



# The Deed of Paksenarrion

*Elizabeth Moon*

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## **The Deed of Paksenarrion** Elizabeth Moon

*The Deed of Paksenarrion* revolves around the life of Paksenarrion Dorthansdotter, known as Paks. It takes place in a fictional medieval world comprised of kingdoms of humans, dwarves, and elves. The story begins by introducing Paks as a headstrong girl of 18, who leaves her home (fleeing a marriage arranged by her father) to join a mercenary company. Through her journeys and hardships she comes to realize that she has been gifted as a paladin. The novel was originally published in three volumes in 1988 and 1989 and as a single trade edition of that name in 1992. The three books included are *The Sheepfarmer's Daughter*, *Divided Allegiance* and *Oath of Gold*.

From publisher Baen: "Paksenarrion, a simple sheepfarmer's daughter, yearns for a life of adventure and glory, such as was known to heroes in songs and story. At age seventeen she runs away from home to join a mercenary company and begins her epic life . . . Book One: Paks is trained as a mercenary, blooded, and introduced to the life of a soldier . . . and to the followers of Gird, the soldier's god. Book Two: Paks leaves the Duke's company to follow the path of Gird alone—and on her lonely quests encounters the other sentient races of her world. Book Three: Paks the warrior must learn to live with Paks the human. She undertakes a holy quest for a lost elven prince that brings the gods' wrath down on her and tests her very limits."

## **The Deed of Paksenarrion Details**

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Author : Elizabeth Moon

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# From Reader Review The Deed of Paksenarrion for online ebook

## SoloSetup says

This is difficult book to get through and it's not because the language is particularly difficult, in fact, the language is simple and direct. Is the language direct because the characters involved are soldiers and simple sentence structure just comes with the territory? I have no idea, but there is a lack of description in the writing which means there's a lack of rhythm to the sentences and the narrative itself. And that gets under my skin like nothing else.

And then there's the characters. I'm actually finding it difficult to describe them because there's so little that I remember about them. There's a few side characters here and there but during reading I struggled to remember who they were and which position in the cohort they occupied. Paks herself is a boring vehicle for "strong female character" who...wow I can't remember what she's done besides kill a few people in battle and get injured a few times. Oh and she's not interested in having sex (with anyone), which is all fine and good, but if that's your only defining character trait...? In short, Paks is not an interesting main character and the world she inhabits isn't interesting enough to excuse her lack of personality. This makes me sad because there are so few female warrior characters in the first place and Paks is just a lump of coal with the label "strong female warrior" taped to it. She's not a bad example of a female warrior character, but she's nowhere near a good one either.

I don't know if I can finish this book. The descriptions are flat and boring and the characters (including the main character) are forgettable. Just another Flat Fantasy.

EDIT:

I should mention that the edition I'm reading is an omnibus of all three books in the Paksenarrion series. I just finished the first book, today. Well, "struggled through it" would be a more accurate description. I didn't know it was possible to keep the same flat pacing through an entire book rich with battles and fight scenes but Moon manages it! The fight scenes are bogged down by description and they don't flow at a natural, believable speed. This kills any suspense in the book. The flat pacing does work well for describing the drudgery involved with sieges and marching, but not for anything else that happens.

As I said before, the book suffers from shallow characterization but add that on top of the flat pacing and it becomes a struggle to read. I found myself more concerned with finishing this book than with what was going on. I know, technically, that there was a climax but it didn't feel like one; I wasn't excited or tense about what was happening at all. Paks remains dull and boring. The side characters remain forgetful and the villain, Siniava, was a throwaway character. I won't remember this book because of a thrilling storyline or fascinating characters, but because the execution was so lifeless.

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## Stef Rozitis says

Well! The joke is on me after the way I kept saying year that I resented reading anything over 500 pages since most authors were neither talented enough not disciplined enough to be worth it, and here I am in the first month of this year praising my second book over 1000 pages! To be fair this is actually a compilation of three novels (though I am not sure the second would stand alone well).

