges. So they allow the import of women from a different land to be used as prostitutes. Yep, you got that right. What makes this extra disgusting is that these imported women have been magically changed so that they have paws or claws like animals. AND they have had their voices removed in favor of animal noises (chirps, meows, barking, etc) to match their paws. Yeah, I was all in the WTF??! area with that.

And somehow...this also manages to have been the very first Fantasy novel that I have read...that has a polyamorous relationship which included a *ménage à trois* and demon sex. O_O

With all of that aside...the book is about a young Mazonian woman who *thinks* she is cursed with bad

luck. The blurb above...talks about the first 3% of the book and is not what the book is about. She is alone (only one slave to her name!) and takes out a loan to help with her finances. The loan comes due...and it turns out she owes the money to a local Demon. She argues with him...and thus the title of the book: If she can't pay him in Gold, she will pay him in silver. I can't really say any more without spoiling the book. Though why anyone else would want to read this is a mystery...

In order to assist with paying back her loan, the girl (Xylina) has to go on a quest. While on her quest she travels the land...so readers can see how poor the world-building is. And it is pretty bad.

I can't really describe how bad this book is. So, I'll let the *authors* tell you how bad the book is:

Mercedes Lackey on Piers Anthony:

If I Pay Thee Not in Gold is the first and last collaboration between the two authors.

Piers Anthony on Mercedes Lackey, If I Pay Thee Not in Gold, and Baen Books:

But my main irritation of the moment is the Audit. This is simplified, as all the details would be tedious and confusing. I have done some business with BAEN BOOKS, a publisher which at first seemed quite promising. But over the years there were little signals of mischief, and then larger ones, and finally a giant one that required me to take firm action. **When I agreed to do *If I Pay Thee Not In Gold* there collaboratively, it was to be the first of a series. But when my collaborator dumped an insultingly sloppy manuscript on me-apparently she was angry at my assumption that I know how to write Piers Anthony style better than she know how to write Piers Anthony style-I cleaned it up as well as I could, a real headache, and told the publisher I would not do another. That marked the turning point in our relations. The publisher paid the collaborator more than \$55,000, and paid me \$400.** And subsequently stopped sending me statements at all. The publisher had originally estimated, and stated so in the contract, that it expected to pay me, as the senior writer, on the order of \$100,000. Obviously I would not have made the deal if I had known it would be for peanuts; money aside, the experience was already bad enough. Evidently the books started to be cooked the moment the publisher felt it didn't need me any more. Not to put too fine a point on this, but **I don't think the collaborator's contribution was worth well over a hundred times what mine was**, and the failure even to send statements was an open breach of contract. I am not a good writer to stiff. When my agent's repeated queries got nowhere, I acted directly, with a high powered New York auditor backed by the same lawyer I had used before to make TOR honor its own deal. Well, it has now been over four months, and the BAEN is still stonewalling the audit. Preliminary figures indicate that I

am owed from \$20,000 to \$55,000, but these have to be confirmed, and the publisher is not providing the necessary accounts. I suspect it will take a court order to blast them out, and another to force payment actually to be made, with the threat of punitive damages. So the issue is not yet settled, but I think enough shows here to be a warning to other writers who may consider doing business with this publisher.

One Star

Megalion says

I remember loving this when I read it years ago. Many years. Also remember that there was something off about it too.

What I love are the very interesting concepts in love and gender. But the writing is all over the place. Anything that doesn't directly explore those concepts is hurried and often very formulaic.

This time, there was a brief afterword by Piers that shed a lot of light on why its so disjointed and it's interesting to have that context.

I think of this now as still stuck in rewrites between two very busy & prolific writers. Shame it was never fully polished.

The core of the story is 5 stars for me. The pooriness of the writing is a 3 so I'll punch in a 4. Yeti can't recommend this to others.

J'aime says

I chose this book because I am a fan of Mercedes Lackey - I had never read Piers Anthony before. What a shame this is out of print, because it had a great twist on the cliché Amazon warrior story, with a surprisingly tongue-in-cheek tone. Mazonia is a matriarchy and men are slaves. Only women can command magic, and the most powerful of them rules. Xylina lives in poverty and also fear of her upcoming Rite of Passage wherein she must battle a gladiator in the arena. Despite the overwhelming odds, she is victorious and wins the slave as her own. She also makes a powerful and unknown enemy. When Xylina takes the unusual step of befriending her slave, it sets in motion a chain of events that will change the fabric of Mazonia forever.

A good story, with an interesting concept and fun, well-developed characters. It can be a little cheesy at times, but not every book needs to be "deep!" Highly Recommended.

Bookwormdragon says

I enjoyed this book most for its quirky plot and bisexual undertones. Although the blurb on the back cover leads you to believe that one thing will happen, in reality something else altogether really happens. I suppose you could say that this is an examination of the social constructions of class and hierarchy, but that might give you the idea that this is a serious and weighty book, which is totally not the case. You could also say that this book explores the artificial construction of gender and gender-roles in society, but, once again, you might be reading a bit too much into it. In the end, I found this to be an amusing and lighthearted read with interesting supporting characters and some intriguing and rather straight-forward examples of world-building. Not an 'instant classic' by any means, but still worth reading if you enjoy fantasy and want something light and quick.

Patty says

Two of my favorite fantasy authors at the time this was published, this was a wonderful collaboration and I could see both their styles in the layout of the story and it's resolution.

Emily Jackson says

Good book. Different kind of world, but neat characters and plot twists!
