



Star of Danger

Marion Zimmer Bradley

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First published in 1965, Star of Danger is a work that stands as a foundation for the bestselling Darkover series, introducing many loyal fans to this wonderful, mysterious world. Two natives of Darkover are forced to combine Darkover matrix magic with Terran technology to stand against a shared enemy.

Star of Danger Details

Date : Published 1965 by Ace

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Author : Marion Zimmer Bradley

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From Reader Review Star of Danger for online ebook

Marcello Tarot says

Una piccola lezione di storia

Scritto nel 1965, non sente il trascorrere del tempo ed è godibilissimo anche oggi. Certo, alcune opere del ciclo scritte più avanti sono qualitativamente migliori, ma resta una lettura interessante che mette a confronto la cultura darkovana e quella terrestre del futuro (e, tra le righe, pare che la Bradley parteggi per la darkovana) tramite gli occhi dei due giovani protagonisti, Kennard Alton e Larry Montray, che ritroveremo, invecchiati, anche in altri libri.

Il libro poi è meritevole perché, con la scusa dell'avventura vissuta dai due ragazzi, ci viene narrata la storia delle razze di Darkover, permettendoci di conoscere anche una parte di questo affascinante pianeta solitamente tenuta in secondo piano.

Fa specie, per un'opera della Bradley, la totale mancanza di figure femminili di rilievo nella storia: si vedono i padri di Kennard e di Larry, mentre la madre del primo viene solo citata en passant e quella del secondo è deceduta anni prima (solo alla fine del romanzo scopriremo che era una Aldaran, ma non ne conosceremo neppure il nome); anche Lorill Hastur e i delinquenti montanari, che hanno un ruolo minore nel romanzo, sono di sesso maschile; l'unica donna che appare è la lerona Janina, ma solo in un capitolo e solo in completa funzione della trama in corso, non come personaggio a sé stante (avrebbe potuto benissimo restare anche senza nome, o portare un nome diverso, e sarebbe comunque rimasta insignificante nell'economia sia di questo romanzo sia del ciclo di Darkover nel suo complesso).

Miriam says

MZB does the Boys' Adventure Story much better than one would expect.

Judey says

This is the first Darkover book I read.

As the story unfolded I rather quickly guessed the 'hook' in the plot, although I was fooled at the way it unfolded.

(I had guessed a space Prince and the Pauper story. I was wrong).

I'm cheered by reading other reviews that places this as a ho-hum story; I may read another book or so in the series to see how it turns out.... but it isn't high on my priorities.

MZB is an author that I rather enjoyed in the past but the events in her life have overshadowed those memories.

Valerie says

I have two editions of this book, which is one of the earliest Darkover Books written, and was rewritten in a

later edition, to bring it more in line with the series as it developed.

The rewriting is not very obvious in this title, and it's sometimes difficult to realize what has changed. But the copy I read this time is the earlier edition.

In terms of internal chronology, this is set during the childhood of Kennard Alton. At this time, Valdir Alton lived at Armida in winter, and (mostly) at the later-destroyed Alton townhouse in summer. Kennard, it should be noted, was Valdir's younger son; the older brother, Lewis, was evidently sent to Arilinn at a fairly young age, and probably died with Cleindori, whose son he fathered. Cleindori was fostered at Armida, though it's not clear when she went there.

This edition has, as many books at the time had, very misleading cover art. Nothing remotely like what's pictured on the cover features in the book. The cover is credited to Jack Gaughan, who perhaps also drew the picture of what are probably Kennard and Larry (later styled Lerrys) Montray, being menaced by what is apparently meant to be a banshee bird. Neither are anything like what's described in the book, so I suppose the artist did not, in fact, read the book. This was not uncommon at the time.

The dedication reads: "To my son Patrick, but for whose help this book would have been written much sooner"--apparently a wry reference to the fact that child care is a much more time-consuming job than novices expect it to be.

