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The Sharing Knife, Vol. 3: Passage



Synopsis

[Audiobook CD Library Edition in vinyl case.][Read by Bernadette Dunne] Filled with magic, heroism, and all-too-human characters, Bujold's Sharing Knife saga is both a gripping adventure and a poignant romance. In this third volume, Fawn, the young farm girl, and Dag, the seasoned soldier-sorcerer, set off to find fresh solutions to the perilous split between their peoples and encounter new hazards both human and uncanny. The farmers and riverfolk have long distrusted the power of the mysterious and aloof Lakewalkers, even though they depend on them for protection from the evil malices. The proud Lakewalkers, meanwhile, have exiled Dag after learning of his marriage to Fawn, the first outsider to be bound to a Lakewalker in their magical way. But as Dag's natural Lakewalker ability to manipulate "ground energy" begins to develop in dangerous directions, he and Fawn realize that big changes are ahead.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Nebula and Hugo  œwinner Bujold explores culture clashes in this compelling third segment of the Sharing Knife series (after 2007's Legacy). Former Lakewalker captain Dag has been exiled from his family for marrying an outsider, farmer's daughter Fawn. Farmers and riverfolk need the secretive Lakewalkers for their ability to manipulate ground energy and battle the deadly blight-causing creatures called malices, but few trust them completely, and the Lakewalkers haven't helped the situation by remaining aloof from the rest of the world. Dag longs to build a bridge of

understanding and respect between Lakewalkers and those who depend on their protection. The old ways have worked for better 'n a thousand years, another Lakewalker captain warns, but as farmers settle dangerous territory and Dag's own commonsense abilities develop in dangerous directions, big changes are inevitable. Bujold excels at creating interesting and sympathetic characters, and this story will satisfy readers who enjoy romance as much as adventure. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The third volume of Bujold's increasingly popular Sharing Knife series opens with young farmer Fawn Bluefield and her lakewalker husband, Dag, leaving her family's home to take a trip downriver. After their disagreeable reception from Dag's family (in *Legacy*, 2007), Fawn's family, though nervous and not quite sure how to deal with the new family member, extends a welcome. Dag even agrees to take Fawn's brother, Whit, along on what is the couple's working honeymoon. Since meeting Fawn, Dag has realized that farmers and lakewalkers need better working relationships; otherwise, both groups will suffer from habitat disruption. One reason for the trip is for Dag to try talking to farm folk to discover what proposals they will listen to. Heading downriver, Fawn and Dag find plenty of chances to practice diplomacy and healing in both communities and to recover themselves from battle injuries (see *Legacy*). Bujold extends the series' portrayal of a pastoral world haunted by ancient ills. The characters are so superbly realized that the reader feels like a fellow passenger on their voyage. In the end, the question of cooperation between communities is still vexedly present, and Fawn and Dag's journey will continue. --Frieda Murray --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

About the series: Bujold is most famous for her science fiction books starring Miles Vorkosigan and his family, and for her "Five Gods" fantasy series (*Curse of Chalion* etc.). Her Sharing Knife series gets a lot less publicity which I think is unfortunate. There are numerous online commentators which liken the series to *Lord Of The Rings* - but as someone who had trouble getting into *LOTR*, I can state that you will NOT have this problem with the Sharing Knife books. They're set in a very real landscape (along what we know as the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, though not called that in the book) with civilization for the most part at early 19th century levels - and Bujold's prose is, as always, welcoming and easy to read. You get the sense that there are hidden depths to Lakewalker society, by the frequent reference to "maker's secrets" and a long-departed civilization's cities and bridges, but you're not choked with it the way Tolkein could sometimes do. As well, the "vanquish

the ancient evil" here is a long-standing chore that is still ongoing as the series concludes, and the "change society forever" is shown as one person seeing a need, and gradually, in his own small (or not-so-small) way, beginning to effect that change to the benefit of everyone. It too would qualify as fantasy, though in many ways it's much more accessible than the Five Gods books because there is not the constant dealing-with-deities undercurrent there. In many ways, you could consider this to be a historical adventure series, except there's this thing called "commonsense" and there are these awful creatures called "malices". The downside of any individual book in this series is that while you could in theory read just one, really you need to read them in order as later events really don't make sense without the background from the earlier books. In fact, *Beguilement* and *Legacy* were originally a single book (split into two for length) as were *Passage* and *Horizon*. *Passage* (the first book) deals with a Lakewalker (Dag) encountering a Farmer (Fawn), and starting the very beginnings of getting the two groups to interact more than they had in the past. It ends with the unthinkable: a Lakewalker and a Farmer marrying. *Legacy* dealt with Fawn's culture shock being plunged into Lakewalker society, the Lakewalkers' refusal to accept her, and Dag's beginning realization that a) his people don't know it all, b) are unwilling to learn, c) things have to change for everyone to survive in the long run, and d) he's the only one to realize that so he must learn how to change the world.

