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Sharon Lee , Steve Miller

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Rebecca Beauvelley is a ruined woman.

In a moment of girlish folly, she allowed a high-flying young man to take her up in his phaeton, not realizing that he was drunk. When he dropped the ribbons, she recovered them, but not in time to avoid disaster. The young man was killed in the accident. Rebecca survived, with a withered arm to remind her of the wages of folly, and a reputation in tatters.

Against all expectation, her father has found someone, an elderly rogue, who will marry her. Rebecca's life seems set, and she resigned to it, when Altimere, a Fey, appears and uses his magic to show her two futures: In the first, she is abused and neglected as the dutiful wife; in the second, she is dressed and bejeweled like a princess. Rebecca chooses the second future and elopes with Altimere.

Unfortunately, Altimere has an agenda of his own.

The first of a two-book series. Watch for the sequel, *Longeye*.

Duainfey Details

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Author : Sharon Lee , Steve Miller

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From Reader Review Duainfey for online ebook

Cait says

Spoiler alert: this review is for both books in the duology.

I'd like to first state that it seems that many of the negative reviews come from people who have first read and enjoyed the Liaden Universe by Lee and Miller, and then come to these books expecting more of the same. They are then appalled by the darker tone, sexual violence, and power imbalances in these books. (To be fair, awful things also happen in the Liaden Universe, but they usually occur off-camera). I think these books are potentially getting more critical reviews than they would if people weren't expecting entirely different stories from these authors. The book is described inside the cover-flap as "dark fantasy", which seems fair. I do feel bad when authors with one successful series receive negative feedback, and even backlash, when they try to write a very different series. So I want to be clear that my criticism is not because I was expecting, or desiring, a series in the image of the Liaden Universe.

I'll mention here what I DID like about this series. I enjoyed the style. This recognizably is Lee and Miller's voice, which I enjoy a lot. The three narrators braided together well in the second book, and that can be a tricky thing to manage. Each narrator had a very different perspective, and different knowledge that they brought to the book. And it felt well-balanced to me. Well done. I liked the concept, too: two characters, both damaged from their experiences, come together, and in the course of their healing they help to heal their world.

There were a lot of details that seemed unsatisfactorily glossed-over to me, but I'm not sure that it is a bigger issue here than in the Liaden series. I remember thinking that there were a lot of holes or pieces missing after I read *Agent of Change* (the first book I read), but with other books in the series we had a better understanding of the world and the overarching plots. So my complaints may be secondary to there only being two books. Perhaps a third book might explain more. (What is the wind that swept over the land? What happened to the trapped Rangers? What, exactly, DOES happen after the last chapter? How DID the villagers manage to cross the keleigh? Where do the Newmen come from, and why? Why was Meripen awoken early? Why the imprisonment in the mist?) I think there are details the readers never get because the narrators don't know the answers, and while occasionally frustrating, that seems fair.

What was most difficult for me about this story, and my primary criticism, is that Rebecca lacks agency for most of the first book. I know that the story needs to establish Meripen and Rebecca as both broken, damaged characters. However, Meripen is a much more sympathetic, likable character because we see him as taking steps, albeit small ones, from the first time that we see him. For most of the first book, Rebecca is a victim. She doesn't DO things, they just happen to her. For a chapter or two, you feel bad for her. After that, you, or at least I, became impatient for her to do something, anything. It's hard to emotionally bond with a character like that. She was much more enjoyable in the second book, where she may have been confused or ignorant, but at least had some agency. She made choices, dealt with consequences, learned, changed, grew. The trouble is, if I hadn't already been familiar with the authors, I'm not sure that I would have read the second book at all.

In ways (EXTRA SPOILERS!) Rebecca reminds me of Aelliana Caylon. They are both damaged, abused characters who need a chance to heal and are stronger in the second books. But while Aelliana is certainly more empowered in **Mouse and Dragon** than **Scout's Progress**, she is still enjoyable in the first book. But much of the plot of **Scout's Progress** is how she tries to find her way out her situation. Rebecca spends too

much time enthralled in **Duainfey** for me to have sympathy, admiration, or respectful feelings for her. And her plan for escape? Suicide. I won't say that I don't UNDERSTAND her feelings of despair, but her suicidal impulse doesn't help me regain interest in her character, either. These are superficially similar characters, but Aelliana was portrayed in a way that readers, or at least THIS reader, wanted to pick up book two and find out what happened. Sadly, Rebecca did NOT inspire similar feelings.