Paksenarrion is a sheep farmer's daughter, but dreams of more than just marriage. She wants to fight and she has a strong sense of right and wrong. All the elements of high fantasy are there and some cliches too, but better than that because for a start the world-building is better than average, the language is plausible and not too unwieldy. While I appreciate the many, varied, strong, female characters (more than passes the Bechdel test -look up Alison Bechdel I was still irritated that overwhelmingly more characters were male and most females in the world seemed to be back-grounded as invisible wives and suchlike).

This for me was summarised on p703 where the question of a male character's marriage is dismissed with "The world is full of good wives". Well it might be (and the term "good" in this context is problematic anyway) but where are they? The story gives them no voice or even visibility. Of course wives are boring, but then the fact that most characters are male becomes not so progressive after all (but I guess that was the nineties).

I loved that Paks is asexual. About time someone in a book was and I think it is well treated. She is a great combination of heroic and fallible, exceptional yet relatable. She is a beautiful character and the people around her who surround her with love are a Utopian but lovely part of the book (some of the traditions, celebrations and camaraderie made me think of this as a Tamora Pierce book for adults).

I hated the torture scenes. I don;t care how compelling that many detailed pages of torture. No...just no. If you feel that way too I recommend you still read the book but skip those bits...I wish I had it would have ruined the story not at all.

I love the complex(ish) morality and spirituality in the book. Yes good vs evil but...there's different ways of doing each. The way of explaining the pantheon of the world made more sense to me than multiple gods have before. I could turn my critical feminist lens on that but I would rather celebrate the Gird/Falk diversity of good as something to aspire to. The focus varies but the intent is the same.

For anyone who likes high fantasy with believable characters, magic, action, good vs evil and kick arse characters (male and female both) could get something out of this book. But be warned at times it does move slowly!

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## **Kevin says**

If you aren't bothered by fantasy clichés and are looking for a good story with a strong, female lead you should consider *The Deed of Paksenarrion*.

This book is an omnibus edition that combines the books *Sheepfarmer's Daughter*, *Divided Allegiance* and *Oath of Gold* into one volume. The trilogy was written as one story and tells the tale of Paksenarrion Dorthansdotter, or simply Paks to her friends.

Paks is the daughter of a sheepfarmer from a small hamlet in the middle of nowhere. In order to escape her betrothal to a pigfarmer and a boring life in insignificance she runs away from home at the age of eighteen and joins a local lord's mercenary band. We follow Paks as she goes through her training and her first years on campaign and we see what happens after her military years. We see her change from a young peasant girl, head filled with dreams of glory and fame, to a veteran scarred by many battles, scars both mental and physical. We follow her as she makes friends for life and as she loses those friends to war and betrayal. We follow her as she goes through moments of intense joy and triumph and as she lives through undescrivable

horror. And slowly, through loss, pain and mistakes but also through her innate strength of character, the goodness of her heart, and an unwavering loyalty to her friends, the naive sheepfarmer's daughter grows into something much more.

I liked this book, Paks makes for a credible, rich and engaging main character. The other characters all have their own personalities, strengths and flaws, though none are as developed as Paks.

Through the realistic depictions of strategy, battles, armies on march and weaponplay Elizabeth Moon lets her background in the military and as a historian shine through. All the combat has a gritty sense of realism to it without being overly gory.

There are, however, a couple of points that could potentially turn people, especially more experienced fantasy readers, off this story.

First of all it is very clear that the world that Moon has built is based on roleplaying settings like D&D. It is obvious from the magic system, both arcane and divine and a lot of the characters fall into clear roleplaying archetypes: the wizard, the rogue, the cleric, the paladin, ... There are also elves, dwarves and orcs who all fulfill the classic stereotypes.

Further there are descriptions of barely relevant landscapes that seem to go on for pages in certain parts, especially in the middle book. Also, something that really bothered me personally, there are the archaic speech patterns in the dialogues. It all comes across a bit contrived to me and can turn reading into a bit of slog at times.

Granted the reason that most of these 'flaws' are there is that these books were written in the late eighties. The fantasy genre and its readership has evolved since that time, and what worked or what was commonplace then can sometimes be a turnoff for modern readers.

All in all this story of self discovery and growth has more positive points than negatives and I enjoyed reading it.

