



★ **The Four Profound Weaves: A Birdverse Book**

R. B. Lemberg

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R. B. Lemberg spins a world of singing gods, desert nomads, and magic humming in the wind in *The Four Profound Weaves*, the first novella set in their Birdverse universe.

Uiziya, a transgender woman in her sixties, is an aspiring master weaver studying under her aunt, Benesret, to learn the Four Profound Weaves: wind, sand, song, and bone. These components create cloths of change, wanderlust, hope, and death, respectively. But Uiziya's training was cut short when Benesret was driven out of the Surun' nomads' society forty years ago. Torn between fear and loyalty and, above all, tired of waiting, Uiziya enters the Burri desert to seek Benesret with the hope of learning to weave from death.

A nameless man, after leaving his oppressive society behind and using a cloth of wind to transition into a man, is also searching for Benesret. He hopes she will give him a name to accompany his new body, as she provided the cloth for his change. He accompanies Uiziya into the desert. But Benesret is not as benevolent as Uiziya's memories suggest, and the nameless man strikes a bargain for Uiziya's life: he will steal back Benesret's only cloth of song from The Collector, the corrupt ruler of Iyar who murdered his lover decades earlier.

Impressive world building renders the shifting hues of the desert sands and the cold stone of The Collector's palace in tight prose. Social structures and customs are relayed with the same deft hand; the free, accepting atmosphere of the desert and its people ends at Iyar's stifling walls.

In *The Four Profound Weaves*, the nameless man and Uiziya are compelling, complementary leads—both stubborn, loyal, and struggling to decide where their loyalties lie. Though external battles raise stakes—a palace torturer wields a weapon filled with trapped and tormented spirits, for example—it is the twin leads' internal progress that arrests the most. They search for identity and hope amid the rubble of youthful expectations and regret.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (July / August 2020)

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