



The True Game

Sheri S. Tepper

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Grass, has helped redefine speculative fiction. Award winner, national bestseller, and one of the genre's most respected and acclaimed talents, she has transcended the boundaries of science fiction and fantasy with her widespread success. Available for the first time in one volume, this is the long out-of-print trilogy that launched her remarkable career: *King's Blood Four*, *Necromancer Nine*, and *Wizard's Eleven*.

In the lands of the *True Game*, your lifelong identity emerges as you play-Prince or Sorcerer, Demon or Doyen. Raising the dead is the least of the Necromancer's Talents-he is a wild card who threatens the True Game itself. A giant stalks the mountains. Shadowpeople gather by the light of the moon. Bonedancers raise up armies of the dead. And the Wizard's Eleven sleep trapped in their dreams. Players, take your places. The final Game begins now...

The True Game Details

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Author : Sheri S. Tepper

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From Reader Review The True Game for online ebook

Mary Lynn E. Longsworth says

"The True Game" is a compilation of Sheri S. Tepper's first three novels "King's Blood Four," "Necromancer Nine," and "Wizard's Eleven," all released from 1984 through 1985, and the first part of what became a nine-novel set; the other two belonging to the "Mavin the Manyshaped" trilogy, and the "Jinian" trilogy.

I have to say that I am biased towards these novels as that purchased "King's Blood Four" back when it was first released, and at that time I was still both a young-ish reader (14-years-old), and a young writer. I enjoyed the books so much that, when they were stolen (my ex-husband's car was stolen with all of my Tepper books in a box inside), I forked out the extra money to replace them, as well as purchase more.

"The True Game" is mainly fantasy set in a medieval-style world, with some surprising sci-fi elements thrown in as we follow Peter, a young man in his adolescence, growing both in age and experience to find out what his "talent" is in a world where everything is a "game" and those with any ability to survive have "talents."

By the word "Game," one could say "battle" or "fight" instead. There are always those "gaming" against one another, plotting, planning, fighting even in an underhanded fashion. And there are rules!

By the word "Talents," one could also say things such as "supernatural powers," each one, or each mix of several earning the person who wields them a title, as well as a formal dress they are expected to wear. A person who is a telepath, for instance, is called a Demon. A person who can fly is an Armiger.

For those who are "Gamers" in the sense of playing table-top role-playing games such as the classic Dungeons and Dragons, I have a feeling that you would enjoy this series immensely.

Ben says

First off, this review is somewhat less than objective as this book holds a great deal of nostalgia value for me. I first read this book almost 25 years ago, shortly after reading the *Chronicles of Mavin Manyshaped* - which is actually a prequel and written later, and at the time it opened me up to a new style of literature and a very different brand of fantasy writing. I have re-read *The True Game* many times over the years, and whenever I do it is always through a certain filter which takes me back to that first read.

The True Game is Tepper's first book, and in it you can see the prototype for many of her ideas and themes which run through pretty much all of her other books - feminism, social conscience, and environmentalism to name just a few which spring to mind. We also see the blending between fantasy and science fiction, and many of the same story-telling tools. While the novel is perhaps somewhat raw in style, and some of her later books are technically tighter and have stronger characterisation and better prose, this really is the quintessential Tepper and the ideas behind the tale, and the story itself and the world she builds are as exciting today as they were all those years ago.

The story itself is told through the eyes of Peter, a sheltered teenager, in the land of the True Game, where some people are 'Gamesmen' and have special or magical powers. Their interactions often are through

conflict of duels or wars, and their society is governed by the rules of the 'Game'. When Peter gets used as a minor piece in a game of subterfuge the safety of his school house is shattered and he soon finds himself abroad in the wider world, and on a journey of more than one dimension.

While this is Tepper's first book and it was only later on she went on to write the Mavin trilogy and the Jinian trilogy (which are stronger and better books to be honest - but together the series forms an entire whole), and the Mavin series is the prequel which is set decades before the events of the True Game, if you can get hold of the Chronicles then you should do so and read them first. The Jinian series comes afterwards and ties up the loose ends which True Game leaves and eliminates that slight feel of dissatisfaction which comes at the end of the book with a few too many things being left undeveloped. Sadly, both these series have been out of print for a long time now and are increasingly difficult to find.

At the end of the day, a must read for any fan of Sheri S. Tepper, and highly recommended for those who are looking for thinking fantasy and a book which will stay with you for years to come.

Linda says

Love this author! Though this first trilogy is not as strong in structure as her later books, it wonderfully foreshadows her recurring themes of religion, feminism, a workable society and environmental concerns, among others. In this trilogy, she explores justice and law in a world that closely mirrors the situation in our own world. Sheri Tepper was a master of fantasy/science fiction.

