



Allegiance

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With Leos Dzavek dead and his Council in turmoil, the king of Veraene sees his chance to launch his long-desired war against Károví. Ilse Zhalina and Raul Kosenmark know the people of Károví are not so easily defeated, however. Raul sets off for Duenne to confront his king and retake his place in Veraene's Court. Ilse Zhalina embarks on the long journey from Károví with a letter vital to their cause of peace. Both of them must beware of Markus Khandarr, King Armand's most trusted Councilor and Raul's long-time enemy, who has plans of his own.

Allegiance Details

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Author : Beth Bernobich

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From Reader Review Allegiance for online ebook

Linda says

I was prepared to be disappointed...boy was I wrong. I will search out other books by Ms Bernovich and indulge my escape from reality!

Nightwing says

Beth Bernovich's third book in her River of Souls series, Allegiance is even better than the two that preceded it, Passion Play and Queen's Hunt. Passion Play introduced the reader to the world of Ilse Zhalina and Raul Kosenmark, a world rife with politics and magic. Queen's Hunt continued their story, although they were separated by seemingly insurmountable odds. Allegiance picks up right where Queen's Hunt left off. Ilse and Raul are still, as far as they can tell, forever remaining apart, for the good of the kingdoms. King Leos is dead, in ways that cannot be undone (and his chance for reincarnation look extremely slim). Ilse is fulfilling her vow to return Valara Baussay, the Queen of Morennioù, to her kingdom. Raul is doing everything he can to prevent a war in Veraene. All of this while spies and enemies and obstacles of nature all try to thwart everyone on every page.

It is not all murder and mayhem, of course. Love can be found in the strangest of places and readers will be happily surprised by some of the matches that occur by the story's end. People receive gifts they did not know they wanted, until they get them, and not always from someone they would like to accept *anything* from. And sometimes, as fabulous a gift as it is, it is not a gift they would have asked for, especially not at this point in their life. Other people find freedom in ways they did not imagine were possible, sometimes against their conscious will. And Ms. Bernovich handles it all marvelously well.

Some final words of warning- you may find that trying to read when tears are running down your face and getting all over the last 2 chapters of the books is really hard to do! Worth every second of it, but hard to do! So, stock up on tissues. Make sure you are sitting comfortably, for you will not want to put this story down until you reach the very end. Then, if you are like me, you will find yourself revisiting section after section, reliving with the characters important events in their lives, in this installment of what is hoped to be a long ongoing saga.

Anita Macauslan says

This one could certainly not stand alone in any manner. I enjoyed it at times and found it tedious at others (mostly in the beginning). I also felt a bit betrayed on Raul and Ilse's behalf for the ending.

Gwen says

A very satisfying ending for two damaged people and for a well rounded and intricate fantasy world - really enjoyed the series. Could there more books? possibly. Do I want more? no not really but that's just me, I am

happy were it ended.

Jeff says

Excellent work finishing this life in the book. (Though how many past lives should one be held accountable for ?) despite intrusions & inclusions in the world of magic, the tale is stunningly wrapped up and made whole. The king is dead, long live the king; once again proving the office, not the mutable person is what makes a difference.

Normalene says

I loved this series so much. It felt like you fell into the world and never wanted to leave. Okay, bits of the second book were scary but this finale was all the pieces coming together in the nicest way possible. The bits of reincarnation didn't overpower the story as they easily could have in the hands of a lesser writer. They did add to the history of the characters and helped explain some of the motivations. In this world, people often do get what they deserve even if it isn't in this lifetime. Romantic Times Book Reviews gave the first book four and a half stars and called Ilse "one of the most unique heroines ever encountered" and the first book "Passion Play" won the 2010 RT Award for Best Epic Fantasy. I love when new authors get recognition for their writing and I hope to read much more of her work in the future. This is an author I'll keep on my Read Everything list.

Heather Jones says

Allegiance is the third novel in the River of Souls series (which also includes a number of shorter related works) and therefore this review will in some ways be a review of the series as a whole. Bernobich has created a masterpiece of worldbuilding in this epic fantasy series, as I've noted in reviews for the previous two books. There is a strong sense of place and history, built up of innumerable casual details, that leads you gradually and quietly into the scope of history that underlies the events of the series.

History is critically important in a world where souls are reborn, time and again, retaining memories and connections to previous lives and relationships, and political complications can carry over across centuries, whether via re-birth or magically prolonged lifespans. Allegiance brings together the consequences of the previous books, with the several kingdoms and empires destabilized both on a political and magical level, and various players racing to take advantage of the opportunities this creates.