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## **Wealththeow says**

Terrible. I hoped that the author's experience in real combat would make this an interesting novel, but instead it just bogged the story down with boring and completely unnecessary details. She feels the need to describe every type of mud, but Paks' training to be a soldier still somehow feels like a montage. Add to that unrealistic dialog, a plot that \*still\* hadn't started at page 131, evil characters who are VERY VERY evil and good characters who are VERY VERY good, and you have yourself a piece of drek. I feel no need to finish the book (because A)the characters have no personalities whatsoever, B)the main character is a boring Mary-Sue, and C)there is no plot), let alone the series. At least Mercedes Lackey's Arrows of the Queen had a feel of joy to it; this is just one long slog through cliché-land.

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## **Monika says**

Out of all the books I have read, this is probably(ok IS) my favorite. I actually was slow and bought the omnibus having not read any of the 3 books. I bought it because I have read and liked Elizabeth Moon's other books. I actually need to buy another copy as mine is so worn and tattered, held together by cardboard

and duct tape.

Elizabeth Moon is a very strong writer with the ability to make you see her words in your mind's eye not just on the page. Paksenarrion is the heroine of this trilogy and I am not sure if it is her strong sense of honor and duty which appeals to me or the fact that as a female veteran I can empathize with her so much.

This is my first real review and since it is my favorite book more emotional than factual. If you like fantasy and military books this one combines some of the best of both. I will honestly say there is a little drag in the middle (I skip it in rereads sometimes) but for the most part even as many times as I have read it, the flow is fast paced and dynamic and you always want to root for Paks and her friends.

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## **J says**

This book made a criminal out of me.

...let me explain.

This was the first fantasy novel that I remember reading -- the first that wasn't a school library find, aimed at children. This is not a children's book. I was around eleven or twelve and was visiting a neighbor, and saw this cover of a lady in armor on a horse swinging a sword.

And I thought: "Wow. That lady's cool. And she's not wearing a bikini."

So I asked the neighbor if I could borrow it. This is a pretty big book, mind, and I think he didn't think I'd finish it.

He might still think that, actually, because I never gave that book back. I read it cover to cover in four days, all 1024 pages of the Baen omnibus version, and then I tucked it away on my shelf. Over the years I'd pull it out and read it again every so often, whenever I was feeling a bit blue.

When I found out that the author was writing more novels in the universe, ones that actually followed what happened after Paks had her adventures, I did a little happy dance around the room. And they are indeed also fantastic.

So. To recap: This is straight up epic fantasy, no bones about it, featuring one of the strongest (and most truly paladin-y) female characters I've ever bumped into. And yet for fantasy it's remarkably grounded. The story starts with the life of a working soldier, the trench-digging, supply-hauling pikemen of pre-gunpowder warfare. That this soldier evolves into the type of person who alters the face of kingdoms is a remarkable and wholly believable story, I think -- it's a hard thing to do without crossing into Mary Sue territory, but it's deftly avoided. Paks is flawed, but true, and I heartily recommend her tale to anyone in the mood for an epic yarn.

And then go pick up the recently released follow ups, which follow everyone else that's involved in Paks' world, and what happens when she waltzes through and shakes everything up. They're fantastic and show how the author's craft has evolved in the last twenty years, and they're appointment reading for me these days. Highly recommended.

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## Nicholas Kotar says

Nowadays, readers tend to give authors as much as five pages to impress them. More often, it's one page. Sometimes, it's even one line.

It's too bad, really, because people who read that way tend to miss some real gems. I've been slipping into that kind of reading mode, if only because there are too many books to read in a short lifetime. But for whatever reason, I stuck with this series far longer than I normally would have.

First, the problems.

This is a chronicle, and sometimes it reads like one. Most of today's fantasy readers prefer a deep, deep point of view, reminiscent of watching something on TV. The leisurely narration of classic fiction bores them. The Deed of Paksenarrion sometimes gets lost in such leisurely narration. It's not entirely surprising. Paksenarrion, as a character, is very much a work in progress. She's not very bright. She doesn't think deeply (at least in the beginning). She has a very annoying tendency to let others dictate her actions.

These are not good qualities for a main character, and add to that her complete lack of interest in romance, and you have an odd choice for a hero.

But she's earnest and good and she changes when she realizes her fault. For the better.

