



The Door Into Shadow

Diane Duane

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Second of Diane Duane's "Middle Kingdoms" sequence, sequel to THE DOOR INTO FIRE. The quest of Freelorn Ferrant's son, exiled prince of Arlen, continues as he and his people push eastward across the Middle Kingdoms in pursuit of his lost throne. But his companion, the warrior and sorceress Segnbora, brings her own possibly deadly agenda to the search...

The Door Into Shadow Details

Date : Published June 15th 1985 by Tor Books (first published 1984)

ISBN : 9780812523690

Author : Diane Duane

Format : Mass Market Paperback 298 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Dragons, Science Fiction Fantasy, Glbt, Queer, Romance, M M Romance, Lgbt, High Fantasy, Science Fiction, Adventure, Gay

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From Reader Review The Door Into Shadow for online ebook

ambyr says

Ah, Segnbora, one of my first fictional crushes. She's a master swordswoman, a professionally trained bard, a skilled sorceress. She speaks with dragons. She has an affair with one of the male leads. She is Full of Angst.

She is, in short, the definition of the Mary Sue, and I *could not care less* because she. is. awesome.

. . . why yes, I do still have a crush on her, why do you ask?

I would say, "but there's more to this book than Segnbora," but really, there isn't. It's a series of set pieces of Segnbora being awesome and more awesome, and I eat it up like chocolate ice cream every time.

Okay, okay, so there is a little more to the book, and what there is is good. I love the story of the battle-standard of the Darthenes, I think Glasscastle (and the Maiden with Still Hands) is quite possibly the creepiest place I have ever visited in fiction, I want my very own Skadhwe, and I find draconic culture fascinating. It's still a pretty episodic read, but it flows more smoothly than the first book. The characterizations are clearer, too.

So why, with all this praise, am I giving this book only three stars? Because of a little section--just a few pages--near the end. If you've read the book, you know the one. (view spoiler)

Emma says

I wanted to love this book, I really did. I had loved the first book in the series and was looking forward to more. When I started, I was delighted to find that it was told from the point of view of a female character, Segnbora. (The first book had been about Herewiss, and was fairly male-centric.) But Segnbora's story is not a happy one, and the differences with respect to the tales of her male co-heroes bother me.

First off, trigger warning.*

Secondly, major spoilers for the first two books in the series will be behind the jumps. In book 1, Herewiss struggles to master his Fire (magical powers) and must accept and move beyond a traumatic memory from his youth of (view spoiler). In book 2, Segnbora struggles to master her Fire and must accept and move beyond a traumatic memory from her youth of [TRIGGER] (view spoiler) wtf??! I can only imagine that book 3 will be about Freelorn and he'll have to accept and move beyond his longstanding shame of (view spoiler). One of these things is not like the other. But that's not all that Segnbora suffers in this book. Her (view spoiler) die pointlessly. The latter dies immediately, as she finally realizes that she loves him and is about to tell him, after having held him at an emotional distance up until that point. Okay, so it's dark, you're thinking. Some novels are dark. If it were a standalone book, I'd grant you that. But this did not happen to Herewiss. Herewiss ends up with (view spoiler). But not Segnbora. Since the queer poly romance was such a strength in the first book, I was hoping that when she ran into her ex, they would get together again and there would be an F/F romance. Or at least she would see what was right in front of her with poor Lang. But no. And you know what the worst was? At the end, when she (view spoiler), she is about to die and on the Final Shore, where she meets up with [TRIGGER] (view spoiler). What the hell, y'all. Even darling Herewiss was sullied for me in this book by forcing Segnbora to relive the traumatic memory without her consent, not to mention throwing her into a situation that could have killed her. And she thanks him. No.

Overall Segnbora felt like a secondary character in her own story. And that's not to say that the sidekick's point of view isn't worthwhile. But for a story so dominated by the male characters, I was hoping for a different kind of growth for the female hero. Sure, she gets to talk with dragons and (view spoiler). But even after all the times she saves everyone, the royals are the ones calling the shots and she remains an observer. Her character is not as warm or overtly emotional as Herewiss's. She's more closed off, and yeah that has to do with the old trauma, but it made it harder for me to relate to her and root for her. I wanted her to be my favorite, but the longer it went on, the more I kept hoping Herewiss and Freelorn, or even Sunspark or Eftgan or Lang, would be on the next page.

There were some things I did like. I still enjoy the world and the mythology. I thought the Glasscastle part was especially good. The political machinations are fairly standard genre fare, but the way it weaves into the history and magic is well done. The dragon culture takes up a substantial part of the book, and it was fairly interesting.

Frankly, if this had been the first book in the trilogy, I'm not sure I would read on. But because I loved the first installment, I'm going to go ahead and finish the series. I hope that I will come back in a week and be able to write a 4 or 5 star review again!

