



Glory Season

David Brin

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Hugo and Nebula award-winning author David Brin is one of the most eloquent, imaginative voices in science fiction. Now he returns with a new novel rich in texture, universal in theme, monumental in scope--pushing the genre to new heights.

Young Maia is fast approaching a turning point in her life. As a half-caste var, she must leave the clan home of her privileged half sisters and seek her fortune in the world. With her twin sister, Leie, she searches the docks of Port Sanger for an apprenticeship aboard the vessels that sail the trade routes of the Stratoin oceans.

On her far-reaching, perilous journey of discovery, Maia will endure hardship and hunger, imprisonment and loneliness, bloody battles with pirates and separation from her twin. And along the way, she will meet a traveler who has come an unimaginable distance--and who threatens the delicate balance of the Stratoin's carefully maintained, perfect society....

Both exciting and insightful, *Glory Season* is a major novel, a transcendent saga of the human spirit.

Glory Season Details

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Author : David Brin

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From Reader Review *Glory Season* for online ebook

Sara Gettel says

Imaginative, was not done getting to know the characters when the book ended.

Joe Martin says

The best science fiction is, at its heart, speculative fiction. These books start with a single big idea—a single question—and develop it. The great books take that idea and develop it superbly. *Glory Season* is a great book. It starts with a single idea: what if humans could clone themselves when times are good and revert to sexual reproduction when times are bad and genetic diversity is at a premium?

David Brin explains how his idea developed, from that single root.

The idea of cloning has been explored widely in fiction, but always in terms of medical technology involving complex machinery, a dilettante obsession for the very rich. This may serve a pampered, self-obsessed class for a while, but it's hardly a process any species could rely on over the long haul, through bad times as well as good. Not a way of life, machine-assisted cloning is the biosocial counterpart of a hobby.

What if, instead, self-cloning were just another of the many startling capabilities of the human womb? An interesting premise. But then, only female humans have wombs, so a contemplation of cloning became a novel about drastically altered relations between the sexes. Most aspects to the society of planet Stratos arose out of this one idea.

David Brin relentlessly develops this big idea, to see exactly where it takes him. He follows it through the sciences, to see where it takes him: biology, sociology, psychology, and more. By pursuing this idea so relentlessly, he constructs a society that is very alien to our own (uncomfortably so, in cases) but yet is still very recognizable.

Glory Season is a tale of a largely static society, where women hold the upper hand. Men are kept around primarily for their ability to “spark” clone births. It’s a society largely dominated by extended clans of female clones. It’s a society where being unique is very uncomfortable and where “var” is a derisive slur.

But David Brin didn’t allow these big, well developed ideas to get in the way of telling a story. *Glory Season* is an adventure tale, a coming of age tale, and a tale of radicals seeking to remake society. It was both thought provoking and thoroughly entertaining. I highly recommend it.

Nadia Afifi says

Science fiction stories about cloning all too often take a negative bent - the clones struggle with their identities or mad scientists learn the pitfalls of "playing God." What we have in "Glory Season" is a fully realized world, once in which women can both reproduce naturally during one season and clone themselves in another. It also imagines a matriarchal society in a way that is thoughtful, without idealism or tropes.

I'll admit, it took a while for the story to pick up for me. The beginning is slow, with long stretches of travel around a complex world that the main character, Maia, struggles to find a place in. She is a "var", a genetic variant with a biological father, but is also able to pass off as a clone thanks to a twin sister. After an escape from a prison, where she is held by one of the many political factions we learn of throughout the story, the pace begins to pick up. There are sea battles, escapes, reunions and a wealth of political intrigue, all caused by an alien visitor who threatens change to the order of this rigid, designed world.

The premise is stronger than the actual story, but in the end, I enjoyed spending time in this world. By the end, I could visualize the cities, the countryside and the people that lived in them. It could have benefitted from a simpler plot, with less focus on factions with abstract goals and more on Maia's story arc.