I wish that more of Rebecca's experiences could be told in flashback, or taken less time to tell. I think the story suffers because of her lack of agency for so much of the first book. Otherwise, I thought that this was an interesting duology, which left enough plot threads unresolved that potentially many other stories could be told.

Janice says

These are the same authors who write the Laiden Universe novels. Apparently, I just like their writing. This one is fantasy rather than science fiction, and quite a bit darker than the Laiden stories, but every bit as good. First of two, and I've a feeling this series is going to have a Lord of the Rings ending - where the evil is defeated, but the cost is high.

Dan says

A very difficult book to read. It started slow, and really very "Cinderella-ey".. It got a little more interesting, but was laden with scenes of rape, mental, physical, and spiritual. I ended up skipping multiple pages with a grieved heart.

Jennifer says

If you're looking up this book, it probably means that you've read through the available books about the Liaden Universe, are hungry for more....And like myself, thought that this would be more of the same style and stories but in a fantasy genre. And this is my cautionary tale.

This is a story A, and story B book, one chapter tells the story of the heroine, the other the story of Longeye. That's Story B, with a capital B, that stands for boring. But story A, is a horrifying tale of, well, rape. The heroine of story A, is repeatedly violated....I couldn't keep count, what with the gang-rapes, and regular rapes, and pretty much any way that someone could sexually victimize a woman. I think the total stood at about 16 at the book's close. Story B has some horrifying and graphic tales of rape and sodomy, all it's very own.

This is not the work I've come to expect from the Sharon Lee and Steve Miller writing duo. Honestly, reading it, made me think less of them as authors, and fear the Liaden Universe may go tripping down plot paths as dark and morbid as this one in the future.

I wish the editors and publishers involved in the fruition and release of this book, would have thought twice - had this book been written by a previously unknown author, that author would have had a stack of rejection letters, not a contract. But established authors, with an established readership, sells.....and my advice, is to

not buy it this time.

C Watson says

Duainfey starts with a fun concept of elves and humans living warily as neighbors. Two individuals a human woman and an elf man are each hurt horribly by the other race. And that is it. No real explanation of how humans and elves are different. Little characterization. No explanation of human or elvish society. Many fantasy books are designed to leave you a little confused at the beginning, but new concepts are eventually explained. Lee and Miller just leave everything, including the characters, bland and vague.

Laura (Kyahgirl) says

4.5/5; 5 stars; A

This review will apply to both Duainfey, book 1, and Longeye, book 2. I don't believe its accurate to view these two books as a duology but they are halves of the same whole. There is no point (IMO) in reading one if you don't also plan to read the other book.

Anyway, I found this duo of books to be captivating, disturbing, engrossing, and satisfying in the sense of traditional high fantasy. There are the Fey, there are humans, there are sentient trees and animals, there is an evil monster who was so vile he made my skin crawl, there is the triumph of good over evil and a positive, happy outcome.

I've read a lot of books by Lee and Miller and always find their style of writing appealing. However, they can be very subtle and they expect the reader to pay attention and figure out the story as it unfolds instead of just handing it to you. They also tend to end their books a bit abruptly for my taste but maybe I've become spoiled by the ubiquitous epilogue. It doesn't change the fact that these books are really well done. There IS some uncomfortable sexual content in book one. It isn't added to make the book romantic or erotic by any means, but to allow the reader to really understand how depraved and craven the evil monster is.

Since the Liaden Universe series has very little sexual content, and that little bit is mostly 'implied', it may come as a surprise (nasty or not) to some readers to find it here. Myself, I'm happy to see two of my favorite authors displaying yet another facet in their mighty talent.

Joni says

I am a huge fan of Lee and Miller. This book is darker than most of the Liaden novels, although some of the Liaden books do have their moments. It also ends on a big cliffhanger:(Or several big cliffhangers.

Rebecca DeBeuvelly (or however you spell her name) has a maimed arm and a spoiled reputation (although her virtue was never soiled). She's about to be married to some old man who is harsh and lives up in the cold north (and seems to care only for money and appearances), but she's whisked out from underneath his nose by a Fey. However, it's unclear whether or not this is actually a better fate for her. And we certainly don't know by the end of the book.

