



Star Champion: The Champion of Barésh

Susan Grant

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NOTE: Alternate cover edition for ASIN B01B5LBYM0, previously titled The Champion of Baresh.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED AS THE CHAMPION OF BARÉSH!

RITA® winner and New York Times & USA Today bestselling author Susan Grant sweeps readers away to exciting new worlds in another romance and action-packed story!

Dreaming big on a dead-end world... Jemm Aves toils for a mining company by day, but at night she is a successful bajha player, disguised as a male to compete in the violent underworld of the colony's fight clubs. Every win puts her one small step closer to her goal: saving enough to escape Barésh with her family. When a royal recruits her to be a star player for his team, her ruse proves to be her most perilous game yet when it puts both their lives—and her heart—at risk.

Prince Charming he was not... Prince Klark is eager to reverse his reputation as the black sheep of the Vedla clan. If his bajha team can win the galactic title it would go a long way toward restoring the family honor that his misdeeds tarnished. On Barésh, he tracks down an amateur who has risen to the top of the seedy world of street bajha, offering the commoner a chance of a lifetime: a way off that reeking space rock for good. But his new player comes with a scandalous secret that turns his plans and his beliefs upside down. He sets out to win a very different prize—his champion's reluctant heart.

RITA® finalist *** Galaxy Award Winner

Star Champion: The Champion of Barésh Details

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From Reader Review Star Champion: The Champion of Barésh for online ebook

Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says

It has been a long five-year wait for the start of a new series by Grant. It is a very good story with great characters. One, Prince Klark, is a carry over from her Star series and another, Jemm Ave, is brand new. I loved how Klark was trying to bring honor to his family after his actions in a previous book did the reverse. Jemm is perfect in the role of a very strong woman who is working hard to help her family. The world building is very good and back-story for Jemm is spot on. My only complaint - It has been a long time since I read the Star series and the back-story for Klark is based on that series and I had forgotten a lot about what he did. It does work as a stand-alone and has numerous hooks for future books set in the Star World Frontier.

Laz the Sailor says

This was a very engaging scifi romance, where all of the main characters were well developed. The story of a waif on a backwater planet who becomes a hero for everyone was enchanting, and while there isn't much new here, the author is adept at writing scifi and lite erotica.

I will likely read the next book in this series.

Florence says

I've been a fan of Susan Grant since I first picked up a copy of *The Legend of Banzai Maguire* on a newsstand in 2004. I have read all her books, and I was thrilled to have the opportunity to read her latest work in advance and review it.

The Champion of Baresh is very much in keeping with the rest of Ms. Grant's Vash Nadah series: strong women flying against tradition in a heavily male-dominated society. Some of the sexual double standards, which I found quite "icky" in previous books, are downplayed in The Champion of Baresh, which was a plus for me. In its place, the disparity between privilege and poverty is managed with masterful attention to detail and just enough emphasis to make its points without being preachy. I did find it surprising that the class difference was not judged more harshly – or at least addressed more specifically – by more of the secondary characters among the Vash and their retainers towards the end of the book. Perhaps this represents progress in the development of the society, albeit perhaps more rapidly than real life social change occurs, but it might have been a bit more clearly explained.

After his enigmatic appearances as a side character in The Star Prince and The Star Princess, I was delighted to see Klark Vedla get his own book and his own chance for a happily ever after. I was glad to finally see events from his perspective. His sense of Vash Nadah honor, isolation, and regret for his previous actions are compelling, and his willingness to admit and correct a mistake is admirable. I appreciated his growth of character across all three books. Jemm, of course, is lovely as a tough but sweet young woman trying to keep her family safe and healthy amid difficult circumstances. It's refreshing to see a romance novel heroine who is not struggling with low self-esteem. I love the way she acts independently to solve her problems throughout the book, despite being slightly swept away as events move rapidly in unexpected directions.

