



Gods and Pawns

Kage Baker

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In the Company, you're either a God or a Pawn, but sometimes you have to be both. The eight stories, reprinted for the first time in this collection delve further into the history and exploits of the Company and its operatives, including Mendoza, Lewis, and Alec.

The book opens with the novella, "To the Land Beyond the Sunset," starring Lewis and Mendoza, and involving a strange tribe in Bolivia whose members claim to be gods. Their ability to grow a small tropical paradise in the middle of the desert certainly seems godlike, and it's Mendoza's job to figure what their secret is. "Standing in His Light" features Van Drouten, and her role in the career of the artist Jan Vermeer. The story illustrates how, with a little help from the Company, lost masterpieces can be found (or created) easily. Other stories include "Welcome to Olympus, Mr. Hearst," which opens up intriguing questions about The Company, and the original novelette, "Hellfire at Twilight," which concludes the volume and tells of Lewis infiltrating the famous Hellfire Club in the England of the 18th century.

This book is a compelling read for every Baker fan, and essential for Company addicts

Gods and Pawns Details

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Author : Kage Baker

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From Reader Review *Gods and Pawns* for online ebook

Infinite Scythe says

4.5

Kathi says

I am not a fan of short stories, but Kage Baker writes excellent short stories and since these are set in the same world and with some of the same characters as her *Company* series, it was more like reading episodes that didn't quite make it into any of the novels. Great vignettes of Joseph, Lewis, and Mendoza.

Kerry says

REREAD #1: 30 September 2018 - 30 - September 2018 (8/10)

I'm continuing to thoroughly enjoy my reread through *The Company* series. I rather suspect everything else is on hold at least until I read the last book again.

ORIGINAL READ: 12 July 2007 - 15 July 2007 (9/10)

Gods and Pawns by Kage Baker.

This was another collection of short stories in Baker's *Company* universe.

I remain impressed by the way Baker has mastered both the short and long fiction forms and can tell a full and satisfying story either way.

I enjoyed all the stories in this volume, although naturally some more than others. I especially enjoyed more Lewis tales as he has very much grown on me as a character. I'm not sure that I can pick a favourite, as each story had things I liked and they were all deftly written.

My least favourite was probably "The Land Beyond the Sunset" in which Lewis and Mendoza go on a field trip and find an apparently lost civilisation. Again, it was well written and engaging, but didn't work for me as well as some of the others.

I liked the 1930's-set "Welcome to Olympus, Mr Hearst", although the future ramifications of the *Company*'s machinations in this case are rather scary. But the story of the house party was delightful, as was the early cameo by Rudolph Valentino.

Another favourite was "Angel in the Darkness" that showed the complications of Porfirio's continued observation of his mortal family from the point of view of one of those family members rather than one of the cyborgs.

Perhaps not a book to come in and read cold, but a lovely addition to the series.

Gods and Pawns

Kage Baker

9/10

[Copied from LibraryThing.]

Jamie Collins says

A collection of short stories set in the universe of Dr. Zeus Inc., also known the Company. There are flashes of Baker's wonderful humor, but most of these are rather sad stories.

My two favorites were:

"Standing in his Light" - Facilitator Van Drouten encourages Johannes Vermeer to create extra paintings for the Company to "discover" in the twenty-fourth century. If you're not very familiar with Vermeer's work, it helps to read this while referencing the Wikipedia page about the 34 paintings that are attributed to him.

"Welcome to Olympus, Mr. Hearst" - Joseph and Lewis visit William Randolph Hearst at his famous ranch in California in 1933. Greta Garbo and Clark Gable are in the background of this one - Kage Baker was fond of Old Hollywood.

The rest are all very readable:

"To the Land Beyond the Sunset" - Lewis spends his vacation with Mendoza in prehistoric Bolivia, investigating the origins of *terra preta*, or Amazonian dark earth.

"The Catch" - Porfirio tracks down a rogue immortal, a victim of a botched attempt to create a cyborg from a human child snatched in 1951 America.

"The Angel in the Darkness" - Porfirio has spent centuries monitoring his mortal brother's descendents, becoming part of their lives whenever possible and "dying" off when necessary. 1991 Los Angeles is not a particularly high point the family history, and this is largely the story of a middle-aged woman struggling with a bad job, an infirm father and an alcoholic sister.

"A Night on the Barbary Coast" - Mendoza and Joseph (I like it when these two get together) make a trip to 1850 San Francisco to find the source of a valuable lichen.

"Hellfire at Twilight" - Lewis attempts to retrieve an ancient document from the aging Sir Francis Dashwood of the infamous Hellfire Club.