Jenne says

In a world where psychic abilities run rampant and laws are only rules of the Game that those with psi-talent play for power and advancement using living people as game pieces. A young orphan boy named Peter grows up in the schoolhouse with the children of other Gamelords learning the lists of psi-talents - telepathy, levitation, telekinesis, shape-shifting among others - and their moves in the Game while waiting for his own talent to emerge. But when he is caught in the middle of a game of power that almost kills him, Peter is sent away to study at another schoolhouse only to find himself pursued by those who would use his talent for their own gain.

On route Peter stumbles upon a set of carved game pieces and a book, a long lost treasure that will change his fate, set in motion plans long past laid out and reveal the true history of their world.

In this omnibus of Tepper's first 3 novels of a series of nine, be prepared for fantasy and science fiction to mix with tremendous results and let the Game begin!

Chris says

One of the most unique book series I've ever read. I read it first as a younger person when I opened the first of nine books (there are even more in side stories) and just when you think you understand where it's going or what's its point is, the world opens up a bit more, the themes and character needs and wants becomes a bit more complex and you are drawn yet deeper into an amazingly complex world. The central characters are

beautifully complex and appealing. While the dangerous and evil characters in spite of their alien nature reflect the worst of human behaviors and emotions. Tepper, in all her books, has very strong opinions about human behavior and the environment, but as always leaves you in great hope that humans will learn and grow and there is a happy ending to be had... even if not this very minute. I've had these books for many years and they are old and much loved and duct taped together. I never tire of dipping back in. I guarantee it is like nothing else you might read and worth every minute.

~ ChrisD

The True Game: Kings Blood Four/Necromancer Nine/Wizard's Eleven
Sheri S. Tepper

Phoenixfalls says

A really solid piece of science fantasy, impressive as a debut trilogy and showing quite a bit of the author Tepper would eventually become. The world is fascinating, both when it seems magical in the first novel and when it becomes recognizably science fiction in the second two. The set pieces are filled with wonder and a bit of horror, and the narrator does convincingly grow up over the course of the story. The supporting cast of characters includes quite a few really fascinating ones, and there are only two characters that totally missed the boat for me. The narrative voice is occasionally uneven, with young-Peter narrating at times and older-Peter taking over other times, without much rhyme or reason, but that can (and should) be overlooked given the many other strengths this trilogy has.

Rebecca Smucker says

Peter is a young man at a magic school--but it's not just any magic school, and it's not just any world. Peter is a member of a society formed around a chess-like game called "the True Game." His school is for children of the powerful magic-users who are the higher-powered "pieces" in the game. Through betrayal by a close older friend, a teacher at the school, Peter is forced to leave the school and sent to another school, several days' journey from where he has lived his entire life. Through that journey, Peter begins to discover just how real the True Game is, and perhaps how little sense it makes, as well. A foundling, Peter knows nothing about his parentage, but he soon comes to find that his lineage is more important than he could ever know--and that he has a gift that is truly unique among players of the True Game.

As the series progresses, we find out more and more about Peter, his parents, and where exactly the True Game originated. We also start to discover that the players of the True Game may not be the original inhabitants of the planet, and that there are layers of mystery underneath the game of 'wizard's chess' that consumes its players.

A friend loaned me this series and, having read a lot of Tepper's later novels, I was surprised at how truly pure fantasy this trilogy was... at least until I started to see the science fiction elements underlying the fantasy.

A warning for those who don't read a book if the first few pages don't draw them in: I was initially a little put

off by how much Tepper seemed to want her reader to swallow without any initial explanation. Just hang in there for a chapter or so. The vagueness of her descriptions, I believe, is meant to put you in a position where you're on a sort of even footing with the protagonist, who, to be honest, is pretty naive about his entire world. Everything becomes more clear and more engaging quickly, and the rest of the series makes it more than worth it.

J L's Bibliomania says

I was in the mood for a re-read and so I revisited the world of Mavin Manyshaped and Jinian StarEye. The Omnibus The True Game contains 3 novels centered around Peter, who we discover partway through the book is Mavin's son. But thanks to a serendipitous discovery, he is much more than a just a shape shifter, more than just a boy coming of age.

While some of the writing is unpolished, King's Blood Four, which is Sheri S. Tepper's first published novel, showcased the creativity that keeps me coming back to her work. Others have written books based on chess games, others have written fantasy novels with multiple psychic powers, Kings Blood Four uses both as the backdrop for a clever coming of age story.

The beginning of Necromancer Nine, the 2nd book in the trilogy, was weaker, and unfortunately contains a sexual awakening scene which is just explicit enough that I will not be handing these books to my newly-turned 11 year old. Without the implications of rape/forced sex, the rest of the fare in the books is appropriate to middle-grade readers.

