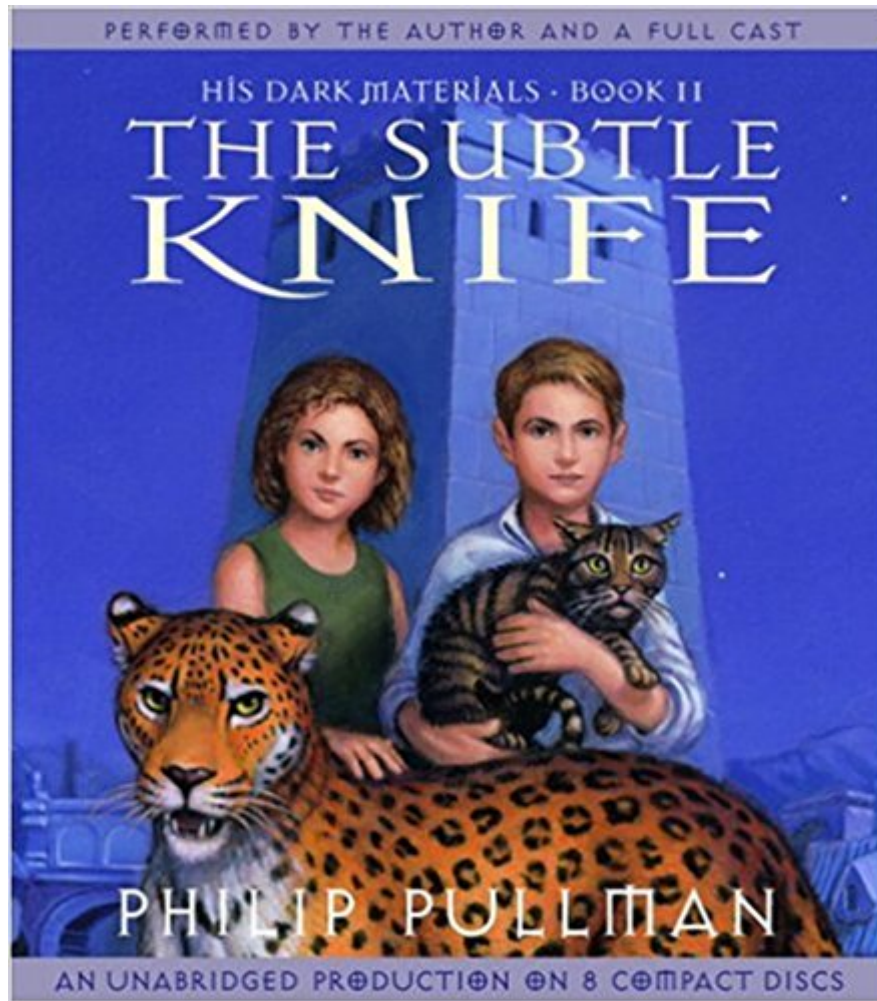


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The Subtle Knife (His Dark Materials, Book 2)



Synopsis

Read by the author and a full cast 8 hours 55 minutes, 8 CDs The universe has broken wide, and Lyra's friend lies dead. Desperate for answers and set on revenge, Lyra bursts into a new world in pursuit of his killer. Instead, she finds Will, just twelve years old and already a murderer himself. He's on a quest as fierce as Lyra's, and together they strike out into this sunlit otherworld. On this journey marked by danger, Will and Lyra forge ahead. But with every step and each new horror, they move closer to the greatest threat of all—and the shattering truth of their own destiny. In this stunning sequel to *The Golden Compass*, Philip Pullman continues His Dark Materials trilogy and confirms it as an undoubted and enduring classic.