This volume is fairly deliberately disingenuous. Why Wade Montray felt he had to conceal his previous history on Darkover (including the fact that Larry had a sister, Elaine, and that their mother was of Aldaran ancestry), I don't know. I would guess that Wade's relationship with his wife was not untroubled, and that they divorced after the birth of their younger child (I THINK Larry was the younger). I'm not sure when Larry & Elaine's mother died, but I think she might have been still alive when Kennard went to be fostered on Earth.

I conclude that Larry was the younger because he seems to have had little knowledge of his mother, though it doesn't necessarily follow. It looks as if custody was split, and as if Larry had little if any contact with his mother and sister after the divorce.

Wade Montray appears in the Darkover timeline around about the time of the beginning of the Forbidden Tower. He has a one-night stand (one day, really) with Margali n'ha Ysabet during her housebound time in Thendara House, and at the time he mentions that he's planning to go off to Aldaran, where the then Lord Aldaran (Kermiac? Either him or his predecessor, likely) had asked for some technical aid. He also goes off to fight the fire menacing Armida at the time. But though he married one of the Aldarans, he seems to have had very little to do with the leroni, so it's likely from his mother that Larry inherited the laran he has.

Kennard at the time is about 15--but though he assumes that Larry is his agemate, he is probably a few years older (Darkovan years are about a month longer than Earth years, and Darkovan days are 28 hours long--which means, by the way, that a tenday is more nearly a third of a month on Darkover). Kennard's mother was still alive at the time, and is offstage in several scenes, though she never appears onstage in any scene. Kennard is doing his stint as a Guard cadet, which is how he meets Larry, because he referees a fight between Larry and the champion of a group of street toughs who are harassing him. Kennard is rather contemptuously insular--but also rather uneasily so. It's evident that he had been in the habit of hanging about the spaceport for some time before Larry arrived, but that he hadn't managed to strike up an acquaintance with any of the Terran children, because they were every bit as insular as the Darkovans.

It's also evident that Valdir had already been maturing the idea of importing lensgrinding technology and expertise before Larry and Kennard became friends. One of the things Kennard asks Larry for is books about Terran photographic techniques, and about starships. Picture books, because Kennard, at this point, was illiterate both in Terran and Darkovan scripts. Bradley's uneasiness about the rejection of literacy by Darkovans is made clear even this early in her imagination of Darkover--the rationalizations for said lack of written lore are quite defensive; and where you find defensiveness, there's evidence of a feeling of shame about something. The odds are the Darkovans themselves didn't know why they had (largely) abandoned written texts, and, when they were challenged on the subject, defended themselves reflexively, even while recognizing that they had been deliberately kept ignorant of things their ancestors wanted kept secret, and that this was seriously hampering betimes. Case in point: the Terran ancestors of the majority of Darkovan humans undoubtedly knew of the technique of cloud-seeding. But the knowledge had to be (re)introduced to their descendants in this book.

In this book, as in quite a few others, the 'bandits' are introduced as monstra ad machina, to menace the visiting Larry. There are hints that a lot of backcountry Darkovan (small d) domains turned to preying on passersby in troubled times, or were taken over by roving bands of bandits, and that there was no coordinated attempt to dislodge them from their holdings until Valdir's time. But this is still a matter of dislocation. Bandits can't sustain themselves. They need supplies. And there's not much use in stealing money if you can't SPEND it somewhere. The Dry Towns are a partial answer: it's evident that they acted as suppliers and fences for the bandits. And they probably did so in order to keep the people south of the Kadarin from advancing and meddling in what they regarded as their own business. But there are still missing elements, and the rationales still ring a bit hollow.

Talking of rings, by the way, it's occurred to me that the metal-poor Darkovans seem to have a lot of bells and gongs. Where do THEY come from? Nevarsin?

This is also the origin of the oft-repeated (and often scoffed-at) encounter between Larry Montray, Kennard Alton, and a chieri. Most lowland Darkovans treat tales of chieri as fairy-tales. But those six-fingered hands (and six-toed feet?) in some Darkovan families didn't come from nowhere, after all.

John Loyd says

Star of Danger (1965) 213 pages by Marion Zimmer Bradley.

