



# Unquiet Land

*Sharon Shinn*

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**Unquiet Land** Sharon Shinn

**From the national bestselling author of *Jeweled Fire* and *Royal Airs* comes the latest novel in the Elemental Blessings series.**

Leah Frothen has returned home. But she can scarcely catch her breath before she is summoned by regent Darien Serlast, the man who made her a spy. Leah is reluctant to take on a new assignment, but Darien has dangled the perfect lure to draw her in...

Leah finds she enjoys the challenges of opening a shop catering to foreign visitors, especially since it affords her the opportunity to get to know Mally, the child she abandoned five years ago.

But when the regent asks her to spy on ambassadors from a visiting nation, Leah soon learns that everyone—her regent, her lover, and even her daughter—have secrets that could save the nation, but might very well break her heart.

## Unquiet Land Details

Date : Published November 1st 2016 by Ace Books

ISBN : 9780425277034

Author : Sharon Shinn

Format : Hardcover 400 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Romance, Fiction, Magic, Fantasy Romance

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## From Reader Review **Unquiet Land** for online ebook

### Jennifer says

Sharon Shinn is rarely less than a pleasure to read, and **Unquiet Land** is no exception. Still, I hope this isn't a trend for her writing -- cozy, comfortable books set in immersive worlds, but with little real urgency or stakes. The 4th in her Elemental Blessings series is very much the **Persuasion to Troubled Waters' Pride and Prejudice**. The main characters are older, calmer, trying to make peace with their pasts and carry on with the present. The ever-competent Leah Frothen whom we met in **Jeweled Fire** is the main character here: she returns to Welce to the daughter she abandoned at birth and to her family and its political entanglements.

A huge portion of the book is devoted to the mundanities of shopkeeping. Leah once again takes on the role of spy for the regent, and in this role, sets up as a trader of imported goods in order to keep an eye on the internationals causing chaos in the city and in Welce's tricky politics. I enjoyed these parts, actually. Shinn's imagination fills Leah's shop with wonders that make me wish we still had markets filled with handmade goods instead of malls and mass production. Shinn builds fabulously detailed worlds that leap off the page.

But not all that much happens in the first 3/4 of the book, and even when things start happening, I didn't find that I cared all that much. The romance is pleasant enough but 100% sizzle free, especially compared to the fireworks of **Troubled Waters**, the relationships between Leah and her daughter, former lover, and family are similarly realistic but uninteresting, and the crises tend to fizzle out or resolve themselves with remarkable ease. The Primes have powers that seem...conveniently expansive.

No real surprises in **Unquiet Land**, just a comfortable visit to a place I've come to like. Which is kind of a shame, because I \*loved\* the first book.

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### Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

3.5 stars. This is a great fantasy series with a different main character and romance in each book. My favorite is the first book, **Troubled Waters**, which I highly recommend if you like your fantasies with a little romance. The world-building in this series is unusual.

Full review, first posted on Fantasy Literature:

In *Unquiet Land*, Sharon Shinn's fourth book in her ELEMENTAL BLESSINGS fantasy series, the story returns to the country of Welce, the setting for the first two books in this series. Leah, who was introduced to readers in the third book, *Jeweled Fire*, lived in the country of Malinqua for five years, helping Darien Serlast, the ruler of Welce, by acting as a spy and, for the last few months of her stay, keeping an protective eye on the princess Corene, who was on an extended visit with the ruling family of Malinqua. More to the point, at the time Leah was running away from personal issues in her life: a lover who deserted her when she told him she was pregnant, and her now five year old daughter Mally, whom Leah handed over as a newborn to her uncle Taro (the torz prime) and his wife Virrie before she disappeared from all of their lives.

