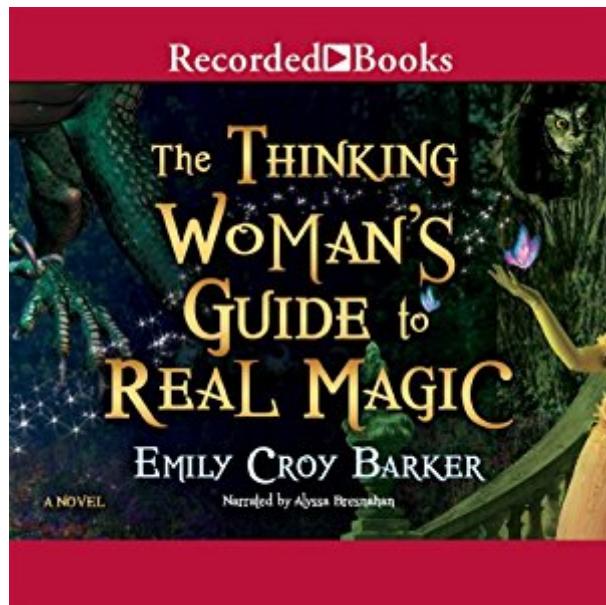


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The Thinking Woman's Guide To Real Magic



Synopsis

Emily Croy Barker's riveting debut novel is a must-read for fans of Lev Grossman and Deborah Harkness. *The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic* follows grad student Nora Fischer as she stumbles through a portal into a magical world. Having been transformed from drab to beautiful, Nora finds herself surrounded by glamorous friends. Life seems perfect. But then things take a terrible turn, and Nora must learn magic from a reclusive ally if she is to have any hope of survival...

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 26 hours and 21 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: August 1, 2013

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00E9O1XI6

Best Sellers Rank: #121 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Romance > Fantasy #166 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fantasy > Paranormal #193 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fantasy > Contemporary

Customer Reviews

The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic by Emily Croy Barker looked like an excellent choice for me on the surface. I'm in graduate school, so a character dealing with similar issues sounded perfect. I always love a good fantasy, so another book in that genre was nothing to worry about. However, I ended up with a character that I could not identify with at all and a story that made me yawn more than want to continue. I haven't actually read *A Discovery of Witches*, so I don't know if the comparison is accurate, but I sincerely hope it isn't. Note: I received an eARC of *The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic* through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Some things might be different in the final copy.

Strengths: The magic system in *The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic* is actually quite interesting. During the info dumps, it is explained that a magic user has to have a deep understanding of the object/element they are working with in order to perform magic. For example, in order to repair a broken bowl, Nora must deeply connect with the broken pieces and pull on the pieces' desire to be whole again. This was cool, too bad we didn't get to use it in many

fun ways. As a graduate student, I could identify with a couple of moments in Nora's life and there are fun literary references for book geeks, so that was cool when it happened. Weaknesses: The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real magic appears to be long just for the sake of being long. It so easily could have been cut down by a couple hundred pages and told the same story. There is a horrendous lack of action in The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic. Nora makes very few conscious decisions to act, and instead is generally reacting and discussing events.

Poor Nora! Her boyfriend has unceremoniously dumped her, work as a graduate student is going poorly, and her boss has put Nora on notice that unless there are significant improvements in her work product, Nora will be 'kaput' in her department. A sad start for our not-so-intrepid heroine. In fact, a SLOW start. Nora manages to find a hole in space and time and blunders into another world. Being lost and looking for directions, Nora discovers a fantastic, chic, entertaining world filled with equally fantastic, chic, and entertaining people. People who seem to change clothes at will, beautify themselves and Nora on a whim, and generally party 24/7. At this point, I was wondering why Nora, as a literature major (an expert in memorizing poetry) didn't start thinking about the fae... La Belle Dame sans Merci... Darby O'Gill and the Little People, for goodness sake! But, sadly, no. She boops along believing everything and everyone. Nora is boring. It goes badly for her. Very badly. (END OF URBAN FANTASY/HORROR NOVEL) Luckily, she is rescued, eventually, by a cranky, scarred magician (don't call him a wizard!). Now begins her long, long days of life as a drudge/guest with said magician-- and she continues to be weak, pathetic, and boring. She describes her daily life in great detail. Lots of pot cleaning and sheep shearing. The magician has little truck with her until she manages to convince him to teach her magic. (END HISTORICAL TIME-TRAVEL NOVEL) The book continues, switching from a fantasy adventure (Nora begins to show a bit of spunk, the best section of the whole book is where she boldly trades pot-mending services to the villagers for mundane items in order to ultimately trade for a new pair of boots.

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