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The Spirit Ring



Synopsis

Fiametta Beneforte dreamed of making beautiful and enchanted objets d'art, but alas her magician-goldsmith father was more likely to have her scrub the kiln than study magic. After all, it was a waste to train a mere daughter beyond the needs of the moment. Thur Ochs dreamed of escaping the icy mines of Bruinwald. But the letter from his brother, Uri, arranging his apprenticeship to Master Beneforte was not the only force that drew him over the mountains to the Duchy of Montefoglia.... A betrayal at a banquet plunges Thur and Fiametta into a struggle against men who would use vile magic for vile ends. The needs of this desperate moment will require all their wits, all their talents, and all their courage, if they are to rescue both Montefoglia and the souls of those they most love.

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Customer Reviews

Hugo and Nebula winner Bujold (the Miles Vorkosigan series; Barrayer) makes her hardcover debut with this enthralling dark fantasy set in Renaissance Italy, where the church regulates magic and licenses magicians. After Uberto Ferrante assassinates the Duke of Montefoglia and takes over the duchy, master goldsmith and sorcerer Prospero Beneforte flees with his 16-year-old daughter, Fiametta. But he dies of a heart attack while being pursued by Ferrante's men for his magical powers and knowledge. His unshriven body is taken back to Ferrante to be used in making a spirit ring granting the usurper the strong powers of black magic. Fiametta, talented in magic and metalwork but untrained because she is female, joins with Thur Ochs, a young Swiss with untapped

skills in necromancy, to rescue the souls of her father and of Ochs's brother, a mercenary soldier. Aided by a wise churchman, the two youngsters take on the ancient evil of sorcery used for devilish ends. In a perfectly natural manner, Bujold incorporates the concept of magic into this crisply paced, fully developed tale. She notes that Benvenuto Cellini served as the inspiration for the hugely talented, hugely egocentric Beneforte. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"LOOK OUT FOR THIS WINNER; IT EXCELS!"-- The Bookwatch --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Lois McMaster Bujold is one of my favourite authors, and I've been hoarding her remaining books because I don't really want to get to a point where I have no more new Bujold books to read. I succumbed to THE SPIRIT RING this week, though. THE SPIRIT RING is a pretty straightfoward fantasy story set in Renaissance Italy. Fiametta's life shatters when she and her mage/artisan father are caught up in the squabbles between two dukedoms, and now she has to find a way to free her town from the invading duke before he is able to use black magic (using her father) to cement his hold on it. As always with Bujold, the characters have complex emotions and pretty much leap off the page. Fiametta is sad and very scared, but she's also somewhat relieved by having to fend for herself, having constantly been judged as less capable because of her gender. She's determined and stubborn, but realistic & she knows exactly how powerless she is as a multiracial woman without a protector. I liked that her story was told in a way that seemed historically accurate to the options that she would have in that time, but it did so without making Fiametta seem any less capable. Fiametta's father is another great character; he's a true Renaissance man & master craftsman and amateur scientist (but with magic), flamboyant and selfish, definitely not the best father, but still very proud of his daughter. Every character in this book is just a person (another thing I love about all of Bujold's work!), even the occupying "evil" duke and his black-magic using assistant are just people with their own hopes and dreams (albeit ones that are not good for the rest of society), and like most people, they're usually pretty amiable when their life isn't being affected directly. Bujold is great at subtle romances & usually her characters just recognize a similar kind of competence in each other, and at some point realize that they should just join forces. THE SPIRIT RING does this, but with a healthy addition of

Fiametta and Thur's teenage hormones. Thur is fantastic, and his down to earth practicality matches Fiametta's temperament very well. I'd love to read a book set a couple of decades later to see how they've grown together.

A great setting, based on Renaissance Italy (favorite country, favorite period in history) but with magic entwined into daily life. The plucky hero and heroine are as different as night and day yet magic and circumstances throw them together and give them a great shake. The heroine is driven by her ability, the hero is driven by love and by an innate sense of right and wrong. A really nasty villain whose comeuppance is very satisfying. All in all, a fun tale well told.

Very different, very fun, very entertaining ... especially if you like Lois Bujold's work. Here you have a typically meticulously researched setting, typically well fleshed-out characters (with a few notable exceptions; I feel like this plot was a bit overstuffed) and a typically egalitarian love story/relationship in a time period and society where it is hinted that such relationships are rare. The relationship feels a little rushed toward the end, but it pretty much works, since we've come to know what generally good kids are involved. In fact, the whole thing rather surges to a somewhat hurried conclusion, but it hangs together like a talented apprentice's spell.

First: if Lois McMaster Bujold Wrote it, almost certainly will be good. Second, The 'Spirit Ring' is a very good read. "Full of Surprises" is a huge understatement. The characters get into so many unexpected situations that one wonders how in the heck they can EVER ever survive to GET OUT!! Truth to tell, I was almost worn out trying to guess what would happen next -- as compared to what I WANTED to happen next -- which, of course, never happened. In summary, it is an exciting and interesting book -- and has a very happy ending -- which you also will not expect -- at least not quite the way you EXPECT! BHS

I love Lois McMaster Bujold. Her fantasy novels are humane and intelligent and her world building is exceptional. That said, I found this one to be a little less authentic than her other novels. Don't get me wrong. A bad L.M.M.B book is still better than 95% of the fantasy novels out there. She writes women as people and when she does romance she does it as a genuine connecting between two people who learn each other before falling into each other's arms. There is no swooning, thank god. But I have to say that if you are considering her fantasy novels just go straight to the Chalion trilogy. It kicks ass on so many levels with authentic characters and heart breaking romance and hair

raising adventure all rolled up into three amazing books.

Bujold has created a very readable fable of her own with sly humor and a good deal of scholarly work. The characters are well developed and keep "growing" as the story keeps picking up Norse legend and other references. It is really fun to keep running into glancing references to Wagnerian "Ring Cycle" images. Our hero is named Thur and his favorite weapon is a hammer.....and away we go!

Wish I could see a second book coming with filament and her newly husband Thur. Her story was very well laid out in order and visual arts.

If Lois McMaster Bujold has ever badly written a book I suspect she's stuffed it behind a discouragingly noisome pile of junk in the darkest corner of her basement, shrouded by an invisibility spell. The Spirit Ring is a charming book, and a darn good read that's almost impossible to put down. I've just finished it and feel like starting at the beginning again. Here is a true mistress of the most enchanting art of all, the well told tale.

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