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Barrayar (Library Edition)



Synopsis

Political intrigue, culture clash and romance make a stirring mix in this award-winning follow-up novel to the acclaimed *Shards of Honor*. In the wake of interplanetary war, former commander Cordelia Naismith has deserted her own planet to marry the leader of the defeated enemy, Aral Vorkosigan. On his home planet of Barrayar, two rival factions are eyeing the recently vacated throne, and Aral, recently appointed Regent of Barrayar by the Emperor on his deathbed, must stand between them. As Lord and Lady Vorkosigan, Aral and Cordelia struggle to establish stability in a fragile government thrown into confusion by the transition of power and the threat of civil war. When a palace coup endangers the government, their lives, and her unborn son, Cordelia takes action to secure the safety of her new family and new home. Winner of the Hugo Award for best novel.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Barrayar is, chronologically, the second book in the Miles Vorkosigan series, though it was written after the first few books of that series came out. It continues the story of Miles' mother, Cordelia Naismith (though now she's married, so it's really Cordelia Vorkosigan). It ends with a very young Miles, neatly tying into the beginning of Miles' story (which is what the rest of the series is about). Barrayar won a Hugo award, one of the highest awards in science fiction writing, and I will have to say that it was well-deserved. This is a fabulous book. After leaving her home planet of Beta to marry Aral Vorkosigan on his home planet of Barrayar, Cordelia tries to settle into a Barrayaran retired

nobles' life. Aral has retired from politics and wants to lead a quiet life with his new wife. Cordelia is pregnant with their son, and he just wants to live a happy life with her. Unfortunately, events transpire to make that impossible. The Emperor is dying and his grandson (the son died in *Shards of Honor*, the first book) is only four years old. A regent must be appointed, and Vorkosigan is the only one who would be agreeable to the majority of Counts. Thus, Cordelia and Aral's life is turned upside down when he assumes his new duties. There is plenty of political intrigue as other Counts scheme for power because Vorkosigan wants to bring *Barrayar* into the current century while the conservatives want things to stay as they are. These events even go so far as to really affect the unborn Miles in ways that will be familiar to long-time Vorkosigan fans, but which I won't spoil in case you've never read a Vorkosigan book. This book is fascinating in many ways.

To start with, if you haven't yet read *Shards of Honor*, the first novel in the tales of Miles Vorkosigan (even though it doesn't actually feature Miles, it's about how his parents met), STOP, go back and read it before approaching *Barrayar*. You'll be glad you did. These two novels, written seven years apart, tell one complete story arc. How that came to be is an interesting story. *Shards of Honor* and *Barrayar* form the beginning of the Miles Vorkosigan series. (Bujold's novel *Falling Free* takes place within the same fictional universe but, being set approximately 200 years before Miles' birth, features none of the series' familiar characters. Eventually you'll want to read *Falling Free*, but it doesn't matter when; you can insert it into your Bujold reading experience anytime.) *Shards of Honor* is Bujold's first novel (not merely the first novel she ever sold, but the first she ever wrote, thus disproving the axiom, "All first novels are unsaleable trash"). She begins writing it in December 1982. In mid-'83, having worked through the *Shards* material and about a third into what would eventually become *Barrayar*, Bujold realizes her manuscript is becoming too long to submit as one book (the "wisdom" at the time being a thin manuscript is more likely to be picked off the slush pile than a thick one). Bujold finds a logical breaking point for her tale (Cordelia's arrival on *Barrayar*), puts it in final draft form, and mothballs the partially finished "rest of the story." Bujold submits *Shards* and begins working on another book, *The Warrior's Apprentice*. She's about halfway through that when *Shards* comes back rejected with an editorial suggestion she tighten it up. She finishes *Warrior's*, then cuts about 80 pages out of *Shards*, giving her two good unpublished novels.

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