



Festival Moon

C.J. Cherryh (Editor) , Robert Lynn Asprin , Janet E. Morris , Lynn Abbey , Mercedes Lackey , Nancy Asire , Leslie Fish , Chris Morris , more... Pat Tobin ...less

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Merovin, the world the C. J. Cherryh built, a low-tech, inhospitable planet where the human survivors of a colony nearly destroyed by an enigmatic alien menace still dwell, salvaging what they can, while awaiting the return of the alien menace or rediscovery by the Terrans who abandoned them in that long-ago terror.

And in Merovingen, the fantastic canal city, where the wealthy and powerful reside in the highest towers, and beggars, spies, thieves and boaters like Altair Jones ply the highly polluted interlacing waterways below, intrigue, thievery and revolution are the very breath of life. And now with the Festival of Scouring approaching, C. J. Cherryh has invited some of today's finest writers into Merovignen, to weave together this tale of Festival Moon, a time of mystery and murder, of power games both high and low, a Festival after which this world will never be quite the same again...

Festival Moon Details

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From Reader Review Festival Moon for online ebook

Katherine says

Fantasy/SF, first of the Merovingen Nights collaborations. Cherryh is a superlative worldbuilder, and it's great to read others' stories using her characters and backgrounds.

Terry says

Reading this book really takes me back to the 80's. Not so much because there is a particular 80's vibe to the content per se (with one exception), but because this is an entry in one of those chimeric beasts that I will forever associate with the wild and wooly 80's: the shared universe anthology. It seemed to me that you couldn't look at the sci-fi or fantasy shelves in bookstores without at least a few such titles jumping out at you, most notoriously, perhaps, the Thieves' World series edited by Robert Asprin (who, not altogether surprisingly, is a contributor in this volume). I never read a shared world series when they were popular though I did flirt quite a bit with picking up the aforementioned Thieves' World books from time to time (are these beasts even a thing anymore? the only one I can think of is GRRM's Wild Cards series and that seems to have been resuscitated, I assume, primarily due to the wild popularity of his Song of Ice and Fire series and the burgeoning popularity of superheroes outside of their home medium of comic books). I guess my main reasons for staying away in the past were my general lack of interest in short story collections (a genre I still have a fair bit of ambivalence towards) and my assumption that the difficulty in making the varied stories by different authors all fit thematically and stylistically into one shared world was nearly insurmountable. So what made me pick up this one? Well primarily my love for Cherryh's stand-alone novel that introduced the world of Merovin (Angel with the Sword) and my desire to return and see what kind of trouble Altair Jones (I gotta admit that name makes me cringe...it definitely sounds like something I would have come up with back in the 80's when I was 13) and her somewhat doofish boyfriend Thomas Mondragon have gotten themselves into.

The first thing I should note is that this is not simply a short story collection, but a mosaic novel, in which each of the stories written by the contributors supposedly all work towards expanding on one larger story. Some are more successful at this than others, and while I was generally pleased with the results I have to admit to not having a totally clear picture of the overarching story, though I think there is an in-story reason for that. Of course, the concept of a mosaic novel, intriguing as it is, comes with some obvious implications: namely the above-mentioned thematic and stylistic challenges of a shared world anthology go up to eleven. How do you get multiple authors on the same page, figuratively speaking, so that the stories meld into something approaching a unified whole? I'm not sure what Cherryh's approach as editor was, though appearances lead me to believe that some kind of atlas of the planet, culture, and characters of Merovin were distributed and each author may have had ear-marked areas/content for inclusion in their stories (I wonder how much freedom they even had in the story concept overall...did they submit something to Cherryh who then tried to work everything into a whole, or was it the other way around and she gave them an 'assignment', or at least a story framework within which to fill in the details?) Whatever the case may have been, some of the stories show less confidence than others when it comes to incorporating something like this, such as the entry by Janet and Chris Morris, "Swordplay", which has an awful lot of telling instead of showing that often has the flavour of ticking off required boxes.

'Festival Moon' by C. J. Cherryh: a series of vignettes written by Cherryh which act as intermediate bridges

between each of the contributor's stories and are from the point of view of the main characters from the parent novel, Altair Jones and Thomas Mondragon. In many cases these are rather slight entries and, for me at least, they tended to deepen as oppose to clarify the mysteries (or perhaps confusion) of the story overall.

