



Seeker's Mask

P.C. Hodgell

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Jame has found and been reunited with her ten year older twin brother Tori. Now all she has to do is find a place for herself among the Kencyrs that are following her brother. This is not quite as easy as it sounds.

Seeker's Mask Details

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Author : P.C. Hodgell

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Estara says

The absolute incompetence of Torisen in dealing with his sister is even more evident during this re-read, because he basically just shoves her into the Highborn compartment and doesn't even check that his own vassals support her in her dealing with the Women's World. But then again, he really is ridden by his father's mad ghost and none to secure in his own dealings with the other Highborn in the Kencyrath.

Jame does do her best, it's a bit surprising how much she allows to be done to her (but she really would like to belong) and then we get thrown into multiple backstory strands all converging on her, from Kallystine Caineron's manipulations out of envy and anger at Torisen's dealings with her (as well as the encouragement she gets from her father - that scene with her handmaid remains chilling), to the ages old feud that killed all the female Knorth folk even before her father went mad in the White Hills - and that hasn't ended yet (nor will it end in this book).

The scene with the hunt to survive that pack of almost invisible assassins throughout the Women's part of the keep at Gothregor was brilliant (as was the Merikit sacrifice and Jame getting chosen as the Earth Wife's favourite, etc.) - this series rewards reading together because otherwise you won't see all the interlocking threads (with some eventual solutions and some new problems arising) - but my favourite bit is probably Mount Alban cast adrift on the weirding and where it all stops and why and what happens there, etc.

I'm just happy Tori and Jame manage to find a lawful precedent for putting her in a different role, even if Torisen still can't manage to talk to her or look at her much ((view spoiler)).

Curt Connors says

A worthy successor to the first two books. Write faster Ms. Hodgell, please.

Danielle says

3rd in series (God Stalk)

Tankerbay says

Bleh. Unexplained mystical events splashed with blood and vague references to events not in the previous stories. This one almost killed the series for me.

D. says

The third installment of Hodgell's Kencyrath series sustains the high quality of the first two books. It juggles multiple storylines and characters deftly, and begins to unravel some of the unexplained backstory that is hinted at in the first two books.

Jame is still the main focus, as she tries (and fails) to fit into "proper society," she runs into all sorts of unexpected trouble. Tori is still consolidating his power, and struggling with his position and politics.

This is pretty dense reading -- you have to be able to juggle multiple storylines and chronologies to really appreciate it, but Hodgell's deft writing make it worth the time and effort.

I'm looking forward to the rest of the books in the series!

Kevin says

I have the first five as paperbacks. I have re-bought them as e-books.

I have just started re-reading Seeker's Mask and I expect to love it as much as before ...

Strongly recommended -- the book and the series

Julie says

Book #3. After a 20-year hiatus (20 years! You're killing me, Pat) Hodgell has returned to Jame and her story. Sadly, this round finds Jame in the Women's World (like a school that the Highborn girls get sent to) where her brother dumps her so she can learn her proper place in the Kencyrath. Well, I was all settled in, just delighted to find out what Jame was going to do to these bubble-headed twits, but the answer was -- not nearly enough. Disappointing. Jame does grow and change in this novel and it's more character-oriented than plot-oriented than Hodgell's previous two novels. And I like that Jame is getting more internally complex. But it kept reading faster and faster, waiting for all the "bad guys" to get what they so richly deserve. It fell a bit flat, I think. Still, we get to meet a maledroit, a witch, wierdingstorms, and Bane is back!! Despite being decisively killed in book 2, Hodgell doesn't make this a cheat, and Bane is as nasty and wonderful as ever. No Marc, though. I missed him.

Chris Devine says

I tried to read this book three times but never finished. It is a mammoth read and just seems to ramble aimlessly along. Nothing like the first 2 (in *Chronicles Of The Kencyrath* omnibus) which I just could not put down. Sorry.

Fietspomp says

7.5 stars to ensure it gets more recognition.

