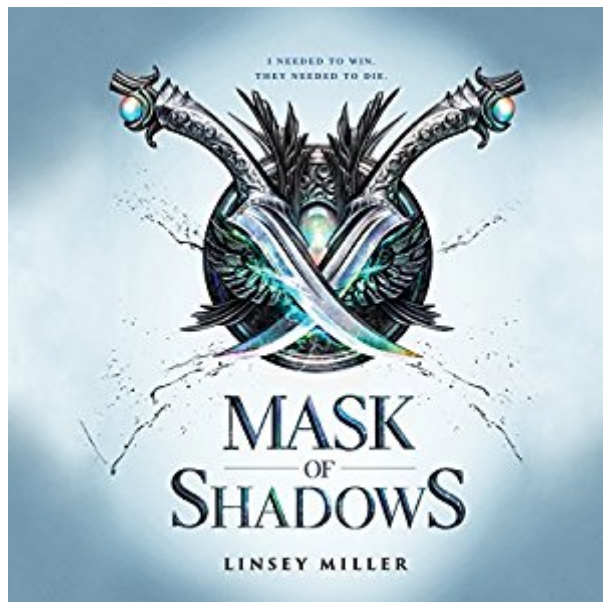


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# Mask Of Shadows



## Synopsis

Gender-fluid Sallot Leon is a thief, and a good one at that. But Sal wants nothing more than to escape the drudgery of life as a highway robber and to get closer to the nobles who destroyed home. So when auditions to become a member of The Left Hand - the Queen's personal assassins - are announced, Sal jumps at the chance to infiltrate the court and get revenge. But a childhood as a common criminal hardly prepared Sal for the audition: a fight to the death filled with clever circus acrobats, lethal apothecaries, and vicious ex-soldiers. But Sal succeeds in the competition, winning the heart of an intriguing scribe at court, and, together, they begin to dream of a new life and a different future - a future that they can have only if they both survive....

## Book Information

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Whispersync for Voice: Ready

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## Customer Reviews

"Mask of Shadows" by Linsey Miller is the first book of a planned duology. It is, as the plot summary asserts, a "tale of vengeance". Our protagonist-narrator Sallot Leon (Sal) is described as "gender fluid"; one of the last survivors of a massacre; and intent upon destroying those individuals responsible. To accomplish this, Sal "auditions" for the position of Opal, one of four assassins at the service of "Our Queen". Sal, designated "23", is chosen for the lethal contest to select Opal and tricks and murders her way through this contest, aided by the attendant Maud.

Maud hopes to keep Sal alive in order to achieve a reward that will help her rescue her own orphaned siblings from bondage. The love interest in this story is Elise, who unfortunately is the daughter of one of the original villainous group Sal plans to eliminate. As seems to be obligatory in the YA genre of which this fantasy is a part, explicit violence is totally acceptable, whereas explicit sexuality is not. A potential romance between Sal and Elise never really gets off the ground. The “gender fluidity” asserted for Sal is primarily manifest in resentment of being called “girl” or referred to by feminine pronouns, but doesn’t really delve the nuances of identity. This is an easy to read, fast moving story with some interesting sidelines and character development. Unfortunately, the theme of vengeance is one I can’t really relate to; but for those who can it will doubtless be thoroughly enjoyable.

I really, REALLY wanted to like *Mask of Shadows*. I love fantasy, and I know, once you’ve read enough fantasy novels, you notice trope after trope after trope. Making a trope stand out is a task a writer must undertake. How does your character differ from others we’ve seen? What makes your world unique? *Mask of Shadows* suffers greatly from its use of tropes in ways I have seen done before in the ways they’re used here. But first, let me applaud the genderfluid main character, Sal. I was afraid about the way MOS was going to handle the genderfluidity, but it’s explained and used with respect to Sal. Sal is Sal, no matter what. The writing is clear and readable. The world building is a bit confusing. In certain times, people are accepting and welcoming of Sal. This is a very great world! But then I was confused because Sal would get emotional about this acceptance for them. Is this a world of acceptance for genderfluid people? This needed some clarification. Now, the issues I had with MOS. The book is about a fight to the death between a group of young adults. While all this is appealing, I’ve seen the idea for this before with *Battle Royale* and *The Hunger Games*. The concept is put instead as an opportunity to become the Queen’s Left Hand, her personal assassin, but what makes this even more frustrating is that I never got to know any of the other combatants. They’re given numbers and are only ever addressed by their numbers. And they wear masks with each trial. Never are we given the chance to get to know any of the combatants aside from Sal. This brings the emotional impact of what’s going on to a constant stand still. This should have been a grand, dynamic novel, but it left me wanting more. I think, if you’re not familiar with fantasy tropes, *Mask of Shadows* is a decent novel to start checking out fantasy novels. Otherwise, it’s something you’ve seen before.

Linsey Miller's debut is a fascinating, fast-paced YA fantasy. Sallot Leon (Sal) is a thief, and a good one. But when Sal gets a chance to audition to become one of the Queen's Left Hand, an elite group of assassins, Sal jumps at it--not only for the opportunity, but because it gives Sal a chance at revenge on the people who wiped out Sal's family and country. The catch? The audition involves killing off the other auditioners, without anyone catching the killer at it. Not surprisingly, the stakes for the audition are high--and the pace of the story ratchets up along with it. Though dark, the story also had some beautiful moments (I loved Sal's growing friendship with one of the other characters). I was particularly fascinated by the history and magic of the world--and I'm hoping we'll learn more about both in book two!

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