



# Valley of Shields

*Duncan Lay*

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Cast out from his homeland, Sendatsu has used his sword-fighting talents to survive in the foreign land of the Vales. With the assistance of Rhiannon – the first human to use magic in hundreds of years – Sendatsu has helped Huw and the Velsh defeat an invading army. Better still, Sendatsu now has the key to reclaim his children.

It will mean a return to Dokuzen – a city where deceit runs deep and Sendatsu expects an unwelcome reception. How will Sendatsu and his unlikely allies, Huw and Rhiannon, know who to trust when they can barely trust each other?

And when Dokuzen comes under fierce attack, Sendatsu's fight to survive will need to be more desperate than ever. Especially when this attack reveals who the real enemy is ...

## Valley of Shields Details

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Author : Duncan Lay

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## From Reader Review Valley of Shields for online ebook

### Dark Matter says

This and more reviews, interviews etc are on Dark Matter Zine, an online magazine.  
<http://www.darkmatterzine.com>. This review was written by Rebecca Muir for Dark Matter Zine.

This is the second book in Duncan Lay's Empire of Bones trilogy. I reviewed the first book, Bridge of Swords. In Valley of Shields, Sendatsu, Rhiannon and Huw travel back to Dokuzen, the city of the elves. They seek an alliance between the elves and the Velsh against the Forlish.

The disdain the elves hold towards humans makes them reluctant, both to help the Velsh and to acknowledge the threat the Forlish pose. Sendatsu, Rhiannon and Huw, with the help of Sendatsu's friends Gaibun and Asami, must take matters into their own hands.

In this book we see Sendatsu continue to grow. His sense of what is right and what he should do grows until he finally finds himself able to stand up to his father. The relationships between Sendatsu, Rhiannon and Huw settle down somewhat as they finally learn to respect and trust each other. However, the theme of tense and complicated relationships from the first book continues in Valley of Shields with the love triangle between Sendatsu, Asami and Gaibun. I found the tension this caused detracted from what was otherwise an exciting and engaging story.

The themes of fatherhood and of deceit, which played a big part in Bridge of Swords, are carried over and developed further in this book. The impact Rhiannon's father, and his death, had on her is explored further, and the interaction between Sendatsu and his father plays a big part in this book. Sendatsu finds himself still seeking the respect and commendation of his father, despite the abuse he has subjected him to, despite not wanting to be like him. We also see Sendatsu interacting with his own children. His desire to be a better man in order to live up to their high opinion of him is one of the most likeable things about him.

As in Bridge of Swords, deceit is shown to be a destructive force in relationships. We see again that the temptation to be less than honest, in order to further a relationship, actually damages it in the long run. The power of lies is also seen in the inability of the elves to see past the lies they invented for themselves centuries ago about their superiority to humans. A lot of terrible things happen in this book because of their inability to let go of those lies.

This is a gripping, hard-to-put-down book. There is a lot of tension in the book – it is not a light hearted read. If you liked Bridge of Swords (which you should definitely read first), you will like this book too. I look forward to the conclusion of the trilogy – there is a lot still to be resolved.

Publisher: Harper Voyager, an imprint of Harper Collins

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### Katharine (Ventureadlaxre) says

Katharine is a judge for the Aurealis Awards. This review is the personal opinion of Katharine herself, and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of any judging panel, the judging coordinator or the Aurealis Awards management team.

## Roger says

Time for Elven city!

Too much pre-guessing at what the enemy is up to and being right.

Interesting twists and power shifts.

Looking forward to the 3rd book!

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## Tsana Dolichva says

Valley of Shields by Duncan Lay is the second book his Empire of Bones trilogy. Last year, I read and reviewed the first book, Bridge of Swords.

I had forgotten, when I first picked up Valley of Shields, just one much of a cliffhanger the first book had ended on. This second volume starts pretty much the same second the previous one ended, jumping straight into the action. As such, it was a very in medias res beginning, without any recapping. It took me a little while to remember everything that had been going on nine months previously when I read the first book. I suspect this is the kind of sequel that would be perfect to read straight after the first book. So if you haven't had the chance to pick up this series, now might be a good time (and Valley of Shields doesn't end on the same sort of cliffhanger).

Valley of Shields again follows Sendatsu, Huw and Rhiannon but this time a lot of the action takes place in Dokuzen, the Elfaren city. This brings a lot of different political struggles to the forefront and I think there was a bit more intrigue going on (those who know me know I'm a fan of intrigue) from all sides, including the main characters.

