



Hellflower

Eluki bes Shahr

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The author's first SF novel and the first part of a proposed trilogy, this involves Butterfly St. Cyr, an interplanetary smuggler (her contraband ranges from philosophy texts to an undefined item called "never-you-mind" p. 15). Butterfly's life goes askew when she finds herself entangled with Valijon Starbringer (or, as Butterfly calls him, "Tiggy Stardust"), a young member of the alMayne (colloquially called "hellflowers") royalty. Butterfly is in possession of a sentient and illegal computer called a Library, named Paladin, whose existence she must go to great lengths to keep secret. Further, she has been coerced into doing a job involving a second Library, one not nearly so genteel as Paladin. There are some interesting uses of language (foreign word derivations like "purdū" and "che-bai"), p.176, 13 and some funny bits (a chapter titled "How to File for Moral Bankruptcy" p.180). But the alMayne are yet another race of large, temperamental, animalistic humanoids with a bizarre code of honor. And does the SF genre really need another sentient computer? Still, this is a breezy read with a good mix of humor, adventure and politics.

Hellflower Details

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From Reader Review Hellflower for online ebook

Josh Mathews says

I figure I wouldn't enjoy this as much were I as familiar with the sci-fi genre as I am with the fantasy genre. Though that being said, I wouldn't mind reading more books with the same style as this one. The plot seems like fairly standard stuff, with a main character who is essentially a smuggler with a heart of gold, who generally seems to make things up as she goes along. I always enjoy stories with AI characters such as Paladin the "library", but then again, I haven't encountered many such characters. The pace was nice and fast with lots of action (the irony of the main character's name -- Butterflies-Are-Free Peace Sincere -- was always worth a few laughs)... overall this series was a nice fun read, but I'm guessing that in years to come I'm mostly going to remember it as one of the few series within this genre I've read so far, not as something that blew my mind and opened up new plateaus of thought.

Mary Brodd says

Engaging characters and interesting use of language, after I got used to it. The world-building was great - hints, not any "as you know, Jim..." situations. Looking for the other two books in the series now.

Denise says

By all rights I should hate this book -- it's first-person dialect-heavy narration, which is a particular annoyance of mine -- and yet I couldn't put it down. Butterfly, our heroine, is a wonderful character, and the worldbuilding is highly entertaining. It's a book that revolves around people, and the plot is driven by those people and their particular motivations at every given moment, and I love that kind of thing so much.

The dialect is difficult in places, and there are times when it feels like the author's figuring out what's going on at the same time we are, but it didn't stop me from really enjoying it anyway.

Eleanor With Cats says

This trilogy is based on and expanded from two or three space opera short stories published in *Amazing* in the 80s that I had the pleasure to acquire in a yard sale in my youth. The money was not misspent. The stories are hilarious. The book is equally exuberant, but with more of a serious and tragic thread that increases as the trilogy progresses. It's not *about* linguistics, but is one of those books written in a very distinct invented dialect, like *A Clockwork Orange*.

For example:

I was minding my own business in beautiful downside Wanderweb, having just managed to mislay my cargo for the right price. My nighttime man had talked me into booklegging again, and damsilly stuff it was too - either maintenance manuals or philosophy texts. I never did figure out which, even with sixty hours time in *Firecat* between Coldwater and Wanderweb to stare at them and Paladin to read them to me.

So I was making my way around wondertown; free, female, and a damn sight over the age of reason, when I saw this greenie right in front of me in the street.

He was definitely a toff, and no stardancer - you never saw such clothes outside of a hollycast. He was lit up like Dream Street at night and wearing enough heat to stock a good-sized Imperial Armory besides. And this being scenic Wanderweb, land of enchantment, there was six of K'Jarn's werewolves and K'Jarn facing him. I was of the opinion - then - that he couldn't do them before they opened him up, so, fancy-free, I opened my mouth and said:

"Good morning, thou nobly-born K'Jarn. Airt hiert out to do wetwork these days or just to roll glitterborn for kicks, hey?"

--*Hellflower*, p9.

If this is your cup of tea, this trilogy should be yours. If you want a plot summary, it's something like female trickster Han Solo, who's in love with her ship AI, performs a random act of kindness by beating some people up and then realizes she's (unnecessarily) saved a fighter from an incredibly violent culture with an unpredictable sense of honor who's also being pursued by many, many people including agents of the Imperium. Adventure ensues.

Ben Bochinski says

The story was a little difficult for me to get into at first, as I am not the biggest fan of learning made up words with little context, but once I got sucked into the story, I couldn't put it down. (probably about 40 pages.) fantastic book, kept me on the edge of my seat, and I'm a little sad it's over.

Marty says

Old fashioned and good. Smuggler saddles herself with a kid in need of aid, while also trying to protect an outlawed "library".

Suz Thackston says

I'm always taken aback by how few people know about this gem. It's one of my absolute favorite books. If you don't like dialects it might annoy you, but this one is brilliantly done. Think 'A Clockwork Orange' but with warmth and humor. Don't let the delightfully hokey cover fool you. This is no schlockey romance. It's a surprising, wise, tender, exciting, deeply mythic adventure cloaked in a sci-fi story.