I liked the journey told in Wizard's Eleven, but found the villain to be badly developed and the ending unsatisfying. While I can't say much without spoilers, I think parts of the resolution were insufficiently foreshadowed and came out of nowhere. But we got to meet the connecting characters that lead to the other 6 books set in the same enchanting world.

In total these three short juveniles make for a satisfactory introduction to Sheri S. Tepper and the clever world of The True Game.

Krystle says

I wanted to read this book because I had read of her books before (Beauty) and loved it, so I thought I would give this a try. It's her debut trilogy and for the price of one! The first novel was extremely difficult to get through. There are a huge number of names, places, and other things just thrown at you and if you're not paying close attention you'll get lost very quickly, which I was. But I kept reading because there was just something about that kept pushing me forward. Perhaps it was the writing, her world, or the final push towards the end. The second book was a lot better and way more gripping than the first. I loved the whole seeking out his mother and then the sudden dark turn at the end. The last book was great. I loved reading about all the different talents Peter used through his blues (you'll find out what these are in the book) and the final battle.

Her writing style and story telling methods aren't as polished as her later novels but you can see the bright gem of talent shining through. The characters were each given their own unique voice and all of them had a

chance to shine. Character development could especially be seen through Peter as he went from a naïve, innocent boy to the more hardened mature one at the end. Her world building is fantastic and well thought out. Everything seems to have logical reason to exist or work as they do, and there was no point in time where I had to suspend belief.

This book for the most part is hard/epic fantasy, so I'm guessing a lot of name throwing is normal. Thankfully, there's a chart later on in the book to help you refer to. It later adds in a touch of speculative fiction showing Tepper's future genre crossing she's famous for. A neat book, while tough in the beginning, it proves a rewarding read in the end.

Antigone says

I read this trilogy (this version of the novel is 3 books in one and it is the actual version I read) in a matter of days and it drug me back into the Sci-F-/Fantasy world kicking and screaming. I had read the genre during my days as a bookseller but by the time I stopped buying books with my employee's discount, the field had lost my interest..... too many books by the same people with the same ideas. But a friend (whose taste in books I liked) recommended this and it was what I needed to try sci-fi/fantasy again. That genre name may be trouble. Why mix the two? Why shelve them together? I think the two could be segregated and the results would be generally good. But the True Game does make a case for keeping the fields together.

The novel is set in a very fantasy-feeling setting, with the characters living predestined to play a part in the Game (of Life?). The big question is what part do they play (literally, as each discovers in their late teens what skills they have and are then assigned a role... think RPG 'classes' though with many more options). This story follows one particular young man as he starts to figure out not only what his role in the game is but what the game is actually about (which leads into a more sci-fi realm). It was a good, solid read and shows the author's ability to be very non-mainstream in her story. Many of Tepper's other novels are similarly unique. Some are more readable than others. This is a my personal favorite of her books thus far.

Albert Myburgh says

I have always enjoyed Sheri S Tepper's novels immensely. She is such a master of her craft, a kind of voice I miss when I haven't read her for a while. However, 'The True Game' trilogy really stood out to me. It could be because these three books are her debut novels and it is pure genius. She really did start out her writing career with a bang.

These are utterly unique fantasy/sci-fi novels, and will easily appeal to both genres' hard-reading fans. It is complex in so many ways, with well-rounded characters who grow more convoluted and interesting as the novels progress; a place where the laws of the universe are so magical, intriguing and yet believable that I often found myself in awe of Tepper's imagination.

And this is the part that really left me speechless: All three books play off in the same world, have mostly the same characters in them and progress the same story-line, yet they read completely different from each other, redirecting the reader's focus in every book, exposing and revealing new and larger themes and other aspects of the story and the world at every turn.

It makes me want to read even more than I do.

Pierce says

I love this premise and this world. I'm going to read all the other series. I don't think this first series is perfect, but it's good enough to make me remember it years after my first reading and still like it enough on the second reading to hunt down all the others.

Lily says

What an utterly unique and intriguing high fantasy world. This is so unlike anything I've come across before and for fans of the genre this classic is well worth a look! I read this years ago but it left a very distinct impression, it is one of those rare gems that will stay with you long after you finish.

Alden says

A hero's journey; swords and sorcerers; a clever scene parodying academia (they've had X-thousand years to maintain traditions while utterly forgetting the purpose): what more could you want? Well, maybe, especially in the 3rd book, a little less people just riding along talking..? It seemed to bog down for a while. But these are early works of someone who went on to write some great SF. If you're into fantasy and SF, and find a cheap copy, give it a try. You'll be able to find it in our Little Free Library if you hurry.

Darlene Vendegna says

OH. MY. GOD! I absolutely loved this book. It is one that will stay with my forever. It is part coming of age, part quest, part fantastic imagery, wonderful characters, interesting and unique world and most of all a compelling storyline. I'm almost sorry I finished it because I am loath to leave that world.