Catherine Fitzsimmons says

I read what I believe is the first of Baker's Company novels - about a future corporation that has patented

time travel and immortality and sends its cyborg agents throughout history to seek out and preserve lost antiquities - a few years ago and had been interested in seeking out more since then. After hearing that Ms. Baker passed away earlier in 2010, I'd been on the lookout for them, so when I ran across this collection of short stories about the Company on clearance, I had to have it. Having only read one novel, these stories featured characters both familiar and new to me, ranging through centuries and various different aspects of the company and its operatives.

Overall, I was very pleased with this collection. I was already a fan of Baker's writing style and the depths to which she explored the opportunities this world presented were very satisfying. The details about the various places and times explored really drew me in and brought the era and locale vividly to life, and I'm quite impressed by such attention to detail. I was also fascinated by the various different subjects covered by the shorts, delving into not only the operatives' lives and their individual missions, but also shedding light on some dealings of the Company itself, which was left as mostly background information in the first novel, *In the Garden of Eden*. Aside from that, the characters were very genuine, the stories were engaging, and the whole book was a pleasure to read. This book is certainly also recommended to fans of scifi and/or historical fiction, as the two are very much inextricably linked in the Company series.

Jenny Yates says

This is a collection of short stories set in the universe that Kage Baker has invented. It's a fascinating place, and these stories explore it further. Some of them cover familiar ground (for those like me who've read all the other books in the series), while others go in unexpected directions.

One of the boldest is "Welcome to Olympus, Mr. Hearst". Kage Baker likes to throw famous people into her novels, usually in odd situations, and she does some very interesting things here with William Randolph Hearst. No, he's not exactly human.

Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says

I had actually read this once before; I can't be sure about the dates. I wanted to re-read the Porfirio story. (He appeared in *Mendoza in Hollywood* and *The Graveyard Game*. I suppose it may not be her best short story ever, but to me it's interesting.

I'm also fond of "Standing in His Light," which features the rarely seen facilitator Van Drouten in a behind-the-scenes-of-history role. "Hellfire at Twilight" is okay, and "A Night on the Barbary Coast" is a mildly amusing Joseph and Mendoza story. "Welcome to Olympus, Mr. Hearst" is ... all right. I'd have to go back and read the later books in the series to be sure (and I don't really want to), but I think it may slightly contradict the canon.

Gregory Hodgins says

Best short syfy stories around

Love this Kage Baker collection. All stories of the Company agents working back and forth through time, collecting and interfering with parts of History. Because I am a history buff as well as an artist, it's most enjoyable to see how enthusiastically and knowledgeably Baker deals with actual characters and events. She knows how to humorously play around the edges and fold her cyborgs into the action and tell a great story.

Grillables says

I think I like Baker's short stories more than her novels. The Company series has been going on and on (and on and on), and the focus often seems to be on Mendoza or her lover(s) (which I find tiresome). I'm much more interested in these little vignettes: the background stories, the eerie anomalies, the little swashbuckling adventures that dance between the novels. The "what happens after" thread of the novels keeps me reading the series, but it's a bit of a slog. These stories reminded me of why I liked Baker in the first place.

Nigel says

Some excellent short stories about the immortal cyborgs seeded through time by the time-travelling company as part of an immense scheme to make immense amounts of money in the future when discoveries and antiquities carefully hidden for hundreds or thousands of years and which can now be sold for a mint. Life ain't easy for an immortal cyborg and there are always difficulties and problems to overcome, to say nothing of the machinations of both the Company masters and of certain powerful immortals who think they'd be better off in charge. Baker writes engagingly, it's easy to become addicted.

Tasula says

It was wonderful to be in the world of the Company again, in these stories. Facilitator Joseph, as well as operatives Lewis and Mendoza (my favorite characters from the Company series) are featured in most of the stories. I especially liked Standing in his Light, about the painter Jan Vermeer.

Emily says

I'll admit that these books are blending together, and I'm becoming impatient to find out what happens in the year 2355. This felt like a step sideways, filling in background and character relationships, but not really moving us forward.

Tom Loock says

Another good collection with "Welcome to Olympus, Mr. Hearst" (one of Lewis & Joseph-stories) a stand-out and "Standing in His Light" (Van Drouten) the low point.

MB (What she read) says

Comfort re-read 6/11/11. I love this series and am glomming/re-reading it this weekend.

9/1/16 Re-read again, skimming through the stories I hadn't read since last time. I really wish she'd written more about van Drouten (sp?) within the Dr. Zeus saga. I always like her calm competence when she shows up. Kage Baker was so great at short stories. I love them all.

As always, Joseph and Lewis are my favorites.

Kaethe says

February 23, 2008

I've enjoyed the Company series enormously, and I quite like these short stories. I still hate the covers.

February 8, 2015

What I said. I enjoy the stories some of which are emotionally draining, many of which are just plain funny, but I don't find myself thinking about them afterward.

Library copy
