

Genre Spotlight **A Steampunk Swan Song**

BEC MCMASTER PUT the “steam” in steampunk — but she’s packing up her dirigible, at least for now. The author tells us about the final book in her London Steampunk series, ***Of Silk and Steam*** (Sourcebooks, Mar.), and why her leading ladies just can’t sit still.

***Of Silk and Steam* is the fifth — and final — book in the series, but you’ve teased that there may be more steampunk coming someday. So ... do you have any plans to continue this series, or should we consider this the end?** I always planned to close out the overriding story arc for London Steampunk after Leo’s book; however, there are a couple of different stories I could spin out. I have them roughly plotted out, so it’s definitely in mind. I’m just playing with a little something else at the moment to freshen up — then, we’ll see.

Fans really love your worldbuilding in this series and the seamless way you inject all the steampunk-y goodness into jolly ol’ London. What’s the hardest part of writing steampunk? What is your favorite part? My favorite part is making stuff up. Kidding. My favorite part of steampunk is the sense of adventure of it. Who wouldn’t want to steal a dirigible, or ride an automaton into war? I’ve read steampunk books where people fly to the moon, or build mysterious devices that can open

gateways to another plane. It’s the ultimate game of pretend — let’s pretend this can happen, or did. The hardest part is making it somewhat believable. I love Meljean Brooks’ steampunk: You could almost see it happening, because she’s really studied up on this stuff, and the whys and wherefores of the science behind it.

You took a bit of a different path when it comes to steampunk, adding another fantasy element — vampirism — to the story. What made you choose to go in that direction? It was just the way the world came to me. I never set out to write steampunk or paranormal romance. I had a vision of a scene featuring Blade and Honoria (from *Kiss of Steel*), where a dangerous man was watching a young Victorian-era woman wend her way home through the streets after a long day of work. She was desperate and hiding from someone, and there was a faint predatory undertone in the manner that he stalked her, as if he knew something she didn’t. That was all I knew at that stage.

The women in the London Steampunk series are all strong, fierce and indepen-

dent. Was it important to you that the women be such badasses?

It is definitely important to me, though I have a little bit of an issue with the word “strong.” What is “strong?” Is it the ability to outpunch someone, or can a woman be strong just because she is resilient?

I like writing women who are as much a part of solving the plot as the heroes, because if I were them, I wouldn’t want to be sitting at home waiting for the menfolk to defeat the bad guys. Why do the heroes get to have all the fun?

Mina’s very forward and direct ... until she tries to tell Leo that she likes him. Do you see it as her being afraid of being vulnerable, or is she just really bad at showing emotions other than anger? A little of both. She lost the people she loved — and who loved her — so she doesn’t ever want to be vulnerable again, plus she’s simply not used to it. She’s never been in love. Taking those emotional steps

in her new relationship is a big risk for her. She has the courage to do it, but it was never going to be easy.

What will you miss most about London Steampunk and the characters whose stories you’ve told?

Exploring this world is my favorite part in writing it, though I know I’m going to miss the characters the most. The main theme behind the series has always been family — whether that family is blood, or the family you choose — so the saddest part of leaving them behind is saying goodbye to the “family,” in a way.

— Jennifer Peters

For a chance to win a copy of *Kiss of Steel*, the first book in the London Steampunk series, check *Parting Gifts* on page 96.

To learn more about Bec, visit **BecMcMaster.com**.

