

## SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE            *Barrayar*  
AUTHOR        Lois McMaster Bujold  
PUBLISHER     Baen  
COPYRIGHT    1991  
PRINTING      1991  
COVER ART     Stephen Hickman

**Précis**        Cordelia Vorkosigan is adjusting to life as a Vor Lady which is complicated greatly by the fact that her husband Aral is the Regent for the boy Emperor Gregor. Within weeks of this appointment old Emperor Ezar dies and now the power struggles begin.

Aral tries to keep order but within days a sonic grenade just misses Aral's ground car, then a soltoxin canister is tossed into her bedroom nearly killing them both and causing her to have her unborn child transferred to a uterine replicator and treatment to prevent serious deformity.

The final blow is the attempted coup of Count Vordarian who unsuccessfully tries to kidnap little Gregor which sets up a dangerous game of cat and mouse for Cordelia and the prince, assisted by Bothari and Aral's father Piotr - who is not happy about the possibility of a "mutant" grandson and heir. The Barrayarans are not fond of defects.

Cordelia is pushed to the limit when Miles' replicator is taken hostage and she plans a daring raid to get it back and ends getting more than she bargained for.

**Protagonist**    Cordelia Naismith Vorkosigan  
**Antagonist**     Count Vordarian

**What I liked**    The excellent pace, the terrific characters, the superb telling of the Vor society, and the one liners - especially at the end.

**What I didn't like**    A few inconsistencies, like one person being able to carry the replicator back to safety, it would be a fragile and at the same time heavy object and bulky. None of this detracts from the story however.

**Final Comments**     This is the second book in the series chronologically and it really explains how Miles got to be the way he is and also introduces us to his cousin Ivan and explains the relationship of Koudelka and Drou. And all these are things that make the following books deeper and richer. It also lays a lot of the groundwork for *The Vor Game*. McMaster wrote this after the first couple of Mile books to do just that I suspect but it is fun to read it before those and one could argue that if you are reading the Miles series for the first time, reading the books chronologically has a lot of merit.

I really love going back and reading these books because the prose is outstanding and they are just plain fun to read.

**Rating** 🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