

★ **Joythief**

Brenda J. Pierson

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A spider-thief, a slave, and a woman with hidden darkness inside team up to save the world in Brenda J. Pierson's Arabian-inspired fantasy novel *Joythief*.

Mariq is a pampered princess in Kuriza by day and a gifted spider-thief for the Star-Blades by night. The Star-Blades give her two options: she can either assassinate her future husband, the Sheik of Hatife, or take a poison that costs her the gifts she worked hard to attain. And with Turien, a slave for the Star-Blades, and Ehra, her attendant in the Hatife palace, Mariq faces the ultimate mission of saving the world from being torn apart by an imbalance of magic. They also search for an answer to the most fundamental question of all: are they worthy of being remembered?

A fast-moving, twisting, and unpredictable fantasy novel, *Joythief* includes a neverending rollercoaster of events that create new problems for the trio to combat. Its worldbuilding is astounding: each page describes the colors, scents, traditions, and lifestyles of the three kingdoms in the book—Kuriza, Hatife, and Temhet-Sakh. And Mariq, Turien, and Ehra each fight against symbolic and physical captors that keep them prisoners. For Mariq, her captors are her family and the bleeding insecurities she faces from losing her gifts; Turien is marked and seen as property, and works to find his voice and realize his worth. His story is triumphant and moving, and his pursuit of freedom is pure and glorious to behold. And Ehra's struggle may be the most challenging and heart-wrenching of all: she struggles between accepting and shunning her gifts.

Perfect and satisfying in its final moments, *Joythief* is a stunning magical story about people who find their true places in the world, freeing themselves from emotional chains.

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