Now Leah has returned to Welce after five years away, determined to get to know her young daughter that she initially abandoned in her youthful confusion and despair. Leah's urgently hoping to be able build a

relationship with Mally and, at an appropriate time, to tell Mally that she, Leah, is her mother. But Darien isn't willing to let his trained spy drop out of his employ quite so easily. He offers her a new opportunity to serve the Welce crown, by opening up a shop in Welce's capital specializing in exotic international goods, catering to visitors from foreign lands who have come to Welce for diplomatic reasons, and hopefully getting to know some of these visitors and learn more about them and their plans. To sweeten the pot, Darien arranges for Mally to come to the city with Virrie for a stay so that Leah can spend some time with her daughter.

Leah's new international goods shop is an instant success, both financially and politically; she soon meets a very friendly but rather disturbing woman from the delegation from the Karkades, a country that is causing Darien particular concern with its political intriguing. She visits often with Mally, and their relationship begins to grow. And she develops a tentative peace with her former lover Rhan Ardelay (son of the sweela prime).

While in Malinqua, Leah had spent some time working for Chandran, a merchant from the country of Cozique. After a rough start to their relationship (he poisoned Leah at their first meeting to determine whether she could be trusted before giving her the antidote), they developed a friendship tinged with attraction. They've been writing letters, but Leah is surprised when Chandran shows up at her shop one evening, on the run from Malinqua for his own reasons. Their relationship continues to develop, but Chandran has a secret past. When he shares it with Leah, she's not at all certain that she can accept what he's done in his prior life.

*Unquiet Land* juggles Leah's slowly growing relationship with her daughter, her equally gradual romantic relationship with Chandran, and the political intrigue revolving around the country of the Karkades that begins to entangle Leah and others. The Karkan people have some disturbing habits and philosophies, and when dead and nearly-dead people begin to show up on the streets of the city, Leah suspects that the Karkans are up to no good. And Chandran may know more about this than he's willing to say.

*Unquiet Land* is pleasant but very leisurely paced. The three plotlines all have their tensions, but mostly it remains at a simmer, and it isn't until the last third of the book that the adrenaline kicks in. Leah's slow-burning romance with Chandran wasn't particularly appealing to me. Leah's in her mid-twenties and Chandran is in his mid-forties, a significant age gap. Chandran is also rather hesitant in his manner (for good reasons), and is described as having a "prominent forehead, generous nose, [and] thickly bearded cheeks and chin," a description that I didn't find particularly appealing. So I wasn't really feeling the romance in this book, although it helped when I started mentally picturing Chandran as Joe Manganiello. I can be shallow like that.

Leah's international store, where much of the action takes place, was a richly imagined, exotic place. Shinn's descriptions of the items that are sold in this shop are entrancing:

Gloves made of gray-and-black striped fur, spices that smelled like citrus and cocoa, lengths of wool dyed in royal colors, goblets of blown glass fused to etched silver.

Shinn realistically conveys the hard work involved in running a retail shop, as Leah and her friends work night and day to stock the store, deal with difficult customers, and make the venture a success. But the chief strength of *Unquiet Land* is in its thoughtful exploration of interpersonal relationships of all types ? romantic, familial, friendship, political ? but particularly the redemptive love of a parent for her child, even under fraught circumstances. It's a touching portrayal of a woman's personal growth, learning to give and accept love, told with insight and occasional humor.

In Welce, individuals are affiliated with a particular element, with their personal qualities and even, in the case of the “prime” person for each element, magical abilities. The three previous books in the ELEMENTAL BLESSINGS series focused on the coru (water/blood) element (Zoe in *Troubled Waters*), the elay (air/soul) element (Josetta in *Royal Airs*), and the sweela (fire/mind) element (Corene in *Jeweled Fire*). In *Unquiet Land* the focus is on the torz (earth/flesh) element, which Leah, Mally and others in their family share, and the qualities of patience, honesty and endurance associated with that element. It’s an intriguing concept, and I’m hoping Shinn will write at least one more book in this series focusing on a hunti (wood/bone) woman.

*I received a free copy of this book from the publisher, Ace, and from NetGalley, in exchange for a review. Thank you so much!*

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## **Beth says**

This world with its primes and its blessings is so, so great, and I'm so glad this book takes place squarely in the middle of it. And Zoe! And Darien! And Celia! And Mally! (The Odelia stuff works so well!)

