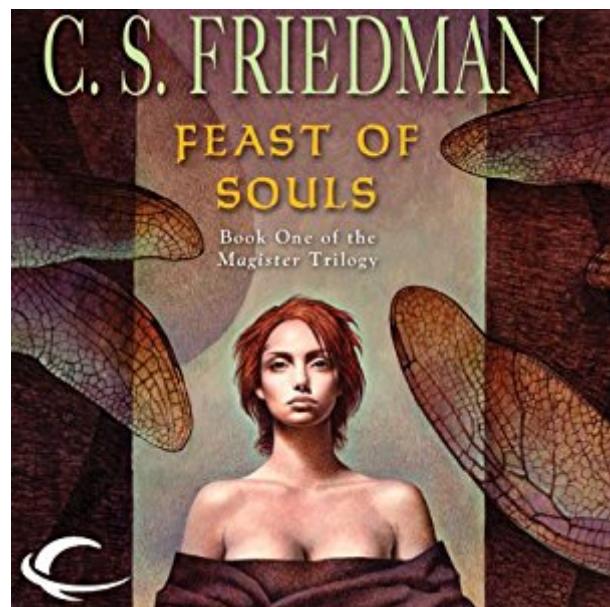


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Feast Of Souls: Magister Trilogy, Book 1



Synopsis

C.S. Friedman, acclaimed author of The Coldfire Trilogy, returns to the epic style which has made her one of the most popular fantasy writers in the genre. In this first book of the trilogy, Friedman introduces listeners to a world of high fantasy, replete with vampire-like magical powers, erotic interludes, treachery, war, sorcery, and a draconic creature of horrific power and evil that will have listeners eagerly awaiting the next novel in the series.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 18 hoursÂ andÂ 16 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: May 15, 2012

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B0083EFYMY

Best Sellers Rank: #301 inÂ Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fantasy > Epic #1467 inÂ Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Epic #4113 inÂ Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature

Customer Reviews

Inexplicably, this latest offering by acclaimed author C. S. Friedman has been flying under the radar since last January. And given its quality, this sad state of affairs continues to baffle me. Feast of Souls marks Friedman's return to the fantasy genre. That, in and of itself, should be reason enough to buy this book! Like many other readers, I have been waiting for this moment since Crown of Shadows was published. And yet, having read both Rothfuss' The Name of the Wind and Williams' Shadowplay earlier this year, I decided to wait a while before giving this one a chance. I try to balance everything by reading titles from various publishers -- an attempt to spread the joy, if you will. However, electing to wait before reading Feast of Souls proved to be a dumb move on my part, for the first volume of the Magister trilogy is without a doubt the very best of Daw Books' "big guns" of 2007. More epic than dark fantasy this time around, Feast of Souls is a compelling opening chapter in a tale which appears vaster in scope than anything C. S. Friedman has written up until this point. Having said that, I feel that it's also the least self-contained novel the author has ever

written. Whereas each volume of the Coldfire trilogy was more or less stand-alone -- even though part of an overall story arc -- Feast of Souls is definitely an introduction to a much more ambitious and complex fantasy epic. Richly detailed worldbuilding intrigues the reader from the beginning. It's obvious that this book is meant to lay the groundwork for what will unfold in the upcoming sequels. As such, it makes for a slower pace for the better part of the first half of the novel. After that, the pace quickens and the storytelling makes it difficult to put this one down.

There are a couple of things I really loved about this book. First is the fact that Friedman never withholds information about her world just for the sake of creating suspense or avoiding exposition or whatever other excuse too many fantasy writers use to keep their readers in a state of complete befuddlement. Friedman tells us right off the bat that Magister power is derived by draining the lifeforce from other human beings. Any other author would have dragged that out for chapters and chapters, dropping tantalizing hints and ominous foreshadowing. But Friedman is more interested in examining the way that the source of their power affects Magisters, and how they differ from witches, who must drain their own life force to use magic. It's a fascinating system, and one that sets up complex moral and ethical issues, which are explored sympathetically and in depth. (And let's also give props for Friedman actually justifying why a female Magister is, in her world, unusual. None of this Robert Newcomb women-are-eeeeevil-and-too-incredibly-stupid-to-use-magic crap. Kemala is the first of her kind, but once you see what their power does to the other Magisters, you understand why.) The second thing I loved is that there is no "hero" in this story. No starry-eyed youth coming of age; no hard-bitten veteran called back to fight a final battle; no hidden prince discovering his destiny. There is a protagonist, sure. There are victims and opportunists, bad people who do good things and good people who do bad things. Perhaps unfortunately, there is an easily identifiable bad guy, complete with a requisite army of minions set to Take Over the World. But who will stand against him, who will sit this one out, and who will throw their hat into the ring of eeeeevil?

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