Complex story with very long common thread

Read before #1/#2 didn't like the usages of names, house/first/last since I am not that into names

Melissa says

This book finally starts to answer many of the questions about Jame and Tori that the first two books posed - especially questions about the society and social/political hierarchy of the Kencyrath. In typical fashion, though, the path the story takes is convoluted, and the world follows its own rules - and while that makes for great authenticity, the world and events are foreign enough that it leaves the reader sometimes having to fill in the gaps and struggle to connect the dots. Fortunately Jame usually connects the dots for us with her own sudden insight, but many times I wished I had a print copy instead of an ebook to flip back pages and see if I was missing something.

Catherine says

Fascinating, complicated fantasy series with engaging characters and spectacular world building. One of my all time favorite novels.

Sbuchler says

Genre: High Fantasy

I loved this book! Tori has bundled Jame off to the "Women's World" to learn how to be a proper Highborn lady, quiet and obedient. A task that isn't easier for either her or them. The Matriarchs (who rule the women's world) don't trust her, but Jame is smart and guesses many of their secrets, much to their chagrin. That's the set-up when outside forces (the Shadow Guild Assassins bent on finally fulfilling their contract to kill all the Knorth women) force Jame to flee again.

In my opinion, this book takes a much closer look at honor than the previous ones – the first duty of a woman (or a Kendar) is obedience, but it was obedience to her lord that made Jamethiel Dream Weaver betray their people and cause The Fall. The issue of where duty to one's lord ends and personal honor begins (called Honor's Paradox by the Kencyr) reoccurred again and again. Jame spends much of this book being disgruntled with herself – she tries for the path of honor, and for kindness, but she repeatedly fails and castigates herself for it and attempts redemption, with mixed success. As a reader, you can see how other characters wouldn't like Jame very much – but her self-examination and her attempts to put things right felt very real, very human to me. I appreciated it very much – it's not something you see frequently in a fantasy heroine.

On another exciting note, this book also reveals much more about the mythology of the universe – both the elements native to Rathillien (the Earth Wife, Burning Man, etc.) and the Kencyrath's Tyr-ridan, of which

Jame quite probably is part of. Much of the weird mystical stuff centers around Jame (of course) and culminates with her playing an unintentional part in a Merikit religious ceremony. (The Merikit are a people native to Rathillien, and rather hostile to the Kencyrath.) Tori arrives just as Jame emerges from the ceremony. Somehow, their interaction at this point sums up most of the book:

"Somehow, I'm not surprised." He surveyed the surrounding ruins. "Your friend Marc warned me that I would probably find the Riverland reduced to rubble and you in the midst of it, looking apologetic."
"Er ... sorry."

kvon says

More happened here than I remembered...quick glimpse of the cloistered ladies' world with their secrets (knot stitches being brought up in the latest book); Jame defining for herself what honor is; the prophecy (from the Arrin-ken?) of the one, three, and four; introduction of the native gods and the northern tribe; revisiting the random school; the enmity of the Randir house and their involvement in assassination (why comes up in a later book, star-crossed lovers); revelation of Kindrie's heritage. Lots of travel by conventional and non- ways.

Charmy says

That took too long. thank goodness the story was over. Too many unpronounceable names and use of single consonant when constructing names.

Althea Ann says

A sequel to "God Stalk" and "Dark of the Moon," "Seeker's Mask" is definitely the best of the three - one can definitely see Hodgell really finding her stride, and moving ahead with both characterization and plot. At the outset of this book, Jame has finally found her brother, Torisen, but unfortunately, he really doesn't know what to do with her. Having grown up partly in the sinister realm of Perimal Darkling and then as apprentice thief and tavern dancer, Jame is far from the typical meek and obedient highborn Kencyr lady. Regardless, Tori has her escorted to the women's quarters – and tries to forget about her. Unfortunately, not only does Jame not fit in socially, the women's quarters are also home to her brother's consort, noblewoman of an enemy house. But the jealous and bitter Kallistyne may be one of the more minor dangers awaiting Jame, as old blood feuds awaken. Soon Jame is on the run, in a danger-filled quest of self-discovery and family reconciliation, where, of course, the fate of worlds may hang in the balance.

