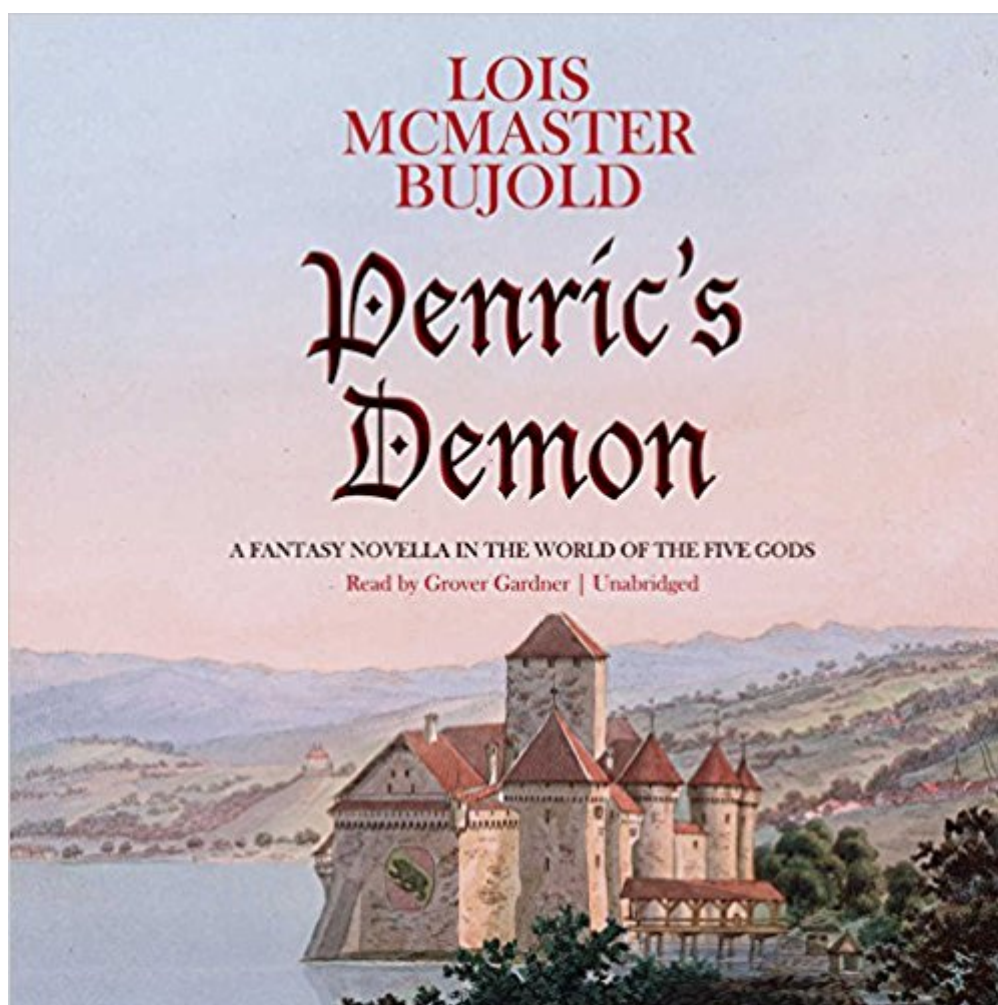


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Penric's Demon: A Fantasy Novella In The World Of The Five Gods (Curse Of Chalion Series)



Synopsis

[Read by Grover Gardner] Set in the fantasy world of the author's acclaimed novels *The Curse of Chalion*, *Paladin of Souls*, and *The Hallowed Hunt*, this novella has the depth of characterization and emotional complexity that distinguishes Bujold's work. On his way to his betrothal, young Lord Penric comes upon a riding accident with an elderly lady on the ground, her maidservant and guardsmen distraught. As he approaches to help, he discovers that the lady is a Temple divine, servant to the five gods of this world. Her avowed god is the Bastard, "master of all disasters out of season," and with her dying breath she bequeaths her mysterious powers to Penric. From that moment on, Penric's life is irreversibly changed, and his life is in danger from those who envy or fear him.

