



## Unmasked

*E.M. Kaplan*

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Mel can sense the blood beating through her companions' veins. She can count the moments between heartbeats to tell who is sincere and who is lying. She can make herself stronger for short periods of time, heal small wounds on her body, and manipulate light to change her appearance subtly. These abilities are useful skills for a Mask—a preternaturally sensitive, cloaked and imposing, impartial arbitrator, both revered and feared by everyone.

Mattieus Ottick, or just Ott to his friends, comes from the frozen north to hunt the strange ogre-like creatures, or trogs, that threaten the northern mines. Magical beasties? Nightmares come to life? The world as Ott knows it is about to change. Blessed by easy charm and good looks, Ott is used to the attention of females, but, gods above, he is knocked flat by the kiss of the ethereal woman he rescues. How could she possibly be a Mask?

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Rated approximately PG-13 for fantasy violence and some smooching.

## Unmasked Details

Date : Published May 28th 2014 by Black Crow Books (first published May 17th 2014)

ISBN :

Author : E.M. Kaplan

Format : Kindle Edition 377 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Romance, Young Adult, Paranormal, Paranormal Romance, Action

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## From Reader Review Unmasked for online ebook

### Mike Billington says

EM Kaplan doesn't lead you gently into the pages of her fantasy novel "Unmasked."

Instead, she pushes you off a cliff and wishes you luck as you plummet head first into this action-packed story of a young woman named Mel who is desperately trying to find her place in the world that Kaplan has so artfully created.

The action starts right on Page One when Mel, who is in training to become a Mask, is kidnapped by a hulking, vaguely humanoid monster and carried pell mell through the woods toward an uncertain fate before she is rescued by a woodsman. From that point to the end of the novel the action never lets up and, for me, that's a good thing. The reason: In my experience too many fantasy authors spend too much time setting scenes and building worlds rather than just getting on with the story. Make no mistake, Kaplan has built an impressive world full of mysterious - and often misunderstood - characters but she does so in the context of the story, often while her protagonists are fighting for their lives. She doesn't waste chapters waxing poetic about the sun and stars: She does not, in other words, pause her narrative so she can dump a ton of information on the reader before moving on. As a result, the narrative maintains its headlong momentum allowing us, as readers, to learn about the world that Mel inhabits as she and the other characters make their way through it.

The characters are appealing, each in their own way. Mel is, for example, the daughter of a man and woman who are Masks - the mysterious arbiters of disputes and healers of the sick. She is also, however, a highly emotional young woman born into a culture in which people do their best to shun their feelings so they can better act as mediators. Ott, the woodsman who almost inadvertently rescues her, is the best friend of a man who will one day rule the far northern land where they both live. Together, they have spent weeks chasing the monster that later kidnaps Mel so they can wreak vengeance on it for the slaughter of some miners. Ott's friend Rob is the son of a manipulative and, ultimately, cruel ruler who has grown old, sick and - if possible - even more bitter. Jenny, Ott's sister and the object of Rob's unspoken affection, is trying to raise three children alone in the cold north.

And then there are the Trogs.

Are they monsters?

They certainly look and often act like they are but, at their core, are they actually something else?

Although it is a fantasy/adventure novel, "Unmasked" is more than simply that. It is also a romance and a coming-of-age story. We see some of Kaplan's young male and female characters fall in love - often with unexpected consequences - as they move through the pages of this novel. We also see them grow as they experience joy, betrayal, triumph, and defeat while fighting not only for their own lives but also the lives of their friends.

Her ability to weave so many interesting characters into this novel makes Kaplan, who also has two down-to-earth mystery novels to her credit, a pleasure to read. Her writing is top notch and her descriptions of people, places and events (including battles) are vivid and add, rather than detract, from the story.

The verdict: A great read for fantasy fans as well as those that are new to the genre and a book I highly recommend.

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### T. says

I downloaded Unmasked as a free book from Amazon. Here's a story which surprised me with great characters, fast-pacing, and unique world-building. I enjoyed the main protagonist, Mel, and her internal

struggle to fit into Mask society. A lot of small sub-plots keep the action going and invest the reader in multiple secondary characters. There were some areas that could have benefited from additional depth or background, but overall this tipped more toward 5 stars than four...I'll admit to being curious about more books in this series, also.

