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The Snow Queen

by Joan D. Vinge



About the Book

The Winter colonists have ruled Tiamat for 150 years, slaughtering the gentle sea mers in trade for off-world wealth. But soon the gate to the galactic Hegemony will close, Tiamat will be isolate, and the 150-year reign of the Summer primitives will begin. Unless...

Arienrhod, the ageless, corrupt Snow Queen, can commit a genocidal crime-and destroy destiny...unless Sparks Dawntreader, the Snow Queen's companion, can survive sea and city, palace and slums-and find destiny...unless Hegemony Commander Jerusha Palathion, the Snow Queen's victim, can find one ally on Tiamat-and change destiny...

And unless Moon Summer, a young mystic, can break a conspiracy that spans space-and control destiny. Because Moon is the Snow Queen's lost weapon. The Snow Queen's lost nemesis. The Snow Queen's lost soul. Moon is the Snow Queen's clone...

Discussion Guide

1. The Snow Queen, in part, is an exploration of what love is and what people will do for the sake of love. For love of Sparks, Moon crosses galaxies and fights death in order to return to him. For love of Moon, BZ Gundhalinu risks his career and allows himself to be renounced by the members of his social caste. Herne follows Arienrhod to a suicide death. What do you think love is? How far would you let someone else go for love of you? How far would you go and how much would you give up for love?

2. The mers are revealed to be intelligent?an intelligence bioengineered by humans. Silky, an amphibian dillyp, is an alien who relates to them and communicates with them in a way that implies intelligence. Even Pollux, the android spending this time with Tor Starhiker, subtly shows signs of intelligence, not the least of which is the implication that he's in love with Tor. The author is making some broad statements about intelligence in her novel by bestowing it upon

prominent characters who are not human. But what do you think intelligence is? How do you think it is displayed or understood?

3. This novel is set extremely far into the future, after humanity has spread to colonies on other planets. We have even found and developed relationships with alien life. Do you think these humans of the future have changed or grown much in terms of the way they deal with each other and the way their communities operate compared to what you know of humans now? Do you think this is a reasonable expectation for humanity's future? In what ways do you think human-kind will change?

4. While many have remarked on the beauty of the love story, many other readers have commented that they found the Moon and Sparks love story to be too incestuous. Though we find out that their genetic makeup is unrelated, Moon and Sparks still grew up believing they were first cousins and with a decidedly sibling-like relationship. Do you think it is natural for them to have fallen in love?

5. At the end of the novel, Moon has become the Summer Queen. One of the first goals she sets is to redefine the relationships between the Winters, the Summers, and their technology by encouraging the Summers, who are now in control, not to destroy the technology still on Tiamat. Do you think that Moon's idea will work? What do you think are the major social problems on Tiamat? Do you think that Moon will be a good Summer Queen? What do you think she can and should do to help her community?

6. If Arienrhod could continue taking the water of life potion, she could live forever. What would you do with your time if you could be immortal? Do you think you could keep yourself occupied and interested in life forever? Or do you think you'd get bored?

Author Bio

Joan D. Vinge is the author of the Hugo Award-winning novel The Snow Queen, as well as the The Summer Queen, Psion, and several other science fiction novels. Her summer 1996 hardcover, Dreamfall, is a new novel about the character Cat. Vinge received a degree in anthropology (with highest honors) from San Diego State University. The study of that subject has been very useful to her in writing science fiction, Vinge says; both offer fresh viewpoints for looking at "human" behavior. Her novelette "Eyes of Amber" won the Hugo Award as well, and she has been a finalist for several other Hugo and Nebula awards. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her husband and two children.

Critical Praise

"A many-splendored blockbuster epic! "

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