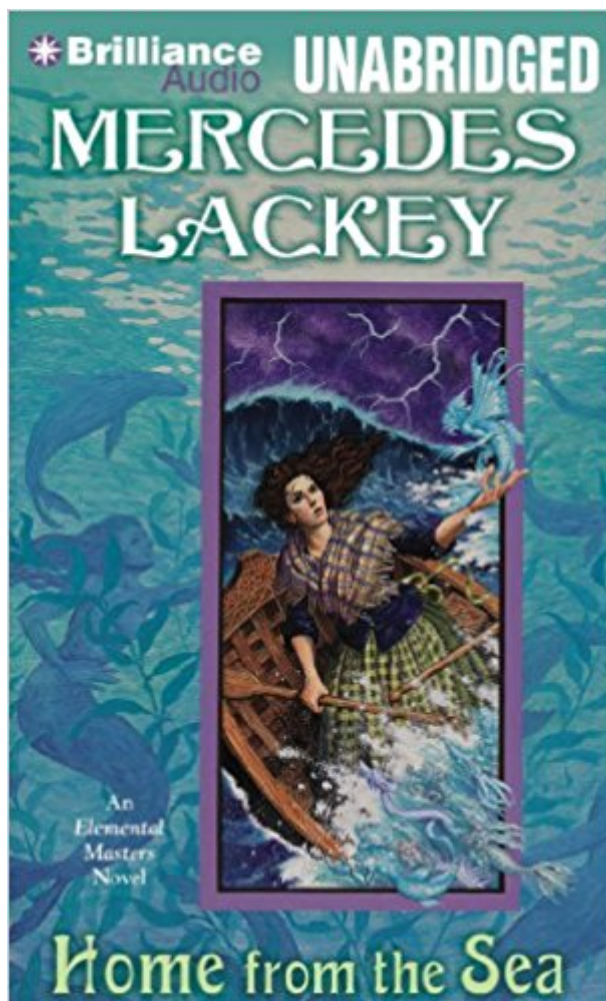




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Home From The Sea (Elemental Masters)



Synopsis

Mari Prothero grew up in a tiny fishing village on the west coast of Wales where she lived alone with her father, Daffyd, a master fisherman. Although the sea had never harmed her father, Mari still worried, for her mother and older brother had been drowned by a rogue wave when she was just an infant. Her father was all she had left, and Mari was not blind to the possibility of losing him. Mari and her father kept to themselves in their village. It would not be wise to call attention to how much more prosperous the Protheros were than any other fisherman's family; Daffyd was out in every storm, pulling in fish where no other man could, and his fish were always the fattest, the tastiest. But their unusual good fortune was not the only reason for their reclusive behavior. For as long as she could remember, Mari had seen things that shouldn't, that couldn't be real: tiny manlike creatures that were mischievous and wore only seaweed, and tiny beings that spoke to her kindly but seemed to be made of water. When she was a child, she had asked her father about these creatures, but Daffyd was so upset by these conversations that Mari had given up trying to talk to him. But on the morning of her eighteenth birthday, her father finally told her the great secret of the Prothero Luck and what they must do to keep it. Her mother and brother were not truly dead, but neither were they human. They were shape-shifters of the sea, the half-human, half-seal people known as the Selch, and they had returned to their watery domain. Since ancient times, the Prothero family had kept a covenant with these magical creatures. In exchange for protection on the water, a member of the Prothero family would take a Selch to marry, only to relinquish their spouse and one of their children to the sea after a brief number of years. Now Mari's time had come, and her father told her that she must abide by her family's ancient magical compact, or face dire consequences. But Mari was not without protectors: for the tiny creatures she had seen her whole life, which she now knew were real, counseled her to "bargain" with her mother's people. While in faraway London, Lord Alderscroft, the head of the Elemental Masters, was aware that a powerful but untrained Water Master on the far coast of Wales was being threatened by some of the Elemental Elder Spirits, and he had dispatched some very unique champions to come to Mari's aid.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for the Elemental Masters series: "The Paris of Degas, turn-of-the-century Blackpool, and the desperation of young girls without family or other protection come to life in a story that should interest a broad readership." •Booklist "All in a fine fairy-tale tradition. It's grim fun, with some nice historical detail, and just a hint of romance to help lighten things." •Locus "The action and dialogue flow freely, mingling with beautiful descriptions of European countryside and just a hint of romance."

A well-developed heroine and engaging story. •Publishers Weekly "The fifth in the series involving the mysterious Elemental Masters, this story of a resourceful young dancer also delivers a new version of a classic fairy tale. Richly detailed historic

backgrounds add flavor and richness to an already strong series that belongs in most fantasy collections. Highly recommended." •Library Journal "Lackey's

fantastical world of Elementals, plus her delightful Nan and Sarah, create an amusing contrast for Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. The mix of humor, history, fantasy, and mystery is balanced in a way that any reader could pick up the book and

thoroughly enjoy it from beginning to end." •RT Reviews "The Elementals novels are beautiful, romantic adult fairy tales. Master magician Mercedes Lackey writes a

charming fantasy." •Worlds of Wonder "Ms. Lackey is a master in fantasy, and this visit to an alternate historical England is no exception. Vivid characterization and believable surroundings are flawlessly joined in a well-detailed world." •Darque

Reviews "I find Ms. Lackey's Elemental Masters series a true frolic into

fantasy." •Fantasy Book Spot --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Mercedes Lackey is a full-time writer and has published numerous novels and works of short fiction, including the bestselling Heralds of Valdemar series. She is also a professional lyricist and a licensed wild bird rehabilitator. She lives in Oklahoma with her husband and collaborator, artist Larry Dixon, and their flock of parrots.

