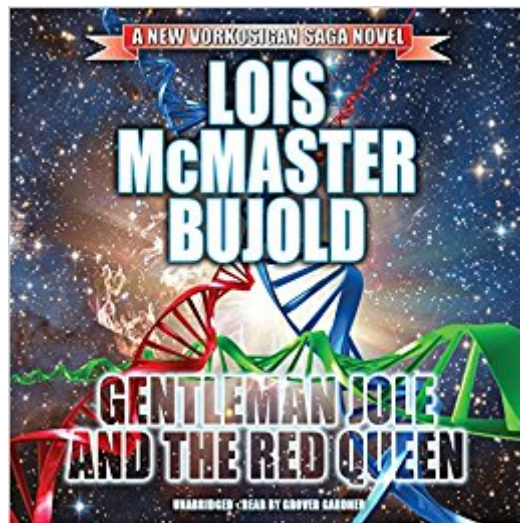


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Gentleman Jole And The Red Queen (Miles Vorkosigan Adventures, Book 17)



Synopsis

[Read by Grover Gardner] Three years after her famous husband's death, Cordelia Vorkosigan, widowed Vicereine of Sergyar, stands ready to spin her life in a new direction. Oliver Jole, Admiral, Sergyar Fleet, finds himself caught up in her web of plans in ways he'd never imagined, bringing him to an unexpected crossroads in his life. Meanwhile, Miles Vorkosigan, one of Emperor Gregor's key investigators, this time dispatches himself on a mission of inquiry, into a mystery he never anticipated - his own mother. Plans, wills, and expectations collide in this sparkling science-fiction social comedy, as the impact of galactic technology on the range of the possible changes all the old rules, and Miles learns that not only is the future not what he expects, neither is the past.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lois McMaster Bujold is one of the most honored writers in the fields of science fiction and fantasy, having won five Hugo Awards and three Nebula Awards. Her second novel, *The Warrior's Apprentice*, introduced young Miles Vorkosigan, one of the most popular characters in science fiction. In 2011, she was awarded the Skylark Award for her significant contribution to science fiction. The mother of two, she lives in Minneapolis.

In the aftermath of Aral Vorkosigan's passing we find Cordelia revisiting plans for the family she had wanted when politics and the health problems of her first child Miles derailed her long ago. The

grieving Cordelia seems oddly reduced from the dynamo of past novels until finally she slowly begins to gain color and life. The series of books that is the Vorkosigan saga has changed from book to book, morphing genres and literary styles with unusual fluidity. This book does not fit neatly any existing literary slot. It is still science fiction, although most of the science involves either human reproduction or ecology in this case. But if you are expecting action or mystery you will be let down. There is a bit of romance, an exploration of gender roles, and a revisit to the relationship of Aral and Cordelia that fills a lot of detail known neither to the reader or their son Miles. Miles himself arrives later, family in tow to assess and assimilate his mother's next step. While this works as a stand alone novel, it could also function as either a last look at characters many readers have grown to love, or a jumping off point for a whole new set of adventures. As ever the answer lies with Ms. Bujold who often keeps her literary plans to herself. While I am fine with this novel's unique style, I did miss Bujold's usual humor, and found Cordelia strangely diminished during most of the novel. I hope this is side effect of grief rather than age, and that if we are lucky enough to get more books her trademark strength of character will be restored. It is because of these factors I withhold one star, although I consider every book written by this author cause for rejoicing.

I love the Vorkosigan Saga and looked forward to a new book; Cordelia is also a reliably interesting character. This book was disappointing. While it was good to be back in the Vorkosigan Universe, this book failed for me in two major ways. 1. It flew in the face of the character of the characters. Aral Vorkosigan would not have cheated on his wife when she went on a trip and Cordelia would not have accepted it without a qualm. Yes, the triad described in the book is possible given her Betan background and his sexuality BUT they would have gotten there through discussion and agreement, not behind Cordelia's back when she was out of town. It just left a nasty taste about Aral's character and sense of honor. 2. Nothing happens. There is no plot here; it reads like an epilogue. Yes their relationship is mildly interesting but there is no central challenge or story. I kept assuming the Cetagandan was up to no good with his little kiosk/experience or that something challenging would occur but the entire story is just a wallow in Cordelia's personal life.

I have read pretty well all of Ms Bujold's novels, both the science fiction and fantasy ones. I've always loved the Miles Vorkosigan stories, and the writer's daring in having an odd little man as her main protagonist (after the original Cordelia and Aral stories). What a guy! Not to mention how funny some of the books have been, while others were so intense they brought tears to my eyes. But I must say this latest outing in the Vorkosigan saga was deeply disappointing. As other commenters

noted, there was next to no plot here, except - for this reader - a surprising desire that Cordelia decides to pursue after her husband Aral's death. Nor was I particularly impressed to hear about the bizarre intimate shenanigans revealed about Cordelia and Aral's marriage. There had been no real foreshadowing of any of this in the earlier books, and quite frankly seem more to do with the author deciding to explore gender-related theories for her own amusement. This seems a rather self-indulgent approach to writing a book, and had the author not been such a well regarded writer in the genre, I can't imagine a publisher would have printed it. Read this if you've been following the series, and want to know what happens to Cordelia (a rather colourless Cordelia here), but definitely don't read if you are new to the Vorkosigans. It won't make much sense, and nothing much really happens to move the story along.

I have consistently enjoyed the Bujold Vorkosigan series, having read them multiple times and listened to them on disc (which is lots of fun and very different from reading them). This book, however, is a major disappointment. It's just plain boring with lots of psycho-babble, personal self-debates and almost none of the humor, wit, ethical challenges, and excitement of the rest of the series. I struggled to get through it, and finally ended up skipping numerous paragraphs just to see if it went anywhere. Well, it ended (predictably) and I was left hoping it was just a bump in the road and that the next in the series, if there is one, gives us more of the Bujold we expect and appreciate.

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