



Cetaganda

Lois McMaster Bujold

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The latest installment in the adventures of Miles Vorkosigan. Miles and Cousin Ivan travel to Cetaganda to play the part of sprigs of nobility doing their diplomatic duty. But when the Empress of Cetaganda dies naturally, and her lifelong attendant dies unnaturally, Miles and Ivan finds themselves in the thick of it.

Cetaganda Details

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Author : Lois McMaster Bujold

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From Reader Review Cetaganda for online ebook

Stephen says

3.5 stars. A solid entry in this excellent space opera series. Not my favorite of the bunch, but still a good read.

Anna says

"What did you think you were doing, Vorkosigan?"

"I stopped the Cetagandan Empire from breaking up into eight aggressively expanding units. I derailed plans for a war by some of them with Barrayar. I survived an assassination attempt, and helped catch three high-ranking traitors. Admittedly, they weren't our traitors, but still. Oh. And I solved a murder. That's enough for one trip, I hope."

Melissa McShane says

I remember reading this book when it was first published and thinking it was very light by comparison to the rest of the series--well, it followed *Mirror Dance*, so that made sense. It's still one of my favorites, and I'm impressed by the Cetagandan culture and how Miles and Ivan tromp all over it in their Vor size twelves (or whatever size shoe Miles wears). It's a clever little mystery, very enjoyable, and I cannot get the image of the kitten tree out of my head.

Clouds says

Following the resounding success of my Locus Quest, I faced a dilemma: which reading list to follow it up with? Variety is the spice of life, so I've decided to diversify and pursue six different lists simultaneously. This book falls into my FINISHING THE SERIES! list.

I loves me a good series! But I'm terrible for starting a new series before finishing my last - so this reading list is all about trying to close out those series I've got on the go.

The general consensus amongst fans of the Vorkosigan Saga seems to be that while ***Cetaganda*** is good, it's not one of Bujold's best. This is my tenth book in the series (I'm reading them largely out of order) and as a fully-fledged fan I'll add my weight to that position. ***Cetaganda*** is a fun, solid read, but lacks the extra spark that pushed *The Warrior's Apprentice*, *The Vor Game* and *Mirrordance* into the realm of emphatic five-star ratings.

We find Miles in detective mode. Following on from his undercover exploits in the guise of Admiral Naismith, Miles is now out and about in his public identity, Lord Vorkosigan. The Cetagandan Empress has died and Miles is sent to the funeral, along with Cousin Ivan, as special envoys. Within minutes of arriving at the orbital docking station, Miles has a weird fight/encounter with a native which leaves him in possession of some kind of seal/key device. When that same native turns out to be the personal servant of the deceased

Empress, and its (sexless) body is next seen at the foot of its mistress bier – the mystery is most definitely afoot.

Rather than report events to their host Ambassador (and his security chief), Miles convinces (bullies) Ivan into letting him tackle the problem solo. Skulduggery ensues as Miles ferrets out the identity of the device and its strategic importance in preventing Cetagandan civil war, survives attacks and assassination attempts, makes unlikely allies, unmasks his adversary and of course, against-all-the-odds, saves the day.

Cetaganda is an interesting setting with its genetically engineered Haut aristocracy and their ambitious Ghem courtiers. The jaw-droppingly beautiful Haut ladies, in their floating, opaque bubble chairs, are probably the most memorable aspect (that and the disturbing and sad genetic engineering art-project; the kitten tree). Miles has Ivan along for the ride to trade snarky remarks with and bail each other into and out of trouble. And it's a good, tangled mystery, with plenty at stake (war between Barrayar and Cetaganda, Miles' execution, etc).

Despite these strengths, it still felt like punches were being pulled.

By and large, the threat is all a looming potential bad-thing, with very little in-your-face action. Yes, Miles has Ivan there, but without his parents or his brother, Elena, Bothari, Quin, Taura, Tung or Ekaterin (the many starring supporting characters of his other adventures) – without any of them present to bring out different elements of Miles' complex psychology, this is very much Miles being Miles with no impediment. None of the supporting cast of this adventure really stand out from the background. He runs rings around the Ambassador and his security chief. He runs rings around the Cetagandans. Oh, it's great fun watching him do it, but this is actually pretty easy, un-traumatic, stuff for Miles. Sure, Bujold tries to give him some heart-pangs by having him fall in love/lust with his Haut lady ally, but even there Miles talks himself out of the worst of it with barely a mention of his true love (at this point), Elena.