The game of Bajha is an interesting combination of fencing and Blind Man's Bluff, with aspects of meditation, steeped in centuries-long tradition of warrior honor, and followed with the fervor of modern football. Even as a dedicated non-sports fan, I enjoyed the descriptions of the various Bajha matches, which were original, detailed, and at times suspenseful. However, I have to admit, I never really "got" the fanaticism aspect of football (either American or European) even in real life, and therefore had a bit of difficulty seeing success in the sports arena as a convincing vehicle for Klark to counteract his galactic-level humiliation and restore his family honor. However, I know I'm in the minority on this, and I imagine it won't be a problem for other readers.

To say The Champion of Baresh is not my favorite of all Susan Grant's books is to say I prefer Chocolate Moose Tracks ice cream over Rocky Road. It still deserves 5 stars in my opinion, it's still among my favorite books, and I will still read it over and over. And as always, my final question is... when can I buy the audiobook?

I received a free review copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Marta Cox says

I haven't read a book by Susan Grant for quite some time and have fond memories of her Star series. I seem to recall a certain well meaning Prince causing all manner of madness and mayhem and what do you know Prince Klark Vedla not only finally gets his own book but it just happens to be the first in a whole new series.

Yes Klark has always known his brother Che is heir to the throne which makes him the spare! Not really what any honourable male wants to consider himself but Klark unfortunately has a lot to make up for. Helping his nations bajha team win the galactic cup is his chance and there's nothing he won't consider . So if travelling to a back water planet searching for raw talent is what's called for than bring it on but the player he discovers will turn his previous notions upside down!

Jemm Aves has dreams of escaping Baresh and taking her family with her. Prepared to do anything and if pretending to be a lad is what it takes then she is fully onboard with that . Her lifeline is her talent for the street version of bajha, a sport only played by males traditionally. Yet she gets the chance of a lifetime to go off planet and play for an elite team. So ok then, time to leave Jemm behind and fully embrace the (male) persona of Kes but that's proving tricky as there's just something about her new employer Klark that's proving hard to ignore. What started out as a hopeful dream rapidly escalates into a scandal and caught in the eye of the storm? Jemm and Klark!

As usual it's a fast paced read that just pulls the reader in. It's so easy to root for Jemm with her humble beginnings because she is brimming with self confidence and just doesn't see herself as less or low. Yes she accepts that she is considered a commoner and not an elite noble but it doesn't dampen her spirit or love of life one iota. You go girl!

Klark initially comes off as quite jaded and it's only his passion for his beloved sport and fondness for his youngest sister that brought him to life. His place in the hierarchy of the monarchy is changing and he needs to prove he is mature not only to his father but indeed himself as well. I truly enjoyed seeing him come to terms with change and whilst he is a traditionalist he never felt biased or prejudiced in any way. It would be too easy to view him as chauvinistic because frankly he is far more open to ideas than he initially believed. Such a juxtaposition as this noble and somewhat conventional male acknowledges that long established and historic customs are just that, traditional and restraining

So essentially it's a sci fi romance yes but it's not full of gobbledygook or too much technology. Yes it does feel futuristic but strangely it never feels alien. There's a realism here that surprised me. Pairing up a gutsy

heroine with a hero struggling with self doubt worked beautifully . Klark has made mistakes and wishes to atone and as he starts to really see the reality through Jemm's eyes he opens himself up to a world of possibilities . I'm not really sure who saves who here but I was entertained by these likeable characters . Speaking of characters Klark has a somewhat brusque uncle and Jemm has a devil may care brother who both have sad back stories and I am kind of hoping that the author will let her readers catch up with them and hopefully see them get happy ending too

I was gifted a copy in exchange for an honest review

Four and a half from me

Jody says

From the first page to the last there's much about this book that left me giddy with its virtually angst-free romance between apparent opposites and exhilarating action scenes set amidst class and gender distinctions. Some of the themes are familiar but Ms. Grant put a fresh spin on them which added to my overall enjoyment and I didn't want it to end.