The foreshadowing is *incredibly obvious*, but it turns out I don't care all that much. I do care, though, that Leah feels a little like Zoe 2.0. It's mostly because of her day-to-day life - the store, the court stuff - but she's not as good an embodiment of the elements as everyone else is.

I don't have a lot to say, really. Good Sharon Shinn is like a cozy blanket on a cold day.

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## **Althea Ann says**

This is the fourth in the 'Elemental Blessings' series; a fact I didn't realize when I picked up the book. I've read more than a dozen of Shinn's other books - but not the three that come before this one. I highly, highly recommend NOT starting here. Nevertheless, I'm giving this 4 stars based on how much I think I would've enjoyed it if I had read the prequels - and I did really enjoy it.

I believe this series would appeal greatly to fans of Robin Hobb. The writing has the same quality- it manages to be gripping and deeply interesting, even when the matters at hand are perhaps not the most momentous. I'd describe it as 'domestic fantasy.'

Our main character is Leah, a young woman who has just returned to her hometown after years abroad, working as a spy. But she's not done working for the Regent - he has a new job for her at home: setting her up as a shopkeeper selling imported goods which hopefully will appeal to foreign dignitaries and other visitors to the city; giving Leah the chance to, of course, keep spying on them. But Leah's first priority is not spycraft - it's the chance to re-connect with the daughter she gave up for fostering as an infant, feeling herself unready to become a mother. Will the girl be willing to get to know her? Complicating matters is the sudden presence of the father of her daughter - and her not-wholly-explored feelings toward the colleague she left behind in another country.

There is a political plot here, complete with villainous deeds and nefarious characters - but it takes a back seat to the quotidian details of trying to get to know a child, of the inventory of a retail boutique, to the

details of how to care for a rather strange pet fish. It's not a rushing-through-it to find out what happens book; it's a book that invites you to immerse yourself in its world. And - I loved doing so. Even if Leah was a bit too goody-goody for words, and if I couldn't really buy the portrayal of every single person from an entire country as morally corrupt. Even if I really have no interest in the difficulties involved in balancing complicated family relationships; and I think that being constantly surrounded by a noisy crowd of people in a busy house is simply dreadful. (Leah has to learn that she doesn't really like living alone, even if she thought she did.)

Still loved it; would be happy to revisit this world any time.

Many thanks to Ace and NetGalley for the opportunity to read. As always, my opinion is solely my own.

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### **J L's Bibliomania says**

Unquiet Land, continues the story of Leah Frothen, who was introduced as a supporting character in Jeweled Fire. Unquiet Land very much fit my mood and was quickly and enjoyably devoured. While better than Jeweled Fire, Unquiet Land in no way lived up to the first book in the series. The romance aspect was more explicit, with a bit too much agonizing about whether she deserved to trust/love her man. The evil deeds committed by the villains are a bit more explicit than I prefer. In addition, I felt like Ms. Shinn recycled too many plot elements from previous books. (view spoiler)

In the kingdom of Welce, they believe that all people are affiliated with one of the five elemental groups Coru (water/blood), Elay (air/soul), Sweela (fire/mind), Torz (earth/flesh) or Hunti (wood/bone). These affiliations come with personality inclinations embodied in the associated blessings. Welce is headed by a king, but his rule is supported by the approval of the 5 Elemental Primes, one for each affiliation. We've now had books centered around Coru (Zoe Ardelay in Troubled Waters), Elay (Josetta in Royal Airs), Sweela (Corene in Jeweled Fire), and Torz (Leah Frothen in Unquiet Land). Goodreads doesn't (yet) list a #5 in the series, and the only characters that comes to mind as having a Hunti affiliation are the Regent, Darien Serlast and his Aunt Mirti the Hunti Prime. But I'm hoping that Ms. Shinn will find a Hunti young woman to feature so this series can continue for at least one more book and we can enjoy a complete set of elements.

