



Midshipman

Phil Geusz

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For centuries noble houses have struggled with the problem of what to do with their younger, non-inheriting sons. It's even tougher when one of these younger sons is a Rabbit and therefore by definition a former slave.

In this second volume of the David Birkenhead series, our young hero has been adopted into the powerful House of Marcus. But... what can be done with a former slave-boy who's earned his kingdom's highest award for bravery, but who also can't shed his Rabbithood no matter how hard he tries? Send him to the Naval Academy, of course, where he must battle loneliness and prejudice as well as the rigors of military discipline.

David's courage has already been proven beyond question, and it is said that the hottest furnaces produce the finest steel. yet... how can a mere Rabbit survive such pressure?

Will David crack? Or will he stand taller and prouder than ever, winning great victories for his kingdom and his fellow slave-species along the way?

Midshipman Details

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From Reader Review Midshipman for online ebook

Dan Thompson says

In this book, David Birkenhead is still technically a rabbit, but he's now a free rabbit, no longer considered a slave by law. But as he recovers from his injuries and considers his future, it's clear that most people still consider him to be a slave in all but paper.

As much as the anthropomorphized animal aspects might be weird -- my wife, for example, was a little squicked by it -- it actually served as an interesting proxy for our own history of racial slavery in the U.S. In many cases I could see people treating the rabbits in much the way old slaveholders of the U.S. south would have treated them, and I also see what that slavery has done to the rabbits psyche, in terms of their expectations, their choices, and their self-image. More than any furry aspect, it was this comfortable view of slavery that got under my skin more than anything else.

So, this book takes David from his injuries through to his official decoration for his heroic actions in the first book, and then onto the navy's officer academy with the King's full blessing. Of course, not everyone wants to see David succeed as the first free rabbit to enter the academy, and there's quite a bit of good struggle over that. Along the way, he befriends a few other students in the academy, and for the climax, they go to an interstellar wargames competition between two opposing academies. He acquires himself fairly well in a move that would have made even Ender Wiggin proud.

So, I'm pretty jazzed about it, even with the bunny ears and slavery, and I'm looking forward to the rest of the series.

Eric says

This series is becoming very interesting and explores racial concepts very well. How society relates to one another is one of the most important plots within the series. David Birkenhead is like Jackie Robinson was to baseball, ashamed to be the first to do what his species has never done before. He like Robinson makes his race proud. Geusz has a wonderful understanding of Military history and creates a wonderful background to explore David's understanding of that history. Will definitely complete this series.

Charles Reynolds says

The book starts exactly where Ship's Boy The David Birkenhead Series 1 left off, creating a bit of feeling like this should be additional chapters to that first book.

Again, the story is compelling and characters are wonderful.

This entire series is some of the best young-adult fiction I've read in decades. The stories and characters are on-par with Mr. Hornblower, Mr. Aubrey and Dr. Maturin.

Bill says

I registered a book at BookCrossing.com!
<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/13230953>

This one is less action packed than the previous but we get to see young David grow. And we get a small peek into the enemy's world. It's a very selective peek, mind you... but it shows enough. While David's side still has flaws, the smaller Empire is merciless.

Also, there are hints of talking Dog and Horse slaves, but I haven't seen them yet. I hope to see at least the Horses soon. Because.

I rather like the Mast as it reminds me of the Herndon climb, but that one has a lot more greased up rugged young men, topless... hmm... I rather like that idea better, but it would hardly work to grease up David. Not with all that fur!

Reminded me of this from 1977: <http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2007...> (the Mast, I mean, not the story).

I've ordered the next book in the series and hope to get that soon so I can start on it.

x x x says

Good character development & sideways touches on slave holding.

Very good extension of ships boy plus new complexity in the relationships still few more words are deemed necessary. So

Matt says

This second book of the seven part series was a significant improvement over the first. The main character, David, was developed much more fully and the plot settled into a good rhythm. I'm a sucker for books featuring a gifted yet humble young leader (see Ender's Game, Watership Down, A Prayer for Owen Meany) which is probably why I liked this one so much.