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### **Laura Duval says**

#### **2.5 Star Rating**

I give this a solid 2/5 star rating.

First off, I loved the storyline. The MC was a unique woman with many talents yet still soft and caring when needed. She wasn't all hero badass but still very likeable.

The reason for my rating was because I found the plots so slow moving. It was really hard for me to keep pushing forward and finish it but I did anyways. There were also parts to the book that could have used more explanation than others as well as some editing needs. For example, I would have enjoyed more explanation for Col Rob and Rob's portions of the novel and less descriptions on the land and trees, etc. That's just one example.

If you don't mind slow moving plots and lots of details on general things verses the people and the plots then you'll enjoy this.

At the moment, I'm not sure if I'm able to continue forward.

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### **Elena Alvarez Dosil says**

Review originally published at: <http://www.lomeraniel.com/audiobookre...>

I received a copy of this book in audio format from the narrator in exchange for an honest review.

Mel is part of society group called Masks. They have unique abilities to analyze persons and situations, and their services are usually required to arbitrate in any conflict. But Mel is different from the rest of Masks, since she is also impetuous and really does not fit within the rest. Mel and her parents are required to travel north to resolve a conflict between a new race called trogs and the locals of a little town.

I think the premises of this book were brilliant. I liked the idea of a sector of the society with special abilities to play judges and how it would affect somebody which did not completely fit into this scheme. Sadly I missed some more character development. Mel was different but I think Kaplan could have transmitted better what Mel was up against. A consequence of plain characters are forced actions and conversations, and we also see a lot of this in this book. Without mentioning how Mel and Ott met. Even fifteen years younger I would not have fallen for that (I hope). In the middle of some dare situation they meet and suddenly fall in love. Okay, I would accept love at first sight, but I would not expect much from it months after. I do not mind romance in books, but I need it to be justified and it has to feel natural. The sudden urge Mel felt is not explained nor analyzed.

The story about the trogs was also very interesting, but I missed some more information about it. Who where they really? There is a hypothesis about it but when I expected more information the book just finished. There is also something going on with Ott, which left me wanting to know more. I guess we will get that

information in future books.

This book is part of a series, which is why I guess there is still some information not delivered to the listener, but it is a book which stands well on its own and does not end on a massive cliffhanger, something I appreciate.

There was something that bothered me a bit, and it was how the information was delivered to the listener. At the beginning of the book, especially, there was a sudden ton of information. I found it distracting, and this and the inability to connect to the characters prevented me from fully enjoying the book.

Even though the main characters are in their twenties, I would classify this book as Young Adult due to how romance is approached.

What I truly enjoyed was T.J. Richards' narration. She did a wonderful job transmitting the characters emotions and making subtle voice changes depending on the character. It was very very subtle, but it was very clear at all times who was talking. She has a soft and clear voice, and the audio production was spotless. I will be on the watch for T.J. Richards from now on!

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### **Angela Lover of all Books No Matter How Horrid They Are ❤️☀️? says**

I received this book at my request in exchange for an honest review.

This story is not what you would think it is. It is a mixture of old world and modern age. I do not know if I am able to put this story in a particular genre. This story is about a woman named Mel. When we are first introduced to her she is battling for her life and she is saved by someone that she would least expect.

This story at times was really difficult to follow with the multiple different points of view. This is not a book that you can drift with. Once you lose focus it will be hard to figure out what character is which and how all of them are connected with one another. ALL of the characters are all connected so paying attention is key.

I love the world that EM Kaplan is building. It is unlike anything that I have read before and it is refreshing. In a sea of fantasy this book stands out in the most wonderful of ways. It is not an easy read in the beginning because you are starting to learn who all the characters are and what role and special talents that they seem to have. However when you pass the introduction of this world you will get sucked in and never want to leave.