The account of Paksenarrion's struggles and transformation is about as transformative a reading experience as I can remember. Book Three (Oath of Gold) is gut-wrenching, brilliant, amazing. It's really what made the entire series worth a five star rating.

Outside of Game of Thrones, I have never had to experience the pain and suffering of a main character so viscerally. What Paksenarrion has to endure is martyr-like. But unlike Martin's largely nihilist treatment of (basically) everyone, Elizabeth Moon is not afraid to explore how pain and suffering can have profound positive effects on a person. And she, unlike so many others, is brave enough to try to tackle the most difficult of all aspects of fiction--a believable system of divine intercession that doesn't veer into Deus ex Machina.

Tolkien did this wonderfully. Some people don't like the way Lord of the Rings ended. Tolkien explained that he purposely did not want a typically heroic ending, not because he did not value the idea of heroism, but because he understood the importance of grace, of divine intervention in the lives of his characters, occurring ineffably, but without doubt.

When dealing with ultimate evil, either your hero needs to be a god, an even worse monster, or a human being with the odds ridiculously stacked against you. There are few ways out of such a situation that leave the reader satisfied. Moon puts Paksenarrion into a situation with no ways out. Then she delivers her in the most amazing way, but with no hint of hokey trickery. Everything that happens to Paksenarrion happens for a concrete reason that moves the plot forward. It brilliant juggling by a capable writer.

But perhaps what I loved the best about this series is its treatment of "good magic." Too often, in epic fantasy, the good guys can only beat the bad guys by taking more and more power for themselves. Yes, of course, they'll use it better than the bad guys. But in "real life" that's rarely the case. Tolkien understood this too, making "Boromir's solution" something that never ends well. But the paladins and saints of Moon's

secondary world wield power only when they ask for it. It comes, or it doesn't come, not because of their own will, but because of the will of the gods they serve. This is convincing, good magic, because the wielder becomes humble through lack of control, and is safeguarded from the temptation of abusing power. It's brilliant, effective, and inspiring.

Elizabeth Moon's trenchant understanding of the temptation and misuse of power, for me, is what makes this series, according to the back cover blurb, the "only worthy successor to Tolkien."

Go and read it! But be warned, there are geldings, explicit tortures, sermonizing, and some self-righteous behavior. It's worth it, though. With patience, the reward is great.

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### **Lorena says**

This book is interesting to me primarily for its description of the main character's military training. The author is a former Marine, and as such, her creation of a female warrior has more credibility than most. However, as technically accurate as this series may be in terms of military training and strategy, it is seriously lacking in emotional resonance. The main character, Paksenarrion (Paks), never really connects emotionally with anyone else. We are told that certain other characters are her "friends," but why is a mystery. Mostly they seem to be gregarious people who adopt her without much encouragement from Paks herself, and then rapidly get themselves killed off so that the relationships don't have to develop very far. More than anything, Paks seems almost like a child. Her closest relationships are with older men who treat her in a fatherly fashion. She has no sexual urges or attractions whatsoever. She spends most of the series very passively taking orders from others. While we are assured in brief passages that she is learning all sorts of things, her understanding of things like politics and philosophy never seems to progress beyond that of a child.

Also, I didn't care for the role Paks' faith played in these books. We are supposed to believe that her strong faith plays a large role in the final conflict in the series, but the only reason she HAS faith at all is because her gods have appeared to her repeatedly and bestowed all sorts of gifts upon her. It doesn't strike me as all that remarkable to develop an unshakeable faith in a god that is constantly showing up and actively helping you out.

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### **Michael Pang says**

Fantastic, I forgot I was reading an omnibus edition of 3 books I was so engrossed.

When I first read the blurb where it said it was a high fantasy story of sheepfarmer's daughter turned paladin, I admit I was a little wary. I envisioned some immature teenager shooting bolts of blue light from fingers instantly dropping scores of ugly orcs, talking pets, [insert cheesy/campy bad kiddie movie theme), etc. Needless to say, it wasn't and was a fantastic story.

The 3 books of the omnibus follow one after the other, literally with little to no time between books.

Book 1 I would categorized a solid military fantasy. The main character, Paks, joins a mercenary company and you follow along as she trains and adventures with the company across the map. We have close



formation drills, sieges, and campaigning.