Jemm's grown up on a harsh world where her people are considered amongst the lowest class. A lack of food, medical care, and a family torn apart by the death of her father and her brother's wife has her dreaming of a way out. With so much oppression and feelings of hopelessness she clings to those moments of joy that playing bajha with her father's encouragement bring her and plans to use her talents to make a better life for them all despite the adversity. Long held beliefs of a woman's role casts a shadow over her dreams though and leads to her hiding her sexuality at first in order to play. When she meets Prince Klark though keeping her secret becomes even harder as their connection becomes more palpable with its increasing sexual tensions once he discovers the truth. Twists and turns take them on a heartwarming and uplifting journey that leads to radical change across the universe in an ultimately rousing conclusion. Jemm's a delightful heroine, strong-willed and loyal. She has a big heart, an open mind, and her joy in playing bajha is infectious. She dreams big and her belief in herself and her dream had me cheering. She's a bit rough around the edges with her constant cursing but it made her all the more likable. She brought joy to Klark's stale life and together they made a formidable match.

Klark grew up knowing his role as The Spare to his brother's one day ascending to the throne. It's his role to protect his brother and keep their family line honorable. That belief led to a horrible decision that hurt his family and bruised his relationship with them, as well as landing him on house arrest. With his sentence ended he's sworn to himself that he'll bring honor to their family name and make them proud of him once again. For so long he's lived a meaningless life of frivolity, never finding something meaningful to him, until he formed a bajha team. Having them win the championship is his main goal and is what brings him to dirty and dangerous Baresh and the unforgettable bajha player who's like nothing he's ever seen before. He's in awe of her the minute he meets her, drawn to her wholeheartedly, despite knowing nothing about her. Discovering her true gender creates new drama but it also opens his heart to feelings of love he's always denied before. She brings happiness to his structured life, giving him moments of carefree fun. Soon, he too is dreaming....dreaming of a future with her despite the odds and familial expectations. Theirs is a joyous relationship full of laughter and smiles, along with steamy encounters that are both sensual and playful. Klark may have started off a bit standoffish and a bit lost, but meeting Jemm had him focusing on a future with her, a future that has him a part of many big changes. His heart was hidden early on but with each word and deed directed at Jemm he became a true romantic. He fought for her on every level, reminding her that she was so much more than the downtrodden existence she came from and it left me in love with him.

This was a well-paced story for the most part with only a bit of lag in the middle as Jemm and Klark were training and getting to know more about each other. The main characters were strong-willed with

personalities that were immensely appealing with a romance that had me smiling and cheering. The secondary characters were a colorful bunch, from Jemm's heartbroken brother Nico to her fellow bajha teammates and their brotherly and playful interactions with her, and they added much enjoyment to the story and plenty of fodder for more stories set in this universe in the future. Baresh is vividly depicted, warts and all, and shows the true strength of Jemm to rise above its bleakness. The sport of bajha is similar to fencing and Ms. Grant's depiction of it is an exhilarating one full of pulse-pounding scenes that had me feeling like a part of the sweaty action and became a driving force for change across many levels. Fans of sci-fi will find this an entertaining and satisfying read that once again shows Ms. Grant to be the queen of this genre and I look forward to revisiting this world soon!

Jonmontanavega says

MF, female athlete, romance + sweet erotic. 4 stars.

Star Champion is that very rarest of books, a romantic / erotic story about a professional female athlete. She starts as an unknown, playing a men's game in men's clothing. For this I would give 5 stars.

Looked at another way, Star Champion is a tale as old as campfire storytellers. Young, poor, but special woman meets rich / royal / influential man under abnormal circumstances in a way that allows the MCs to see the real person under the stereotype / disguise each inhabits. Nothing worth more than 3 stars for romance + moderate to mild tension points.

At least there are some full contact sex scenes worthy of the athletically gifted MCs. 3 1/3 stars..

I purchased the book and I wasn't asked to review it.

KJ Van Houten says

Two people on opposite ends of the social spectrum, each searching for a place to belong. Each with something or someone to protect, to fight for. Brought together by a shared love for bajha – a form of fighting that involves swordplay while restricting a player's sense of sight, where a player must rely on intuition, focus, and intense control.

Two people: Klark, owner and trainer of a professional bajha team, highly skilled in his own right, seeks to redeem his name, regain the acceptance of his royal family, and bring honour to his clan. Jemm, a rising bajha star, hiding her identity to make her way in a sport played and controlled by men, fighting to gain a basic necessities and a better life for her family living on the harsh frontier world of Baresh.