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### **Beth says**

Release Day Blast [Click for Tome Tender Link](#)

1 Hard Cover Copy of  
UNQUIET LAND  
by Sharon Shinn  
November 1 - 20, 2016  
(US & Canada Mailing Addresses Only)

Leah has spent the last few years as a spy in a foreign land. Now that she is returning home, her one goal is to reconnect with a daughter she left behind.

Leah is greeted with open arms by the friends and most of the family she left behind. They help her by setting her up in business, as a spy once again, giving her a specialty shop in the town's market place. They also help her by arranging Leah into a position that she can spend time with her young daughter without revealing their relationship. Of course, the dangers of being a spy cross over to her personal life putting those she's come to love at risk.

*Unquiet Land* brings us into an enchanting tale of love, family, betrayal and lots of political machinations.

I received this ARC copy of *Unquiet Land* from Berkley Publishing Group - Ace in exchange for a honest review. This book is set for publication November 1, 2016.

My Rating: 4 stars

Written by: Sharon Shinn

Series: An Elemental Blessings Novel (Book 4)

Hardcover: 400 pages

Publisher: Ace (November 1, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0425277038

ISBN-13: 978-0425277034

Genre: Romantic Fantasy

Itunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/unqui...>

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Unquiet-Land-E...>

Barnes & Noble: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/unqui...>

Reviewed for:

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## Melindam says

### Things I liked

- to be back in Chialto, Welce, to draw elemental blessings, to meet again the well-loved cast of characters missing from the previous book „Jewelled Fire”: Zoe, Darien, Annova, the Primes, Jaker & Barlow
- The overall coziness & warmth of Shinn's worldbuilding. It is refreshing to be able to read fantasy books without armageddon brewing / happening all the time.
- The political intrigue: it was exciting with quite dark & unsettling undertones. The antagonists were really and truly creepy. The leisurely plot development gets really fast-paced in the last third of the book.
- Mally's character development. Beside the lovely story arch of Mally's & Leah's relationship as mother & daughter, I was sure that Mally will end up playing a major role & was not disappointed. It kind of compensates for her bleaker life when she had to play the shadow-princess role.

Things I did not like that much:

- Leah was the first heroine whose elemental affiliation was not very convincing for me. She is torz, with affiliation for earth, but it was nowhere as clear as the affiliation of Zoe / Josetta / Corene in the previous books.
- The romance was kind of nice, but predictable even with the exciting plot twist at the end.

I hope there shall be a 5th installment of the series with a hunti heroine!

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### **Keertana says**

Rating: 4.5 Stars

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### **Melissa McShane says**

[When Chandran tells Leah his past (some of it) and that he murdered his wife, my reaction was not

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### **Roslyn says**

4.5

Another excellent instalment of this series. It grew much darker than I usually expect from Shinn, but this only added depth to the very satisfactory ending (which you *know* you're going to get from Shinn!).

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### **Critterbee✿ says**

This is the latest in the excellent Elemental Blessings series by Sharon Shinn. The series features women from the Shinn-created nation of Welce, in which people have elemental-based affiliations. These heroines are always interesting, and quite strong, but in very different ways. There is always a mystery (or several), great interaction between characters, soul-searching and personal growth, a good dose of romance, and a deep connection with the elemental blessings theme.

The world she has created and developed is intriguing, hopeful, and believable. Characters, both main and supporting, heroic and villainous, are varied, memorable and complex. The emotional development of Corene over the books, in particular, is delicately and skillfully done. All of the heroines face personal and public challenges, and experience great personal growth without losing the core of their personalities.

The first three books in the series introduced Zoe, Josetta and Corene. In the fourth book, Leah returns home after living abroad collecting information for the regent of Welce. The main reason for her return is her daughter, whom she left in her family's care (read: ran away from). Of the four, this book is, to me, the darkest, but that mirrors the tone of the difficulties that Leah experiences as she tries to balance returning to her home, reconnecting with family and friends, meeting and growing her relationship with her daughter, and dealing with a very complicated romantic relationship. That she ran away from her daughter is not a light subject, and Shinn does not let Leah off the hook with a quick and easy resolution.