Contains spoilersMari is a Welsh fisherman's daughter who discovers on her 18th birthday that she is obligated to marry a 'Selch' (selkie) as part of a generations-long bargain between her family and the seal clan. At the same time, she learns that the fantastic sprites she's been seeing her whole life are actually indicative of her growing potential as a Water Master. Nan and Sarah (repeat characters who debuted in *The Wizard of London*) are sent by Lord Alderscroft to investigate the reports that a new Elemental Mage is coming into power. So much for the summary.... unfortunately, for three-fourths of the book, that's about all there is. It reads much more like a Louisa May Alcott accounting of daily life than the fantasy adventure in the previous *Elemental Masters* novels. There are minor points of conflict: Mari's reluctance to be bartered off as a bride, and her subsequent bargain with the Selch leader; and a new, bullying constable who's more of a nuisance than a threat to anyone. In the meantime, Nan and Sarah (now grown and returned from off-screen African adventures) conduct a failed experiment in teaching, debate what to do with themselves, and wander off for a sea-side holiday at Alderscroft's behest. Mari enjoys being courted by handsome young men, learning the extents of powers with a Selch Druid's tutelage, and harvesting various forms of seaweed to cook with. My Kindle showed 80% of the book completed before any sort of significant danger even began to reveal itself - and when it arrived, it was with insufficient justification based on the previous pages. There was almost no tension for most of the story. It was a huge contrast to previous books in the series, where an antagonist is established almost immediately through his/her POV scenes, and slowly revealed to the heroes. Instead, the encounters preceding the climax seem incredibly mild, there are no antagonist POV scenes, and therefore the antagonist's major attack is very out of proportion and unbelievable in context. That being said, the writing is very pleasant, and a fun read overall; I just wish I'd known it would be so different from previous installments. I do wonder if Lackey is planning future books to be *The Nan And Sarah Show* - this seemed more about an 'apprenticeship'-sort of way to set them up as roving detectives for the London mage's society than about anything you would expect from an *Elemental Masters* book. I'll still continue to read everything she puts out, but I feel like she's losing ground and it's hard to see a favorite author's quality continue to slip.

I believe this is the seventh book in a series, all set in the same universe, but it is only the second book of the series that I've read. The premise of the author's Universe is that magic is real, all around us, but is perceptible only to a few. The setting of both books I've read is late-Victorian Britain, with this one taking place almost entirely in Wales. This story centers around the story of Mari, who is the unknowing embodiment of an ancient bargain made with a magical sea creature: a clan of seals who can transform into people. She sees things nobody else can, and at first fears she is going insane. She is actually an untrained magician herself, and a quite powerful one. Then her father tells her of the family's bargain: she must bear two children, one of whom will be borne off to live under the sea with the magical folk. At about the same time, what might be termed a magicians' guild, based in London, learns of her existence and sends two young women to seek her out and discover what she's up to. Much of the story goes on with a girl-meets-boy, with magical complications thrown in. There is a secondary plot involving an annoying constable sent to look for trouble in Mari's small fishing village. The story, for me, was paced a little too slow. Things really only start popping in the last 60-80 pages. I feel like this might have made a better short story than a novel. Both books I've read in this series seem to emphasize girl-meets-boy plots. The other book wrapped the tale in the mythology of India; this one wraps the story in primarily-Celtic myth. Perhaps she is choosing a different mythology for each book in the series, which could be an interesting concept, but I was hoping for a story based more strongly on magic and myth than I got. Ms. Lackey writes well, though I stumbled over an apparent unmentioned jump of 6 months towards the end. In all, it was a pleasant read, but I'm not sure if I'll buy more of the series.

I have very much enjoyed most of the previous Elemental Masters books, but was disappointed in this one. I did finish the book and overall enjoyed reading it, but it suffers from multiple issues. First, the story setup is rather weak and meandering. The story alternates between two subplots that eventually converge. One features on a new character, Mari Prothero, while the other features Nan and Sarah from the previous book "The Wizard of London." Unfortunately, most of the book (especially Nan and Sarah's portion) ends up feeling like very slow setup and irrelevant tangents while the major conflict is crammed into the last few chapters. The final confrontation itself was also pretty uninteresting: Previous books have set up conflicts that were interesting because they could be won through cleverness and/or by using skills that have been set up earlier in the book, and the reader could see how the clever plan worked because the "rules" of the conflict had been defined relatively clearly. This one is too vague and rushed to really appreciate any cleverness on the part

of the protagonist. Second, there is some lazy and sloppy writing. This is most notable in Chapter 6, which includes multiple "flashbacks" to events during "The Wizard of London" each consisting of multiple pages of text reproduced verbatim from that book. Aside from the laziness of simply repeating the previous book, these flashbacks added nothing to the story other than establishing Nan and Sarah's relationship with Puck, which could have been done both more concisely and more elegantly. I nearly gave up on the book at this point, but fortunately, the rest of the book was not that bad. There were also noticeable inconsistencies, as if the author forgot that a concept had already been introduced, and reintroduced it in a contradictory way. E.g., multiple times, a character would make a suggestion, and (multiple chapters) later would act astonished by the exact same idea.

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