

## Mage on the Hill

**Angel Martinez**

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Outcasts with magical abilities find love and friendship in Angel Martinez's *Mage on the Hill*.

Toby Jones's inability to control his magical powers is killing him. Desperate for help, he turns to the magical guild of Montchanin, who try to coerce him into agreeing to a slow demise in hospice. Eavesdropping on a conversation, Toby hears about Darius Valspar, a teacher who was disgraced after an accident involving a student like Toby. Determined to stay alive, Toby escapes the guild and collapses in front of Darius's house. Against his better judgment, Darius takes him in. This decision changes both of their lives forever.

Toby and Darius are perfect foils for one another. In the overlap between Toby's need to connect and Darius's disabilities, an intimate relationship develops into romance, though in the process much of their early intimacy is lost. Toby and Darius's lovemaking reads as mechanical—they spend more time analyzing the act than indulging in it. Meanwhile, Toby has a magical seizure that Darius helps him contain—a wonderfully written metaphor for sex.

Alternating perspectives proffer interesting insights into how Toby and Darius see each other, but there is disconnect between their inner lives and their outward behavior. Internally, Darius's acceptance of Toby as his protégé is quick; outwardly, it is slow. Meanwhile, Toby is more physically intimate with Darius than his internal emotional state seems to allow.

*Mage on the Hill* is a story of acceptance and the importance of a supportive community. With his parents siding with the guild in wanting Toby to die slowly in hospice, Toby is saved by his found family of similar outcasts and the love that he and Darius share.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (May/June 2019)

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