I love this series because the stories are a perfect balance of world building, strong characters, mystery, romance, adventure, and coming of age.

**\*\*eARC Netgalley\*\***

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## **Rachel Neumeier says**

*Unquiet Land* is my favorite of the Elemental Blessings series novels since the first, *Troubled Waters*. I liked the second book fine, but the primary relationship is the romance between Josetta and Rafe; I like the third book as well, but the primary story is of Corene growing into herself.

*Unquiet Land* picks up where the third book left off, but focuses on someone more or less tangential to the story as we've seen it so far: Leah, whom Corene met in the *Jeweled Fire*. And the primary story is not Leah sorting out her romantic life, though that happens. It involves Leah recovering her relationship with the daughter she abandoned at birth. Abandoned in the sense of leaving the baby with her own highly competent and loving foster parents; this is an issue, but not a gritty, grim kind of Issue.

It turns out that this emphasis worked well for me. Also it brought the overall story back in a satisfying circle to the initial situation you may recall from the first book, dealing with a major loose thread. Remember Mally, the little girl who was used as a double for Princess Odelia? Well, Mally is actually Leah's daughter, and in this final book of the series, she finally gets a life of her own. About time, too.

So, *Unquiet Land*.

a) The romance: There's always a romance in a Sharon Shinn novel, and I liked this one. Chandran is a good male lead. Of course anybody who always draws "honor" as one of his blessing is naturally going to appeal to me. His backstory is interesting, and I must add, if you are going to visit this world, you totally want to land in Welce, NOT in any neighboring country. The people of the Kaskades, ugh, they might be as bad as those creepy Soechin people. So, yeah, Chandran's getting himself free of his Kaskadian wife, one can only sympathize.

b) The daughter: Sure, Leah has a pretty easy time getting things sorted out with her daughter. But after all, Mally *was* raised by loving foster parents, even if she was also dragged into the fake-princess thing. The Elemental Blessings series offers warm, fuzzy stories. One doesn't expect relationships to be too fraught. A little more difficulty or complexity would have probably appealed to me, but the story was fine as it was.

c) Dealing with the bad guys: For a competent person, Darien might have been a little quicker off the mark in dealing with the Kaskadian people. I get that practicality is a concern when you are working out your country's relationships with its neighbors. It's not like Shinn didn't explicitly address the problems Darien is facing. Still, in his place, I would be inclined to post a formal notice that certain crimes, if committed in Welce, are likely to result in perpetrators being hanged if they escape being beaten to death by a mob, and that diplomatic immunity won't cover these crimes, so Soechin and Kaskadian people need to be aware that they enter the country at their own risk.

I will add again, this *is* a warm and fuzzy Shinn novel, so nothing too awful actually happens in the book. It's just that the potential for awful is so clear.

For me, *Troubled Waters* is still the standout, but all four books are delightful and *Unquiet Earth* was a worthy wrap-up for the series.

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## Metaphorosis says

3 stars - Metaphorosis Reviews

Leah, once a foreign spy in Malinqua, has come home to Welce, dominated by the Five Families and the magic powers of the primes. She plans to reunite with the daughter she once abandoned, but also misses the close friend she made while away. When the Welce regent asks her to keep an eye on some foreign visitors, Leah finds herself drawn back into intrigue and danger.

I like Sharon Shinn's work in part because she's an unabashed romantic, and interesting romance just isn't that common in fantasy (Mary Stewart and Melanie Rawn aside). Unfortunately, her stories sometimes stray too far from romantic (characters with strong feelings) and into commercial romance (unlikely coincidences, happy endings). Worst of all, those detours often carry strong tones of sexism. I stopped following her work closely midway through the *Twelve Houses* series, but when I saw *Unquiet Land*, I thought I'd give the new *Elemental Blessings* series a try. Plus, I happened to meet Shinn a while back, and she just seems nice - one of the intangibles that do sometimes affect a reader's perception.

