



Shadow Gate

Kate Elliott

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The captivating, bestselling *Spirit Gate* swept readers into the turbulent world of the Hundred, where the peace and order of life under the protection of the immortal Guardians has given way to chaos and violence. In the face of a vast horde of marauders led by a rogue Guardian, the bravery and resourcefulness of a lone eagle-reeve and others who risk their lives for the common good have prevented death and destruction from overwhelming the Hundred.

Now in *Shadow Gate*, the enthralling sequel, the source of corruption of the Guardians is still a mystery to the mortals who fight to withstand the forces that have turned against them. And when three new Guardians emerge, a struggle begins among the immortals, with nothing less at stake than the future of the land and its gods.

With all the color, excitement, and narrative power that have made Kate Elliott an enormously popular writer, *Shadow Gate* weaves a powerful spell of action, romance, and magic that will entrance legions of readers.

Shadow Gate Details

Date : Published April 15th 2008 by Tor Books (first published January 1st 2008)

ISBN : 9780765310569

Author : Kate Elliott

Format : Hardcover 475 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Epic Fantasy, Science Fiction Fantasy

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From Reader Review Shadow Gate for online ebook

Tim says

The second book in Kate Elliott's Crossroads trilogy (though there's more to come, apparently) is as good as the first, though it must be said that it drags a bit more than "Spirit Gate." But it again pulls a four-star rating out of the fire with a strong conclusion.

Much of "Shadow Gate" is about new beginnings. Two characters killed early in the first book, and another who died before the action started, come back as Guardians, apparently immortal beings supposed to act as benign caretakers but many of whom have been corrupted. There's also a woman chosen as a reeve who turns her back on that duty and declines to ride with the eagle who chose her (she'll want to rethink that). The opening section, in which a woman slowly comes to the realization that she has been reborn as a Guardian, is fantastic. After this strong start, the book becomes tedious for about a hundred pages as Elliott seems to be engaged in make-work between the saga's major events — and, be warned, there are not as many battle or action scenes in Book 2. Still, the story builds interestingly, if sometimes slowly, revealing the back story of another new Guardian. Cornflower/Kirit endured horrifying hardships as a slave, and, back as someone who can't be killed (at least permanently) is determined to bring vengeance upon those who used her, at least until she can figure out what sort of Guardian she wants to be.

Elsewhere, the reeve Joss stays busy as he helps the Qin mercenary Anji prepare the Hundred for the next stage in the battle against Guardian-led armies.

The Guardians, who are borne by winged horses, are quite prominent here, and their machinations drive the tale's "bigger" events even as Elliott continues her world-building in smaller ways, piece by piece. The fact that there's a Guardian pictured on the book's cover (U.S. edition) hints at the prominence here of the beings mostly hinted at in the first book. As for the art; in my opinion there have been few excellent fantasy authors so poorly served by her cover art, from the Crown of Stars series (though a couple aren't that bad) onward. I firmly believe more compelling artwork would have made this strong fantasy author more popular than she is.

Back to the story: A few characters — the "good" Guardians, for instance — make decisions that don't seem logical or advisable, and again, at a couple points in the tale Elliott's pacing lags. But "Shadow Gate" is another good one, setting up the "final" book nicely.

Fayley says

This is not a review, just a heads up. If you are going to read this series then buy all 3 and read them together - pretend they are 1 book because although the series has a proper ending, neither books 1 or 2 have a satisfactory ending. Don't say you weren't warned!

Doc Opp says

It pains me that I have to wait 9 months for the next book in this series to come out. It also pains me that I

spent all weekend reading this instead of getting work done, and now I'm going to have to put in 18 hour days this week... this is why I shouldn't pick up such good books to begin with.

Cindy says

this was one of my favorite reads of 2013. i don't read much adult epic fantasy any more. i don't seem to have the attention span for a large cast of characters and multiple storylines, and pacing that can often feel to me like meandering. (and i used to in my twenties, so this is personal taste entirely as my preferences evolve.)

so it says a lot that i read and loved Shadow Gate, which is a hefty book indeed. as a reader, i loved all of the major characters in this trilogy. (this is book 2 of 3.) it is indeed grim, and hard, with impending war and chaos and factions taking place. but the world building is so well done, and i admired as a writer seeing elliot pull together all the story threads while at the same time making each character seem unique and individual to me. the storytelling is in third close with a wide range of view points--so i think it's a tremendous accomplishment.

not only has elliot woven a complex and complicated storyline with multiple tensions--she's put complex and complicated characters into this world to inhabit them. and i loved reading all of it.

the asian inspired setting is extra mapo sauce all the way.