An interesting aspect which was present in the first book but is much more important in the second is the love triangle between Sendatsu, Asami and her husband, Gaibun. The thing that made it interesting for me is that it was seen predominantly from Sendatsu's perspective (since he's the most central character), rather than from Asami's as is common, especially in YA (not that this is YA, of course). I also appreciated that while we saw the two men trying to undermine each other, we also got to see Asami being annoyed at being treated like a prize, which made me happy. And while everyone (especially the men) made fools of themselves, it struck me as a pretty realistic state of affairs. I am looking forward to seeing how the matter is resolved in the final volume.

As fans of Lay will have come to expect, battles and training for them are again central to this book. If you're the kind of reader who doesn't like graphic violence (I wouldn't call it at all gratuitous in this case), then I'm not sure this kind of fantasy novel (what I like to call BFF — Big Fat Fantasy) is for you. But for fantasy fans, I highly recommend Duncan Lay's books. I also strongly recommend starting with the first book in this series, Bridge of Swords.

I enjoyed Valley of Shields a great deal. After a long string of not BFF books, it was nice and comforting (yes, I may have issues on that front) to get back into a nice long fantasy novel. I look forward to February, when the concluding volume is scheduled for release.

4.5 / 5 stars

You can read more of my reviews on my blog.

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### **Dave Brassington says**

I think this was not my favourite book of Duncan's, I don't know if there is a middle book syndrome. I suspected that he was laying the groundwork for the end of the trilogy. Having quickly read that I am glad to report I was right. The third book was quickly consumed and with relish. Lots of twists and turns and a satisfying ending.

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### **Rose Nisbet says**

The characters were allowed to develop in interesting ways, I thought.

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### **Shaheen says**

**4.5/5**

*Valley of Shields* begins with a heart-pounding battle (remember that cliffhanger from *Bridge of Swords*?) and the action doesn't let up throughout the novel. Perfectly balanced with secrets and intrigue, romance and familial relationships, it has left me wishing that the third and final volume of this series was already available.

Sendatsu, our quintessential reluctant hero, finally bites the bullet in this book and starts to make decisions himself, instead of watching passively and hoping trouble passes him by. I liked getting to know about his old life better, especially the way he lives and his relationship with his children and mother. Huw and Rhiannon are with him every step of the way, trying to convince the 'elves' that they are equal to humans and should live peacefully alongside them. With the main cast all together, it's weird to see Sendatsu, Asami and Gaibun in the same place, considering their love triangle.

I really wanted Asami to have a larger role than previously, and she gets that in this novel, which made me happy. Although much of her and Rhiannon's interactions are based on the men in their lives, they bond over a lot of other things, like magic and defying the traditional roles for women. In my opinion, they spent too long talking about their romances, with Asami even once saying that the politics and battles don't matter, she wanted to hear about "more important things", like Rhiannon and Huw. I also think Asami's character is held back by the love triangle - Gaibun and Sendatsu frequently treat her like a prized possession, rather than a person, and it's infuriating. However, I love that she always knew what she wanted and wasn't afraid to grab it, or confront Sendatsu when he was keeping her away from her dreams. I think the love triangle is handled realistically in this book, especially in comparison to a few others I have read \*cough\*Jem-Tessa-Will\*cough\*

Again, the world building in this novel blew me away - everything is so well thought out and explained that I had no trouble imagining it. While *Bridge of Swords* focussed on showing us the human world, here we were introduced to the elven world, which is every bit as interesting and exotic. I admire the cultural and social differences between the elves and humans, and understood each group's motivations. I love that the author manages to make the readers' sympathies shift with every change in perspective; it takes a clever writer to be

able to pull that off consistently.

This series is focussed on physical battles between the humans and elves, but while the previous book had a few small-scale skirmishes in it, and focussed a lot on the training of human troops, *Valley of Shields* has a few larger battles. These are long, strategic, bloody affairs, but I think the inclusion of so many narrative perspectives works in this case because it never got boring. Each character saw something different, and more importantly, was a part of a different part of the defence/attack, so that they only gave a complete picture of what was happening what taken together. It was enjoyable, and Duncan Lay writes some of the best one-on-one fight scenes I have ever read.

*Valley of Shields* is a wonderful sequel to *Bridge of Swords*, and will be enjoyed my many fans of the Fantasy genre. Although somewhat lengthy, it rewards its readers with amazing characters and realistic plot elements. For me, the next book (*Wall of Spears*), cannot come quickly enough.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher for review.  
You can read more of my reviews at [Speculating on SpecFic](#) .

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### **Optimus says**

Fantastic book of betrayal and war. Some of the best war scenes in the history of every book i have read. You are on the edge of your seat the whole time. Way too stressful but still a great book.

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