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Customer Reviews

After speeding through the *Golden Compass*, one of the best fantasy books I had read in years at the very least, I could barely wait to start on the sequel. Unfortunately, it did very little to live up to my expectations. Nearly all of the charms of the first book--a unique and well realized alternate reality, an interesting and masterful reshaping of "real world" institutions into this alternate reality, intriguing technologies--were lost in the sequel. However, the biggest disappointment had to be what I consider the near character assassination of Lyra. Lyra, I thought, was one of the primary strengths of the first book. In the *Golden Compass*, we had that rarest of all things, a female

protagonist in a fantasy novel who isn't some kind of patient saint or super warrior. She was selfish, brave, ungrateful, loyal, resourceful and something of a brat. In short, she felt very much like a real girl who found herself swept up in horrible events far beyond what any 12-year-old child should have to face and, while she had her failures, faced those challenges with resourcefulness and sometimes terrible courage. At the end, we had Lyra, betrayed by her own parents, her dearest friend dead, about to leave behind the sole protector she'd found--but who was facing this unknown new world and a war against her giant of a father because she felt it was right. It was a powerful image. So I excitedly opened *The Subtle Knife* only to find Lyra's quest nigh well abandoned. Will is a decent if underdeveloped character, but he's tremendously common. In how many fantasy novels is the chief protagonist a boy with a mysterious father who ends up having a destiny well beyond his expectations? Will as sidekick I could have born.

When Dickens' novels were first serialized, anxious crowds gathered at American docks, waiting for each fresh installment from across the ocean. Readers of Philip Pullman's *"The Golden Compass"* have found themselves similarly looking across the water for its sequel, and after an eighteen month wait *"The Subtle Knife"* has finally arrived. *"The Subtle Knife"* is the second installment in the *"His Dark Materials"* trilogy, in which Pullman has created an alternate universe nearly as vivid and credible as our own. Whereas *"The Golden Compass"* was set in a parallel world in which bears talk and witches fly, the action of its sequel occurs primarily in our own world. The book introduces a new protagonist, Will Perry, who joins the heroine of *"The Golden Compass,"* Lyra Belacqua, in an eschatological quest for the nature of "Dust" -- subatomic particles which correspond to the mysterious dark matter of modern astronomy. Will and Lyra meet in Cittagazze, a frightening world in which spectres suck the souls from adults, and thus the only fear children have is of growing up. Reviewers of *"The Golden Compass"* made inevitable comparisons to Tolkien's *"The Lord of the Rings"* trilogy. While it is difficult for any fantasy book to escape the long shadow of Frodo Baggins, the *Dark Materials* series admirably avoids the painful kitsch that so often mars Tolkien's work; Pullman's characters seldom burst into song or sigh as they contemplate a noble past where men and elves walked tall and... well, one gets the picture. Indeed, what sets Pullman apart from so many fellow fabulists is his respect for restrained, inventive language.

I snatched up the *Subtle Knife* from my bookstore the very first day the book was released, eager with anticipation. Almost three years later, at 15, I still have not lost that joyous and excited feeling of delight every time I pick up the book. I originally reviewed the book long ago, but I came back to

check what others thought about Philip Pullman's masterpiece. Needless to say, I was extremely disappointed. Readers seem to be criticizing Pullman for the religious aspects of his works and their apparent "immorality." The fact that these absurd thoughts completely contradict the ideals of the pluralistic society we're supposed to be living in doesn't even bother me at this point. Readers simply fail to realize that the very nature of Pullman's work forces him to deal with these issues! The Dark Materials Trilogy is based on a single passage from Milton's Paradise Lost, which, as you know, deals with Satan's rebellion, original sin and man's fall from grace. And although Milton in his first two books of Paradise Lost portrays Satan as an almost heroic character, no one accuses *him* of blasphemy. In fact, he was a devout Christian, one of the greatest writers of the seventeenth century and his work is commonly upheld to be a great resource to and extension of the Christian faith. Pullman simply takes a few lines from Paradise Lost and explores the concept within them. What if God had indeed, created other worlds that we are not aware of? Pullman, with his immense genius and imagination decides to explore this question. What if there were thousands of worlds like ours, where every possibility of probability occurs? He manages to answer this question in a magnificent and skillful manner. His work needs not be marred by religious censure.

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