

The Last Days of Magic

by Mark Tompkins



About the Book

What became of magic in the world? Who needed to do away with it, and for what reasons? Drawing on myth, legend, fairy tales and Biblical mysteries, *THE LAST DAYS OF MAGIC* brilliantly imagines answers to these questions, sweeping us back to a world where humans and magical beings co-exist as they had for centuries.

Aisling, a goddess in human form, was born to rule both domains and --- with her twin, Anya --- unite the Celts with the powerful faeries of the Middle Kingdom. But within medieval Ireland interests are divided, and far from its shores greater forces are mustering. Both England and Rome have a stake in driving magic from the Emerald Isle. Jordan, the Vatican commander tasked with vanquishing the remnants of otherworldly creatures from a disenchanted Europe, has built a career on such plots. But increasingly he finds himself torn between duty and his desire to understand the magic that has been forbidden.

As kings prepare, exorcists gather, and divisions widen between the warring clans of Ireland, Aisling and Jordan must come to terms with powers given and withheld, while a world that can still foster magic hangs in the balance. Loyalties are tested, betrayals sown, and the coming war will have repercussions that ripple centuries later, in today's world --- and in particular for a young graduate student named Sara Hill.

THE LAST DAYS OF MAGIC introduces us to unforgettable characters who grapple with quests for power, human frailty, and the longing for knowledge that has been made taboo. Mark Tompkins has crafted a remarkable tale --- a feat of world-building that poses astonishing and resonant answers to epic questions.

Discussion Guide

1. How were we told, as children, that fairy tales came about, and have you ever questioned those ideas? What strikes you about how the question is taken up in *THE LAST DAYS OF MAGIC*?
2. Almost every culture has old stories of faeries, giants and other nonhuman beings. How do you think the mythology of these beings arose?
3. Do you think it's possible that magic and magical beings were deliberately expunged from the historical record? Or is *THE LAST DAYS OF MAGIC* purely an imaginative fiction? What do you think the author intended in dramatizing this question for us?
4. Aisling and Anya represent two aspects of the goddess considered important to rule Ireland and unite the divided factions. What are their different aspects, and what resonance might these qualities have for us today?
5. How and why is Jordan so conflicted, and what drives the evolution of his relationship with Najia? What role does their relationship play in his personal transformation?
6. A number of intimate relationships in the novel are formed during periods of crisis. Do you think that relationships forged in this way are more or less enduring than those developed in calmer times?
7. Brigid forsook her desire for a relationship with Liam in order to fulfill her calling as High Priestess. What ramifications does her choice have?
8. Did Liam's decision to continue to support Aisling after Anya's death seem like a wise choice? How did Liam and Aisling differently perceive this support?
9. How do you feel about who and what Aisling becomes at the end of the novel?
10. What do you think happens to Sara, and why?
11. What is the author conveying with the concept of Ardor? If Ardor is present today, where do you think it exists?

Author Bio

Mark Tompkins divides his time between entrepreneurship and the arts. The founder of the Aspen Writers' Network, he serves on the board of the Aspen Writers' Foundation, a program of the Aspen Institute. He is a published poet and photographer whose work is held in the permanent collections of museums in the United States and abroad. Born in Texas of Irish ancestry, Tompkins lives in Boston, Houston and Aspen.

Critical Praise

“Fantastic... an honest, beautifully detailed book and an entertaining read.”

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Publication Date: March 7, 2017

Genres: Fantasy, Fiction, Historical Fantasy, Historical Fiction

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books

ISBN-10: 0143110012

ISBN-13: 9780143110019