Thomas says

This is the second book in Kate Elliott's Crossroads trilogy and I was very eager to read it considering my experience with Spirit Gate. My goodness what a novel this was, it had everything I was looking for and more.

Shadow Gate actually begins with the return of a character that I thought dead. We get to see Marit again, who has now become a Guardian. They are another peacekeeping force for The Hundred like the Reeves, only they are fewer and much more powerful, but were thought to be gone from the world until now.

The plot of Shadow Gate is still quite slow like book 1, but the writing is of a very high standard. The flow of the novel, the descriptions and the world building are excellent. All of these together created a rich and vivid picture in my imagination of the world Elliott has created.

Like with Spirit Gate, there was a flashback about halfway through the novel, but in this case it added so much more value to the plot, explaining a great deal of the events that happened in Spirit Gate. The character it concerned was also my joint favourite, which is more than can be said for the last flashback in book 1.

Elliott has some fantastic characters in her cast, in particular her female characters. Like with Spirit Gate, I was still fond of Mai and Zubaidit, but their storylines were nothing compared to those of Marit and Kirit, I just loved these two women. The introduction of Nallo was great too.

I wasn't so fussed on the men in the cast, but Shai was given brilliant character development here considering I didn't really care about him in book 1. Keshad though... not my favourite POV in the least!

I thoroughly enjoyed Shadow Gate, and Kate Elliott really deserves high praise for her work. I am pleased to award this one 4.5 out 5 stars rounded up to 5, it was quite a fitting book to complete my 2017 reading challenge! I really look forward to reading Traitor's Gate, the final book in the trilogy and hope very much that it meets the same high standards as this one.

VMom says

This is a big fat book, rich in calories and flavor. Consider the ingredients:

- Worldbuilding. Being Filipino, the Asian and Pacific islander influences in the cultures of the Qin & The Hundred are such a kick to me. The level of detail is wonderful; the feeling that this world really exists we're only seeing bits of it.
- Characters. Let me see if I can explain what I really like about the characters. They are all full of the prejudices of beliefs of their culture and upbringing, and they all consider their own worldviews to be perfectly valid. And that's how they are.
- Mastery. I don't know what else to call the storytelling. The choices she makes in the way she tells the story are just very good. Take for example, Cornflower's story. I usually dislike flashback's, but I appreciated the choice here, since it allows some emotional distance from what would otherwise have been too painful. Grand and bewilderingly big, like the construction of a Gothic cathedral -- that's what I think this series is like.

Sarah says

In a way, more enjoyable than the first, because the world is now established and no longer so confusing. But it definitely felt like a middle book ... I didn't really feel too much tension throughout. And it's just way too long for that.

I was really upset when Elliott killed off one of my favorite characters :(It's so cruel, getting you to really like someone and then killing them off ... no mercy, that Elliott.

Karen Williams says

The story grows in interesting ways. Characters believed to be dead come back in interesting ways. Characters grow and change, as well. Struggles continue, and change, and grow, though not necessarily through combat. New interesting characters are introduced. The ending is strong, and throws a monkey wrench (or the Hundred equivalent) into Plans. I started "Traitors' Gate" as soon as I finished this one, because I couldn't wait.

Grey says

Spoilers for the first book, Spirit Gate. This one definitely feels like a middle book, in that I know the plot developed, things happened, but it didn't really feel like it? The plot may not have moved super far, but what happened was that we get a lot of new information: backstories and explanations for a lot of what was going on in Spirit Gate.

So looking at what I learned: Marit is a main character! Bringing back a female character who I thought was fridged offscreen in the first one back to main character relevance! What a plus! I felt achingly sad for her and Joss - the fact that they can't go back to what they had before... You know, when I first read their first scene in Spirit Gate, I didn't think it was anything special. But reading this book, my mind kept going back to that scene and just thinking, "Gosh, if only..."

I call that a win for character writing!

Mai is still great. The Ri Amarah took more of a backseat in this novel, unfortunately, which is too bad as I really liked Miravia. Same with Mai, she didn't have so much to do. I guess this is a point against the book, but there was so much going on, I can see why they didn't have as central of a role.