*Note: If you want to read the book but skip past the triggering scenes, they are located 1. right after the battle with the Nightmare, and 2. during the final battle when she finds herself on the Shore. I'd suggest skipping over a few pages each time.

Mikah says

I liked the first book so much, and this sequel was so disappointing. This seeming feminist utopia went full Narnia-esque christianity metaphor somehow, and became about the main character needing to...forgive her rapist in order to unlock her Inner Potential? Wtf?

Zana says

I seriously considered not finishing this book because it was so good and I didn't want it to end.

Two things prevented me: my girlfriend was going to want it back eventually, and the book cover is literally falling apart. Bits and pieces of it are disintegrating. I was afraid there wasn't going to be a book TO read if I kept delaying the ending!

This is an awesome, awesome book. Why don't more people know about it? *pout*

Kaa says

[rape (hide spoiler)]

Stephanie says

[For those who know what I'm talking about, I really don't mean to trivialize the event. Perhaps this is a timing issue, as obviously Diane Duane wrote this long before the internet decided to have

Alex James says

Door Into Shadow is a self-discovery for Segnbora, who is a deadly swordswoman without much 'fire', sorcery, to defend against the dark monsters and demons of the Shadow. Segnbora's failure with fire is revisited often when she compares herself with prodigy Herewiss, the only male fire-wielder who can outperform most Rodmistress fire-wielders. Most of the story is about the adventures of her allies, and tales of past lovers and how they relate to Segnbora's failure. Throughout, she is not seen by the reader as a failure but as a brave sacrificial swordswoman who is the first to jump into the conflict and save her friends.

There were many remarkable scenes throughout – infiltrating the Glass Castle that only appears at a certain time, and confronting evil variations of the Goddess or manifestations of the Shadow. The battle scenes were engrossing, and allowed the story to release its true energy.

There were aspects I really liked about this book. The atmosphere, landscape, and scope of the story were terrific and realistic. Diane Duane had gone to lengths to create varied cultures and an immense fantasy world. The dialogue was good, and she kept the quest going with new challenges. For example, a challenge of note was when Segnbora must join with a dragon and the memory of its ancestors to save the dragon from the terrible fate of death and its associated loss of its race's ancestral memories. Thereafter the dragon is a part of her; talking to her, aiding her, and giving her a cool dragon shadow.

I did think there was too much lore, and the significance of much of it was lost on me, perhaps because this is the second book in the series and I hadn't read the first. The story needed more present action and breathing room. The character focus was a bit off too. At the beginning Segnbora's attention is fixed on exile prince Lorn, but then Lorn becomes almost a sub-character and all the action occurs around Herewiss. Some

events, such as the treacherous Cillmod's deeds, were only mentioned in passing, instead of being shown, which was disappointing because I thought he should have been the main tool of the Shadow. The Shadow's tools ended up being hordes of developed monsters, and we didn't learn much about them or understand their significance clearly. Cutting down a touch on the fantastic elements and on the lore of gods and goddess may have helped to see where parts weren't developed.

The Door Into Shadow had its memorable moments. I may read the first book, if only to see if I can make more sense of the world, but it wasn't one of my favourite fantasy reads, even if it was well written.

Kelly says

Of interest: dragons :D

Minorly disappointing: The trauma subplot's resolution didn't really sit well with me. I can't quite articulate why, and I'm not really sure it's my place to, either, not having any personal experience with that sort of thing.

Surreysmum says

[These notes were made in 1990:]. The sequel to The Door into Fire, this one didn't hold my attention nearly as well, for some reason. I think probably one main reason is a fault of mine as a reader, not of Duane as a writer -- namely, that the focus was shifted entirely to the female heroine, Segnbora, away from the male pair who dominated the first book. And somehow I'm just not as interested in lady warriors and their relationships with dragons. In one respect, the shape of this book echoes the earlier one. The central figure goes into an "other" state and encounters an inhibiting ghost from the past. In Segnbora's case, she was raped in her youth, and her access of power arrives when she manages to get past her rage and forgive her rapist. There is a sort of hara-kiri motif at the end, but instead of dying Segnbora, linked to her dragon (who is the equivalent of Sunspark in the first novel), survives and all end happily. Despite her plans to write four novels in this series, Duane seems never to have proceeded past the second one. Perhaps she had simply exhausted the possibilities of her world, which is not a particularly rich one in detail; perhaps she ran out of compelling characters to put in the centre of her tales; or perhaps she just discovered that Star Trek novels sell better. [2010 note: Duane has since completed the series] I must admit that, a few wonderful moments in Fire notwithstanding, I prefer her as a ST novelist.

