

The Lady in the Coppergate Tower

Nancy Campbell Allen

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Nancy Campbell Allen's steampunk romance *The Lady in the Coppergate Tower* is a fantasy-laden Victorian era tale whose fascinating world is filled with drama and adventure.

In high society London, working class Hazel works and pines for Sam, a doctor and one of London's most eligible bachelors. Unbeknownst to Hazel, the doctor also has feelings for her.

When Hazel is introduced to Romanian Lord Petrescu, she learns that she has royal heritage. Petrescu begs Hazel to come to her twin sister's aid; the girl is suffering from a strange disease. Although she doesn't quite trust Petrescu, Hazel goes, bringing Sam with her to protect her.

The narrative alternates between Hazel's thoughts and Sam's, providing insight into their emotions as their relationship progresses, moving fast from their mutual pining to their engagement and then to their marriage with little open discussion of their feelings.

Hazel is an easy heroine: good at everything she attempts, beautiful without realizing it, and secretly powerful with magic—not to mention her royal connections. Sam is very much her counterpart—handsome and empathetic, and showing respect for Hazel's emotions and independence in a way that makes him the perfect romantic hero.

The adventure aspects of the tale are engaging and tense. Hazel's origins, and Petrescu's plan, provide an aspect of mystery and intrigue. The romantic subplot is entertaining, and the two plots coexist without overshadowing each other.

A plethora of world building wends into the narration and dialogue, though the magical aspects of the story are vague—neither Hazel nor Sam understand much about how magic works. This adds to the novel's mysteriousness. Petrescu's aims are laid out throughout the text, and the characters never know more than the reader.

The Lady in the Coppergate Tower is an entertaining romance set in interesting lands.

SHANA CREANEY (July/August 2019)

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