As it's part of such a big series, it's easy to compare it the high points, but the simple truth is that I was very happy to dive back into this book every lunch break, and as soon as I hit the end I wanted to go find the next in the series. It's a good book – probably not the best place to start in the series, but for fans of the series very much worth checking out.

NOTE - I split my books into Sci-Fi or Fantasy shelves, and within each of those into Stand-Alone and Series books. When I've read 10 books or more in a series, I spin them out of the Series shelf and onto their own shelf. Previously this had only happened for Discworld and the Dresden Files, but this was the 10th book I've read in the Vorkosigan Saga and has now triggered the creation of a new shelf for the series. Yay for small Goodreads landmarks!

After this I read: Meg On The Moon

Mike (the Paladin) says

This is the third book in the Miles Vorkosigan saga (the first 2 aren't about Miles) and it's the weakest I've read so far. The book is another adventure in the convoluted history of Miles' somewhat...unusual "military" career. "Technically" assigned to Barrayarian Security Miles has been sent to Cetaganda for the funeral of the Cetagandain Empress.

The book sets out to tell an intricate, Byzantine type story of palace intrigue. It does a pretty good job and the story holds the interest fairly well. I say "fairly well" as this one didn't really hold my interest as well as the

first two.

There was once in this novel that I skipped forward a bit, the first time this has happened with this series. I did find the book interesting and I did like it. It's still about Miles and it continues the "saga". Still it wasn't one I was in a hurry to get back to when I'd laid it aside. It isn't one I think I'll reread. And it's one I wasn't sorry to see end. Too bad.

The next book I have is one that's much farther along in the series and we'll see how it goes. I can still go back to the ones "between" this one and the one I just downloaded from the library. Still, a good series and I have hopes for the next one.

So, for this book we'll rate it a good solid "okay". Three (3) stars and a recommendation that's just a bit less enthusiastic than the ones for the 2 novels of the series before this one.

mark monday says

this one hit a sweet spot that I didn't know I even had: incredibly beautiful, highly intelligent, aristocratic geneticists who prize elegance and subtlety, float around in their floating chairs while encased in pearly force fields, and never cut their hair! much like the protagonist Miles, I was immediately enchanted.

unlike Miles, the reader is able to quickly discern that these remote and regal ladies actually control their empire. power lies not with the Emperor nor the warlike generals, and certainly not the various upper crust dandies who wander around creating scent-art; all bow to my newly-found sweet spot's authority. perhaps Miles was fooled by titles like "Consort" and "Handmaiden" - but still, it was a little surprising seeing that both Miles' mom and the love of his life are subtle, independent women who are completely in control. well I guess I can understand a little. Miles turns into a walking boner as soon as a "Haut" Lady (yes, that is what they are called, um) opens up her force bubble... and that state is not conducive to clear thinking.

speaking of walking boners, Miles' cousin Ivan is very much a part of this novel and he is just as enjoyable as ever. dim, grouchy-sweet, unimaginative, loyal, lady-killin' Ivan, what's not to like. and speaking of what not to like, Miles actually refers to himself as a genius in this one. oh Miles. you and Kvothe, sweet Jesus, the egos on some of these kids. fortunately, Bujold is aware of Miles' flaws and they are happily skewered. she is also completely aware that a person's flaws are often intrinsically connected to their virtues; one can't exist without the other in Miles, and in so many others. ain't that the truth!

the world-building was especially well-done in this one. not info-dump world-building, but rather slowly drawn-out Let's Figure Out This Mysterious Place Called Cetaganda type world-building. the empire of Cetaganda is a marvelous creation, layered and compelling and very carefully thought-out.

brisk, fun, smart. entertaining!

Stuart says

Cetaganda: A murder mystery amid exotic political intrigue

This is the third book about Miles Vorkosigan in internal chronology, and unlike its manic predecessors *The Warrior's Apprentice* and *The Vor Game*, there are no space battles, Denarii Mercenaries, Sargent Bothari, Cordelia, Aral, or Emperor Gregor. In fact, Miles's only companion this time is his slightly dim playboy

cousin Ivan Vorpatril. Still, as a comic foil Ivan does yeoman work, and this time the story is a murder mystery set in the intricate court of the Cetegandan Empire on the occasion of the death of the Dowager Empress.

