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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

"The Spirit Ring" is based on "The Grateful Dead", which is an oldfolk-tale (young man pays for a pauper's burial, and is rewarded by hisghost), Bujold's great-uncle's Ph.D. dissertation, and (I presume)source of the band's name. This is, I think, her most personal novel. Theheroine's domineering, larger-than-life father must be, in part, LMB's ownengineer-father, though the character is formally modeled on BenvenutoCellini. The spunky, rebellious, and ultimately spectacularly successfuldaughter is surely, in part, Lois herself (or at least a power-fantasywish-fulfillment mental self-image).Huh. I don't normally do (or like) this sort of review, but it feels right this time.Read the book and see what you think.LMB has said that the

engineer-hero of "Falling Free" was explicitly modeled after her Dad. And "The Spirit Ring" is her only female coming-of-age novel. None of this will get in the way of your enjoyment of the book, BTW, it's Bujold at her story-telling best, a fine and stirring yarn indeed. We're in the smokehouse at a rural inn: Thur glanced up, then his gaze was riveted by what lay in the shadows above the rafters... the nude body of a gray-bearded man, close-wrapped in the same sort of gauze as the sausages... His skin was shrivelled and tanning in the smoke. "Pico was right," Thur observed after a moment's stunned silence. "Your wife does smoke the most unusual hams." Catti glanced up after him. "Oh, that," he said in disgust. "...He's a refugee from Montefoglia who didn't quite make it. Penniless, it turned out -- after the bill was run up.

I had thought that I'd read EVERY book Bujold wrote. She's among my most-favorite authors: The people whose books you grab off the bookstore shelf without even examining the back cover, because you have absolute faith you'll enjoy anything she writes. But I found *The Spirit Ring* on the shelf at my nearby library; I hadn't even known this book existed. I'm glad I grabbed it -- and now you have the opportunity to do so, too. If you're a fan of Bujold's books -- either the Miles Vorkosigan SF series or her fantasy series (*Chalion* and *The Sharing Knife*), then I don't need to tell you that Bujold has the gift of making believable characters in engaging settings, usually with a giggle-out-loud sense of humor. She does an amazing job of putting her characters through plots best described as *One Damned Thing After Another* and making me turn pages long after my bedtime. Underneath some damned fine storytelling she usually has included a fascinating *What If* premise (e.g. what would the ramifications be if THIS technology existed, or if Gods actually **could** interact with people, or...). *The Spirit Ring* doesn't live up to her tippy-top best work, but it's still a fun story. This fantasy takes place in an alternate medieval Italy, wherein the major difference is that magic works (with well defined physics and limitations) and is accepted by the Church (under regulation). One of the two protagonists is Fiametta, the daughter of an accomplished metalworker and mage. 16-year-old Fiametta has been taught some metalcraft but her father's unwilling to train her in magic because she's a GIRL. (Girls still have cooties in alternate universes. Well, it wouldn't have helped the story if Fiametta had confidence in what she's doing.

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