Nadine Jones says

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/sc...>

Zach says

Zach stood at his desk to write his review of David Brin's interminably boring science fiction novel, *Glory Season*.

I'd better start off by mentioning how tedious it was to listen to the main character's thoughts in every other paragraph, Zach thought to himself. That way, the people reading this review will understand my frustration with having the author spell out every tiny nuance of the main character's motivation in tiresome detail, as if internal monologue were the only way to accomplish this feat in writing.

Zach raised his arms to the keyboard, feeling the muscles in his shoulders, back, and neck tense up. He laid the heels of his palms on the ergonomic padding and placed his fingertips on the keys of the home row, preparing to type his review. *It really bothered me how often the exact condition of all the protagonist's main muscle groups was described right in the middle of an ostensible action sequence*, he thought. *I wonder how I can best get across what an obstacle this was to my enjoyment of the novel*. Just as he began to type, he experienced a flashback for the purposes of character development and world building.

It's pretty inconvenient to my readers to continually break up the narrative with all this back-story exposition. But how else can I establish setting and character? Zach was swept back in his mind to weeks earlier, when he was reading David Brin's interminably boring science fiction novel, *Glory Season*, and thinking about the premise of a woman-dominated agrarian civilization. *I would have thought this would be so much juicier, but it's incredibly dry and bland. Ethan of Athos did a much better job of exploring the converse scenario, a world composed solely of men, and did so despite being shorter and spending much less time on the unusual planet. And unlike Glory Season, it actually challenged gender stereotypes, rather than just snidely reversing some and tacitly endorsing others.*

Just then, Zach's aching calf muscles, fatigued from his long stand at his desk, spasmed painfully, dumping him to the carpet. His head brushed the desk on the way to the ground, knocking him unconscious.

Zach came to an indeterminate amount of time later, his lapse into senselessness hopefully having created some dramatic tension. He stood warily to resume writing his review. *Why does the main character get knocked out so often?* he wondered. *It's like two thirds of the plot movements occur while she's dead to the world. Want to talk about gender stereotypes? How about female hypo-agency? How about a "heroine" who is shuttled like a pawn from scene to scene, unconscious as often as not, with no understanding of what's going on or what her goal is?*

Zach again placed his hands on the keyboard to begin writing. Suddenly, he was overcome by another flashback memory. He decided to explore it fully, unconcerned what this would do to the pacing or readability of his book review. He thought back to his computer science education, and learning about cellular automata.

These are pretty interesting for someone completely enamored with mathematics and puzzles, like I am, he thought, *but I'm quite obviously abnormal in that regard*. He watched the little black and white squares flicker on and off on his computer screen, as he sat in a dimly lit basement lab surrounded by pale, friendless virgins with poor hygiene. *Most men would rather do anything else than play Conway's game of life -- even with my unusually abstract interests I find it only mildly engaging. There is absolutely no chance that this game would ever, ever, ever become the basis of a popular pastime.*

Zach sighed deeply, and shook his head at Brin's indefensible choice to make Life the basis of male recreation in his world. *And that's just one of so many problems with this book. How can I possibly convey everything that's wrong with it? Well, I had better get started and see where it gets me.* He again rested his fingers on the home row, feeling the muscles ache in his back, forearms, and shoulders, resolved to begin writing.

Just then, Zach lost consciousness.

Andy Love says

I enjoyed this book very much. Brin created a world (Stratos) that is very different from our own - a world where most of the population is women, and the dominant mode of reproduction is self-cloning, but makes that world come alive by showing how human choices determine how cultures develop from these biological facts. The book starts with the mainstream culture in which large clone families root themselves in occupational niches, while variant girls (non-clones) are sent out as 15-year-olds to find their own way in the world (with the ambition of finding their own niches and creating new clone families) and boys go to sea with their fathers' clans) - a culture which the main character (a var girl named) Leie accepts as normal, but the book expands Leie's viewpoint (and the readers) by showing

- 1) areas where the clone families attempt to diminish the number of vars and to a minimum,
- 2) micro-clone families that persist over generations going from one mother to one daughter
- 3) clone family ecologies with families finding niches in service of other families,
- 4) clone families that have the crippling flaw that they can't get along with each other, but enough raw talent that they can find individual niches

and we even hear of areas in which such heresies as nuclear families, and families that send out clone daughters but keep the vars exist.