Book 2-3, Paks leaves the company and we adventure along with quests into underground lairs, meet elves/dwarves/orcs, knight/paladin training, quests, kings and politics and more military fantasy.

The books isn't overly "dark" but neither is it "childish" as I feared it might be. What you have here in the omnibus is great military, high and epic fantasy. If the author, Elizabeth Moon ever revisits this world I would eagerly await more.

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## **Werner says**

This rating applies to the trilogy overall, though my review below concentrates mostly on the last two books. I reviewed the first novel, *Sheepfarmer's Daughter*, separately; my review is here:

[www.goodreads.com/review/show/625260624](http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/625260624) . (That review is worth reading for insight into the development of the trilogy as a whole.) But while that novel can sort of stand as a unit on its own (though closely related to the other two), the second one, *Divided Allegiance*, ends with Paks in a terrible and apparently hopeless situation. If we take that as the completion of a story arc, the book would get terrible ratings and worse reviews (my wife, to whom I read the omnibus volume aloud, suggested wringing Elizabeth Moon's neck :- ) ); and that would be completely unjustified, because that's NOT the completion of a storyline --the last two books have to read essentially as a unit! Hence my decision to rate and review the omnibus volume as such. (The first novel by itself earned a four-star rating.)

Some of the characteristics of the first book carry over into the next two: the detailed world building, the strong characterizations, the slow narrative pace (though that's not as noticeable here, possibly because by now we're used to it). In other ways, there are differences. Paks' growth as a character here is very marked, and that's one of the reasons for the five stars; she really comes into her own here, psychologically, morally and spiritually, but this comes about as believable personal development of who she essentially is, not as an artificial change tacked on by the author. This is one of the great strengths of the trilogy. Most fantasy fans will appreciate the fact that magic, and magical creatures and races, come into play in the storyline from early in the second book, and play a much more important role in the rest of the trilogy than before. For fans who don't like the military-centric style of fantasy, Paks is taken out of the mercenary company context fairly soon in the second book. Here, she's not in situations that call attention to her unusual disinterest in sex, and that aspect of her character fits into her role as a paladin (see the Goodreads description); "paladins" aren't allowed to marry.

In reviewing the first book, I noted that it seemed to hint that the cult of St. Gird would figure more prominently in the succeeding books. That guess was dead on. While the first novel introduces us to the seemingly polytheistic religions and cults of Moon's fantasy world, the later volumes take us behind the scenes to see more of a unifying pattern in apparent diversity. The human cultures of Pak's world recognize a righteous Creator, the High Lord; and it's explicitly suggested that the elven and dwarfen concepts of the Creator are the same God, just with a different name and different stressed aspects. Other, lesser "gods" are spiritual entities that either serve the Creator, or in the case of the evil ones (and some are radically evil) oppose him, much like Satan opposes God; while human saints like Gird and Falk are separately venerated by distinct groups of followers, but each are recognized as servants of the common High Lord. In other words, religion in that world is much more monotheistic in essence than it initially appears; and it's a strongly moral monotheism. (And as in our world, believers have to struggle with challenges to faith and problems of theodicy.) I know nothing about Moon's religious beliefs, if any. But I'd say that while she's

created a world in which believers have a different "salvation history" than they do in ours, it's one in which Christian readers can view them as believers in the same Creator. That's an important realization, because religious themes play a key part in the last two novels --and I'd say they're themes/messages that are entirely compatible with Christianity.

There's plenty of sword-fighting and other action here, quests and intrigue, magical perils, hidden identity, and a plot that's suspenseful right up almost to the last page. But it's also a work of rare psychological and spiritual depth, with the kind of serious dimension that marks it as truly great fiction, fiction of lasting literary significance, not just entertainment value. It's also fiction that will break your heart in places, because there are points where Paks practically goes through hell --and some scenes here are not for the squeamish. But light is only recognizable against darkness; and out of great darkness here comes great light. One of the most powerful scenes in English-language literature that I've ever read in a lifetime of reading occurs here (you'll know it when you read it). It's a real shame that this trilogy isn't more widely known by fantasy fans; but more than that, it's a shame that it's not recognized as one of the crown jewels of the American literary canon from the late 20th century. I'd like to hope that someday it will be!