The story continues to center on Ilse Zhalina and Raul Kosenmark, the protagonists of the previous books, but more viewpoints have been included to expand the scope of the story we're given access to. These aren't only the great movers and shakers, but include some of the more ordinary people who get swept up in events. Each is a clear and unique personality with their own history, desires, and concerns—never simply a tool to advance the plot. (And a number of them are ones I'd love to see get their own stories!) Particularly delightful is the strong presence of female characters in a wide variety of roles.

I feel like I could either say utterly banal things about what I liked about this series, or I could babble on at great length. Or I could sum it up with my idiosyncratic list of "bonus points": solid and smooth prose,

fantastic and believable worldbuilding, a plot that kept me riveted past the limits of my reading sessions (I read on the treadmill at the gym, so if a book causes me to over-shoot my workout because I don't want to stop reading, it gets bonus points), and a solid diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and sexualities as an inherent part of the fabric of the story.

And I still have all the short River of Souls fiction yet to enjoy!

C Hellisen says

(I accidentally started this when I was clicking on the shelves, and then decided that even though it breaks my rule of not starring books, I don't mind terribly in this case ;))

Allegiance is the concluding book of the River of Souls series. The series is romantic, political, complex, with layers and layers of characters and plots within plots. *This* is the kind of book I love to read, and Bernobich does a great job.

It's also rather nice to read a fantasy world where the game settings are not all characters = default straight white male. A captain of the guard is as likely to be a woman as a man, the sexuality is fluid (and you guys know how much I love that) and people do terrible and/or honourable things for good and bad reasons, where choices *matter*.

The girl we met in Passion Play has come totally into her own, and she's amazing - This final Ilse is still wanting to run, perhaps, still driven by her fears, but acknowledging these things and facing them. Also shut up while I squee for the romance. Squee.

(Also, can I squee for my other favourites - Heloise and Nadine? Because, gah I want to see more stories with them too, *evil grin*)

So yes, I do love me this series and I want more books set in this world.

Nerine Dorman says

My only regret with this trilogy is that I allowed far too much time to elapse between books while reading it; consequently, I feel that I missed out on a fair amount of the nuances, and had to play a spot of catch-up to figure out who was who, and who did what to whom. Yet it's a sweet thing to encounter an author of Beth Bernobich's calibre, whose ability to render tactile, authentic fantasy worlds leaves me breathless.

Not only am I drawn to her writing because of her solid worldbuilding, but also because she has created a society where there is less division between the roles played by men and women, and also a fluidity of sexuality. Women are soldiers, they can take on positions of power, and it doesn't matter who you love. What else I adored was the fact that Bernobich breaks away from the Eurocentricism still prevalent in contemporary fantasy, to gift us with a saga that is distinctly Eastern in flavour without being heavy handed.

Allegiance is chockfull of political intrigue; it is, after all, a story that involves the derring do of masters in spycraft. There is a constant press of urgency, of being hunted down, which keeps up a relentless pace, and yet there are moments of tenderness, of subtle magic. Bernobich feeds in small details so that one can gain a vivid picture of the environment in but a few brushstrokes.

Central to the trilogy is the love between Ilse and Raul, as they fight hard to save their nation from impending war – and theirs is a particularly poignant romance, because their love is threatened at every turn. I'm not ashamed to say that I cried a little for them at the end. Each has an important role to play in the winding down of events that were set up in books one and two, and Ilse proves herself to be a canny heroine, constantly one step ahead of her enemies as she fights to save the man she loves.

For those who are looking for fantasy trilogy that features strong women, who know their minds, and aren't afraid to go to the ends of the earth to save their world, this may well be the story for you. Bernobich's writing is lush and textured, harking back to the measured pace of classic fantasy that begs you to hold onto the books so you can read them again to see what you missed the first time round.

Carrien says

This is a nice read mostly.

Ilse's journey is full of danger and treachery and I was rooting for her to get back to Raul. She has to leave some people behind, but meets others along the way. I kept trying to guess who she could trust and who might stab her in the back.

Raul's storyline is filled with even more intrigue and politics. New to me characters appeared, but from the context of the story I learned they were returning characters from the first book in this trilogy (which I didn't read). Still I didn't feel like I missed out on things. There were some pretty intense moments and situations and at times I wondered if this story could have a happy end.

I was a bit disappointed that some characters suddenly disappeared from the story without there being a real conclusion to their storyline, but the story was interesting enough that I didn't mind too much.

All in all this story was pretty enjoyable and had me invested, until...

Close to the end there was a kind of Deus Ex Machina for something that really annoyed me. I must confess I was close to throwing the book across the room. This event was totally unnecessary in my opinion, and the book would have been much better without it.

With much grumbling I continued to read on and the conclusion of this trilogy is satisfying enough, although that one event colored my remaining reading experience I will confess. (I must add that it might be just me who got really annoyed, others might actually think this Deus Ex Machina is wonderful.)