In a Federation ruled by trade and traditions, how long can Jemm keep her secret? How will Klark react when his prize fighter is revealed to be a woman? What will be their greatest struggle – to win the Galactic Cup and gain fame, fortune, and honour? Or to fight against tradition to find themselves in each other's arms?

Susan Grant was the first author I read within the science fiction romance (SFR) genre. Her Star series, beginning with Star King, hooked me right in and I didn't come up for air until I had read everything she'd published in SFR. I eventually moved on to (many) other authors and their works within SFR, but Grant's works have always remained in a special category for me. Champion of Baresh, first novel in Grant's new

Star World Frontier series brings me full circle, as it follows directly after Star Princess, the last novel in the original Star series. Seeing familiar characters and familiar settings felt like a sort of homecoming. Klark, a ‘bad boy’ in two of the Star series novels, finally gets a chance to be heard and better understood, and quite frankly, it’s hard not to be attracted to him here. While, yes, Champion of Baresh can be read and understood as a standalone, I think readers will get a far richer experience and better understanding of what compels Klark in particular by reading the Star series (in order) first.

As a whole, I think Champion of Baresh represents a new phase for Susan Grant – not because it begins a new series, and not because it shows Grant’s return to writing after too many years off. Rather, it’s a new style of writing. Oh yes, it’s familiar in tone and atmosphere, but the writing itself seems better, her characters more developed, her stories both simpler and yet more compelling. LOL, maybe I was just drawn in faster and more completely!

Yes, I received a free review copy of this book in exchange for an honest review – but I’d have preordered this one and read it as soon as possible anyway! I consider Grant’s novels as ‘autobuys’ for me.

Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

Because I kept conflating this story with the excellent The Empress Game by Rhonda Mason, I was kind of expecting that the stakes in The Champion of Baresh would be slightly bigger than they are. And then they actually are, but not quite in the way I thought. And that’s always a good thing. I also kept wondering if this story linked at all to Grant’s Star series. It turns out that it does, but it is not necessary to have read, or to remember in my case, the details of the earlier series to enjoy The Champion of Baresh.

Baresh is a dead-end world, and Jemm Aves has a dead end job – but then all the jobs on Baresh are pretty much dead end, if not downright deadly. Not deadly as in dangerous per se, but deadly as in the working conditions are so totally awful that the job will kill you one way or another if you live long enough, and if you quit the poverty will kill you even quicker.

Think about all the diseases that miners have been proven to get on this planet, and then multiply that by an entire manufactured world that is completely dependent on mining a deadly and necessary ore. That’s Baresh.

And Jemm Aves wants off.

But the only chance she has for getting herself and her family – mother, brother, niece – is to pick up her dad’s old sens-sword and compete in barroom bajha. And the only way to make her way into the bajha circuit, even on a backwater world like Baresh – is to pretend to be a man. Or at least a boy.

The more she wins, the more that the local gangleaders want to tie her down to an exclusive contract. The better she does, the more she earns – and the more dangerous it gets.

Until she’s presented with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to play in the professional leagues. But that’s only possible if she can keep her secret – or find someone else to keep it with her.

Escape Rating B+: In the end, The Champion of Baresh is a love story about breaking down barriers.

The initial barrier that needs to be broken is the custom that says that women can't play bajha. Think of bajha as a real-life version of the arena fighting video games, with a few changes. Matches are fought blindfolded, and all contestants use the same weapon, a sens-sword that administers a shock rather than a slice. Although there are professional teams, matches are fought one on one. But it's the combined score of the whole team that leads to the championship.

Of course, the barroom circuit on Baresh is a LOT less formal. There's only two individuals, and a whole lot of crowd noise. When Jemm, fighting as Sea Kestrel, steps into the ring, she's the best that Baresh has ever seen. She's living proof that women can play bajha, and play it well. But she has to compete as a man. Not just because of the social conventions, but because it is way safer for her and her brother/manager if no one knows who she really is.

