

Book Review: The Paper Magician by Charlie N. Holmberg
by Krista Johnson

Thrilled to graduate from the Tagis Praff School for the Magically Inclined, Ceony Twill looked forward to her future as a Smelter, a magician who performed magic with metal. Her dreams were quickly dashed when she found herself assigned as the apprentice to Magician Emory Thane, a Folder, simply because there were not enough Folders in the world. Becoming a Folder was the last thing Ceony wanted, but as she learned from Magician Thane, her eyes opened to the endless possibilities of paper magic.

Ceony, the heroine, is a likeable character who makes the rash mistakes of youth. Quick to jump into danger, she has gut to go with her smart mouth. While her decisions are not always the brightest, her heart and photographic memory serve to keep Ceony prepared to fight for those she cares about. She is a heroine with flaws that make her realistic in a world of magic and imagination.

The OCD Magician Thane provides mystery and amusement. A quirky man of 30, he is nothing like Ceony expects. His actions and words lend to his mystery, and the more the author reveals about Thane, the more rounded his character becomes. Magician Thane, too, is flawed in ways similar to Ceony which makes their evolving apprentice-magician relationship more interesting.

Holmberg does a great job of using magic as a tool to explore inner demons, fears, and desires of her characters. The method to her madness is surprising yet refreshing as it keeps the plot moving forward, the danger lurking in the shadows, and the heroine learning about herself and her new magic. The line between what's real and what's magic is crossed and blurred, and it works particularly well to keep sustained suspense and intrigue.

The use of magic in *The Paper Magician* is particularly captivating as it is not presented as magic in the traditional sense. Magicians are bonded to a man-made material and can only perform magic with that material. While following the details of Magician Thanes and Ceony's creations can be difficult at first, imagining the process of folds and the finished creations becomes a vital part of the story. Anyone familiar with or appreciative of origami will enjoy these moments.

While much of the dialogue is interesting and amusing, some of the lines from Ceony feel a bit forced, out of place, or over the top. Holmberg sometimes pushes an extra few words in beyond what is needed or inserts dialogue as if to explain something in case the reader over looks it. For instance, when Ceony is on her adventure, she seems to lead the reader by commenting to herself or asking a question that needs no answer. There are times when this interrupts the flow of the scene and feels pointless.

Overall, Charlie Holmberg's *The Paper Magician* serves as a solid introduction to The Paper Magician Series that both teenagers and adult fans of historical fiction, romance, paranormal, or fantasy genres may enjoy.