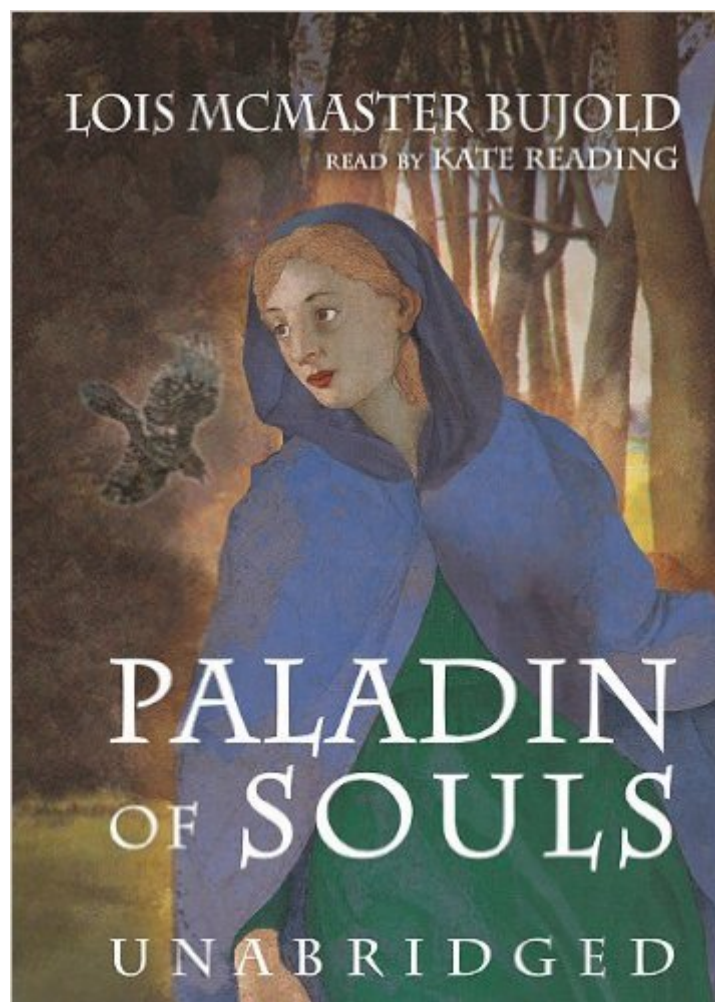


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Paladin Of Souls



Synopsis

One of the most honored authors in the field of fantasy and science fiction, Lois McMaster Bujold transports us once more to a dark and troubled land and embroils us in a desperate struggle to preserve the endangered souls of a realm. Three years have passed since the widowed Dowager Royina Ista found release from the curse of madness that kept her imprisoned in her family's castle of Valenda. Her newfound freedom is costly, bittersweet with memories, regrets, and guilty secrets -- for she knows the truth of what brought her land to the brink of destruction. And now the road -- escape -- beckons. . . . A simple pilgrimage, perhaps. Quite fitting for the Dowager Royina of all Chalion. Yet something else is free, too -- something beyond deadly. To the north lies the vital border fortress of Porifors. Memories linger there as well, of wars and invasions and the mighty Golden General of Jokona. And someone, something, watches from across that border -- humans, demons, gods. Ista thinks her little party of pilgrims wanders at will. But whose? When Ista's retinue is unexpectedly set upon not long into its travels, a mysterious ally appears -- a warrior nobleman who fights like a berserker. The temporary safety of her enigmatic champion's castle cannot ease Ista's mounting dread, however, when she finds his dark secrets are entangled with hers in a net of the gods' own weaving. In her dreams the threads are already drawing her to unforeseen chances, fateful meetings, fearsome choices. What the inscrutable gods commanded of her in the past brought her land to the brink of devastation. Now, once again, they have chosen Ista as their instrument. And again, for good or for ill, she must comply. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

I've been a fan of Lois McMaster Bujold since I was entranced by her Miles Vorkosigan series a couple of years ago. She has an interesting way of telling a story, combining fascinating characters with the ability to write action when the story calls for it. I was sure that she could write fantasy as well, and she proved it with *The Curse of Chalion*. Now, she has written a sequel of sorts, called *Paladin of Souls*. And once again, she hits the perfect mix. *Paladin of Souls* is a sequel only in the sense that the events in the book take place after the previous book. Ista was the mother of two of the main characters in *The Curse of Chalion*, and she didn't figure that prominently in it. Bujold takes her, a relatively undeveloped character except where the curse was concerned, and gives her a living vibrancy. The reader can see why she went mad before, and why she is still seen as slightly insane. But we can also see the inner workings of her mind, and see why she is like this and how she can sometimes use it to her benefit. When one is touched by the gods, one is not unaffected, and Ista shows that effect. She's in her 40s, most of her family dead and her daughter off ruling the kingdom, and she's bored. She's also one of the only people who know the whole truth of what happened, and what lengths her family had taken to try and remove the curse. The entire book is told from her viewpoint, so the reader also gets to see her reaction to the events and the people around her. Ista's not the only wonderful character, though. All of the characters in the book are three-dimensional, unless the book doesn't call them to be.

PALADIN OF SOULS is not really a sequel to Ms. Bujold's masterpiece *THE CURSE OF CHALION*, instead it should be considered a companion piece, another part of the Chalion anthology. Why not a sequel? After all it does pick up just three years after the end of *CURSE*, many of the same characters are found in both, even the story line from *CURSE* is the basis for *PALADIN'S*. Sounds like a sequel doesn't it? Amazingly enough it really isn't. To begin with the story center has shifted away from Iselle, Bergon and of course Cazaril to the now curse free Dowager Royina Ista, the mother of the ruling queen. In fact the principal characters from *CURSE* are rarely mentioned in *PALADIN*, it is the secondary characters who now become the main protagonists. The story revolves around Royina Ista, now free from her gods induced madness, and her attempt to break free from the confining restrictions imposed by her high station. Into her orbit fall the dy Gura brothers Ferda and Foix (one of my favorite characters from the *CURSE*) and a courier girl turned lady in waiting, Liss. In fact the twist of focus away from the original characters in *CURSE* is so dramatic and totally fresh that it becomes a completely new story, admittedly set within the familial universe of Chalion. A wonderful story that is a pleasure to read? Yes, absolutely! Without flaw? No. One of its major

problems is the pacing, it is very slow to start, almost ponderous. But after the first hundred pages it starts to click and begins to flow quite nicely. Its second major flaw is the constant delving into the composition and intricacies of Chalion's religion, overly much I think.

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