So in the end I thought this was an enjoyable read until the last few chapters. I don't think I will reread this series, but I might give another series by Bernobich a try.

Leigh Kimmel says

This is a novel about which I feel intensely ambivalent. I loved the first volume from the moment I read an excerpt for critique -- it was one of the few draft manuscripts about which I've dreamed, so vivid and visceral was the story of Ilse's nightmare flight from her father's house into the hands of a man who proved unworthy of her trust. When I got the published book, I devoured it eagerly and looked forward to the second. That too I read with eagerness and delight. But somehow I've never quite been able to get into this volume. Time and time again I'd catch myself skimming instead of reading, just running eyetracks over the words but absorbing nothing.

It really reads like a "what came after" volume. That the real ending of the story was when Ilse found the jewels and they were revealed to be a self-aware being, sundered into three parts, and realizing that, she let them go rather than continuing to treat them as things to be used. Which makes me wonder if the trilogy format has become so deeply embedded into the fantasy genre that editors and publishers will force a work into the mold even when it doesn't fit, by insisting that the author must write a third volume.

David says

A great ending to the series, but the ending after the climax drags on so long, I was getting Return of the King movie flashbacks

Darlene says

A most satisfying conclusion to the River of Souls story arc begun with *Passion Play*. Raul Kosenmark and Ilse Zhalina are torn apart by political forces in the wake of the death of King Leos. Each of the lovers has a role to play in the struggling kingdom, and their allegiance to their cause will be tested, over and over again, but their allegiance to each other never wavers.

Fans of the earlier volumes will most definitely want to read *Allegiance*. There's room for more stories in the River of Souls universe, but the tale of Ilse and Raul plays out with all of the passion and promise of the earlier books fulfilled.

Dr susan says

Around page 185 of *Allegiance*, I remembered that the River of Souls series has been described as an epic. Epics are grand, sweeping stories of loss, betrayal, war, death, passion and life, and do not often have 'happily ever afters'. So I girded my loins, bit the bullet, put on my big girl panties, and prepared myself for the death of all the characters I enjoy.

Allegiance has multiple points of view that then blend into a main character's 'voice', so this book flows more smoothly than *Queen's Hunt*. I did devour *Allegiance* in one happy gulp. Nadine has been a consistent, snarky joy through all three books. Baron Mann and Raul's sisters gained a strong place in my affections. I do not do spoilers, so I will simply say that the conclusion of *Allegiance* is surprising, satisfying, and does justice to the term 'epic'.

Kelly says

As this is the final volume in the 'River Of Souls' trilogy, spoilers for the first two books are unavoidable. With that warning: King Leos is dead (permanently, one hopes) and the jewels have been reunited. Valara Baussay is bound for Morennioù, Raul Kosenmark is off to serve the king and Ilse Zhalina is caught between oaths and allegiance. She and Raul are still doing all they can to prevent war and, again, the obstacles in their path are numerous.

Secrets, lies, assassins and spies will try to stop them. Though neither Ilse nor Raul believe themselves to be selfless, they overcome their personal ambitions and doubts in order to serve their people. This time they will be rewarded for their sacrifices, making the end of this chapter of the greater story worthwhile for the characters and the reader.

It's the characters that separate the 'River Of Souls' novels from the other fantasy on the shelf. Well, that and the covers. The art by Scott Grimando is gorgeous. Back to the characters. Sexuality and gender are fluid concepts and society doesn't question either. The women are strong without being unfeminine and the men are not written dispassionately. Pen and sword can be effectively wielded by either sex, without discrimination. What is, is, which is very refreshing.

This is not to say individual characters do not struggle with who they are. They do. Writer Beth Bernobich has created a world where the usual rules and prejudices do not apply, which means she doesn't have to write out any objections to certain choices. She can concentrate on the story, which gives the narrative a seamless feel. It also allows her characters to make choices they might not be able to in our world. Love can win out, which allows the characters to forge strong alliances. The concept of reincarnation — the river of souls — flows through this, lending a deeper connection to these bonds and carrying hints or repercussions that will haunt for more than one lifetime.

The play of politics, intrigue and romance is compelling enough to entice readers. The addition of a truly unique setting makes this trilogy stand out.

In her acknowledgements, which appear at the beginning of the book, Bernobich mentions the care and feeding of trilogies, meaning *Allegiance* is the final installment in the 'River Of Souls' novels. The story begun in *Passion Play* and continued in *Queen's Hunt* does find a conclusion, but the 'River Of Souls' is not a concept that can be easily encompassed in three novels. There is more story, if not with these players, then in their next lives, or perhaps their previous incarnations. In other words, I'd like to read on. I hope Beth Bernobich writes on.

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