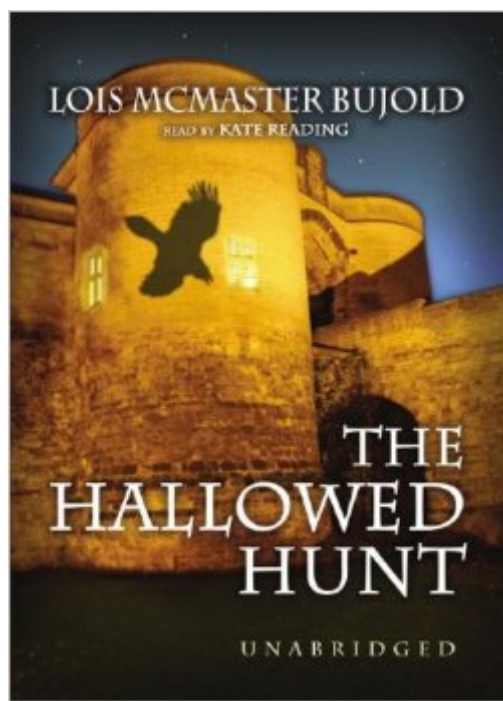


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The Hallowed Hunt



Synopsis

When the Lady Ijada slays Prince Boleso in defense of her virtue, it falls to Lord Ingrey to bring her court for judgment. But his road is fraught with danger, and his prisoner may turn out to be the only one he dares trust.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First off, I got addicted to LMB way back with "Shards of Honor", so I'm a fairly die-hard fan. She never writes the same book twice, but still produces fresh, thoughtful, great reads. She's a rare author I measure only against herself. Okay, that said...It took me a bit to adjust to her fantasies but they're well worth it; different from her Vor series, but just as good in their own way. The worldbuilding has LMB's trademark vividness, and she spins great stories from it. Chalion/Ibra and the world of the the Five Gods lost some of its internal cohesiveness in this one, though. I couldn't place it in time or location, and some basic underpinnings became confusing with the introduction of an ancient form of magic. Many themes in this series explore how individuals respond to supernatural/divine challenges. Even after rereading Hallowed Hunt, I'm still a bit foggy about how the ancient forest magic fits in with the rest. The main characters are also weirdly flat for LMB; 'weirdly' because her characterizations usually are so vivid they jump off the page. Several supporting characters--a roistering sailor/prince, a divine who vents chaos as an adaptation to pregnancy--spring to life immediately. The hero's history and travails are well limned but he still remained muted for me. The heroine, who comes late to spirit-invasion--and during a near rape at

that--remains almost an outline of a character. Why and how she came by her extraordinary acceptance of threatening, bizarre things that happen to her are never really explained. These caveats really are fairly minor. A less-than-great Bujold is still excellent reading. Her gorgeous use of language is still intact, as is her sly, wry, sideways humor. I bought the book and don't regret the purchase.

The Hallowed Hunt is not at all a sequel to *The Curse Of Chalion* or *Paladin Of Souls* ... and yet the new reader would almost certainly be missing quite a bit without having read those two books. The world of these books is something similar to but not quite like medieval Europe. But the religion is based upon a theology of five gods. And so is the series of books (the first one for the Daughter, the second for the Bastard, and this one for the Son). There are no common characters or even settings, as Chalion is a far-off land, barely known by the people of this novel. (So calling this the third "Chalion Book" is something of a misnomer.) But in a sense *The Hallowed Hunt* is a direct descendent of the other books. The first one introduced the five gods and the concept that they can only work in this world when people give up their free will and let the gods use them. The second introduced something called "demon sorcery," in which a demon (an entity of concentrated chaos) is controlled by (or controls) a human being. And this book uses those two ideas and adds another kind of theology (magic is not quite the right word to use in these novels). What really sets *Hallowed Hunt* apart from the other two is the scope of the tale. The others involved a story of human politics interwoven with the divine, while the current book focuses nearly the entire plot on the supernatural -- the political machinations of the court and the temple are somewhat of a minor complication if not a complete red herring. Instead, the book is partially a ghost story and partially an examination of medieval philosophy. What really was the "divine right of kings"?

I see why some other McMaster Bujold fans have been somewhat disappointed in this book compared to her other works, but I think the issue is just a difference in tone. *The Hallowed Hunt* has an archaic and elegiac air, like Mary Renault's oldest stories (*The King Must Die*, *The Bull from the Sea*), or some of Guy Gavriel Kay's works (*Tigana*, *A Song for Arbonne*). As they are read, these stories take on a cool, almost remote grief, because they are told against a backdrop of grave loss: the dying moments of a culture no longer our own, now almost wholly lost in antiquity. (Whether that culture is sourced in archaeology or fantasy, whether it did or will or may exist some-when in the universe, doesn't matter. What does matter is the power of the author's vision, and the depths of our own response to it.) The stories evoke our truest desires. We hunger for their

fierce bright certainties, for times when the holy spoke outright to ordinary hearts, when high deeds and greatness might be claimed by anyone with faith to hear and courage to follow their call. But however strongly we feel their pull, we are separated from them by an unimaginable distance of time and diminishment. We no longer expect the gods, dressed in their mysteries and terrible glory, to intrude upon our daily lives; the seasons have lost their meaning, and the places of the earth no longer drop us to the ground in awe and trembling. MINOR SPOILER: The distance in time also makes it harder for us as readers to fully enter into the characters' personalities. Their assumptions, expectations and choices are often very much removed from our own, especially for modern women.

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