Prince Klark Vedla has a whole lot of barriers to jump over, many of them all by himself. He has to convince himself that this street rat is capable of making the jump to the big leagues, a difficult feat all by itself. Then he has to decide to become complicit in Jemm's secret, defying not just social convention but his own moral code. He wants to win the Championship for his family to erase the stigma of his own intemperate actions in The Star Princess.

And then Jemm and Klark have to bridge the barrier between street rat and prince-not-so-charming. Two people who have never fallen in love fall for each other, each believing that it can't possibly work. It takes a wise and somewhat scary old man to get Klark's head out of his ass on that score.

But as much fun as the romance is in this book, the fun is in breaking down the wall that prevents women from playing bajha. When Jemm's secret is finally revealed, after a series of stunning victories, the powers-that-be in the sport try to bury everything under the rug, and attempt to keep Klark and his team silent with vague but menacing threats.

Watching Jemm and Klark set their entire sporting world on its ear, by proving that women not only can play bajha, but that they want to play bajha, and that encouraging them to play bajha is good for the sport. In the end the score is Neanderthals 0 and Opening Doors to Opportunity a very satisfying 1.

All Things Urban Fantasy says

Review courtesy of All Things Urban Fantasy

This book is fabulous. Automatic new favourite.

I fell in love with Jemm, the main characters, from the first few pages of the book. She's strong, she's worried about her family and she wants a better life for them. She wants to follow her dreams, but the same sport that is putting food on their table is the one their mother claims killed her father. Oh, and girls aren't allowed to play bahja, a kind of sensory-deprived fencing/martial art/yoga. Oops.

The story of the girl dressed as a boy, updated, in space! I also appreciated that unlike many of these stories, the other main character, Klark, catches on early in the book, making it their secret to protect rather than her versus him. It was a pleasant change of pace and really helped raise the stakes: he was not another victim of her deceit, he was her co-conspirator. He wasn't just training a hot new talent, he was training a woman he was learning to love.

One of the best things about this book was the way the three planets the action took place on we're so

different. The cramped, dirty, dome-covered planet of Barésh felt claustrophobic and dangerous. We could understand why Jemm would do anything to escape it. There are dirty children everywhere, crime and corruption are constant, and the poor die of things the rich get cured in an instant. Still, Klark's world is no less dangerous, if more comfortable; every move is being watched and calculated, women have less power than on Barésh, and your mistakes are not only your own, they shame your whole family. The tropical planet where Jemm and Klark train was lush and felt like a perfect hideaway, one they knew was only a reprieve from the real world of competition and backstabbing.

THE CHAMPION OF BARÉSH is related to other books in the previous series, but is isolated enough that you don't need to have read them. Even without knowing the full story, I knew that Earth was a new player, that the in-fighting of the noble families was serious business and that the universe can be a harsh, unfair world.

The romance between the two characters evolves slowly, at first confusingly because he thinks she's a boy, then hesitantly because he's the team's owner and he trains them as well. They almost tumble into it, and as a reader you're just cheering for them to just get it sorted!

Susan Grant's books always make me happy when I read them. The worldbuilding is top notch, the characters feel alive and real, and I always end up thinking about them for days after I finish them. I have re-read MOONSTRUCK and CONTACT so many times, I nearly know them by heart, and I still enjoy them fully every time. I'm adding THE CHAMPION OF BARÉSH to my short list of science-fiction romance favourites!

Cara Bristol says

Simply amazeballs!

The world-building is phenomenal. Reading The Champion of Baresh isn't like reading book it's like having a ring side seat as the story unfolds in front of you. Just amazing. If you've ever wondered what "world-building" is; The Champion of Baresh ought to be required reading.

Author Susan Grant also did an excellent job of building tension in small ways throughout the book, to keep me turning the pages. I was biting my nails to think that something might mess us Jemm's chance to join the team and get off Baresh.

Great characters and dialogue, too!

Mei says

Wonderful SF romance!

The will the heroine, Jemm, has is incredible! She's ready to do everything to take care of her family and to take them away from the grim place they're living in. And when the occasion presents itself, she's ready to take it. So, disguised as man, she enters the dangerous world of bajha.

