The Price of Spring (The Long Price Quartet) by Daniel Abraham

One Of The Best Fantasy Series In Recent Years

Fifteen years have passed since the devastating war between the Galt Empire and the cities of the Khaiem in which the Khaiem’s poets and their magical power known as “andat” were destroyed, leaving the women of the Khaiem and the men of Galt infertile.

The emperor of the Khaiem tries to form a marriage alliance between his son and the daughter of a Galtic lord, hoping the Khaiem men and Galtic women will produce a new generation to help create a peaceful future.

But Maati, a poet who has been in hiding for years, driven by guilt over his part in the disastrous end of the war, defies tradition and begins training female poets. With Eiah, the emperor’s daughter, helping him, he intends to create andat, to restore the world as it was before the war.

Vanjit, a woman haunted by her family’s death in the war, creates a new andat. But hope turns to ashes as her creation unleashes a power that cripples all she touches.

As the prospect of peace dims under the lash of Vanjit’s creation, Maati and Eiah try to end her reign of terror. But time is running out for both the Galt and the Khaiem.

Features:
* Click here to view our Condition Guide and Shipping Prices

My Personal Review:
The Price of Spring is Daniel Abraham’s conclusion of his Long Price Quartet (and I commend Abraham for finishing a quartet in only four books). As anyone who has read my review of the first three knows I’m a big fan of the story. The Price of Spring has only confirmed my view that
the Long Price Quartet is one of the more original and best-written fantasy epics in recent years. If you haven't read my overview of the first three, you should, as I'm not going to repeat myself here with regard to basics of setting, character, magical system, etc. Also, fair warning, if you haven't read An Autumn War, stop reading here as you'll run into spoilers.

As has been the pattern in the series, the story picks up years after the events of book three, An Autumn War. Otah and Maati reappear as major characters, while other familiar faces show up in relatively minor roles—Balasar Gice, Cehmani, Sinja, Idaan, and others. New characters, both major and minor, are added to the mix, including Otah's daughter Eiah, his son Danat, Danat's betrothed, and several poets-in-training. An Autumn War ended with the destruction of the poets and the magical Andat, but only after the Andat Sterile had made the women of the Khaiem and the men of Galt infertile. Fifteen years later, both nations are already having difficulties and the prognosis for worse is obvious: without children, labor is becoming scarce, farms are starting to go unworked, businesses loses essential workers, the armies and navies are aging and will in a few years' time be unable to defend the borders.

The book opens with Otah attempting to negotiate an agreement with Galt to send willing members of the fertile genders of each sex over to the other country so the two countries can survive Sterile's curse. As part of his negotiating, he agrees to have his son Danat wed to a prominent daughter of Galt, Ana Dasin, though the betrothal goes nowhere as smoothly as Otah had wished.

Meanwhile, Otah's daughter, believing that this agreement demeans all women (viewing them as useful only for their reproductive ability), has left the palaces and joined with Maati, who sees Otah's treaty as a sell-out of his country to the Galt's, who after all had 15 years ago destroyed more than half the Khaiem cities in a bloody invasion. To stop Otah and to reassert Khaiem power over Galt, Maati has gathered several women in an attempt to teach them to be poets and regain the power of the Andat. It quickly becomes apparent that along with Vanjit whose entire family was killed by the Galts, Eiah is his best pupil, making these two the most likely new poets. Much of the book is focused on several races: the race by Maati and Eiah and Vanjit to "bind" a new Andat, the race by Otah and others to find them and stop them before they do so, and the race between the past and the future as the two countries must decide what their relationship to each other will be.

The strengths of The Price of Spring are the same as with the series as a whole: characterization, a relatively original "eastern-style" setting (though setting plays a very limited role in this book in comparison to the prior ones), a unique magic system centered on the Andats, relatively tight writing, strong prose, a good ending.

These books are character-driven more than action driven. You'll find no sweeping battle scenes, no storming the gates, no brawling or swordplay or fireballs a'bursting. The action, such as it is, involves mostly travel, a lot of dialogue (well-done dialogue), and brief acts that have deep and far-ranging effects. The characters are complex and multi-faceted and, as is often the case in real life, we can see their actions in both favorable and
unfavorable lights. In other words, nobody does anything here because they’re "evil" or they're the "dark lord"--their motivations come out of the everyday and believable: grief, jealousy, love, protectiveness, etc. Even when characters do something we don't like, we can see why they'd do it. For characters we've seen before, we get to see other sides of them or we get to see them ripen over the decades the book covers--changing as people do, sometimes growing wiser, sometimes letting the world outgrow their earlier wisdom. This is more true of Otah than anyone, and the rich, layered portrayal of his entire life as it plays out across the four novels is one of Abraham's finest achievements here. By the time this book ends we feel a true sense of a life, a real life, lived, with all the sorrows and grievous errors and magnificent triumphs any real life contains.

The plot is compelling and tense through much of the novel. I think, though, that my favorite aspect of the plot is how Abraham has us, as fans of fantasy and all that usually involves (magic, grand actions, noble justice, etc) rooting for the end of fantasy--the end of the Andats and the lack of justice. If the "good guys" win, there will be no magic in this world, only the continued technological progress of Galt as represented by their steamwagons etc. It's a somewhat depressing thought for those of us enticed by the promise of difference and magic in these worlds. And Abraham shows us the bittersweet aspect of this--the necessity to move on, the built-in stagnation inherent in the Andat system set side by side with the sorrow of a world gone by, a world that wasn't great but had its strengths, its pleasures, its better aspects that will be lost along with its worse elements. Much of this comes through the interior thought process of Otah, whom we've seen age from a young man to a nostalgic grieving old man burdened by responsibility.

There is much less focus on the Andat here; they are used mostly as a vehicle to examine the characters' desires and flaws, though as always the discussion of their creation and binding--the attempt to make concrete an abstract idea--is fascinating and enjoyably stimulating. The setting also plays a smaller role as most of the book simply travels through the setting rather than is driven by it. The gesture/pose grammar of the Khaiem is more fully realized here since we see it employed between Khaiem and Galts, so its subtleties are more played up.

As with the others, the book is relatively concise. I might have lost 30 pages or so, but there wasn’t any area of sustained lag, no real major pacing problems that involved whole sections or chapters. I would have probably cut some travel, drop a paragraph here or there, but that's a minor complaint. The writing is strong throughout and the bittersweet ending, two really since there's an epilog, finishes both the book and the series strongly and logically and honestly, with a truly moving close.

The Price of Spring is an excellent closure to one of the top series of recent years. I look forward to Abraham's next project. Highly recommended.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
The Price of Spring (The Long Price Quartet) by Daniel Abraham - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!