I also loved TJ Richardson as a narrator. I think that she did a fantastic job and I cannot wait to listen to book two in this series. I also hope that this series continues because there are a lot of questions that need to be answered and this book only had me wanting more.

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### **Amy says**

E.M. Kaplan's prose is so gorgeous, I sometimes found myself thinking about how pretty the writing was and had to go back and read it again! She's a great writer. The book started with rolling (literally) action that ends with the hero and heroine desperately groping for each other, and then opens to an entire world rife with well-developed characters. The Mask characters themselves, who are sort of empathetic chameleons are

unique and fascinating characters. As are the brutish trogs! The world is so complex and beautifully drawn, this would clearly make a great series. Hope there is more!

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### **Anne Wingate says**

#### **How Are We Masked?**

Masks is both fiction and allegory, both science fiction and fantasy. Kaplan has captured the human quandary and distilled it into a finely done treat  
Recommended for all readers.

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### **Reece Evhans says**

Unmasked is the story of Mel, a member of the Masks, a group of stoic, unemotional beings who serve as counselors to arbitrate disputes. The only problem: she doesn't quite fit in. She's too...well, everything to be a proper Mask. It's also the story of Ott, a man from the far, frozen north, who falls in love with Mel. Their world is being attacked by trogs, a mysterious group of troll-like creatures. What do they want, besides death and destruction? It's up to Mel, Ott, and their friends to figure it out before their world, as they know it, is destroyed.

Kaplan excels at world-building, creating a setting that pulls you in and holds you captive until the very last page. Her descriptions are lively and I felt myself reaching for a mug of tea and an afghan to ward off the cold of the frozen lands she imagines. Her characters are full of life, making you care about their futures. You are in for some lovely writing when you delve into this novel. I frequently found myself stopping to enjoy the rhythm of the prose rather than rushing through the story.

This book has it all: powerful plot, romance, handsome rogues, evil monsters, and magic.

Highly recommended for anyone who wants a high-quality read.

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### **Scott McPherson says**

I loved it

EM Kaplan's novel UNMASKED is a surprising story of love, fantasy and adventure. EM Kaplan describes a world that is very believable and grabs the reader's attention immediately. Her development of the characters helps the reader get to know them thoroughly. Layers of understanding open up gradually as the story unfolds and the world is more different than may be initially supposed. The author helps us to feel what her characters are experiencing. Love and relationships are essential to the cohesiveness of UNMASKED . Nevertheless, there are no guarantees. The direction of the story and its conclusion cannot be discerned by predicting the future from the early portions. I truly enjoyed reading UNMASKED, and plan to add EM Kaplan's other novels to my "to be read" list.

I started this book because I want to support Indie authors and am committed to continue to choose Independent authors for my reading pleasure.

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### **Christy King says**

This was an interesting world with an intriguing cast of characters. Not the usual Kaplan book that I am used to, but it was an enjoyable change of genre.

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### **Jan says**

The characters are fascinating, the descriptives are unbelievably clear, and the plot is full of action that moves very quickly. Excellent fantasy!

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### **Theresa says**

I say 4.5 stars! I really enjoyed this paranormal tale by E.M. Kaplan. The story hit the ground running and didn't let up till the end. The characters were engaging and there was even a little mystery. I have read her Josie Tucker mystery series as well and I will continue both series.

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### **Kathryn says**

Starts off strong...but is bogged down by side characters that suddenly have narration and insta-love between the main characters.

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### **Samantha Britt says**

Unmasked really took me by surprise. I had no idea that when I picked up this book I would encounter such an entertaining plot and set characters!

I really enjoyed the romance in this novel, even if it did happen very quickly. Both Mel and Ott won me over with their personalities and how they handled their feelings for one another. There were plenty of scenes which made me giddy with happiness for them.

The action in this novel kept the story flowing, and left me eager to figure out what was to happen for our protagonists. The conflict was well developed and concluded in a satisfactory manner while also leaving enough open for a continuation.

In short, I REALLY enjoyed Unmasked and recommend it to readers of fantasy romance.

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### **Hasteur says**

I tried, but I just couldn't get into this book

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