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Customer Reviews

Author's Note: A Bujold Reading-Order Guide A A The Fantasy Novels A My fantasy novels are not hard to order. Easiest of all is *The Spirit Ring*, which is a stand-alone, or aquel, as some wag once dubbed books that for some obscure reason failed to spawn a subsequent series. Next easiest are the four volumes of *The Sharing Knife*--in order, *Beguilement*, *Legacy*, *Passage*, and *Horizon*--which I broke down and actually numbered, as this is one continuous tale. A What were called the Chalion books after the setting of its first two volumes, but which now that the geographic scope has widened I'm dubbing the *World of the Five Gods*,

were written to be stand-alones as part of a larger whole. However, the second volume certainly contains spoilers for the first, so Curse-Paladin is the recommended reading order. The third is in effect an independent prequel, not sharing characters or setting with the other two, so readers of the prior volumes need to adjust their expectations going in. In any case, the publication order is: The Curse of Chalion, Paladin of Souls, The Hallowed Hunt. In terms of internal world chronology, The Hallowed Hunt would fall first, the Penric novellas perhaps a hundred and fifty years later, and The Curse of Chalion and Paladin of Souls would follow a century or so after that. Current internal chronology of the Penric & Desdemona tales is: "Penric's Demon", "Penric and the Shaman", "Penric's Fox", "Penric's Mission", "Mira's Last Dance".

Other Original E-books

The short story collection ProtoZoa contains five very early tales--three (1980s) contemporary fantasy, two science fiction--all previously published but not in this handy format. The novelette "Dreamweaver's Dilemma" may be of interest to Vorkosigan completists, as it is the first story in which that proto-universe began, mentioning Beta Colony but before Barrayar was even thought of.

Sidelines: Talks and Essays is just what it says on the tin--a collection of three decades of my nonfiction writings, including convention speeches, essays, travelogues, introductions, and some less formal pieces. I hope it will prove an interesting companion piece to my fiction.

The Vorkosigan Stories

Many pixels have been expended debating the 'best' order in which to read what have come to be known as the Vorkosigan Books (or Saga), the Vorkosiverse, the Miles books, and other names. The debate mainly revolves around publication order versus internal-chronological order. I favor internal chronological, with a few adjustments.

Shards of Honor and Barrayar. The first two books in the series proper, they detail the adventures of Cordelia Naismith of Beta Colony and Aral Vorkosigan of Barrayar. Shards was my very first novel ever; Barrayar was actually my eighth, but continues the tale the next day after the end of Shards. For readers who want to be sure of beginning at the beginning, or who are very spoiler-sensitive, start with these two.

The Warrior's Apprentice and The Vor Game (with, perhaps, the novella "The Mountains of Mourning" tucked in between.) The Warrior's Apprentice introduces the character who became the series' linchpin, Miles Vorkosigan; the first book tells how he created a space mercenary fleet by accident; the second how he fixed his mistakes from the first round. Space opera and military-esque adventure (and a number of other things one can best discover for oneself), The Warrior's Apprentice makes another good place to jump into the series for readers who prefer a young male protagonist.

After that: Brothers in Arms should be read before Mirror Dance, and both, ideally, before Memory.

Komarr makes another alternate entry point for the series, picking up

Miles's second career at its start. It should be read before *A Civil Campaign*. *~* *~* *Borders of Infinity*, a collection of three of the five currently extant novellas, makes a good Miles Vorkosigan early-adventure sampler platter, I always thought, for readers who don't want to commit themselves to length. (But it may make more sense if read after *The Warrior's Apprentice*.) Take care not to confuse the collection-as-a-whole with its title story, "The Borders of Infinity". *~* *~* *Falling Free* takes place 200 years earlier in the timeline and does not share settings or characters with the main body of the series. Most readers recommend picking up this story later. It should likely be read before *Diplomatic Immunity*, however, which revisits the "quaddies", a bioengineered race of free-fall dwellers, in Miles's time. *~* *~* The novels in the internal-chronological list below appear in italics; the novellas (officially defined as a story between 17,500 word sand 40,000 words) in quote marks. *~* *~* *Falling Free* *Shards of Honor* *Barrayer* *The Warrior's Apprentice* *"The Mountains of Mourning"* *"Weatherman"* *The Vor Game* *Cetaganda* *Ethan of Athos* *Borders of Infinity* *"Labyrinth"* *"The Borders of Infinity"* *Brothers in Arms* *Mirror Dance* *Memory* *Komarr* *A Civil Campaign* *"Winterfair Gifts"* *Diplomatic Immunity* *Captain Vorpatril's Alliance* *CryoBurn* *Gentleman Jole and the Red Queen* *~* *~* Caveats: *~* *~* The novella "Weatherman" is an out-take from the beginning of the novel *The Vor Game*. If you already have *The Vor Game*, you likely don't need this. *~* *~* The original *~* *novel's* *Borders of Infinity* was a fix-up collection containing the three novellas "The Mountains of Mourning", "Labyrinth", and "The Borders of Infinity", together with a frame to tie the pieces together. Again, beware duplication. The frame story does not stand alone. Happy reading! *~* *~* -- Lois McMaster Bujold

On his way to his betrothal, young Lord Penric comes upon a riding accident with an elderly lady on the ground, her maidservant and guardsmen distraught. As he approaches to help, he discovers that the lady is a Temple divine, servant to the five gods of this world. Her avowed god is The Bastard, "master of all disasters out of season," and with her dying breath she bequeaths her mysterious powers to Penric. From that moment on, Penric's life is irreversibly changed, and his life is in danger from those who envy or fear him. Set in the fantasy world of the author's acclaimed novels *The Curse of Chalion*, *Paladin of Souls*, and *The Hallowed Hunt*, this novella has the depth of characterization and emotional complexity that distinguishes all Bujold's work.