There's always a danger coming into a series in progress. There's a lot of backstory, the worldbuilding is already done, and it can be hard to pick up on relationships. Shinn makes a fair attempt (albeit sometimes with infodumps) at setting things up here, but it's a complex world - lots of names and networks, to say nothing of the magic system. While the story was readable from the start, I had a clear feeling of being behind, and of missing elements that would have been clear to longer-term readers. A lot of what I took to be rehash of prior books was boring even for me as a newcomer. I can't recommend starting here, but then I'd say that about almost any ongoing series.

The writing is, as always good - the prose is smooth, the characters are engaging, etc. Unfortunately, the book draws on some of Shinn's worst impulses. There's a distinct lack of credibility to the plot, and a concomitant smoothing over of details. For example, Leah's cover for her activities in Welce is as a shopkeeper. She's backed by apparently limitless funds, and promoted by prominent figures, but her shop is nonetheless astonishingly successful. She virtually never has a slow day, despite the fact that we know her suppliers also supply other stores in town. It might not have bothered me, but for the fact that so much of the action takes place in the shop, and that we constantly hear how it's making money hand over fist, despite there being no clear demand or market gap.

The emotional angles are predictable. That's largely alright, because the characters are strong and interesting to follow. It's all too simple, though. Shinn creates obstacles, but they're easily overcome, and there's no great tension to them. With one exception, there's never really a credible chance that things will go wrong. In part, that's because, despite what would seem some pretty bad choices in life, everybody loves Leah, and they all love each other. It's happy all the time in Welce.

That may be because for virtually all of the book, we only see the wealthy. There are a few poor wretches thrown in for color, but there is apparently no middle class in Welce's capital city. There are slums, and there are the mansions of the nobility. No one else really exists. 'As unpretentious a group as anyone could have hoped' doesn't seem to notice that it's gathered in a large mansion at a meal laid out by servants. Rather than

focusing us on the story Shinn wants to tell about Leah and her friends (who happen to be wealthy and powerful), the approach undermines the credibility of the society.

The early portion of the book is also fairly heavy on politics. While writers like Katherine Kurtz have done well by this, I just don't find fictional politics interesting. In broad strokes, it's fine - it sets forces in play - but the fine details of who's married to whom, and how it affect the succession are generally dull, and that's true here. That dullness extends to inheritance in the world's otherwise workable magic system.

The world itself is a vague nod toward steampunk, with neon thrown in (though not explained and not very credible). It is, unfortunately, also seemingly based on traditional gender roles. A key element of the story is that two parents abandoned their child and now want to reclaim it, but it's taken for granted that the mother is the one to decide how. There's a nominal equality, but it's all women doing the shopping, and mostly men doing the protecting.

One of the most interesting elements is the Karkans, who have an unpredictable moral code. I hope that it's explored in more detail in other books, because here it gets relatively short shrift. Frustratingly, it's also inconsistently applied - a key confrontation simply doesn't take into account everything we and the book's supposedly smart characters have learned about the Karkans.

In short, this is a smooth but not satisfying read - well-written but shallow. I won't be digging deeper into the series.

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## **Katie says**

This is really good. I tried to read it slowly, but I failed. It's back in a familiar land with the familiar characters and it is really good.

(Maybe a little too dramatic at the end, but that might be something that improves on re-read.)

## **Audiobook reread March 2017**

(It was still too dramatic.)

## **Audiobook reread August 2018**

Hey, the drama gets better the third time through.

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## **Crowinator says**

This is some great light-hearted, wish-fulfilling, romantic fantasy. The story has moments of darkness, political intrigue, and light conflict, but it's mostly reassuring and domestic, with colorful, familial characters at its center. It reminded me strongly of Anne Bishop's *Others* series (the main character even spends a ton of time setting up and running a shop!), so I may seek out the three earlier novels, which I've never read. (Yeah, more to add to my endless running to-do list!)

