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# Shards Of Honor (Vorkosigan Saga ) (Cordelia Naismith)



## Synopsis

[Read by Grover Gardner] Shards of Honor introduces Barrayar and Aral Vorkosigan, Beta Colony and Cordelia Naismith, thus beginning a multigenerational saga spanning time as well as space. Recognized as the current exemplar of character-based science fiction, Bujold debuts her beloved Vorkosigan saga with this tale about the future parents of Miles Vorkosigan. Captain Cordelia Naismith of the Betan Expeditionary Force was on a routine mission to study the life forms on an uninhabited, neutral planet. Little did she know that the enemy Barrayarans had chosen this place as their secret base for an as-yet undeclared war. Separated from her team, Cordelia is captured by Lord Aral Vorkosigan, the leader in charge of the Barrayaran mission. Aral himself is caught in a web of political intrigue that has led to a recent attempt on his life. As the two strangers struggle together across the unfriendly terrain of the foreign planet toward Aral's ship, they discover that their greatest danger may be the romance inconveniently developing between them, on the brink of a war that will divide their peoples more strongly than ever.

## Book Information

Series: Cordelia Naismith

Audio CD

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.; Unabridged edition (March 15, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1433231921

ISBN-13: 978-1433231926

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.7 x 6 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 199 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,218,313 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > ( B ) > Bujold, Lois McMaster #1186 in Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction #1427 in Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy

## Customer Reviews

Cordelia Naismith, Betan Survey Captain, was expecting the unexpected: hexapods, floating creatures, odd parasites... She was not, however, expecting to find hostile humans on an uninhabited planet. And she wasn't really expecting to fall in love with a 40-plus barbarian known to cosmopolitan galactics as the Butcher of Komarr. Will Mother ever understand? And can such an

odd beast as love survive an interplanetary war? --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"[Bujold] gives [her] characters enough emotional depth, and enough sense, to raise their story beyond cliché." --Locus "Bujold has a nice hand with the complications . . . All in all, Shards is a worthy effort, and worth reading for any fan of SF romance." --Analog

Commander Cordelia Naismith of Beta Colony is leading a scientific study team on an unnamed planet when she and a colleague become separated from the rest of the team. They witness their planetary shuttle taking off in the distance, only to discover that their base camp has been utterly destroyed in an attack and one of their colleagues killed. The shuttle clearly was escaping the attackers, who are nowhere to be found. In communicating with the shuttle crew, Naismith learns that the attack came from a patrol sent by the militaristic society of Barrayar. Then Naismith and her colleague are surprised in the wilderness—her colleague is wounded but, strangely, not killed—by a Barrayaran officer. His name, she learns, is Aral Vorkosigan. He's a man with a fearsome reputation, formerly the youngest admiral in the Barrayaran fleet. Now he bears a lower rank. Vorkosigan commands a single Imperial war cruiser—the source of the contingent that attacked Naismith's men. However, Vorkosigan himself has been attacked by his men and left to die. As he explains, "My best friends and my deadliest enemies all wear the same uniform." Naismith soon learns that Vorkosigan is not the man of Betan myth. The two find themselves fighting for survival together in a 200-kilometer trek across the planet's surface to an emergency cache he has built. Along the way, Naismith and Vorkosigan become close. It seems they may be falling in love with each other. *Shards of Honor* tells the tale of their developing relationship in the midst of a complex and brutal factional struggle on Barrayar. Though Vorkosigan is close to the Emperor, he has been outmaneuvered by forces that share control of the empire. As the story rushes forward, he and Naismith together find themselves in a fight to the death against the Emperor's enemies. This is a suspenseful and exciting tale about an interplanetary war pitting Barrayar against Beta Colony and its formidable ally, Escobar. Some might call this a space opera. I call it science fiction. *Shards of Honor* is the second novel in the ongoing Vorkosigan Saga by Lois McMaster Bujold. Yet it was the first book the author wrote, and it follows by 200 years the title she places first in its internal chronological order, *Falling Free*. (My review of the book is [here](#).) As Bujold puts it in an author's note at the conclusion of *Shards of Honor*, "My publishing history has been complex." The chronological order of the series does

not follow the sequence in which she wrote the books.

First, a word about reading order. This book, *Shards of Honor* (or *Honour*) is sometimes labeled *Vorkosigan* #1 and sometimes #2. It's chronologically the second book in the series (*Falling Free* is about 150 years before it), but it was the first book in publication order. This was my first encounter with the *Vorkosigan* Saga and I didn't feel lost at all by starting with *Shards of Honor*. It seems like a great jumping off point for the series. This was a relatively short book by today's standards, clocking in at only 272 pages. I wouldn't have minded if it ran a little longer and gave us a little more space with the characters. The strength of the novel is really in the characters which is something that works for me. While this is definitely a sci-fi novel, it doesn't dwell tremendously on the "what ifs" of science, though it does have some thought provoking/conversation starting technology which I value in a sci-fi novel. Although both main characters serve in their respective military (or the closest equivalent), the novel doesn't really dwell on the military action going on too much so I wouldn't necessarily call it military sci-fi. I'd tend to put it in the space opera category. There is a huge romance subplot, but it's very contained/subdued, suiting the nature of the characters. There is nothing explicit about the romance at all. Our main characters are Cordelia Naismith, a Commander of a Survey ship for Beta Colony (generally peaceful, life valuing, non-militarily minded from a fairly hostile-environment planet) and Captain Aral Vorkosigan (aristocratic, honor-bound, from a very hierarchical, military, but beautiful planet). Shortly after the book starts, Cordelia's survey team is attacked by soldiers under Aral's command and Cordelia is taken prisoner. Through some twists and turns, Aral and Cordelia set out together on foot across a planet that hasn't been explored/surveyed yet and get to know each other over the journey. The world building for that planet was pretty solid, but we don't end up spending that much more time there! Without getting into spoiler territory, Aral and Cordelia are back in space shortly thereafter and from there on there's a lot of political maneuvering, some sabotage, adventures, some creepy villains (though they were introduced so late it almost seemed like an afterthought), crazy psychologists, and love notes gone astray. Aral and Cordelia manage to cover a lot of ground (or space?) in less than 300 pages! I enjoyed the read and hope to continue on with the series, time allowing! I have a ton of started series that I'm excited about continuing, but the lure of authors I haven't read yet is also strong!

Love the *Vorkosigan* Saga! I haven't enjoyed a book series this much since Heinlein's "Future Histories" stories. While I do enjoy some of Bujold's other work (like the *Sharing Knife* series), it pales in comparison to the escapades of the *Vorkosigan* family (specifically one Miles Naismith

Vorkosigan, although this specific book is a prequel and doesn't include Miles). The stories in this series read like an action/adventure blockbuster movie (a la "Top Gun", and this story is no exception. I highly recommend this book, as well as all the rest of the books in this series. Almost as entertaining as Miles' antics is watching the desperate attempts of his friends and family to save him from himself, while simultaneously trying to stay outside his blast radius.

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