'First Night Cruise' by Leslie Fish: The only story not written by Cherryh in which Altair Jones is the viewpoint character. Jones agrees to take on a dubious cargo for an infamous singer, also known to have underworld connections, and is thereby drawn into a conspiracy to bring about monumental changes to the drifting city of Merovingen. I quite liked this tale, though the implications it raised were not in any way resolved in the subsequent stories.

'Two Gentlemen of the Trade' by Robert Lynn Asprin: A story that brings us into the shadowy and complex world of the upper classes of Merovingen. This is a world of backstabbing politics and intrigue that was only glimpsed from the outside in the novel. This was also an enjoyable tale, though in this case I don't think the main mystery was very mysterious.

'Cats Tale' by Nancy Asire: The story of a lower class student who pursues some classmates in the hopes of rescuing his landlady's cat. We gain some insight into the tensions between two of the main religious factions of the planet: the Adventists and the Revenantists (a tension that is a thread throughout the stories) as well as further development of the upstairs/downstairs dynamics of the city of Merovingen itself (the other major tension threaded throughout the stories) but overall I found this a slight and somewhat silly tale...and I say that as someone who owns two cats.

'Deathangel' by Mercedes Lackey: the story of Rigel (Raj) Takahashi, an Adventist boy who has lost everything and lives at lowest level of Merovingen society: amongst the miasmic swamps surrounding the city where death can as easily come from one's neighbours as from one's environment. Raj relives some of his childhood daydreams, that soon become nightmares as he is pursued by mysterious assassins and races against time to find his brother in the hopes that both of their lives can be saved. Yet more Adventist vs. Revenantist intrigue and a solid tale.

'Sword Play' by Janet & Chris Morris: Michael Chamoun, a member of 'the Sword' (a secret society of Adventists with a remit for the violent overthrow of the powers that be) arrives in Merovingen as part of a plan to infiltrate high society through a marriage of convenience. Given the tangled nature of Merovingen politics not everything runs smoothly for him and his own personal entanglements only add to the problems that threaten to overwhelm him.

'First-Bath' by Lynn Abbey: another look into the lives of one of the high families of Merovingen, this time a relatively minor noble house that has gained its money and power through the application of a secret process for the creation and dying of a particularly fine fabric. The new head of the family, Richard Kamat, struggles to live up to his father's example, and runs afoul of politics (a popular theme in these stories) when his sister ill-advisedly gets herself entangled with a mysterious agent from their mother's family.

'Night Action' by Chris Morris: we return to the story of Michael Chamoun of 'Sword Play' and see the aftermath of the events in that story. Things kind of lost me here and I will admit that I didn't fully comprehend many of the 'revelations' that were made in this story and the shape of the overall intrigue that was meant to be threading its way through all (or at least most) of the stories still eluded me.

I enjoyed this foray into a shared world and think it was mostly successful, at least in conveying the flavour and feel of Merovingen that I got from the first book. That being said I found some of the overarching plot confusing and not all of the tales seemed to fit into the greater arc to me (even if they did expand on the

world itself), though this may be something that is resolved in later volumes as things continue to flesh themselves out and the overall picture hopefully becomes clearer. Perhaps one of these days I'll check them out to see if that's the case.

James says

Start of a shared universe that never caught on.

Grey says

Second book in the series after the "pilot" novel *Angel with the Sword*, and I'm really loving this world. Merovingen is like Venice + Sanctuary - Magic. It's all intrigue and cheap death and low tech and high adventure. I like how this "braided" anthology neatly ties all the disparate shorts into a meaningful narrative. It's not a collection of stories all in the same place as much as it is a running perspective on an event from multiple perspectives. The only thing that bugs me about this piece is the intrigue is perhaps a little *too* subtle and, at the end, I don't really get the punchline. Maybe the next one will bring it home. I'll certainly be reading it.

Linda says

When I read the first book I wasn't sure why the world had such a complex alien and space travel filled background beyond the fact that Cherryh was a scifi writer, so I was kind of delighted that this book it uses the worldbuilding so that Merovingen is both based off 1500s Venice while also being multi-racial/cultural. Also, I enjoyed the vamping up of the political backstabbing and social class concerns. Suck it GRRM.

This book also reminded me why I really like mosaic novels, although there wasn't a lot of resolution to the various plotlines. I was expecting a last chapter to pull all the threads together but there wasn't really. (Or maybe I just find Cherryh writing from the perspective of Jones kind of confusing.)

Judy says

Read it a bazillion years ago and loved it.