Verity Brown says

The first time I read this, the parts about the Women's World seemed a lot longer and a lot more frustrating (partly because that was so NOT NOT NOT Jame's milieu). Also, the whole business of traveling up and down the river on the Weirding mist seemed very disjointed the first time around. This time, though, the

whole plot seemed to fall into place, and I enjoyed the re-read very much.

Tiffany says

Worse upon a second read 10 years later. I could barely follow what was happening--something about a floating building, brother and sister who refused to sleep out of sheer pigheadedness, sacrifices, river fish, a gang of people I couldn't keep straight and an ending that suddenly prepared for the next book.

Godstalk was one of the best reads in my life and I keep on wanting to reexperience that wonder, but books two and three in the series spanned from bad to catastrophic. I don't know how I'm going to get through the next book. I hope to god something happens. In this one, and when it does I can figure it out.

Assaph Mehr says

I've recently decided to re-read this excellent epic fantasy cycle, and review as I go.

What to Expect

The story continues from where Dark of the Moon left off. Hodgell is continuing to explore the Kencyrath culture and world, this time focusing on the Women's World within it and the Riverland valley that they occupy.

This time, the story again focuses on Jame, while Tori (her twin, who took half the previous book) is relegated to brief interludes in the narrative. As often happens in epic fantasy, there is a slow beginning and accumulating clues, as the plot progresses towards realisation and mythic confrontations. As with the previous books, there are open questions leading to the sequels - the cycle is far from over.

What I liked

Hodgell's story-telling and world-building are top-notch, her story pacing is excellent, and she balances light and dark themes perfectly. We learn more about Jame's past, about the complex politics of her people, and about the supernatural powers that inhabit her world. I absolutely love the mythic feel of the supernatural world and competing powers, between the old-world native powers and the Kencyrath own.

What to be aware of

The story builds up on the previous volume. While referenced events are explained in short, it always helps to read in order. Do start with God Stalk.

The opening reflects Jame being trapped in the Women's World of her people. A lot of the story is told from other points of view, and reflects the frustration of Jame being muzzled. Some of this frustration naturally leaks to the reader, but it does get better after the first part, once Jame gets proactive again.

Torisen needs a swift kick up his back side (perhaps the reason he was relegated to the interludes), and one hopes the event in this volume provide it.

Summary

A highly recommended series. This is epic fantasy done right, with perfect balance of light and dark, and excellent, slowly-building pacing. If you love fantasy, I strongly suggest you add it to your TBR pile.

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Assaph Mehr, author of **Murder In Absentia: A story of Togas, Daggers, and Magic** - for lovers of Ancient Rome, Murder Mysteries, and Urban Fantasy.

Laura (Kyahgirl) says

4/5; 4 stars; A-

Another fascinating adventure in Jame's chaotic and dangerous life. I keep getting the sense of regency England in some of the value systems in play within the Kencyrath culture.

Tori's character is a mystery. On one hand, he is a strong, ethical leader, and on the other he is a complete idiot in how he deals with his sister and the realities of their shared history. Its hard not to dislike him.

Jame is a great female protagonist among many great female antagonists!

Derek says

Fortunately, the story passes rather quickly out of the Women's Halls of Gothregor, which averts comparisons to certain "young adult" stories. You know the ones: a misfit but talented child is shoved into a competitive yet insular environment, there to smash and defy and prove to Those Stupid Adults that something bigger and more dangerous is going on.

This has it, a little bit. Enough to needle. This is by design: Jame in some way embodies the destructive aspect of the Triune God and can't help being a bull in a china shop when put into delicate and intricate situations. And what is becoming apparent is that the "nemesis/destroyer" aspect recalls Hindu beliefs of being "demolition" more than "destruction". Kencyrath society has become rigid and strange, with rot hiding under many facades, and if there is anything deserving of a good kicking-down, this is it.

The story is laboring under the weight of the previous novels. It all appears additive, with Jame increasingly burdened by obligations and consequences and entanglements. Everything from Dark of the Moon and some of God Stalk ties in, and more is added.

The world of Rathillien, the adopted home of the Kencyrath, continues to surprise and delight, being a constant source of inventive ideas.