Per Gunnar says

As I mentioned in my review of the first book in the series I wanted to see where this story went even though I had a hard time with this silly idea of making the main character a gen-manipulated rabbit.

It was a quite fun read but I still had to work hard to get past that rabbit stuff. The book is basic young kid goes through the hardship of military training with the additional twist of a military war game tournament

between the kingdom and the empire.

I have to say that I thought it to be a bit illogical that all the war games was playing out old second world war battles since, for training purposes, it would have been more logical to practice using a more 3-dimensional space but that's just a bit of nit-picking.

As I said, a fun read but quite short.

Helen says

I think this one and Ship's Boy should be read together as one continuous story; as Midshipman picks up where Ship's Boy left off and doesn't really allow for new readers (background is assumed, not explained)

Saying that; I quite enjoyed this. It feels like a YA novel, but that may be a deliberate choice by the author as David narrates the story and is 12 and 16 for the key events. As other reviewers point out, there's a lot of the story that borrows from black slave attitudes, but uses bunnies instead (cute and fluffy!). Other than that, it's a pretty standard coming of age/ odd one out story

So fluffy, but I read it in an evening and enjoyed it! Will be getting the next one

Kris Schnee says

A space adventure loosely similar in structure to the Horatio Hornblower books about the rise of a military hero from humble beginnings. In this case the hero isn't even human, but is part of a genetically engineered slave race. The series features a mix of military action and tension during peacetime as David fights his own society for respect, pushing the stagnant monarchy in the direction it needs to go -- toward freedom -- in order to win a series of wars with a ruthless empire. The tone is a middle ground where there's plenty of enjoyable action while still making it clear that war is hell.

Tristan MacAvery says

In my review of the first book in this series, I made mention that I feared that the author didn't make his main character "rabbity" enough. As an author of "furry" fiction myself, I tend to focus a great deal on the actions of anthropomorphic characters. In this second installment, Geusz makes much better use of his subject's characteristics -- physical attributes, rabbit traits, etc. Perhaps as David Birkenhead (our narrator and lead character) grows and develops, more of these traits will become more important. Without any spoilers, I can tell you that scent, gnawing, large hindpaws, "blushing" ears, and dietary choices become important in this character's life.

An excellent step in an increasingly more interesting series. I'm now officially hooked, Mr. Geusz, and I'm going to enjoy watching young David become a Lieutenant... and beyond.

Dan says

Another good story. Will definitely be reading the rest of the books in this series.

Jasmine says

This second installment of the David Birkenhead series was much stronger than the first, though I do say the writing continues to improve throughout the whole series.

I truly enjoyed the story and David's growth throughout. He proves himself again and again, but there is struggle to get him to some places. Once again I was intrigued by the world and the character, so kept reading further on in the series.

Keith Lowe says

What a well-written adventure. I stayed up way too late because I just couldn't put it down!

Erin Penn says

Book 2 of the David Birkenhead series, The Midshipman, finished pulling me in. Book 1 was good enough for me to spend 99 cents on book 2. I have since read books 3 and 4 and bought the balance for the full set of 7. Sleep, who needs sleep before going into work?

In Midshipman, David's near-adoption into a ruling house activates his loyalty and honor and finds him joining the military as a result. The second book of this series still has the character acting as a youth instead of adult (I really like the series having the character truly mature through both his experiences and just growing up). And like any freed slave or lower class working above their station in a stratus society, he faces tremendous peer and cultural pressures to return to his proper place. Only his Honor of Promises Made pushes him past the worst of it.

While the series is High Space Opera Military genre, the theme is about slavery and overcoming the slavery mindset, both in the individual and in the culture. While some may think that we can never go that way again, the only way to make certain that happens is in reminding ourselves and future generations. I find the series again and again touches on things I have learned over the years about cultures which have slavery and the transition times to remove it. A great series.