I liked the book well enough, but wasn't captivated in the same way I am by the Liaden books.

Writtenwyrdd says

I liked the beginning of this book, but once we hit the middle I disliked the plot, the situation, the main character's idiocy and gullability. I wasn't pulled along by wanting to know what happened to the main character. Now, I do admit I always peek at endings. It usually makes no difference in my enjoyment or willingness to read the rest of the book. But this time, it made me feel I didn't miss anything to stop. And as I wasn't liking that book at that time, I quit reading.

Kelly says

I've heard that *Duainfey* contains disturbing sexual content. I mention that as a word of warning, in case you're a reader who dislikes that sort of thing.

That said, I can't speak to that personally. I didn't get that far. *Duainfey* starts with an overly-confusing prologue set in the Fey realm. I was never quite sure what was actually going on in this scene. Then, the story shifts to the doings of a human family in Regency society. The plot is less confusing here, but this dialogue is just not for me. Here's the heroine's brother, upon being asked about a Fey lord's hair color:

"Yellow, oh, aye," Dickon returned slowly; "you might call it yellow — but not like yours, Lady Caro. And his eyes — you see I anticipate your next question! — you might say that his eyes are a pale brown. His coat — attend me now, Mother — was tawny, and his breeches rust colored, his boots polished so high I could see Ferdy reflected in them."

Regency novels have never been my thing, so I can't say for sure, but I'm wondering if this overly mannered speech is a convention of that genre. All I know for sure is that it's driving me bonkers. On to the next book in my TBR pile!

Susan says

I've been meaning to read this book by Sharon Lee & Steve Miller for a while, and I'm sorry I waited so long. Rebecca is about to be forced into a marriage she does not want when she is offered an escape by Altimere, a fey who takes her away from her family and home. At the same time in the land of the Sea Fey, Meripen Vanglelauf has awakened from an extended sleep that he fell into to recover from an attempt by humans to force Fey secrets from him. The two stories parallel each other, and the viewpoint switches between them.

As is typical of Lee & Miller, the characters are well developed and sympathetic, and the stories are absorbing. I read it today in one sitting and will be starting the sequel *Longeye*.

Erica Anderson says

I picked up this book because I've read some of the Liaden books. From the cover and descriptive copy, *Duainfey* appears to be a romantic fantasy. It's not.

No romance at all. Instead, the heroine Becca is ensorcelled by a Fey lord who rescues her from an unwanted marriage. Becca is manipulated by the Fey lord Altimere, who uses her body to steal the life force of others. This part of the book is sordid and disturbing, and I was caught completely unprepared for it (I was still half expecting a romance at this point). In fairness to the authors, Becca's life experiences make her seduction by Altimere believable, as is her complicity in her own degradation.

Becca's story is paralleled by a completely separate story of a badly injured "Wood Wise" who sets out on a journey. I quickly lost interest in this part of the book because the authors basically drop the reader into the world without providing enough context.

The ending is unsatisfying, as Becca achieves a minor victory, only to be thrust into a new set of circumstances, which are presumably resolved in the second book, *Longeye*.

Don't expect this book to be a sort of fantasy version of Liaden. The only book I can think of that comes even close to the sort of sordid sexuality in *Duainfey* is Emily Gee's *Thief With No Shadow*, which involves sex with fire salamanders. Or something.

Definitely not for most readers.

Blaine Henderson says

While constantly written this book is incredibly problematic because it's use of rape as a plot device. The second book is better but while I have reread several Lee & Miller books I will not be re-reading this series. I do not recommend it.

Arleigh Kovacs says

Duainfey is the first book in a series by Sharon Lee and Steve Miller. (The next two books are *Longeye & Fledgling*/).

Rebecca has had her reputation and her arm ruined after taking an ill-advised ride in the phaeton of a rakish young man. (Nothing untoward actually happened. He tried to kiss her, lost control of his horses, and though Rebecca took the reins, the phaeton crashed, killing her companion, and leaving her arm crippled.)

Now her father is about to have her married off to a highly unsuitable older man (until she marries, her younger -- beautiful and snotty -- younger sister Caroline can't take a husband) who will take her despite her reputation and her disability (money conquers all).

