



The Cycle of Fire: Stormwarden / Keeper of the Keys / Shadowfane

By Janny Wurts

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The Cycle of Fire: Stormwarden / Keeper of the Keys / Shadowfane By Janny Wurts

Her magnificent high fantasy trilogy—*Stormwarden*, *Keeper of the Keys* and *Shadowfane* complete in one volume.

Sorcery and Destiny

For centuries, the elusive Vaere have trained sorcerers to stand against Shadowfane's demons, who seek nothing less than mankind's destruction and the world's total conquest. Now, the demons have won corrupt human allies, and the last, great defenders have fallen—the Firelord died mad, and the Stormwarden languishes, imprisoned and disgraced.

New champions will arise from unlikely beginnings—an orphan and an apprentice, a fisher girl and her disaffected brother—each with a power, a secret, and a flaw that will shape their destinies.

The demons awaken. The champions choose sides. And it begins again: *The Cycle of Fire*, Janny Wurts's magnificent high fantasy trilogy, complete in one volume for the first time.

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The Cycle of Fire: Stormwarden / Keeper of the Keys / Shadowfane By Janny Wurts Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This stout and epic tale mixing fantasy and SF was originally published in the 1980s in mass market in three volumes, *Stormwarden*, *Keeper of the Keys* and *Shadowfane*. Whether those novels have been edited for this edition or not, the joint publication brings out the essential unity of the story. Far in the future, a human-crewed starship crashes on a distant planet, carrying a load of alien POWs taken to help discover the secrets of a deadly foe, the group mind known as the Gierj. In time, the humans revert to a feudal society, the aliens are seen as "demons" and the starship's computer survives as a "magical" entity known as the Vaere. Two powerful human wizards learn the mental techniques (or magic) of the Vaere, but one, Ivain Firelord, dies mad, and the other, Anskiere Stormwarden, is distrusted and imprisoned. The burden of fighting the *Shadowfane*, the realm of the demons, falls on Taen Dreamweaver, a fisherman's daughter, and on an orphan boy named Jaric, who is actually Ivain's bastard son. They are in a race against time to master Vaere powers, because the *Shadowfane* are on the march, and Taen's brother has become a minion of the *Shadowfane*, known as Maelgrim Dark Dreamer. The race is full of action, splendid scenes of magic (including some terrifying dreams) and engaging secondary characters. It also has many well-handled seafaring scenes (Robin Hobb's *Liveship Saga* fans, take note) and an amiable, even tender romance subplot. Jaric and Taen are the eventual victors, but not without cost, nor without the possibility of future adventures among the stars and against the Gierj. (June)

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Review

"Action-packed...Wurts continues to be excellent at world-building and characterization." --- *Booklist*

"One of those do-not-put-down-until-finished books, of which there are all too few!" --- *Andre Norton*

"The world Janny Wurts writes about is wonderfully vivid." --- *Stephen R. Donaldson*

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About the Author

Janny Wurts is the author of eleven novels, a collection of short stories, and the internationally best selling Empire trilogy written in collaboration with Raymond E. Feist. Her current release in her Wars of Light and Shadow series, *Grand Conspiracy*, and her forthcoming hardcover, *Peril's Gate*, are the culmination of more than twenty years of carefully evolved ideas. The cover images on the books, both in the US and abroad, are her own paintings, depicting her vision of characters and setting.

Through her combined talents as a writer/illustrator, Janny has immersed herself in a lifelong ambition: to create a seamless interface between words and pictures that will lead reader and viewer beyond the world we know. Her lavish use of language lures the mind into a crafted realm of experience, with characters and

events woven into a complex tapestry, and drawn with an intensity to leave a lasting impression. Her research includes a range of direct experience, lending her fantasy a gritty realism, and her scenes involving magic an almost visionary credibility. A self-taught painter, she draws directly from the imagination, creating scenes in a representational style that blurs the edges between dream and reality. She makes no preliminary sketches, but envisions her characters and the scenes that contain them, then executes the final directly from the initial pencil drawing.

The seed idea for the Wars of Light and Shadow series occurred, when, in the course of researching tactic and weapons, she viewed a documentary film on the Battle of Culloden Moor. This was the first time she had encountered the historical context of that brutal event, with the embroidery of romance stripped from it. The experience gave rise to an awakening, which became anger, that so often, our education, literature and entertainment slant history in a manner that equates winners and losers with moral right and wrong, and the prevalent attitude, that killing wars can be seen as justifiable solutions when only one side of the picture is presented.

Her series takes the stance that there are two sides to every question, and follows two characters who are half brothers. One a bard trained as a master of magecraft, and the other a born ruler with a charismatic passion for justice, have become cursed to lifelong enmity. As one sibling raises a devoted mass following, the other tries desperately to stave off defeat through solitary discipline and cleverness. The conflict sweeps across an imaginary world, dividing land and people through an intricate play of politics and the inborn prejudices of polarized factions already set at odds. Readers are led on a journey that embraces both viewpoints. The story explores the ironies of morality which often confound our own human condition—that what appears right and just, by one side, becomes reprehensible when seen from the opposite angle. What is apparently good for the many, too often causes devastating suffering to the nonconformist minority. Through the interactions between the characters themselves, the reader is left to their own discretion to interpret the moral impact of events.

Says Janny of her work, "I chose to frame this story against a backdrop of fantasy because I could handle even the most sensitive issues with the gloves off-explore the myriad angles of our troubled times with the least risk of offending anyone's personal sensibilities. The result, I can hope, is an expanding journey of the spirit that explores the grand depths, and rises to the challenge of mapping the ethereal potential of an evolving planetary consciousness."

Beyond writing, Janny's award winning paintings have been showcased in exhibitions of imaginative artwork, among them a commemorative exhibition for NASA's 25th Anniversary; the Art of the Cosmos at Hayden Planetarium in New York; and two exhibits of fantasy art, at both the Delaware Art Museum, and Canton Art Museum.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Shanon Stephens:

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