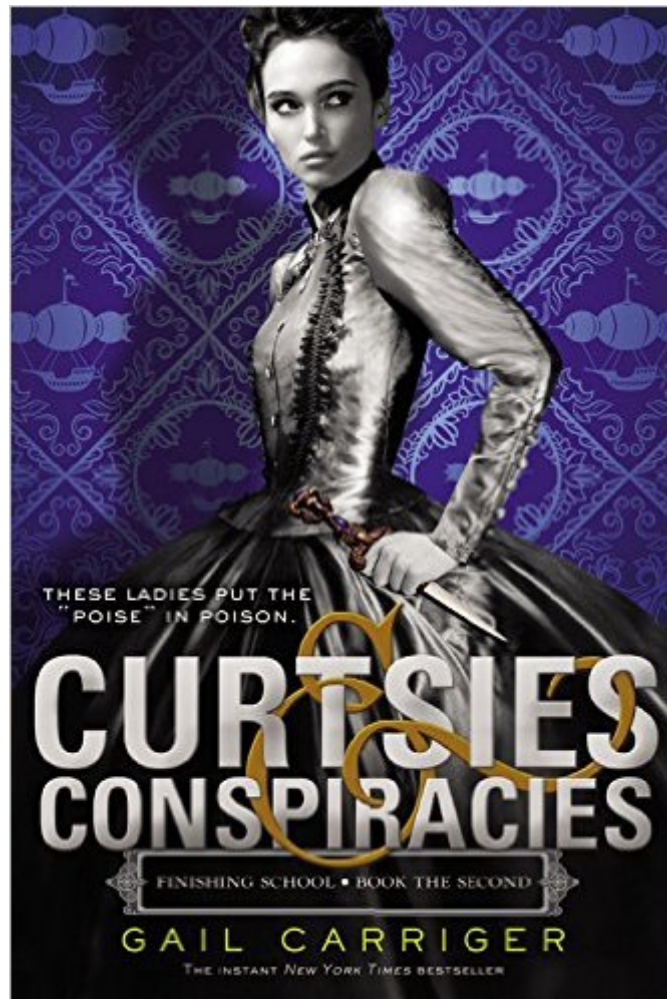


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Curtsies & Conspiracies (Finishing School)



Synopsis

Does one need four fully grown foxgloves for decorating a dinner table for six guests? Or is it six foxgloves to kill four fully grown guests? Sophronia's first year at Mademoiselle Geraldine's Finishing Academy for Young Ladies of Quality has certainly been rousing! For one thing, finishing school is training her to be a spy (won't Mumsy be surprised?). Furthermore, Sophronia got mixed up in an intrigue over a stolen device and had a cheese pie thrown at her in a most horrid display of poor manners. Now, as she sneaks around the dirigible school, eavesdropping on the teachers' quarters and making clandestine climbs to the ship's boiler room, she learns that there may be more to a field trip to London than is apparent at first. A conspiracy is afoot--one with dire implications for both supernaturals and humans. Sophronia must rely on her training to discover who is behind the dangerous plot--and survive the London Season with a full dance card. In this bestselling sequel to New York Times bestselling *Etiquette & Espionage*, class is back in session with more petticoats and poison, tea trays and treason. Gail's distinctive voice, signature humor, and lush steampunk setting are sure to be the height of fashion this season.

Book Information

Series: Finishing School (Book 2)

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (278 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #58,587 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #28 in Â Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Steampunk #35 in Â Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Historical #45 in Â Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Europe

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Originally posted at Fantasy Literature: Such games we playâ |. As if I didnâ™t have to hedge and speak in code most of the time, I must now do it as part of regular social interactions. No wonder

