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The Sharing Knife: Volume One: Beguilement (Unabridged)



Book Information

Audio CD

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Customer Reviews

Lois McMaster Bujold has become one of my favorite authors. She has all the skill of worldbuilding of, say, CJ Cherryh, an unrivaled ability to combine humor and unstoppable action, and the ability to draw believable characters about whom I care desperately. She also knows how to write a romantic love story. *Beguilement* draws upon all those strengths -- but it's somewhat different than *Chalion* and the *Vor* universes. This is a much simpler tale. For example, it doesn't have the history that the *Vor* universe has... a history that slowly dawns on you as you figure out the reasons each society adopts given attitudes, and the reasons that Miles Vorkosigan is unlikely to discover simple answers. The books in the *Chalion* series are built on the premise of gods who can, indirectly at least, interact with the world they created. In *Beguilement*, the world in which Dag and Fawn live has a history, some of which the author has not yet revealed to us, but the world doesn't draw your attention away from the story. Most of the time, anyway. It also doesn't have the non-stop action that characterizes several of the *Vor* books (which makes me think of James Bond in Space). As a result, you don't have to have your brain in operation full-time; *Beguilement* is a book to relax with rather than to cause you to think deep thoughts. Some of the reviewers here are disappointed that this is just another love story, but I think they may be missing the clues that Bujold leaves all over the place; you just know that the newlyweds will have more to cope with in the next book than convincing Dag's family to accept Fawn. It's obvious that Dag and Fawn will encounter something far more dangerous than the cultural clash that forms the tension through much of this book.

Judging from responses I've seen here and heard elsewhere, the publisher's decision to split *The Sharing Knife* into two volumes may end up losing some readers, since there's a tendency for people to feel disappointed because the story is incomplete when this volume ends. I wasn't

particularly bothered by the "stopped in the middle" ending, but I knew ahead of time, from advance buzz, that this was Part 1 of a larger story. Hopefully, advertising campaigns will emphasize this to avoid reader confusion. I know, it says "Volume 1" right in the title, but sometimes it pays to drive this sort of thing home with a sledgehammer . . . :) Moving on to the story, I have to say, as with others who have posted reviews, flat-out romance stories are much less my thing than stories which use romance as a supporting plot element, so I wasn't as taken with this book as I have been with the Vor and Chalion series. However, Bujold has been very up-front about wanting to try "something different," and to see if it was possible to have the romantic element "carry" a fantasy novel. I'd say she's succeeded quite well. Though secondary, the world and cultures that frame the love story between Dag and Fawn are well-realized and believable (too often I've seen "romantic fantasy" wherein the fantasy background is obviously a flimsy afterthought, and a grating one at that). I like the decision to have the as-yet-nameless world be based off of a North American, rather than European, model. After all, no reason why one real-world setting should be more appropriate than another, as the basis of a completely imaginary world. And, personally, I like a fantasy setting that contains redwing blackbirds -- they've long been favorite critters of mine.

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