16 year old Larry Montray's dream was to go into space and explore other worlds. So when his father told him that he had put in for a transfer to Darkover Larry was ecstatic. Larry learned the language on the trip to Darkover, but was soon disappointed to find out that the Terran section was segregated from the planet and no one there was interested in Darkover history or culture. Eventually Larry did get to go out, made friends with Kennard Alton, but the actions that made him friends also got him banned by his father from leaving the Terran section. Weeks later the Altons make a request to the Terrans for Larry to come visit. This is such an opportunity for the Terrans that it overcomes the father's objections and Larry is off to live with Kennard and his family. On a trip visiting some of the Alton's outlying lands there's a forest fire, bandits, capture, escape, struggle against the other dangers of Darkover and several more situations.

The Darkovans don't want their world spoiled by Terrans, who want to exploit the natural resources of the planet. That part wasn't emphasized quite as much in this story. Just a mention that the Darkovans don't build roads, they don't allow guns, bombs or other weapons that can be used impersonally. The story uses the

theme of status quo versus technological change. Several times Larry mentions something that is then used. When there is a forest fire, the Darkovans use their telekinetic powers to move clouds but it's Larry who mentions cloud seeding that enables them to make rain. When Larry and Kennard are trapped by the tree people he's the one that comes up with an idea about medical care. Later on he creates a makeshift compass. There's no way either boy could have made it on their own, but together they were able to overcome all the obstacles.

I enjoyed the story as is, the analysis is for after the story is over. Excellent adventure story. Written in 1965 and it is still fresh.

Gregg Wingo says

Marion Zimmer Bradley has become a cautionary tale of the dangers of hero worship and glorification of celebrities. She had an astoundingly successful career as a fantasy and science fiction writer and editor. was know as a friend and mentor of beginning writers, and was a co-founder of the Society for Creative Anachronism. She also was married to a convicted pedophile, is accused by her own daughter of sexual abuse from the age of three to 12, and is now suspected of sexual crimes against other female and male children. The SF and fantasy world is reeling from these revelations and its final impact is not yet realized.

But Bradley's work speaks loudly of these issues and includes many pubescent characters dealing with their sexual awakenings, adults mentally and physically violating youths, and a menagerie of sexual encounters of all makes and types. Yet, Marion was a staunch defender of women's rights and personal responsibility for one's actions in her writings. So it is important that we learn to condemn the person but still see the beauty and importance of the author's work both written and in support of these ghetto genres. She may very well be seen as literary figure whose life and ideals are a mixed legacy similar to the Marquis de Sade.

I have never considered the Darkover stories as fantasy but rather well written science fiction with good characterization and a well-constructed and logically bound psionically based technological society. "Star of Danger" is one of the very first of the series and begins firmly rooted in the world of hard science fiction. It is tale of a boy finding his manhood through adventure and exploration like Huck Finn, Jim Hawkins and, of course, Paul Atreides. It is also a story that will resonant with any world traveler who despises globalization and the denizens of business class hotels, organized tours, and international home-country schools. Bradley's hero is an individual enthralled with the wonder of the alien and a dislike of the sterility of his Terran culture. His adventures introduce us to the conflict between our own history of assimilation and the indigenous cultures it has destroyed. In fact, the book is more relevant in our condition of Late Capitalism than it was when originally written in 1965. The novel also lays down the basic facts of the Darkoverian universe and is a quick and riveting introduction to one of the great SF and fantasy series ever written and one of the few that can be enjoyed by readers of both genres.

Until the Marion Zimmer Bradley Literary Works Trust decides how to handle royalty issues in regards to her victims, you might not want to buy the book but I strongly recommend you ask your neighborhood librarian to find it for you. It is fun and thought provoking as Mrs. Bradley's work has always been for both female and male readers alike.

Valerie says

I have two editions of this book: this one, and the 1985 edition with the blue cover (20 years after the first edition).

