



# A Parliament of Spies

*Cassandra Clark*

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All the danger and intrigue of 14th-century England spring to life in this "compelling" (*Publishers Weekly*) series about the brave, incorruptible Abbess of Meaux.

Abbess Hildegard may consider herself just a nun with no useful skills or connections, yet her loyalty and intelligence have brought her to the attention of King Richard II himself - not the safest place to be, when the king has enemies on all sides. As Hildegard wrestles with her role as a spy in the parliament that is hastily gathering at Westminster, Cassandra Clark's *A Parliament of Spies* shows us the human side of history, giving readers new reason to follow Publishers Weekly's rallying cry: Medievalists rejoice!

## A Parliament of Spies Details

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Author : Cassandra Clark

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# **From Reader Review A Parliament of Spies for online ebook**

## **Barbara Bristow says**

I think the author's editor has fallen down on the job. Obviously we don't know for sure how medieval people spoke in everyday conversation, but somehow I don't think they used phrases like "kid brother."

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## **Gale says**

The actions of the heroine were so out of character that I kept wondering if I had somehow missed a book or two which might account for her complete change in behavior. Absolutely mind blowing, and not in a good way. What happened to this series? I can't remember an author losing me as a reader so quickly since Anne McCaffery put in the forward to "Pegasus in Space" a brief thanks to the friend who reminded her 'who the characters were and what their relationships were' or words to that effect. If you don't remember who they are, stop writing about them, IMHO. This novel is worse..she seems to remember all of her characters except the heroine, who completely goes off the rails in terms of prior characterization. An upsetting read for Hildegard fans.

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## **Barb Moore says**

Though the medieval setting seemed authentic, neither the plot nor Hildegard's character and actions felt authentic to me. I was puzzled that almost all the male characters were in love with Hildegard--there didn't seem to be any set-up for all these attachments. I read a later book in the series first, then went back to read this, but I won't bother with any more.

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## **Katie says**

I really enjoyed the first book in the series -- Hangman Blind. It was well written and gave a good look of what life might have been like in the time period. I really liked the main character. I realize that I have missed two of the books in the series and this is the latest. I was disappointed with this one. I found the plot very confusing. I couldn't keep up with the political intrigues and I felt the murder got lost and was only remembered at the very last. I was also disturbed by Hildegard's sudden passionate affair. What happened to the vows she took? She seemed to forget them when her dead husband turns out to be alive? Isn't her faith and vows stronger than that? And I have to agree with one reviewer who got a little tired of every man she encounters falling in love with her or wanting to assault her. I might try reading the two that I missed, but I am not sure.

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## **Rae says**

This was the first in the series that I've read and it will definitely be the last.

The history aspect should have been interesting but was overshadowed by an unbelievable main character, too many characters and an overly complicated plot line that wasn't resolved at the end. Don't bother reading.

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### **Mary says**

[The story involves most of the recurring characters going to London to attend Parliament. They travel in multiple groups & are housed all over London. There's a lot of politicking going on, with nearly as many sides to the argument as there are characters. Keeping track of what's going on is complicated. (Maybe I

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### **Donald says**

This was kind of a weird one, yes there was a murder in the very first pages, but it's kind of put on the back burner until there's another attempted one, which again, due to the long journey to London is left up in the air.

This felt much more like scene setting for the series than a self contained mystery.

The King is on precarious ground, plots abound, and for someone as shrewd as Hildegard it really is completely out of character for her to completely miss a huge plot point until everything's safely wrapped up and she's miles away on Pilgrimage . . .

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### **Nancy Martin says**

This series has lots of intricate historical detail driving the plot. The politics & treachery of the middle ages adds to the drama of the central mystery of a murder. My only complaint was that a majority of the male characters seem to desire Hildegard. But after thinking on this, I realize that this fact merely reinforces the low "chattel" status of women during this time period. A beautiful woman would have been seen primarily as a potential bed partner.

Hildegard has many dimensions & roles...mother, widow, religious sister, investigator, confidant...all of which make each installment fresh & interesting.

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### **R.S. says**

The female version of Ellis Peters' Brother Cadfael?

A Parliament of Spies has a more convoluted plot, a lot more sex, but a less likeable protagonist. Hildegard is both flawed and fallible, but sometimes she does ridiculous things just to further the plot. The book also feels a little rushed in places but should have a 3.5 rating instead of a straight 3.

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### **Sharon says**

This is the first Abbess of Meaux mystery I have read and it will likely be my last. So much action is stuffed into the book that it is difficult to keep all of the characters straight. There are at least 3 murders, political conspiracy, and at least two love interests. I hoped that it would all be drawn together at the end, but I was still confused.

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### **Veronica says**

Another good medieval mystery! I enjoyed Clark's writing style and her characters are quite real and believable. Abbess Hildegard is a bit hard to get used to and seems to have so many ardent admirers. And to be so involved with the spy games of the times but then who would suspect a nun?

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### **Oonagh says**

Not nearly as good as a couple of the books at the start of this series, the author seems to have changed her narrative style and the result (for me at least) was confusion. The period of history the book centres on is quite turbulent but the jumpy narrative style made it all the harder to follow the plot.

In terms of a murder mystery I have read other books where that takes centre stage and even though the narrative might twist & turn the basic murder mystery premise never loses its way. I felt that didn't happen in this book at all.

I would probably be slow to read another book should the series continue further, as I was disappointed with *The Law of Angels* as well.

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### **Judith says**

Usually, it's easier to write an unfavorable review than it is to write a favorable one. This was bad on so many levels that I don't know where to start. In the previous books, the characters weren't believable, but the historical aspects were interesting enough to make them worth reading. And, from an historical perspective, this one should have been the most interesting. Instead, the main character behaved so bizarrely, that I couldn't get past it. She has been keeping a man who has loved her since childhood dangling on a thread, she's supposed to be deeply in love with an abbot, and she has an affair with a friar whom she's known for 10 minutes. Not exactly typical behaviour for a nun. This will be the last of these I read.

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### **Jennifer says**

I may have reached the jumped-the-shark point in this series. The ending was muddy and unclear, but even worse is the tendency for every male character to either fall in love with or sexually assault the heroine. (After a while, it begins to feel a bit . . . Mary Sue-ish.) And the author isn't as comfortable as some at portraying the religious life believably (I rank Ellis Peters at the top, for the delightful *Brother Cadfael* books.) Hildegard doesn't seem to have any clear religious vocation, and while it's credible that she chose the path in order to have more personal freedom, there's no sense of the order her vows would impose on her

life. This is the fourth in the series. While it had its good points, I'm very glad I got this one from the library.

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## **Michelle says**

The 4th book in the Abbess of Meaux series. Hildegard has been asked to go to London with the Archbishop to discretely spy on the possible enemies of the King. Tensions are high, with a possible invasion from France, and the loud rumblings of a rebellion. Prior to their journey, a young man is found drowned in a vat under mysterious circumstances. More odd events occur along the way, and Hildegard tries to puzzle out the connections. Key items and persons from her past appear, including the holy relic that she brought back from Italy, and an unwelcome visitation from a person she thought she would never see again.

While the historical details and the actual mystery were interesting, I was quite disappointed in this one as the main character, Hildegard behaves so differently from the prior books. Before she was a strong, thoughtful woman with deep convictions and while having deep feelings, her intellect and religious vocation reigned over her heart. Instead, here she appears weak and throws herself into a bizarre relationship with someone she barely knows. I wanted the "old" Hildegard back, along with her friends. This was a very sad way to end what was an intriguing series.

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