The watchword is "robust stability" - which Brin contrasts with both stasis, and with the constant upheaval that modern society has been experiencing for the last couple of centuries, and he uses Stratos to explore what a society that allows change but promotes conservation of successful ideas and methods might be like.

A very thought-provoking book.

Jennifer Sigman says

The ending is quite disjointed. It's like he was starting a new thought, then just stopped, practically mid-sentence.

Juan Raffo says

Se lee con facilidad, entretiene, historia de aventuras en un cultura exótica constituida por clanes de mujeres capaces de auto clonarse y donde los hombres son una minoría que aporta variedad genética.

Una adolescente no clon, una 'var', parte de su clan para hacer fortuna (en realidad es expulsada, que es lo que normalmente ocurre con las var) y se ve envuelta en una conspiración que involucra la llegada de un representante del resto de la humanidad despues de miles de años de aislamiento, la lucha entre facciones rivales que buscan mantener el status quo (o voltear el mundo de cabeza) pero con tanta mala suerte (o demasiada buena suerte) que por momentos se hace increíble que todo esto le ocurra a la misma persona (pero por supuesto, esto es lo que uno espera que le pase a estos personajes en este tipo de novelas).

Gemma says

An interesting, thought provoking and well established anthropological read, Glory Season presents the coming-of-age tale of the var, Maia. Vars, or variants, are summer children born of a mother and father, and are essentially second class citizens. The winter clones are daughters whose 'fathers' are only used to 'spark' gestation (males being required only to spark the development of the placenta), resulting in clone daughters identical to their mothers. The winter clones belong to family clans who prosper (or not, resulting in a dying clan) based on their marketable skill-set niche. A goal of many vars is to find a niche within which they can succeed enough to be able to create a clan of their own. This desire to find a niche of their own, and to survive and prosper in Stratos society, is the underlying goal of Maia and her twin (as opposed to clone) sister Leie. However, through events outside of their control Maia and Leie are separated, resulting in Maia being forced to face a future on her own without the sister with whom she was to form a successful clan.

Not a bad read: it took a little bit for me to get fully into it, but once I did I quite enjoyed Glory Season. One thing I enjoy about Brin's works is that his alien species are actually alien, and not just humans in an alien suit (I.e. Aliens with human motivations, goals and behaviours). Glory Season, whilst having genetically tinkered humans, is sufficiently alien enough to have a refreshingly convincing alien society, with Stratos-specific behaviours and beliefs designed to complement the genetically-modified lifestyle established by the Founding Mothers.

This lifestyle and history was cleverly integrated into the story bit by bit throughout the first half of the novel, enabling the reader to become familiar with this aspect of Stratos society, before being introduced to another facet, or expanding on what had already been presented. The timing of the presentation of this information was also done well, so that there were no real examples of the reader wondering what exactly was going on. This was a refreshing change from an artificial-feeling word dump (e.g. Where Character A conveniently explains to Character B *everything* about a particular person/society/event) in the middle of the book, which the reader must digest before continuing on with the story. Instead, the background information flowed nicely with, and complemented, the story line.

However, whilst this was an interesting, and enjoyable, read, it didn't really have the impact that would move it to my "must read over and over again" list. I found the ending to be a bit fragmented and anti-climatic, which was disappointing in an otherwise well-grounded and well written novel.

Marthe Dangreux says

Je continue de compléter mes "David Brin". Je ne parlerai pas (encore) de Marée stellaire ou du Peuple d'argile que j'ai lu il y a déjà quelques temps mais de Saison de gloire.