Based on other books in the series, it takes place after the Forbidden Tower moved to Mariposa Lake, on the accession of Valdir to the title of Lord Alton. Valdir was about 14 (Darkovan years are longer than Terran ones, so conversion is uncertain) at the time of The Forbidden Tower, and Valdir's father lived for some years afterward, with Damon Ridenow as both Valdir's and old Dom Esteban's Regent. Valdir's claim not to have met any Terrans before Larry Montray is just a tad exaggerated, therefore--his brother-in-law was Terran, after all, and they must have spent SOME time together after Valdir was recalled from Nevarsin on the death of his brother Domenic. And there was at least one Terran in the Forbidden Tower, for a while, who had free run of the household.

The journey in this story is largely in unexplored territory. There is trailman country, and areas where the forest is unvisited, apparently, since the animals don't fear humans. There's at least one chieri living in the area, and it's not clear what kinds of communities they form--this one's living alone.

In later stories, Kennard Alton is presented as crippled up with arthritis, even from a very young age--but this apparently hadn't yet begun in this book, because he's spry enough here.

I can't say for sure what differences in story or detail there are between the two editions, because I've only read the later one. Probably there were some alterations to bring things in line with stories written later--but there're still some major continuity glitches left, if so.

Jimmy says

It is so refreshing to finally read a Darkover story where the main character is a man and not a woman. Even though the female characters that Marion Zimmer Bradley writes are strong, they can at times be overbearing and whiny.

Larry was a bit of a weak character at first, but when he and Kennard began their adventure and friendship together, Larry proves to be a strong and interesting character.

Sixteen year old Larry is eager for adventure and discovery. He gets his wish when his father tells him that he has been reassigned and they will be traveling to the planet Darkover.

Larry is confronted with all kinds of cultural barriers when they land. He soon finds himself in a fight against the local young men, brutes of the trade city, on his first day on Darkover.

Larry and Kennard quickly become friends after the fight in the trade city. Kennard observes that Larry is not like other Terrans. To his benefit, Larry made the effort to learn the Darkovan language. Also, he solves his own problems himself. He doesn't call out for help from elsewhere or from someone on the outside. He is invited to the house of the ruling Altans. He is surprised to discover that they have the ability to read his mind, but that doesn't seem to disturb him any. The real trouble starts when his father forbids him from leaving the safety of their dormitory at the Terran space port, because of the fear that Larry will unknowingly cause irresolvable conflict between the two aliens leading to a war. Torn between obeying his father and keeping his word to Kennard, (view spoiler)

Faced with fighting the disastrous and deadly fires racing across the hills, brutal and murderous bandits, and

a deep prejudice between the two aliens, Larry wants to earn the right to be recognized as a man.
(view spoiler)

Hilary says

More boys-adventure with a fantasy setting, it's a refreshing change. Kennard Alton and Larry Montray begin forging a bond between Darkover and Terra, but the path to change is not always easy.

Morgan Dhu says

Star of Danger (pub. 1965) is one of the earliest written of the Darkover books, but in terms of the internal chronology of the series, it falls well after the time of first contact. Lorill Hastur, who is well advanced in years in this novel, was a boy of 15 or so when the Terrans came to Alderan. Valdir Alton, who was a child when the Forbidden Tower was formed, is now the father of two sons, the younger of whom is 16. And the third generation of Montrays comes home to Darkover. There are inconsistencies between this early novel and many of the ones that follow, but as with The Bloody Sun and The Planet Savers, certain key elements of Darkovan history were already well formed in the author's mind when the book was written.

In Star of Danger, Wade Montray returns to Darkover with his teenage son Larry after spending more than a decade on Earth. Larry, a curious young man with a desire to explore this new world, ventures into the Trade City and makes friends with Kennard Alton, son of Valdir, cadet guardsman. But when Larry is invited to spend the summer with Kennard at Armida, disaster strikes - Larry is kidnapped by bandits who mistake him for Kennard. Feeling personally responsible for Larry's fate, and knowing that if harm comes to Larry, his father will be caught up in a major diplomatic incident, Kennard sets out to rescue him.

