

SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE *Borders of Infinity*
AUTHOR Lois McMaster Bujold
PUBLISHER Baen
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PRINTING 1989
COVER ART Gary Ruddell

This is a collection of three novellas, which take place between *Warrior's Apprentice* and *The Vor Game*, with a little bridge between them of Illyan debriefing Miles on the three events. All three are great examples of Miles in action - One as Miles the other two as Admiral Naismith of the Dendarii mercenary fleet.

The Mountains of Mourning - This story is Miles first real test as the heir to the Vorkosigan legacy as he gets unintentionally involved in a infanticide investigation in the hill country belonging to the family. Aral gives Miles the power of his voice and Miles manages to get to the bottom of who killed the child and at the same time establishes himself as someone to be respected; no easy task in the back country where children are murdered like this with regularity because they have defects.

IN the end, Miles manages to bring this village into the modern times a bit as well as set up a future of better prosperity and tolerance - not bad for a young man.

Labyrinth - In this story, Miles assumes the role of Admiral of the Dendarri assigned by Impsec to retrieve a scientist from Jackson's Whole - a planet where genetic modifications are bought and flesh is cheap. It is controlled by several houses, Fell and Ryoval being the two involved in this story. As you would expect from a Miles story the mission is not as easy as it sounds. The main snag is that the scientist will not leave without some tissue samples that he has imbedded in a mutant that is currently in the possession of House Ryoval.

A raid is planned, it fails and instead of killing the mutant and getting the samples, Miles is thrust into captivity with said mutant who turns out to be human and Miles saves her, enlists her help to escape and scores a blow against Baron Ryoval.

Borders of Infinity - The title story is an interesting tale of Miles being imprisoned in a dome by the Cetagandans - who from previous stories we know were defeated after a bloody invasion of Barrayar years ago. The conditions in the dome are deplorable and escape is impossible. It appears the series will end prematurely but Miles manages to make order out chaos using his most powerful weapon - his mouth.

In the end you find out he was planted there all along to contact and rescue an important General, but Miles can't stop there. Lots of action at the end of this one.

All three of these stories are good and each works on a different level. Mourning is a touching story about human nature and attitudes and Miles shows his compassion in this story for the first time in such a powerful way. Labyrinth uses the whole host of variant humans and genetic modification to teach us tolerance and at the same time shows Miles resourcefulness under pressure. Borders is pure Miles and shows him scrambling to resolve an insurmountable problem.

Of the three, I liked *Borders* least but only because it drags a bit and the ending comes up fast at the end and is just okay. The writing in these is a step up gain and as I read these stories it is clear that Bujold gets better with each novel.

You could skip this and not really miss anything that ties into later novels but they all give you a keen insight into Miles Vorkosigan and they are all enjoyable to read.

Rating 🍌🍌🍌🍌🍌