On le sait, David Brin fait partie des auteurs qui à partir de quelques hypothèses de base, fabrique un univers en explorant toutes les conséquences de ses suppositions. Cette fois-ci il s'attaque au matriarcat et au clonage à partir de l'observation de... lézards femelles o_O

Sur Stratos, planète isolée des autres mondes humains, les fondatrices ont rendu vivante leur utopie d'un matriarcat pastoral basé sur le clonage. A partir de cette situation, David Brin tire une société étrange et attachante aux rôles inversés. Comme toujours il y a de l'aventure à l'américaine (un peu 80s). On pardonne quelques longueurs car le monde est fascinant (notamment les clans des matriarches clones, les hommes considérés comme une espèce à part et la trouvaille géniale des vars). David Brin a su utiliser les clones d'une manière unique (sans mauvais jeu de mots) et quitter une vision angoissante classique (parfois très réussie comme dans *Reproduction interdite* de Jean-Michel Truong). La postface est très intéressante à ce titre.

Bref je ne regrette pas et je vous le conseille :)

Jill says

Should have been great. As it was, I couldn't finish it. Nothing happened for 342 pages.

kazerniel says

3.5 stars

I have to say I enjoyed reading this novel the 2nd time more than the 1st. The first reading experience was too marred by the disappointment over the ending (or lack of it), and also by all power being ripped away from the protagonist again and again over the book. The 2nd time I knew what to expect, so I could enjoy the nuance and world-building more.

~

Speaking of world-building, it's clearly the driving force behind the whole book. The author really takes the concept of parthenogenesis to its logical conclusions. He paints a really rich and subtle commentary on our real world's technology-crazed patriarchy while describing its matriarchal pastoral society on a future isolated human colony planet. This colony is neither an utopia or a dystopia, Stratos's society has its own up- and downsides too.

The author also knows his forebears, now that I'm reading Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, I see many nods in Brin's novel towards this earlier work.

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As a feminist it was really refreshing to see women in very diverse roles and positions of power in this novel. In this world every politician, scholar, clan leader, mercenary are women. Men are relegated to the fringes of society with sailor and railroad worker being the only two career option for them. The book does a nice job to show that even in this somewhat less violent world people often don't fit into their sex-determined roles, and oppression and disenfranchisement pervade the society, just like our own. On Stratos social status, and thus every woman's life revolves around having children (preferably clones, and as many of them as possible).

One aspect that did not sit well with me was the overwhelming capitalism of Stratos's society (and now that I think of it, it's characteristic of Brin's other worlds as well). Despite the world being pastoral and stable, there's cut-throat competition for niches and personal advancement without basically any social safety nets in place (save for churches for the sick, and to some degree sailing companies for men). As for stability, the

planet's society is also very authoritatively controlled, with tight control over advanced technology, strong censorship and very limited access to information outside what one's immediate life circumstances necessitate.

~

As usual for David Brin's novels, there's almost no queer representation at all. Same-gender romantic attraction is mentioned as accepted, but it's not really depicted aside of the protagonist's internal feelings. Actually any kind of romantic attraction doesn't have anywhere near the social recognition or interest as in our present world (with the cloning somewhat understandably so). Interestingly, mixed-gender romantic attraction is viewed as a perversion in this mostly gender-segregated world.

Sexuality seems to be a solely practical matter, either done for reproduction or to relieve sexual tension in the form of brothel visits. (Where female courtesans service both men and women.) No sexuality seems to be about personal attraction though, people just have sex with pretty much anyone who suits the criteria for reproduction and/or tension relief. This, and sexuality having a strict seasonality result in a very impersonal, aromantic-asexual social norm.

~

My main issue with the book is that it doesn't feel finished. It feels like that when the author missed a good point in the plot's arc to wrap the novel up after (view spoiler), he didn't keep going to find another graceful point to close the book, just kinda got bored and stopped writing at a random anticlimactic spot way after the end of the large story arc. As if the last few chapters were driven by inertia more than any conscious authorial decision, the newly introduced characters and events are mostly irrelevant for the plot (and are clearly only introduced to show a bit more diversity about Stratos's social life), and we don't get to know what became of many important minor characters. All in all it just feels like the book ends quarter-way through its own sequel.