Bajha is a honored martial discipline everywhere else, but on Baresh it's wild and governed by underground lords who will do anything to secure the best players for themselves, even maim and kill.

Bajha is a combination of mental and physical combat and is also reserved for men only. Never a woman was allowed to compete... So Jemm's doubly in danger...

Klark is a prince, a second born to the royals of the Federation. One of the ruling caste, he did something that brought dishonor to his family (I think that this story was told in some other book by Ms. Grant that I haven't read...), now he serves his conviction and he's ready to redeem himself by doing everything to win the Galactic Cup in bajha.

So, Klark, employing Kes, Jemm's name in disguise, in a way saves her giving her a way to gain enough money for her family, but puts her in an awkward position since he doesn't know that she's a woman.

The interesting part of this book is the description of how bajha is played and what makes Jemm such an extraordinary player. I loved the descriptions of her fights and her training!

Jemm, being such a honest person, tells Klark her secret when she can't keep it any longer and Klark, a staunch defender of the fact that bajha is reserved to men only, struggles to accept the fact that a woman can be such an excellent player. That was one other thing that I've appreciated here!

The story is so very interesting and I loved it really very, very much! It's also fast paced and hot when needed. There're no sizzling moments that are not necessary - such a nice mix!

If you want to find out how they resolved the situation and got their HEA, you'll have to read the book! You'll not be disappointed!

The Book Junkie Reads . . . says

Hero. Heroine. Who saves whom? The winner here would be them both. While the prince was working to find his way in a world that he was just a spare to the throne, he had to define himself and define what his life meant. Jemm was just your atypical girl that wanted better for her family. She just did not sit around waiting for things to get better. She made her own way and made it being something she was not but doing what she loved.

Some would say she was playing with fire. She was really playing with life. She was working to make her life and that of her family better. Being a bajha player was something that was classified as male dominated and usually the elite were the ones that played. Jemm went out made a name for her/himself and became a commodity that the prince wanted for his team.

Jemm and Klark had a connection beyond the physical. They connected over the intense game of sword and darkness. There was much control, focus and intuition needed to be successful.

Susan Grant has gained a reader. I was captivated and consumed. I was engrossed by this sci-fi, fantasy, romance with things familiar and unfamiliar. I was caught up in the fight for better and search for purpose by both the hero (Klark) and heroine (Jemm).

This ARC was provided via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Sue Me says

Susan Grant is an author that I read years ago when she first came out with her Star King, Star Prince, Star Princess books. I adored them and they still are on my 'Keepers' shelves. I recently read the new Star Princess book, and I will review that next, but first The Champion of Baresch.

Susan Grant did a wonderful job of world-building for me. Baresch is a small planet that was once technologically advanced and superior in all respects. They might have been the ancients. Remnants of their tall beautiful buildings remain, and they left behind the all-important dome that protects its current inhabitants. Now, the only major employer is the mining operations that eventually kill all who work there. There are also gambling dens and fight clubs where a sport called bajha is played. Professional teams play it in total darkness and without their hearing. They must rely on their other senses. Professionals play as part of teams. the fight clubs on Baresch fight it out against the winner, one fight at a time.

On Baresch Jemm Aves is perhaps the only female bajha player in the universe. She plays because they are desperate for the money she bring in with her winnings. She is tall and lanky and with all the padding the players wear, she easily passes for a youthful male. Her brother Nico is her 'manager'. He was fired from his job and cannot get another one. An accident occurred that caused him to kill his beloved wife. Two others live in their tiny apartment on the 17th floor walk up: her mom, and her niece, Button.

As the first scene opens we see Nico giving Jemm, who goes by the name Sea Kestral, some last minute instructions as she is about to fight in one of the more famous fight clubs against the undefeated champion. He tells her to try to last as long as she can, as they pay more, the longer a bajha player lasts. As this is in a noisy, smelly, foul dive bar, they use blindfolds instead of turning off the lights. The play with shock sticks, the object being to sense where your opponent is with your other senses and strike him on his chest plate. As they wear these special suits, no one is injured. To the great amazement of all, she quickly wins over the champion.