Then one of the handsome and influential High Fey shows up in the neighborhood. He sets out to woo Rebecca -- and he (magically, of course) shows her two futures. One with her betrothed and one with himself. Obviously, we know which she will choose.

But Altimere isn't anything like what he tricked Rebecca into believing. And while giving her the beautiful clothing and jewels he has promised, he drains her of magical power and uses her in his political plotting.

While the sexual content is more or less basic to establishing Altimere's true character and the extent of his power over Rebecca, they consisted of multiple vicious and, unfortunately, graphically described scenes of rape by Altimere's followers.

Luckily for her, there are also Fey who are watching Rebecca and intend to rescue her... Which doesn't make up for why they need to rescue her.

I **do not** recommend this book -- and I won't be reading the sequels... just in case they contain more of the same.

Hali Sowle says

The first in a duology by Sharon Lee and Steve Miller trying to understand the world that Duainfey is set in was a bit difficult. There was a world where the trees are sentient to the rangers and those who walk their paths and care for them, the same is true for the sea. And people had magic within themselves called Kest and the people who lived there could be called elves or Fey. At sometime in the past there was a war and the eldest of these Fey created a magical barrier to protect themselves. Humans live on the other side of the barrier, and there is very little communication between both sides but what there is isn't very pleasant despite what is on the surface. The book revolves around two main characters Rebecca Beauvelley, a willful human girl who in a moment of girlish fun goes off with a gentleman in a flying car but suffers a horrible accident when the car crashes and the young man dies. Now she is a pariah facing a marriage to a man she has never met. Meripen Vangelauf is a Ranger and a fey living on the other side of the barrier, he is woken prematurely from a healing sleep after he was grievously injured by humans. Their stories seem quite different and make no sense to be together in this book, it's one of those cases where you have to read the entire duology for it to make any sense.

This book is not for the faint of heart when it comes to sexual subjugation and manipulation. It plays a huge role in the book and although at first it is alluded to by the end of the book it is fully developed. Unlike all the other books I've read by Sharon Lee and Steve Miller this is not for young adults the themes and the action is not at all fun or pleasant and to make matters worse the book just ends. Not even a cliff hanger ending, it's like the publisher just said okay chop it here. The second book, Longeye brings many things together and answers questions but make sure you have it ready to go when you read Duainfey.

Colleen says

Sharon Lee and Steve Miller have a gift for lyrical prose, implication of formality, and understated descriptiveness that is in evidence here. Unfortunately, the story revolves around the removal of will, manipulation, and soul-staining actions of a main character who started out building to something clever. While I might forgive the authors their sensual lingering on the niceties the Fey offer, I cannot forgive their lingering on the torment of soul for sensual thrill. The second half of the story is nothing more than a series of assassinations and assignations made all the more horrifying by the main character's will-less participation in her own rape and abuse.

I have supported the Liaden series since it was introduced to me in 1988. I do not support this new series. I suppose I will now have to decide whether to continue to support the authors who choose to promote this kind of abuse as storytelling.

ETA: The book I finished just previous to picking up Duainfey was Iron Kissed by Patricia Briggs. In Iron Kissed, the heroine is forced to drink a "fairy potion" which causes her to completely believe anything the villain tells her... so he tells her that she wants him and loves him, etc. and ends up raping her on the floor of the garage. Yuck. Ok, so that scene is over and the story goes on to explain how sick and sickened the heroine was afterward, and how guilty she felt for having not fought her attacker. There is a very good discussion between two other people about how 'a person who does not physically resist' does somehow not make it 'not rape.' Briggs made some excellent points about manipulation and guilt as well as vulnerability and pain.

-- This entire conversation was lacking anywhere in Duainfey, and might - just might - have redeemed the book for me to some medium of okay-ness.

While I'm annoyed about this kind of debauched Kushiel-esque scenery, it's more that I am saddened by the lingering artistic love that Lee & Miller put into those scenes of rape and abuse. The authors lavished care on something I would just as soon not read, and certainly don't need to have repeated over and over. Lee & Miller have fabulous prose and an incredible talent for communicating deep emotions in a few choice words. It's a pity that they spent their time repeatedly graphically humiliating the heroine.