The elite part of Cetagandan society is a complex mix of Ghem lords, gender-neutral courtiers, Haut ladies hidden in opaque energy field bubbles, and the the Emperor and Dowager Empress. When Miles and Ivan literally stumble into trouble straight out of the airlock and find themselves in an altercation with a servitor and then in possession of a mysterious key, things quickly spiral out of control in typical Miles fashion, as his quick wits seem to get him as much into trouble as out of it.

This time he falls for the stunningly beautiful Haut lady Rian, and these aristocratic ladies hold the knowledge of the extensive genetic engineering that underpins Cetagandan society. Bujold spends a lot of time describing the intricate details of the society, which gets full points for creative SF world-building that explores the infinite permutations that human societies can take, it sacrifices a lot of the excitement and tension of the earlier Miles space adventures, though I appreciate Bujold wanting to flesh out her larger galactic civilization.

There are a number of comedic episodes involving Ivan, particularly involving an "anti-aphrodisiac", and the larger conspiracies and treasonous plots that Miles uncovers without the permission or blessing of the Barrayar ambassador or his head of security are suitably intricate, so perhaps listening to it in audiobook while riding the London underground is not ideal for keeping track of the many characters and motivations is a difficult task. Nevertheless, the resulting story is certainly entertaining and worthwhile, but perhaps not quite as frenetic as the first two books.

Caro M. says

UPDATED 2017.04.02 with Worst Cover Gallery - check down below and feel free to comment!

I had so much fun with this book. It was fast paced, it was funny, it had intrigue and very interesting characters. Miles was his usual self, saving the world (and the lady) in what was a complete improv, but extremely effective one nonetheless.

Ivan was, well, he was real Ivanushka!

I like how Bujold's stories are so well balanced and are the perfect mix of adventure, world building, technologies and simple human stuff. Sometimes they're slower, sometimes faster, like **Cetaganda**, but never boring (at least so far as now).

One thing was extremely creepy to me though. Why kittens? Because of the kitten willow? Ew. It was supposed to be this way, I know, but...

Worst Cover Gallery

There's quite a decent amount of horrible covers for this book, yay! :D

- Turn around/Look at what you see/In her face/The mirror of your dreams (imagine Limahl in the background)

Oh, and for this one credit goes to Skardas...

The winner - magic people, voodoo people!

Bradley says

Re-Read 2/2/18:

Buddy Read!

Mystery. Intrigue. Politics. A mouth that consistently gets Miles in trouble.

Not much to say here except the world-building is quite fascinating. Cetaganda's culture is a real treat, but I think I'm always going to focus on the trees. You know, the cats. :)

Funny, fast, and it's so WEIRD how Miles is so honorable. Some might say... stupid... with women. Any women. All women.

Boys. lol

Original Review:

I really enjoyed the inner workings of Cetaganda and the intrigue. Miles is always a treat, not only because he's such a brat, but also because he is the author of his own troubles. Without such verve and curiosity, then very little might have come of the plot, but fortunately, we're talking about Miles. No space battles this time, but that's hardly the draw for the novels. Seeing how Miles gets himself into trouble is. Great fun!

Steve says

Not sure what to think of this, but it was one of my least favorite books in this series, which I've been dabbling with for some time. It's not my *favorite* series, but it tends to be reliable and entertaining, but ... but ... this one never really spoke to me.

Part of me thought this installment was too complicated by half. And maybe I was just distracted and didn't focus enough early on, but I found I just ... *didn't ... care ... that ... much* about how things were playing out for the primary characters (or the planets/empires).

Alas... I doubt this will cause me to give up on the series, particularly because: (1) I've read a couple of the later installments, and they're some of my favorites; and (2) plenty of series readers liked this one more than I did, so maybe I just didn't fully engage early on.

Zach says

Although the fifth of the Vorkosigan books in the series's internal chronology, this is one of the later books that Bujold wrote. In filling in some missing details in her fictional timeline, she brings to bear the collective weight of the story and characters as they exist elsewhere in the universe of the Vorkosigan Saga to present a

fascinating answer to the question of the Cetagandans.

In other books in the series, the Cetagandan Empire is a rather faceless collection of baddies that exist as a foil to the goodness of Miles and his native Barrayar. In Cetagana, Bujold delves into the complexities of Cetagandan culture, packaging this inquiry in an incredibly compelling who-dunnit plot. Although it's not quite Dune in its realism and attention to detail, there are certainly echoes of Frank Herbert's work here. And unlike Dune and its sequels, Cetagana never dips down into the mundane or tedious, instead restricting its fictional space-anthropology to the breathing spaces in the fast-paced mystery plot.