Elsewhere on the planet Eireya, Prince Klark Vedla is trying to win back his honor and that of his family. He has recently been released from house arrest and is anxious to bring the bajha Galactic Cup home this year to honor his team and Eireya.

Several members of his team show him a video of Sea Kestral winning. Klark views her performance several times and decides that they must try her out against his professional team. IF she is really that good and can be quickly trained, his team just might have a chance at the Galactic Cup.

She is brought onto Klark's Star Ship to see how 'he' does against seasoned professional players. 'Kes' routs them all. With her trained, they all feel that they just might have the long sought Galactic Cup. It takes some time for Klark to find out that he is a 'she'.

This book is fast paced adventurous, has some moments of angst, danger, political maneuverings, delightful romance that is not over played, and finally our HEA!

Patrycia says

I found out about this book from one of my GR friends who recommended it to me. I just finished which is a fantasy book & was still in the mood for more of this type of genre. So I requested this book on Netgalley & surprisingly got approved.

The girl-disguised-as-a-boy theme is actually nothing new. BUT, since this book involves a Prince, this

makes it much more interesting. So, Jemm is a girl who works in the mines in order to provide for her family. Her father is dead & she's left with the responsibility of the sole breadwinner of the family. She lives with her Mom, her brother & her niece who is actually her brother's kid. Ever since she was young, she was trained *bajha* by her father. To make some more money for the family, she agreed to fight *bajha* in a shady club against an unbeatable opponent. Surprise surprise, she won the game quite easily & soon after she started to gain name as a rising street *bajha* star. Prince Klark of Vedla heard about her & sought her out. He offered her a contract to play *bajha* professionally for his team. So, here begins her journey as a professional *bajha* player.

I am actually quite impressed with the *bajha* game. I think it's similar to fencing played in utter darkness. It requires a lot of concentration & the focus of the mind. I have to admit that I have quite a hard time imagining the world out there. The place, the language & the appearance of people left me kinda confused. The sexual tension between Jemm & Klark is too high it's palpable. IMO, they give in to their attraction too quickly & too early in the book. Sure I don't mind their active sexual lives but I thought if the author make them give in much later in the book, it'd be a lot sweeter. You know, like build the anticipation so that we readers are even more eager to see them together. I find that while I love how they live happily ever after, the scenes leading to the end are not that eventful. I think they are just not emotional enough (I know I'm such an angst-whore :p).

Aside from the angst-free part, I'd still recommend this book for those of you who love fantasy. For Klark & Jemm, I'd give 3.5 stars.

Thanks to Netgalley for providing me with an ARC in exchange of an honest review.

Cindy says

I want to hike on the paths, too. I want to smell everything, to taste everything, to see the birds, and the trees. All of it. In my wildest dreams I couldn't have imagined a place like this. I feel like I've been caged all my life and now I'm finally free.

I received a free review copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Holy craggin crat! This is the first book of Susan Grant that I have ever read. And I should say, I am so glad I read this book.

I love this book. I love everything of this book. The idea behind this book, the execution of the idea, the characters, the story-line. Everything is blended perfectly.

Jemm Aves is a woman who's in need of money which is why she disguised herself as a male to play *bajha* at night. And gosh, she is good at it, especially as a female.

Let's cheer for Sea Kestrel!

Then she is discovered by Prince Klark who's desperate to repair his reputation in his family clan. Klark

wanted her to play in his team seeing how it would bring victory to his team which would lead to his reputation being restored.

So that is the gist of the story of how they met.

The character development in this book is amazing, Jemm is one of a few female characters that I actually loved. She's a strong woman who will do anything for his family and I feel connected to her somehow. Klark is great and sweet. And I actually sympathize Nico, he's been through a lot, such sadness that he had to bear.

The world-building as well as the story-line is perfect, the romance balanced the action. It was clear and easy to understand. It is very much well-written.

Overall, I very much enjoy this book and I am looking forward to reading another book of Susan Grant's and I certainly am looking forward for the next book in series.