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## Terri says

Robin McKinley communicates with Elizabeth Moon (@emoontx) on Twitter a lot, and I figure if Robin likes it, it's worth a read.

I did not finish this book, but not because it was bad. It was, in fact, a very interesting book, but there was a major flaw that kept me from finishing.

The story of Paksenarrion, or "Paks" as the reader comes to know her, is essentially a good one. She's a mistreated daughter who runs away and joins the army ... and that's pretty much all that happens in the first book (this particular edition is three books crammed into one volume). One reviewer on Amazon describes the book as "relentlessly linear" and I'm inclined to agree. Moon describes everything, and I mean everything, that Paks does. If she's walking to the tent, there's a whole page of what she sees and who she passes, not just once, but every time she walks somewhere. It's as if you're following her around but you have no idea what she's thinking. Because the story is told in 3rd person, you don't get reflection from Paks' point of view, and you don't get the viewpoints from any other characters. Usually, in stories of this length, the author has a main character, but also has supporting characters whose thoughts and feelings the reader is privy to. This moves the story along and helps the reader connect with the characters. In *The Deed*, the reader watches Paks move along her path without ever really connecting with her. I like her as a character, but the book is just too boring. Every tree, every ridge that Paks passes is described in detail and the plot never seems to be going anywhere because you've been inundated with descriptions of her mealtimes, her training times, her sleeping patterns, and every other mundane detail.

And yet, this book is a steadfast favorite among many. Perhaps it's just not my kind of reading, but I checked this book out months ago, have renewed it twice, and have finally given up. I'll be taking this back to the library, and I won't lose any sleep over the fact that I dropped it during a war. I like Paks as a character, but her story just wasn't told in a way that suits me.

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## Kapi says

I came upon this saga purely by accident, because I was testing out the Baen free Library (many thanks to them) on a new PDA. After reading a few pages I was hooked, and could not get to the second and third books fast enough. I completely got caught up in her trials and battles and victories. Ms Moons writing style captivated me and didn't let me go until I turned the last page. This is a story that when I finished it, I held the book close to me and sighed, sad that it was over. Paksenarrion is a character that I can admire for her honesty (altho sometimes it seemed unrealistic) and her sense of honor. I don't normally keep books, but pass them on to others for enjoyment, but this one I will keep, in printed form, e-book, and audiobook.

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## Emma says

OK, I loved this book when I was twelve. Paks was my first screenname and hell I even named a cow after her. Yes, I said a cow, I grew up on a farm and that's what you do when you love something on a farm. You name a cow after it. My dad once named a cow after an ex-girlfriend of his and it pissed my stepmom way off. Ok I digress. This book is about a paladin. What's that you say? Only a holy knight! Only a divine warrior of good! And what else is Paks? A sheepfarmers daughter! Do you see why I loved this book??

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## Saellys says

The one-star reviews are right about one thing: if you're not into the trappings of classic high fantasy, you probably won't enjoy *Paksenarrion*. There are orcs and dwarves and rangers and sentient forests and magic rings and giant evil spiders; people go on quests, and elves save the day more than once. Courage and self-sacrifice are transformative qualities. There is a happy ending and not everyone dies. Sound cliché? Well, it was the eighties and everyone wanted to be Tolkien--gritty medieval fantasy with lots of swears and boobs had not yet been invented.

If you can sit through all that, you'll discover a very different sort of high fantasy novel. In fact, Elizabeth Moon created exactly what a lot of people want, and fail to get, out of contemporary fantasy--and she did it twenty-five years ago.

This is a true epic that happens to be about a woman. Paks gets remarkable character development, and her story does not end with having babies. Her environment is almost entirely egalitarian, but the gender dynamics are still fascinating. She is surrounded by people of color and varying sexual orientations. The mercenary company in which she gets her start is a pragmatically progressive microcosm, with contraceptives freely available and no religious affiliation. All the characters feel solid, as if they had lives before this story; some are morally grey, some are full of doubt, some are shining beacons of faith, but all of them make mistakes.