About this book (*Passage*): In *Passage*, you see Dag beginning his mission of educating Farmers as to what Lakewalkers can do. It's the first time he or any Lakewalker has tried to bring down the veil of secrecy and teach Farmers what Lakewalkers are really all about, it's the first time most Farmers have ever seen Lakewalkers as allies versus terrifying, mysterious sorcerers, and it's the first time Lakewalkers (admittedly, just two of them) are taught to see Farmers as people worthy of respect. Dag also manages to solve one critical problem that has plagued the two groups (*beguilement*), opening the door for allowing Lakewalkers to provide healing to Farmers - and thereby opening the door for greater interaction between the two groups and greater protection against the malices in the future. There is some violence in the climactic scene but nothing too bad. There is some blood-and-guts there (literally) but nothing too graphic. The only sex in the book is referred to obliquely - not even remotely graphic. It is by no means a children's book but I'd have no hesitation in letting a 12 year old read it.

The characters are engaging, as is the dialogue, flirty, ironic, sometimes tongue-in-cheek. The two cultures - farmer and Lakewalker - were fairly well-detailed, and the misunderstandings between them seem consistent with the internal logic of their economies and histories. However, the history is a bit of a problem. Vague, lost in the mists of time, forgotten. . .

Doesn't quite satisfy a curious reader. At least, it is not clear to this reader why it took a millenia for the two groups to start talking to one another, considering that they come into frequent contact, especially in the north, where they story begins. I get that this is a mostly rural, agrarian world that survived a long-ago disaster, but the shared current dangers rip apart whole communities, in plain sight of each other, and should result in cooperation, not isolation and secrecy. I liked the characters so much, however, that I was willing to suspend my disbelief (and these concerns about the plot), until I had finished reading all four books. That's because Bujold really is a very good writer. Like a magician, she distracts you with action and engages you in problem-solving while you are rooting for the protagonists, and you are thoroughly distracted while she glosses over some deep gaps in the backstory.

I am not a fantasy fan but having recently read some that did excite me (Lallo's Deacon series and Rothfuss' Kingkiller's Chronicles) and being a big fan of Bujold's Vorkosigan series, I picked up the the first two books of this 4-book series in a used book store last fall. I finally got around to reading them and enjoyed them enough to order books 3 and 4 so that I could finish the story. If you love Miles and are not a fantasy fan, you probably won't like these. If you are a fan of character development and enjoy romance, you will like these. The writing style, clash of culture, and underlying themes are very much Bujold, which I find enjoyable. The world building has been extended in book 3 of this series as our main characters are joined by kinsmen of each and catch a ride on a riverboat. In exchange for passage, they work on the boat while watching and learning and hoping to figure out how to somehow provide healing to farmers and townspeople. We learn more about grounding, sharing knives, malices, and the history of the world. If I were limited on what books I had time to read, these would not go into my I want to read pile. Since i have too much time to read, it was a nice break from my usual themes.

This book, and it's entire series, is a fascinating exercise in imagination and creative reality-building. The premise is sound once you begin to understand the vocabulary (e.g. 'ground' is something like 'life force', etc). Even Magic has to have some rules and I found the book and series internally consistent and believable (artistic license taken into account). I found myself more and more engrossed with each successive novel. One of the reviews or descriptions said this fell into the romance category, but although the two main protagonists are lovers there is way more adventure, fantasy, sci-fi and just plain fun to limit these books to that genre.

Lois Bujold has delivered yet another excellent volume. One review though it had been completed in a rush but I did not have that impression. I rather felt that it was sometimes too drawn out and could have been edited down a bit, but this is minor. The characters are, as always, well drawn and real and even if there was no dramatic climax, there had been enough drama throughout the book and there is room to explore the theme more. As with Characters in her other books, I want to meet them again.

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