This is probably my favorite Vorkosigan book yet.

Lindsay says

This review is for my reread of the Vorkosigan Saga with SpecFic Buddy Reads during 2017/18. When I signed on for the series read *this* is the book I was most curious about. Cetaganda (the place) had been mentioned in earlier books as antagonists and in much later books (notably Diplomatic Immunity), but they always seemed to have a lot of background that I just wasn't getting.

With this Miles and Ivan are on detached duty to visit Cetaganda for the state funeral of an important figure in their government/nobility. Almost immediately they're setup as Barrayaran fall-guys for an internal Cetagandan conspiracy, and they need to navigate there way through it all without getting killed by the conspirators, triggering a new Barrayar/Cetaganda war or getting shipped home in disgrace.

Cetaganda is a fascinating construction of a society, built around layers of genetically engineered aristocracy with a shadowy final goal which is constantly hinted at throughout the book. The plot/mystery/conspiracy is an excellent vehicle to explore the world-building and an interesting supporting cast of various origins.

One thing I am noticing though in reading all of these back to back like this is that I'm getting a little sick of Miles. It's easy enough to realize that he's arrogant, annoying and mostly obnoxious to the people around him while still being brilliant, but month-after-month he feels a bit much. Still, it helps that I know where this series ends up and that he does eventually learn (a little) humility.

Choko says

*** 4.44 ***

A buddy read with Evgeny and Maria, because we love Miles!!!

What a great ride!!! I am here to report with complete delight that Miles can never stay out of trouble and he never disappoints!!! What did I do without this lovable character in my life up to now, I have no idea. I would not want to be his mom, since he has one of those and she is great, but I have those protective feelings for him, mixed up with worry, pride and pure exhilaration where he is concerned, so I feel like the favorite aunt who is always rooting for her excessively naughty nephew. As such, I am also kind of reassured and kind of terrified by having my bigger than life at heart, but very fragile in body Miles having as his companion in trouble Ivan, the handsome and womanizing cousin who tries very hard to pretend inadequacy and lack of knowledge in order to stay under the radar and do whatever he likes. This usually means he would like to stay away from danger, be away from his mother, and under any circumstances not get

involved in Miles's skiems!!! However, it seems that faith, and very probably Count Vorkosigan tend to stick him as a helpmate and guard for the spirited Miles Vorkosigan and his exaggerated sense of honor and justice. It is a combination which always leads to them almost getting killed, in the middle of political machinations way above their heads, in danger of starting wars between galaxies, meeting some very interesting women, and once out of the mess, getting in humongous trouble at home...

I love, love, love the writing, the storytelling, the adventure, the fact that a reader of every age can read this series, and even if bad things happen and there are evil people who do evil things, by the end of the books you have your faith in humanity and The Light renewed and an overall positive feeling gives you the optimistic attitude to face the day and look forward to the next time you return to this world.!!!

This particular book's action happens on a different planet, in a society based on very controlled genetic engineering and gene manipulation. The last time someone had what we consider to be a natural birth is so many centuries in the past, the concept is repulsive and vulgar to them at present. The more perfect the genes, the higher the status of the individual. They have whole different peoples who are with random genetics *gasp*, who do the regular, dirty work for them. This set up has worked very well, since they are the strongest rival of Miles's world. And that bespeaks of power indeed. The Empress has died and Ivan and Miles are on the planet as envoys of Emperor Gregor, in order to show their respects and condolences. Only just as the door of their shuttle opens at the space port, someone attacks them and a cylindrical sigil is left in their hands. And things get complicated and go down hill fast. In the process, both boys get to meet some very mysterious women and Miles gets his first crush after the disaster that was his infatuation with Elena B. ...

I can not recommend this series enough! It is adventurous, but a very strong core of ethical questions runs through all of the books. The author has an amazing ability to show us the positive and negatives of questions we deal with every day, and just when we see ourselves as the righteous ones, we are put in the other side of the conflict and like it or not, we are given a deeper understanding... All of this is in the core of every story, but not the story itself. This is why I believe that it is accessible and very worthwhile reading by all, regardless of age, gender or preference for genre. You will be enriched by having Miles Vorkosigan in your lives!!!

Now I wish you all Happy Reading and may you always find what you need in the pages of a Good book!!!