At no point does this reek of Moon attempting to shoehorn all the things into her novel; she handles these details masterfully. In fact, this is the first time in recent memory that I have read a trilogy and thought it actually warranted being a trilogy. The denouement really did require all that setup to have the appropriate emotional resonance. The pacing is odd at times, which leads me to believe an editor cut even more material, and that feels like a shame (particularly near the end when the perilous journey (view spoiler) slips by much too quickly. At times I wanted to buy Moon a thesaurus. Fortunately, these minor problems did not detract

from an excellent story.

If you've ever felt disappointed with the fantasy genre's perpetual focus on male protagonists and whitewashed settings, give *Paksenarrion* a few hundred pages to get rolling, and remember that the journey is the destination.

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### **Annie Bellet says**

This has been one of my favorite books since I was 11. I reread it just about every year (though I often skip certain parts because they make me cry, so I save the pain for every few years). This book is one of the best D&D-esque fantasies ever written. Sure, Paks gets hit in the head more than seems possible for someone to survive, and the bull-headedness she displays is at times annoying, but these are qualities of an interesting and dynamic character.

Elizabeth Moon writes entertaining and detailed military scenes and uses a deft hand for painting a typical fantasy world. The plot is varied and thorough. It's the characters that bring me back to this book time and again, however. I feel like I could walk through the streets of her cities and recognize everyone. I want to pick up a sword and go have adventures every time I read this book. I can't think of enough good things to say.

If you love fantasy, read this book. I can't possibly articulate what makes it so good as well as the book itself can.

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### **Ron says**

This is in my opinion the best fantasy novel ever. I actually read all three of the individual books before this omnibus came out, but they are really one complete story.

It has fantasy elements done in a deep way I haven't seen anywhere else. If you want to understand Paladins, this is the place to do it. If you want to get an idea of how a God or gods could use someone's life through pain and trial, this is the book.

Did I say it was the best fantasy novel ever? Go read it now.

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### **Dev Null says**

These books are one of the things she is most famous for, and I like her other stuff, but I avoided these for ages because the jacket blurbs make them sound like such unadulterated schmaltz. As is often the case, said jacket blurbs were probably written by someone who had done no more than look at the (terrible) cover art; the books themselves were quite good. Here Moon turns her talent for making the fantastic feel "normal" and everyday - which I much enjoyed in her sci-fi stuff - on a world of fantasy and magic. The first book follows a new recruit into a mercenary company on a fantasy world, and the day-to-day barracks life, as well as the battles, has the feel of realism to it. All is not the slaying of dragons and heroic rescuing of maidens; mostly its drill, polishing, and slogging through the mud.

In the later two books, once she has you believing in this world, more elements of fantasy creep their way in. And here we get an interesting twist. In some fantasy - usually, but not universally bad - you can practically hear the dice rolling in the background it sounds so much like a transcript of a role-playing game. They end up strings of unrelated events sounding like one of those "And then I rolled a 20!" geek stories that you desperately tried to save yourself from by faking your own death. Moon does the opposite; she paints us a picture of paladins that is so the cardboard stereotype that I swear she must have been working from a DND manual, and then fleshes it out to put real characters in it and tell an interesting story about them. All the wacky pointless details are there - from preternaturally shining armour, magic warhorses, and high charisma, to the old classic of "laying on hands" - but all given reasons and woven into a background to make sense. And then she messes about with some of the real issues like belief in god vs. belief in a church, but does it as an undercurrent in what is otherwise an action tale, so you can be intrigued by it without getting bored.

On the whole, I rarely (except for *Speed of Dark*) find that Moon's writing draws me in so completely and compellingly as some of my other favorites, but she has a talent for selling the fantastic as gritty and real which I always enjoy. Couple that with her poking here at genre stereotypes - and poking by simply doing the stereotypes right, for once - and these books are well worth the read.

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## E. says

The one and only reason I haven't flung *The Deed of Paksenarrion* out of the window, drowned it in a vat of potassium hydroxide, or taken it to Half-Price Books and then used the resulting nine cents to buy myself a much-needed aspirin, is that I haven't reviewed it yet.

Tomorrow, *D of P*, prepare to meet your richly deserved fate: sent in disgrace and ignominy to the nearest used book store, there to stew in your own fetid juices until some other poor fool staggers along and reads you.