Guess who I'm not really liking anymore - Anji! The Qin have the habit of calling whatever is outside their experience demons. His insistence on how terrible these demons are chafes to the max, the fact that he was the one who ran off Cornflower aggravates me, and the Qin's homophobia just - ugh. His stock has definitely gone down in my eyes. Something still in their favour, Anji and the others do make a solid effort to adapt to the Hundred's ways.

In fact, it is mostly noticeable with Anji, Mai, and company, but these books are certainly about culture clash, more obvious as we go on. A central theme has been getting stronger up through the first two books, and that's about how people try to adapt to a new homeland. It's all about people from different cultures and with different values trying to understand and accept each other.

It's part of why Anji's refusal to see Guardians as people (Kirit, especially) is especially infuriating. "It's a demon, can't be trusted" no shut the fuck up. But I have hope that Anji will change his mind, seeing as Kirit and the other Guardians are getting plenty of characterization, screen time, and sympathetic characterizations for like, at least four of the Guardians. It seems to be where the theme is heading, so...

Unlike the first book, I was hooked pretty much right away! Every section in the first half ended right as a cliffhanger and I was just DYING to know what happened next! Momentum was not an issue this book, it felt really thrilling as we moved. I was actually groaning in aggravation at my Kobo ereader at 3 in the morning, trying to keep the noise to a minimum, because the chapters ended on such dramatic moments! Too many to mention, but that was my feeling throughout.

And that leads me to: **new favourite character alert!** Introducing Nallo! I love her to pieces. I was almost stomping my feet with the anxiety about her leaving the Hall and not wanting to be a reeve. Her concerns were totally on point with the knowledge that she had, but me as the reader knowing that she was wrong??? Aiyaaaaa. I was so relieved when Arda the fawknor finally managed to convince her. (And let's be honest, Joss really fucked that one up. But good writing - an actual character flaw on our handsome womanizing male lead that led to actual consequences!)

I found it impossible not to like Nallo. I appreciate a character who cuts through bullshit and demands it from everyone else. This is a kind of character that moves plot along. She'll have nothing less! Haha. I know the character of talking-mean always-angry woman can be a bad staple in fantasy (side-eyeing Wheel of Time), but I found Nallo to be really well done, and she gets along great with other characters! Canon - bisexual? Canon been in a relationship with men but have only seen her express real sexual/romantic interest in other ladies, anyway! :D I hope she sticks around.

Okay, wrapping up thoughts. Some character death I was not expecting. (view spoiler) There wasn't a build-up to it, it just... is a result of the times they're living in. Indicative of what they're facing. I appreciate how Elliott does it. It doesn't fit into the pointlessly gritty "anyone can die!" vibe that's ubiquitous these days, but - I'm feeling it this time. It feels random, but not in an overdone way. Like "yeah, these people were in the line of fire, sometimes these things happen."

Keshad got worse. I actively dislike him, now. Not much to say there. He's an asshole, of the variety you meet everywhere. Fuck off, Keshad.

Shai got some really good development! Kirit had a great point, in that he refused to have sex with Cornflower for all the wrong reasons, and he was no less guilty of objectifying her than Shai's brothers. But Shai really grew. There was a moment, stated explicitly that he realizes the weight of what he did to her when he "rented" her out and is just aggrieved. I think it's up to Cornflower to decide what to do with him, still, but the fact that he truly honestly felt genuine remorse, and then in the end, didn't ask Kirit to forgive him?? This guy has grown.

I wasn't going to judge Kirit for taking her vengeance (in her place I think I would be a lot worse, honestly - I would have made it more painful). But I also was so proud of her when she protected Shai and the slave children. She's grieved some, gotten some revenge, and wants to move on. Hells yeah, girl, I'm rooting for you.

Anyway, I've already started the third book, so more to come in this series!