Mademoiselle Geraldineâ€™s has such success training the female aristocracy to be intelligencers. Itâ€™s most of our life already. ~Miss Sophronia TemminnickThe intrepid girls of Mademoiselle Geraldineâ€™s Finishing Academy for Young Ladies of Quality have returned in another completely charming YA adventure! After having possibly saved the world quite recently, the girls are back in school learning how to dance, do household accounting, speak demurely, faint properly, flutter their eyelashes, and assassinate people at the dinner table. Sophronia, our protagonist, isnâ€™t quite sure why sheâ€™s learning these things or who sheâ€™ll be working for â€” all she knows is that sheâ€™s having fun and she does not want to be sent home. That is, until she makes the highest grade on the exam and invokes the jealousy of her classmates. Now sheâ€™s being ostracized, even by her best friend Dimity. What makes it worse is that Sophronia suspects there are evil plots and conspiracies afoot â€” they involve the werewolves and vampires and the first transcontinental airship flight through the ether. Oh, and of course, the mysterious â€œprototype.â€• While her friends arenâ€™t talking to her, it seems that Sophronia will have to save the world without their aid. Fortunately, she has an arsenal of new skills, and she can always get some help from the sooties in the boiler room. As was its predecessor (*Etiquette & Espionage*), this second book in Gail Carrigerâ€™s *FINISHING SCHOOL* series is a fun blend of steampunk, mannerpunk, and paranormal fantasy aimed at young adults but certain to be enjoyed by any age.

"*Curtsies & Conspiracies*" is the second book in Gail Carriger's young adult "Finishing School " series that weaves the fashion and etiquette of Victorian England into mystery and adventure aboard a dirigible school for young ladies learning the art of espionage. In this story Sophronia Temminnick has just completed her first six months of training and is being ostracized by her schoolmates because of her exceptionally high marks. Undaunted, she prowls the airship at night, listening in on teachers' conversations and spending time with Vieve, Soap and the sooties in the boiler room. What she learns is that a trip is being planned to London and that boys from Bunson and Lacroix's Boys Polytechnique will be travelling with them. Her curiosity aroused she uncovers clues to a plot to kidnap two of the students, and a conspiracy that involves supernaturals and humans. In this comedy of manners and espionage Sophronia begins to hone her skills as a rookie intelligencer, and finds herself lured into a love triangle. The well-written plot set in a steampunk setting is filled with twists and turns as Sophronia grapples with a plan to stop a conspiracy that endangers not only her best friend and her brother, but the welfare of her country. As events progress our heroine is not only troubled by the paranormals and humans that invade her life with all their idiosyncrasies , but she's mesmerized by technology and inventions ; the guidance valve,

hurlie, obstructor and sputter-skates that fascinate the reader as well. As the tension mounts and the action escalates Sophronia struggles not only with the forces that endanger her life but with her heart as it drifts between two boys from different classes and an unwelcome attraction to a vampire.

While still a fun read, the complexities, the clever dialogue and the most intriguing aspects of the first story were, sadly missing in this installment. I was hoping for more of the skill that Carriger brings to her adult-themed stories, with their clear pathway and well-developed characters. As in the first book (*Etiquette & Espionage*) the characters are all fairly middle of the road, what started with some promise has fallen flat with some strange point of view changes that are quite jarring. From limited 3rd person to omniscient, too many he said, she said, and several lengthy passages where we are being told rather than shown the action and events, the story read quickly, but that was it. I was reading along, dragged hither and thither without any real need for input or imagination.

Sophrenia is just as adorable here, with her occasional flashes of insight and humor, but there are far too many moments of dialogue that are simply there, without real purpose but to check in on the multitude of characters and their difficulties until they come into Sophrenia's circle. Sadly, I see this happen often. Authors who are clever and well-received in their more adult-themed stories tend to simplify their plots and characters to appeal to a younger audience. Unfortunately, children and teens are far more capable of understanding and recognizing complexity in stories, and they are craving something MORE in their books and films. It isn't always about a romance and the language or sexual content – several would do well to recognize that some things: acceptance, finding your place, making friends, discovering and uncovering answers to mysteries appear to us all – no matter what age.

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