Megan Baxter says

Cetaganda doesn't have the manic energy of *The Warrior's Apprentice*, which retains top spot as my favourite Vorkosigan book so far. It lacks that pell-mell, out-of-control sense of urgency that I absolutely fell in love with. But it is still a solid entry into the series, and Miles remains an incredibly appealing character to read about.

Note: The rest of this review has been withdrawn due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

Jim says

While this was another fun addition to the series, it struck me as a bit too convoluted & convenient to really work at times. Much hinged on security & technology gaffs that didn't fully make sense, still it was a fun trip featuring Miles & Ivan. They're great characters & if you just go along for the ride, it's quite entertaining.

It was also nice to get a better look at Cetaganda. They're mentioned quite often in other books, but this is the first time we get to see the beasts in their natural habitat. Their philosophy, culture, & world is interesting.

Evgeny says

A buddy read with Choko and Maria.

It all began innocently enough. An Empress of a mighty Empire which had fairly bad attitude towards Barrayar (the former tried to conquer the latter and got their butts kicked bad - this kind of situation does not usually bring strong alliances) died of natural causes. Miles was sent to the funeral ceremony as a diplomatic representative of his planet accompanied by his cousin Ivan who was supposed to keep his relative out of troubles. To keep a long story short Ivan failed miserably.

The lower middle picture is sooo Miles...

I have to be fair and admit that the first trouble found our heroes practically the moment they landed on the capital planet of the Empire. From that moment on the events began unfolding so fast poor Ivan did not have enough time for his favorite hobby: meeting new girls. Miles practically had to juggle running chainsaws trying to prevent several interplanetary wars and Barrayar's neutrality (neutrality for outsiders' view that is).

Cataganda - the Empire in question - is highly original and fascinating. The best description would be Geneticists Gone Wild. Actually scratch that - "gone wild" is too mild an expression for the description. I was really shocked several times when the Barrayars (and the reader) stumbled upon yet another aspect of Catagandian culture; it was never boring though.

The fast-moving plot was never boring either. I thought I would give the book the highest rating practically until the end. What stopped me? Miles' motivations - that is what. In the previous books he ended up in sticky situations with no one around to help him: for different reasons. So it really was up to Miles to get out of them resorting to his own resources. This time I felt his motivations were pure selfish and the ready help was available. There is unavoidable insubordination and there is direct disregard one's superior officer orders. It is all fun and toys until you realize that if the entire Barrayar army would behave like Miles a single enemy armed with a slingshot would be able to conquer them.

In the end Miles received exactly the reward he deserved and I feel there is hope for him. 4 stars is the final rating.

Maria Dimitrova says

Buddy read with Choko and Evgeny.

It's time to explore a new planet in the Nexus. From the start of the series we've been told about the big bad Cetagandans and their unquenchable thirst for new conquest and it's time to finally meet them face to face.

And let me tell you, they sure are something different.

Ever since the first time I read this book I've been fascinated by the complex culture of the Cetagandans. The haut are the ruling class and are the closest thing to aliens in the Vorkosigan Universe. In a future where genetic engineering is just a common tool for humanity (wait until you see what the Jacksonians do!) the haut have taken things to the next level. The scary thing is that this is the best case scenario if a bunch of eugenics adherents have the power to do whatever they please. At first it seems like a good idea, until you put a little thought behind it and realise that this is a total nightmare for everyone involved. Including the haut, if they had the ability to see the cage they have build for themselves. But generations of tinkering and deliberate constriction of the worldview have made them incapable of looking past what they've known all along. The consequences for the galaxy as a whole are terrifying. Just ask the Barrayarans.

This theme is cleverly disguised in an adventure novel, with Miles being the Knight in Shining Armour. Or at least this is what he wants to be. The reality is a little bit different and I find myself, yet again, feeling sorry for poor Ivan who get's sucked into his cousin's harebrained plans. Of all the Vorkosigans Ivan is the only one with enough brains to actively try to stay alive. He plays the role of the fool perfectly because it let's him live his life without too much interference from his famous and rather suicidal relatives. After all if everyone thinks you're dumb as a rock, they won't expect you to risk your neck to save the universe, right? Well, no, because Miles doesn't take no for an answer, is way too curious and needs someone to do his dirty business because he is too physically damaged to do it himself. So Ivan gets conscripted, just like when they were children. Quite honestly, I wonder how Miles friends and family has managed to survive his childhood mostly intact. And why no one has tried to strangle him. Oh yes, I have an answer to the last one! Sergeant Bothari was still alive at the time and no one was crazy enough to try something with him around!