Evilynn says

So far, so good. I was looking for a good (reasonably well written, preferably a page turner) High Fantasy series for quite a while, and had been recommended Kate Elliott's Crown of Stars series, but it was quite a

long series, and I have a hard time not finishing series, even if I don't like them much, so I held off. Then I saw the first two Crossroads books on sale, and thought WTH and bought them both. I like most of the main characters, I like most of the plot, I like how most of the social issues are handled. I *love* the idea of the raptors, I like the fact that she's doing a LeGuin and having most of the peoples be various shades of brown, rather than WASPs in medieval garb. In short, this is some of the best High Fantasy I've read in years. I just hope I won't be disappointed by the last book. :)

Claire says

This is a hard one to review. Some of the aspects I didn't like about it were mostly content-related (see below) rather than anything wrong with the book itself - a matter of personal preference, perhaps. Elliott's setting and characters are strengths in all her writing, and *Shadow Gate* is no exception. As the middle book of a trilogy, we see the characters confront new challenges as the story arc progresses. New regions and cultures in this world are introduced, although only one is given any meaningful time in the novel.

I struggled finishing the first novel, *Spirit Gate*, although it ultimately felt worth the effort because the disparate pieces began to come together. *Shadow Gate* picks up with those pieces continuing to weave together, and I was drawn in to the novel in a way that hadn't happened with *Spirit Gate*.

However, the middle of *Shadow Gate* bogged me down, with a shift to tell the backstory of a supporting character. This is due, in part, to the extended flashback telling the story of the demon-girl and how she comes to be where she is. Through a series of personal misfortunes, she becomes a slave, and is repeatedly raped and abused. While the author doesn't go into explicit detail, there's enough that I'd offer a trigger/content warning for readers. The section immediately following the flashback also contains sexual violence and abuse of children by the army fleeing Olossi, and is also quite difficult to read. Both of these sections are likely necessary to tell the story Elliott seems to be telling, but they were unpleasant to read. Further, the extended flashback slowed the forward progress of the novel, and in my opinion, the novel as a whole suffers.

I recognize that the middle act is the darkest, and the hardest to write. I've tried to keep that in mind as I write this review, and as I consider whether I'll read the final book in the trilogy. I'm still curious about the story Elliott is trying to tell with these characters, in this world. Hopefully all of the shifting into the past to tell character history is done now, and the story can continue to the conclusion without any additional flashbacks to slow it down.

Tulara says

This is the second book of the series. The tale continues with my favorite couples - , Marit and Joss and Mai and Anjii. The first book, is mostly the tale of Joss who in a moment of impulse takes Marit to a forbidden Guardian altar and Marit is captured by an evil band. The book is well-written and gave me a sense of culture of the time. The role of women in the society reminds me of Old Japan.

Kate Elliott weaves the story and you start to really want to see what happens to everyone with magical wars, emperor wars and just ordinary people trying to live through it all.

Emma Deplores Goodreads Censorship says

Unlike in Spirit Gate, the pace is fairly consistent in this second volume; while there are a few slow spots, there was enough tension to keep me going throughout. Structurally, yes, it's a middle book, so not quite as much happens on the macro, political level as in books one and three. But still, partway through this book I fell in love with the trilogy, largely because I'd become so invested in the characters. This one introduces a couple of my favorite characters (Nallo and Marit--well, that's a reintroduction, but a great plotline) and I loved Shai's redemption arc.

A spoiler-free review of the trilogy:

STORYLINE/PACING: Like many an epic fantasy, this could be summarized as "a defensive war against evil." But being a character-driven book, the plot is as much about each character's individual arcs and subplots, and being toward the realistic end of the fantasy spectrum, good and evil aren't clear-cut. There's much more character interaction than swordfighting, and the pacing is maybe a bit on the slow side, but once it gets going midway through the first book, the plot is compelling and something is always happening.

While there are logical ending points for the first and second books, like most fantasy trilogies this one is of the "three-volume novel" variety, and I rushed through them all back-to-back. But although more novels are planned in this world, there's a solid resolution at the end.

CHARACTERS: The character development overall is quite good, and most of the main characters are sympathetic and likable if at times frustrating. Elliott is a rare epic fantasy writer in that she uses the multi-book format to actually further develop the characters, and I found my opinions on several of them changing book by book.

A few things that stand out: One, the characters have actual interests, like carpentry, gardening, etc., beyond fulfilling their plot-related goals (these books made me realize how rare that is in fantasy). Two, they're products of their cultures, and have baggage and prejudices that they never shed. I was expecting the main characters by the end to repudiate slavery and realize there's no such thing as demons.... but most of them never did, and that made it better. Three, I liked the way sexual relationships are handled. There's romance (surprisingly little of it), and there's meaningless sex, and there's attraction that never turns into relationships. Characters (women included!) can be attracted to and have sex with more than one person in the series. Speaking of which: there are a lot of strong female characters, but more in a realistic way than a wish-fulfillment kind of way; it's good stuff.