It will surprise no one familiar with this trilogy to learn that their primary inspiration was the *Dungeons & Dragons* paladin character class. For those of you who spent your high school years *not* sitting in your mom's basement covered in cookie crumbs, beer spills, and shame, paladins are the knight in shining armor type characters, who derive their power as warriors and magic-users from their pure and noble virtues. Paksenarrion, through the course of these three masterworks of reimagining a pen and paper role-playing game's suckiest character class, develops from an ugly, dull, strong, stupid, boring, virtuous sheepfarmer's daughter into an ugly, dull, etc. etc. Warrior of Good, and three cheers for character development, right?

It's been a while since I read this, nor would I inflict any details of the profoundly unmemorable first two books on anyone even if I could. So let's just skip ahead. Quick warning to any easily grossed out readers: if you click on the spoiler, you're going to be grossed out.

In the third book, *Oath of Delivering My Manuscript on Time*, Paksenarrion has offered yon loyal troth or whatever to some hot young king who treats her like furniture. I think this was supposed to be a clever post-feminist reversal of the classic Medieval trope of a pure knight and his platonic courtly-love relationship with a beautiful lady in whose name he sallies forth and kills ogres and whatnot. Honestly, I found the whole relationship between the two utterly embarrassing and sad.

On the other hand, if Paksenarrion's deeds had been limited to yon ogre-slaying, you know, that would have been cool. There are a few good gender-bending chicks in this sort of story; I'm particularly fond of "The

Girl Who Pretended To Be a Boy" (out of Andrew Lang's *The Violet Fairy Book*). Most recently, there's George R.R. Martin's character Brienne of Tarth, who's marginally less stupid, although just as much a cliché, as his others.

But no. Elizabeth Moon sends this character so far off the rails, with the completely incomprehensible titular "Deed," that this series breaks down completely.

(view spoiler)

With the "Deed," Moon seems to have intended a holy martyrdom type of effect, but I was simply left wondering what the bloody hell just happened, and more to the point: why?

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### **Mike (the Paladin) says**

I want to say first that I've read hundreds if not thousands of books and the largest percentage of them are probably fantasy. I love this book and rate it as one of my top 3 or 4 favorite novels. I can't recommend it too highly. I really don't think I can recommend it highly enough. Please read this book. I keep multiple copies on my shelf and have loaned out (read given away) many copies. This one is great.

I read the omnibus edition of this book. It's actually a trilogy. The Deed of Paksenarrion contains Sheepfarmer's Daughter, Divided Allegiance, and Oath of Gold. I find it a truly exceptional high fantasy read. I rate it five stars as it's in many ways (in my opinion of course) the best of it's type. In a time when "attempts" at epic fantasy are a dime a dozen, a good (or great) one should be noticed.

I don't want to include any spoilers in this (and I know some actually look for them)\*\*\*(note that I edited in a spoiler tag below. I decided that I had included a spoiler and came back to hide it under a warning. You may want to read the book before you read the part I hid.)\*\*\* but, let me mention what the book is actually about. It follows the life and career of a young woman who wants to be a soldier (the author Elizabeth Moon was military) from her beginning training throughout her life (view spoiler) \*\*\*\*\*I came back and edited in a spoiler tag, I decided something I said here is sort of a spoiler.\*\*\*\*\*

(view spoiler)

I have read this book (trilogy) many times and love it. It compares well to the "proto-epic fantasy", *The Lord of the Rings*, and I can and do recommend it (as well as *The Lord of the Rings*) highly. As I said, I can't recommend it highly enough. Great Book. I own all the books in print and audio versions. Highest possible recommendation.

As noted above, this omnibus edition contains:  
Sheepfarmer's Daughter, Divided Allegiance, and Oath of Gold.

One of my top favorites, 5 stars+.

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## **Lori says**

ANOTHER LABOR DAY WEEKEND FAIL! I was so excited to finally get to this, and have a wonderful escape. I have a line that I haul out to make fun of people who must have simplicity in their art, the line from Amadeus where the Emperor dismisses Mozart's music because of "too many notes." Well, one good thing about getting older is the ability to laugh at ourselves, and I'm gonna say this book has too many words! Really, 3 chapters for what could have been dealt with effectively in maybe 2 pages? Yet when someone like Mieville writes 50 pages for one idea I have no complaints, I love every word.

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