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Alia Waking

Lillian Heil

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McCaffrey, Laura Williams. *Alia Waking*. Clarion Books Houghton Mifflin Imprint, 2003. ISBN 0618194614. \$15.00. 224 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy Fiction;

Subject: Sex role—Juvenile fiction; Friendship—Juvenile fiction; Magic; Books—Reviews;

Alia wants desperately to be chosen by the Keentens, the elite group of women warriors in her community. When she and her best friend, Kay, capture two teenagers from an enemy tribe, they will likely be selected. But Alia feels the call of an ancient magic which does not approve of her friend Kay's attitude toward the captives. Kay and the Keentens seem to be motivated by the glory and honor they receive and not by a desire to discover the dark secret of their head magician. Alia discovers that she no longer wants to be a member of such a sisterhood. She chooses to align herself with the healers in the village, one of whom recognizes that Alia is a speaker—that is, she can speak to the magical trees and receive help from them.

McCaffrey's story makes the reader feel the mighty conflict Alia faces as she struggles to make a decision between the Keenten's approval and her own feelings of what is right. She has always wanted to be a Keenten, but they are not warriors devoted to defending the right, as she thought. The story implies that these Keentens have strayed from their original purpose and are filled with pride—a classic description of how power can corrupt. It is good to have a story in which the heroine struggles and chooses justice over glory and power.