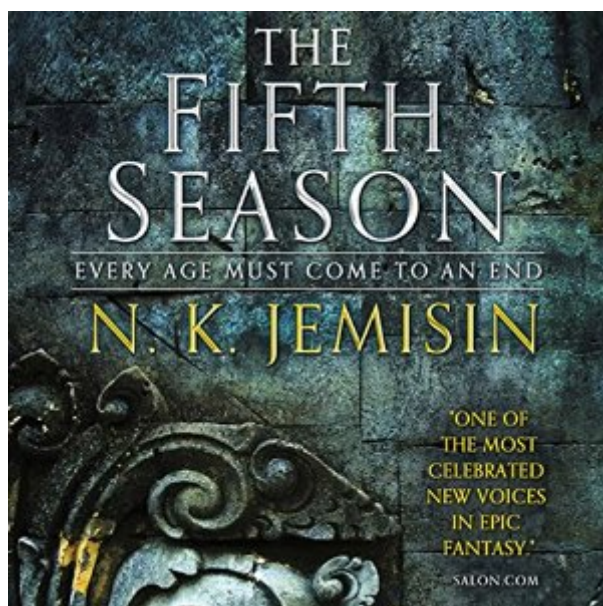


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The Fifth Season: The Broken Earth, Book 1



Synopsis

This is the way the world ends. For the last time. A season of endings has begun. It starts with the great, red rift across the heart of the world's sole continent, spewing ash that blots out the sun. It starts with death, with a murdered son and a missing daughter. It starts with betrayal, and long dormant wounds rising up to fester. This is the Stillness, a land long familiar with catastrophe, where the power of the Earth is wielded as a weapon. And where there is no mercy. A new fantasy trilogy by Hugo, Nebula & World Fantasy Award-nominated author N. K. Jemisin.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 15 hours and 31 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Hachette Audio

Audible.com Release Date: August 4, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B012H8111O

Best Sellers Rank: #39 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Action &

Adventure #54 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Dystopian #69

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fantasy > Epic

Customer Reviews

I've enjoyed all of Jemisin's books thus far, but I often avoid starting series books until the whole series is complete because I hate being left hanging, waiting for the next installment. But "The Fifth Season" was totally worth the suspense. The world of The Stillness - an ironically-named super-continent that suffers frequent, massive environmental catastrophes thanks to its unstable geology - is a captivating setting for the story's three narrators, each of whom is forced to journey across the dangerous, shifting land. In conceiving a society able to do what it takes to survive across multiple devastating periods of disaster and climate change, Jemisin creates a world order that each of her main characters sees through different eyes: one hoping it will offer her refuge, one furious about its demands on her, and one hoping to just avoid its gaze altogether. Even though I enjoy a good Tolkein-esque fantasy, it's so refreshing to read Jemisin's writing, which always takes a fresh departure from the pseudo-medieval-Europe settings so common in the genre. Rather than

elves and orcs and plundering armies, Jemisin gives us orogenes (those gifted with the ability to control geological forces), stone-eaters (non-humans who can move through solid rock with their own, mysterious agenda), and a continent that is a greater threat to its people than any army. Whether the strict, caste-driven, xenophobic society that has evolved in response to the environment is a necessary evil or a regime to be overthrown is an argument that will likely span the entire trilogy. "The Fifth Season" could be considered part of the vein of SF/F that addresses environmental and climate change issues (e.g.

Since reading the Inheritance trilogy, I've been a fan of Jemisin's writing, and I lusted after this book for well over a year. So when it finally made its way into my hands, I had extremely high hopes for it. I spent that time happily sheltered from any spoiler more detailed than the release date, so I went into it blind, knowing only that it was written by an author whose work I love. I can't even begin to say how even my legendary expectations were blown out of the water. The story starts with Essun, a woman whose husband has murdered their young son and kidnapped their daughter, because he found out that Essun and her children were orogenes, those hated and dangerous manipulators of the earth. Essun sets out on a quest to kill her husband and recover her daughter, but a powerful seismic event has just happened, starting an unprecedented Season and changing the fate of humanity. Told alongside Essun's story are the stories of Syenite, a young orogene on a mission with the most powerful orogene alive, and Damaya, an orogene just starting her training at the Fulcrum. Over time we see how these stories converge, but it's not in the way many readers might first expect. What to say about the world of The Fifth Season? The planet, or at least the known inhabited land, is one large continent called the Stillness. Nobody has much inclination to seek potential land elsewhere, because seismic activity is common and devastating, and tsunamis are a very real and not uncommon danger for people living in coastal communities, let alone those at sea. Humanity has survived disaster after disaster, civilizations crumbling and new ones arising, and the Sanze empire has been in power for most of recorded history. It is, on its surface, a fascinating and unique fantasy world.

I had never read anything by N. K. Jemisin before, and I got to tell you, I was blown away by this book. There's just so much here: Incredible world building, unforgettable characters with powerful voices, and twists and turns that caught me completely off guard. Jemisin can turn a scene just like George R. R. Martin and she has channeled the righteous anger of Octavia Butler. "The Fifth Season", takes us far into the future, to the Still, a seismically active world with one Pangea-like

continent. The inhabitants of this world take for granted constant earthquakes and volcanoes. They matter-o-factly prepare for Fifth Seasons, when large earthquakes or volcanoes will poison the air and water, killing most of the population. Even their bodies have adapted to this restless world with a sensory organ in the brain that warn of a pending quakes. Some of the inhabitants, called Orogenes, have evolved this ability to the point they can alter seismic activity with power of thought. These people are exploited by the government for construction and demolition, quarrying and other large earth moving projects. But they are also despised, because they can bring instant death to thousands at whim. Orogenes are classified as nonhumans, and they are hunted down and killed. A lucky few are taken, at a young age, to the Fulcrum in the heart of the Still. There, they are enslaved by the Guardians. Only those with exquisite self control and proven loyalty to the Guardians are ever allowed outside the gates of the Fulcrum again. The world of the Still is given to us through Orogenes in three part harmony, maiden/matron/crone. A child kept in a barn by her family after her orogenic nature is made to feel guilty for her own victimization.

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