For the first two books I did feel that personal morality aligns rather too closely with which side of the war a character is on, and wished for more moral ambiguity. To a large degree that's subverted in the final volume, though.

WORLDBUILDING: A highlight of this trilogy. There are multiple highly-detailed cultures. I loved the amount of thought Elliott clearly put into the customs, religions, and so forth, and the fact that the inspiration was non-European. I see some Pacific Islander, Chinese, Mongol, Muslim and Zoroastrian influences, and undoubtedly didn't recognize many more. The world is increasingly well-developed in subsequent volumes.

The Hundred, where most of the action takes place, is a bit idealized, but every culture has its strengths and weaknesses. The Hundred does very well (especially compared to the other countries in this world) in women's rights and accepting homosexuality, and has been peaceful for generations despite no strong central

government. But slavery is widespread, arranged/forced marriages are normal, and there's corruption, xenophobia and disenfranchisement of religious minorities. Meanwhile, the only group in the entire world that opposes slavery also forces its women to wear something burqa-ish, and virtually imprisons them in the home.

The introduction to the world is handled well. Customs aren't explained so much as mentioned in passing, allowing the readers to deduce cultural practices and background from context. Sometimes a custom will be alluded to and never mentioned again, hinting at hidden depths. So, thank you Ms. Elliott for treating readers like adults here.

THEMATICS: You can tell Elliott thinks about what her books are saying, and epic fantasy still being a somewhat conservative and male-dominated genre, I love reading good fantasy books informed by a progressive and feminist ethos. The trilogy examines how power affects people, how cultures interact and change and has a fascinating take on the myth of the fantasy hero and the good-vs-evil dichotomy.

I did think that the "good" side (with very different, conflicting ideas of what's "good") was better drawn than the "evil" side. It's great that the "evil" army is human, comes from within the Hundred itself and that the problem was at least partially caused by actual corruption and ignored problems--but in my judgment Elliott didn't do enough with that, and there's no apparent reason why many of the people on the evil side are quite as evil as they are, and why there are so many of them. One has to read between the lines to figure it out, where the author should probably have explored the reasons for this more or else not had so much cruelty on the one side and so little on the other.

WRITING: The prose is average. Not bad, but workmanlike. It's true there's a lot of description, which I mostly liked but isn't for everyone. There are several POV characters, but dealt with in a disciplined way; we don't get into everybody's head, the POVs are well-developed and there's no head-hopping.

MAGIC: Not much of it, thankfully. No sorcerers, although a very limited number of people have very limited magical powers. The supernatural elements are mostly in the worldbuilding, while the real focus here is on people, as it should be.

OTHER THINGS I LIKED:

- 1) Groups that are usually either evil or two-dimensional in fantasy are neither here: merchants, conquering horsemen, people who wear headscarves or turbans, and most notably, non-white people (which describes almost everyone in the trilogy). Even slave traders aren't automatically written off.
- 2) Elliott allows main characters to be illiterate. Most authors do contortions to avoid this even where it's realistic.

OTHER THINGS I DISLIKED:

- 1) Being told halfway through the second book that "week," "month" and "year" don't mean what I thought they meant. What do you mean a year has 432 days? Couldn't another word have been used to clue me in to this sooner? Do I have to recalculate everyone's ages now? Blargh.
- 2) Characters coincidentally meet rather too frequently.

Overall, a great series for those who like thoughtful, character-driven fantasy set in fully realized secondary worlds.

Jason Lang says

I'm re-reading this novel as I'm sick and bedridden. She keeps amazing me with how clearly she manages to tell three or more storylines and weave them amongst each other. It's a feat sometimes attempted, yet rarely as successfully achieved. On top of that, she weaves an amazing storyline.

Heather Scott says

Was difficult to finish this. Disappointing, because I really like Elliot's work. Like the first book in this series, I found it difficult to actually care about the main characters. Also, like the first book, the amount of smut has made me begin to wonder if this series hasn't been improperly categorized. It's really not to my taste. Sad, really, since I bought the whole series. Well, here's hoping the third one's the charm...