The rescue succeeds, but in evading pursuit, Kennard and Larry are lost and must find their way through the rugged terrain of Darkover - forests inhabited by the non-human trailmen and mountains harbouring dangerous predators - to reach safe territory. During their difficult journey, Larry's latent telepathy is awakened and he and Kennard bond more deeply - although the harmony of that bond is often threatened by cultural issues. Eventually the two find ways to work together, relying on both Kennard's psi training and Darkovan survival skills, and Larry's scientific knowledge, to survive in the wilds.

As they near the territories of the Hastur domain, they encounter a lone chieri, who takes them in, offers them hospitality, tells them of the true history of humans on Darkover, and then teleports them to safety, just in time to ward off the brewing diplomatic firestorm. Larry's father explains that his late wife - Karry's mother - had in fact been a Darkovan woman, kin to the Alderan clan, who had followed him to Earth, and that Larry's laran comes from her. There is great hope that the friendship Larry and Kennard have formed will help to improve relations between Terrans and Darkovans.

Carole-Ann says

I have an Arrow Books Ltd edition from 1978

David Pappas says

Can probably sum this up in one word. Boring.

This juvenile blather must be targeted for some other audience other than me although I can't imagine what audience that may be. Have never been a big fan of constant dribbling repetition, giving the audience no credit for thinking for themselves and last the inability of one gender to assume they know how to cloak centric characters of the other gender in anything approaching believability. One would think that such a prolific author may have learned to polish their skills over the years, but no. In fact just the opposite seems to be the rule. However, given the reviews someone must like this mundane drivel, but not me. Bad. Bad. Bad.

Ken says

It's been about ten days since I finished *Star of Danger*. I sat down to review it just now, and I drew a blank: I couldn't remember the story! Finding a synopsis on the web helped to remind me. But it does go to show that *Star of Danger* wasn't all that memorable.

When I began reading the Darkover books, I was hoping to immerse myself in a fascinating universe. So far, I'm only getting a wading pool. Well, that's not entirely fair: the world of Darkover actually is a fascinating creation. But, Bradley's character work, plotting and writing is a bit of a letdown. There's something slightly generic about the characters, the way they speak and think -- I can't quite make myself suspend disbelief.

If you've read my other reviews, you know that I suspect that Bradley's writing improves over the course of the many Darkover tales. This is one of the earlier books. Still. If I was hoping for something as impressive as *The Firebrand* or as memorable as *The Catch Trap*, I can't say that *Star of Danger* even comes close to her best work.

So -- am I recommending this book or not? I'd say: read it and enjoy, but don't ramp up your expectations. You do not need to have read the previously written Darkover books. Bradley herself said that they were each written to stand alone as self-contained novels.

Star of Danger has a Young Adult novel flavor to it. It's a story of two young men -- in their mid-teens, I think -- who meet and become unlikely friends, as their respective societies distrust each other and forbid such friendships. Intrigue ensues: the friendship carries the power to open up a new understanding between these two peoples, yet it also has the potential to lead to open conflict. I could tell you which ends up happening, but that wouldn't be very nice, would it?

mark monday says

an entry in the Darkover cycle. pleasantly enjoyable overall, but also slim and rather forgettable. this one concerns Larry Montray, Terran, and his teen adventures on the wintry, semi-barbaric world of Darkover. those adventures come complete with assorted monsters & aliens, bullying street urchins & dastardly kidnapping bandits, psychic powers, a forest fire, an amusingly antagonistic bromance between our hero & an arrogant Darkovan lordling, and much contemplation & conversating regarding the nature of being a man & what constitutes honor in a fight (i prefer the Darkover belief system that loathes guns & bombs as the weak man's choice). this early novel in the long-running series has none of the mid-saga's books' fervent, near-hysterical emotional content nor their sometimes moving, other times soap operatic deconstruction of gender & sexual orientation. it is a pleasingly straightforward, clearly written, earnest young adult novel filled with boyish enthusiasm, teenage angst, and on-the-cusp-of-maturity musings on Adulthood. probably a good starting point for kids interested in Darkover. but are there any even out there?

Joyce Reynolds-Ward says

Research read. Interesting to discover.