Juliana says

Okay, so the storyline generally continues in an interesting way, and I quite liked some of the other character development, and the dragons were interesting. However, [rest of review contains spoilers. Also, trigger warning!] there is some major fail. It turns out that Segnbora's intimacy issues and inability to focus her Flame are because she was sexually abused as a child and had mostly repressed that. Now, yes, it's believable that she'd have these kinds of issues as a result of that, but rape as a plot point and significant motivator for a female character's actions is a cliche, and one I can live without. I also found her conclusion at the end that her rapist was just a tool of the Goddess to get her where she needed to be to save the world

and stuff to be HIGHLY PROBLEMATIC. OH DIANE DUANE NO.

Nikki says

While *The Door into Shadow* continues the overarching plot of getting Freelorn to his throne, the focus turns from Herewiss to Segnbora. Segnbora is a great character, her relationship with the dragons is fascinating, and the overall thrust of the story — of overcoming old trauma to really come into your power, even embracing the old trauma because it made you who you are — chimes with me quite well.

The only problem is, Segnbora's character is built on that trauma, around her inability to open up — to magic, to people, to anything. The whole thing relies on her overcoming her trauma. Which, because she's a female character, you can probably guess the origin of. There is something powerful here about acceptance and healing, but I could wish her story didn't just reach for that convenient storyline. Particularly when it's otherwise good about people living and loving outside the box, and at making that a totally natural part of the world.

I didn't love any of the characters as much as Herewiss and Sunspark, and something about the structure of the plot didn't work that well for me either. It felt like a series of pre-ordained episodes, taking Segnbora inexorably toward something she didn't want to face, "for her own good". I guess that fits with the way this world works, but it didn't work for me.

Also, some of the language about the Goddess sometimes tips into being 'too much' for me, somehow. The Glasscastle section, however, is brilliant; atmospheric, urgent.

Originally posted here.

Robert says

The Tale of the Five continues, Freelorn must obtain his throne!

The main plot is joined by Segnbora's, who is the main protagonist this time.

Due to a wound, she reexamines her life and soul through her thought-to-be-forgotten memories. As a result, the book has a huge emphasis on the spiritual, as it often becomes ethereal, even surreal.

The book contains songs, poems, even stories, which enrich and pleasure, should you like literature as it is meant to be, and the story-weaving is still breathtaking.

Unfortunately, this leaves the main plot of the series in a significantly neglected state, which has its impact on the whole book.

As a standalone novel, the book would have been an excellent addition to the series, but I think that as part of the trilogy, now possibly a quartet, it does more harm than good.

A perhaps much better approach could have been to switch the focus to Freelorn, and reveal Segnbora's mystery in a future instalment.

Readers who loved the first book will likely not have the same feelings about this second one, but perhaps *The Door into Sunset* will be able to forge "that Was Broken."

Wetdryvac Wetdryvac says

I keep re-reading this series, and every time am reminded why Duane is one of my favorite authors. Well executed characters, system of magic, and most important of all: A strong feeling of connection to every aspect of the tale.

Ariel says

I really enjoyed the first book in this series, but I absolutely loved this one, for the sophisticated reason of DRAGONS. Segnbora is an amazing character, and I'm glad to see Diane Duane writing female leads again (not that her male leads are any less good, but she writes women so well in a genre that often slight them), and what's more, the supporting characters were fleshed out as well. Also, Herewiss! It's interesting getting an outsider's perspective on him. And did I mention DRAGONS?

As for the issue of her forgiving her rapist - I read it differently than a lot of reviewers, it seems. Instead of the Goddess having Segnbora raped to make her the way she was, I saw it as the Goddess showing Segnbora that it was a part of her past, something that influenced her life, and that she needed to make peace with it and with herself to progress as a person. I found that to ring very true, and it moved me.

Amy Mills says

At first, I was enjoying this much more than Book 1, as the writing was tense and tight, and it didn't have the lackadaisical meandering that annoyed me in the first book. But the further I got, the less I wanted to keep reading, and I'm rather relieved to be finished. The first book focused on Herewiss and his struggle to become the first male in a century to be able to use "Fire" (the strongest form of magic). This book focuses on Segnbora, who, despite being very strong in the Fire, has never managed to focus it. So, naturally, this book is largely about her journey to do just that, and ... um. Very overused trope (see spoiler for more), and I'm sad to see a female author using it. Then she compounds it symbolically with a horribly disgusting mental sequence. I can think of ways of accomplishing the same inner mental growth without THAT.

(view spoiler)

Observations: I keep seeing parallels between this series and Wheel of Time. The gender-differentiated magic system. The strong character blocked from using her power. The Dark One. Pretty sure Jordan must have read this series and been inspired by it.