This is a deceptively simple story, but the master storyteller behind it is anything but simple. Pen is on his way to his betrothal when he encounters a dying woman and her companions on the side of

the road. Since there is no way to stop the process of nature, he asks out of kindness if there is any way he can be of service. She accepts, and as she dies he is rendered unconscious. When he awakens he finds his simple life is over. He now carries both a burden and a gift coveted by others. Pen seems throughout the story to be a simple man with simple desires. Others try to use turn this to their advantage. But the creature that has adopted him seeks the strongest host it can find. Keep that in mind. This book is part of the five gods series though which the author has found a way to both entertain and illuminate. Thank Gods for a new Bujold story.

Summary: Penric, a young, very much lower lording, is on his way to be dutifully married when his wedding day is turned upside down. Finding a dying sorceress of the Bastard's Order by the side of the road, he's unexpectedly infested with the demon she carried when she passes. So the wedding is off, Penric has a demon carrying the lives of ten women (plus a lioness and a mare) in his head, and he's got a very uncertain future ahead of him. Well, at least his no-longer-bride-to-be gave him a nice cheese wheel as a going away present. Review: I think the best way to describe this story is "Amiable". It's a self-published novella that Lois points out is the longest she's written, but it's got less *plot* than say "Borders of Infinity", "The Mountains of Mourning" or "Labyrinth". It's actually a sly commentary about the two halves that make up a marriage (it's no coincidence Pen got his demon on his supposed wedding day), not a great pile of storm and thunder. Much of the bulk of the story is just Penric talking to the demon, which he names "Desdemona" out of discomfort of the idea of just calling it "Demon" as it had been in its previous ten lives. There's a very minor conflict at the end, but it's dealt with handily by Pen and Des, and has the feel of being tacked on just because Lois figured she needed something to actually threaten Penric before the story finished. Honestly, as a Bujold story it's minor at best. But it's a pleasant read to help pass an hour or two, and there's quite a bit of worldbuilding (as Lois is wont to do) about how the Bastard's Order uses sorcerers and their demons, which would be useful for anyone writing Five Gods 'Verse fanfics. Recommended

I tend to have the same complaint, every time Lois McMaster Bujold writes another novella (this is, I think, her sixth). I feel cheated-- I want more. Not that her novellas aren't fully formed and complete; they are. I just want more of her to read. This is the fourth entry (and first novella) in her "World of the Five Gods" series-- the other books include "The Hallowed Hunt", "Paladin of Souls", and "The Curse of Chalion". It would come in after "The Hallowed Hunt" chronologically, but Bujold's books in this series can be read in any order. The story begins with a young man, Lord Penric, on his way to be married. He's not particularly interested in marrying this young woman (nor she he) but it's what

their families arranged, and neither particularly objects, either. En route, though, he stops to help an elderly woman who had apparently fallen quite ill, not realizing that she was either, one, a powerful sorceress of a, well, "particular" school of wizardry, or two, that she was about to die in his arms, bequeathing him a gift without which he could have lived quite happily, and probably longer. Although at least it does get him out of engagement. Not wishing to give too much away, I'll leave it at that. Lois McMaster Bujold has never written a bad book in over thirty years of writing, and she by no means begins with this one. Buy it, read it, enjoy it... and if you're like so many of Bujold's fans, you'll find yourself rereading it more than once over the years.

I'm a huge fan of Bujold's world of the Five Gods; The Curse of Chalion is one of my all time favorite fantasy novels. Penric's Demon has all of the right ingredients to be a part of the world with another focus on The Bastard god. I've now read the first two novellas of Penric. They're extremely enjoyable short stories and well written. Bujold does her usual excellent job of thoroughly and succinctly fleshing out characters. She also gives a brief look into the political and historical background of the societies. Somehow, I keep finding myself wanting more from these novellas. I enjoy them so much that I hate when each story ends without an even deeper dive into the world. Perhaps by the time I've read all of Penric's stories I'll feel more satisfied.

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