The story is engaging and fast paced. Easy to get into and before you know it you're at the end of the book craving more. Miles has that effect on a reader! Thanks again to Choko and Evgeny! It's a pleasure to see your reactions to miles shenanigans :)

Joanka says

I must admit it took me really long to get into this novel. To be honest I can see some appeal, the adventure start very early and it was quite fast-paced throughout the whole book. There is also the whole Empire of Cetaganda introduced, both from scientific and cultural perspective as Miles and Ivan travel there to attend funeral rites of the late Empress. The intrigue becomes more and more complex, the mystery is there, the crime and investigation... Everything is in place and yet it didn't work for me for more than half of the book. The fault may be on my side as I didn't have that much time for reading... But I guess it's just a weaker volume, unfortunately.

Mostly, let's be honest, because of Miles. Don't get me wrong, I'm a real Miles enthusiast and as he evokes lots of parental feelings in me, I can understand and forgive him many of his idiot behaviors. Do you know why? Because I trust Mrs. Bujold and do believe that she has everything meticulously planned, especially when it comes to characters' development. Miles is quite insufferable here, he acts arrogantly and so full of himself, he is awful to my dear Ivan and I can't even describe how painful it is to read about him dealing with ladies. But that makes sense, even if reading about it wasn't a pleasure. He is in that moment of life – he already achieved quite spectacular successes, but no recognition because almost no one knows about his input. He would do stupid things only to gain some spotlight and appreciation – and he does. He is frustrated more than ever because of his physique and I guess the sexual frustration causes his ridiculous behavior around women. Not to mention complexes he has, and he punishes poor caring, sweet and loyal Ivan for them. Does he sound rather repulsive? Yes, well, he is. Do I excuse him? No. But I strongly believe it is a

phase, that he is a person with difficult character and complicated situation and although he made me angry a few times and embarrassed on other occasions. But I believe in him that he will mature and grow up to fit his own shoes... and that he will see the world for what it is, more.

Also, I need more Ivan. His growing up is depicted so off-handedly because Miles sees him as that idiotic cousin he has to bring everywhere... But it is there and it's lovely what a good person he is becoming. In case you don't know me, I love well-developed characters with good hearts, loyal and kind.

So, although it was the weakest part of the Vorkosigan saga in my opinion, I'm excited to continue my reading of the novels!

Milda Page Runner says

Another fun misadventure with Miles. Interesting and unusual Cetagandan world, priceless banter with Ivan, series of ridiculous and dangerous events and a tough case for Miles to solve. Probably the most fun book with Miles so far.

Trish says

I hate people who are cheerful in the morning.
This has to be the only thing I agree with Miles about.

sighs

This apparently is a very well-known and beloved SF series. Which is one of the reasons why I started reading it with my group here. I really enjoyed the first, loved the second and third and thus had great hopes for all novels. However, as soon as Miles entered the stage, things took a dive for me. This book was supposed to be better because it is a relatively typical whodunnit, a murder mystery.

Miles and his cousin Ivan are sent to Cetaganda, the seat of the Cetagandan Empire, for the funeral of the Emperor's late mother. It's supposed to be an easy and uneventful mission, just for them to polish their social skills and establish a few contacts.

However, from the get-go things go wrong (for once, it's not really Miles' fault) and soon there is a body and Barrayar is to be framed.

Therefore, Miles has to find the true culprit and save the diplomatic connections between the two empires for mutual benefits.

As my introduction probably already gave away, this didn't manage to convince me to continue with the series. It completely failed to grab me.

I was actually surprised because I really like murder mysteries and collecting all clues to become a detective myself, hunting for what happened, why and how. Since the mystery wasn't very thrilling / complicated, I basically knew what had happened 30% before we get the official reveal. Thus, the rest was just wordafterwordafterword and I was BORED.

Add to that the fact that I had been bored before this point already because on top of the mystery not being mysterious, the characters were also bland (especially when compared to those of the first three novels). Ivan was only there for flashback glimpses into Miles' childhood, as a sidekick that was also supposed to make Miles look even smarter, and sometimes as a comedic relief but failed to make me even only grin. The other

players in the political intrigue were even worse. Too bad, really, as Bujold is quite good at describing weird and alien cultures on other planets. But that simply wasn't enough here.

So this is farewell to the Vorkosigans and the planets in this spacefaring universe.