While most of the Afterword is interesting and good, I didn't agree with his complaint about the criticism of male writers writing female-focused novels. He calls the criticism 'sexist', as if gendered experiences happened outside of social power dynamics, and as if - when we take a single oppressional axis - a person in the position of privilege could have the same insights as an oppressed person. We don't live in a vacuum, he seems to occasionally forget this, while other times seems to have an acute insight on how much it sucks to be a woman under the patriarchy.

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read: 2015, 2016

Jen says

Great world building, and the author is deft and unveiling information in a way that is both page-turning and believable.

The story didn't quite live up to the excitement I felt reading the first half, and I felt that the ending was a little flat. All in all, a good vacation read.

Saira Shahid says

This book had a great concept but it dragged on and I lost interest after the first quarter and skimmed through the rest

Althea Ann says

Entertaining, but not quite Ursula K. LeGuin (who also deals with similar experimental gender issues in lots of her work).

Ben Babcock says

Perhaps the best science fiction book I've ever read that so elegantly reverses our contemporary notions of gender. Not so great as a novel, unfortunately.

In *Glory Season*, David Brin depicts a world with an intensely matriarchal society. The majority of the population of Stratos consists of female clones, "sparked" in winter by male sperm, but genetic copies of their mothers. Men and "variant" girls are born in summer. Designed this way the founders of Stratos, this society is supposedly pastoral and stable, with the clones running the show and the "vars" (men and variant girls) struggling to fit in wherever they can.

Brin does a masterful job at creating Stratoin society and instilling it with values that are essentially the opposite of what we might consider "normal" in Western society. For example, in Stratoin society, men don't fight. Almost every man serves aboard a ship as a sailor until retiring; otherwise, they stay in "sanctuaries" during the summer, unless invited by a clan looking to produce some vars. As *Glory Season* is told from the limited omniscient perspective following a female var, we get a sense of the prejudices that pervade Stratoin culture. These stark differences from the way our society operates are only emphasized by the arrival of the "Outsider", Renna, an advanced scout from the multi-world Phylum.

For his world-building achievement with this book, Brin deserves much praise. It's not easy to construct such a logical, consistent society yet still remain within the bounds of scientific possibility and avoid descending into a lampoon of Amazon-like cultures. *Glory Season* is neither a cautionary tale about what matriarchy would be like, nor is it an encomium for matriarchal rule. Rather, as Brin explains in his afterword, it's a novel-length answer to "What if?". Any good science fiction story should begin by trying to answer that question.

I was much less impressed with the plot and characterization. Much of the plot was difficult to follow, and the parts I did follow I often found boring or repetitive--Brin had a tendency to render Maia, our stalwart protagonist, unconscious when he needed to end a chapter on a cliffhanger. For the first couple of blackouts, it was effective, but then it became old, even when he lampshades it later on.

I can't decide if I admire or am annoyed by Maia! On the one hand, she's a plucky protagonist, definitively individual in a culture where one *strives* to be the same as one's clone sisters. On the other hand, she is continually buffeted around among forces she can't control; even when she does reach out to try and seize the day, she's knocked down before she can truly succeed. The end of the book seems to imply that this is part of the story's theme, that Maia's adventure has finally allowed her to mature to the point where she can strike out as an individual and begin making her own way through life.

Unfortunately, there are too many loose threads to leave me satisfied. Maia's twin, Leie, (and this isn't a spoiler, because anyone who reads the book should realize two pages after Leie dies that she really isn't dead) reappears only to disappear about fifty pages later. It's a touching reunion, but one devoid of purpose save for a few plot points during the dry climax of the book. It kind of makes me feel like the end of *The Matrix*, where they just sort of walk off into the crowd of oblivious pod-happy people.

Brin aims for something lofty, but he overshoots and misses, at least in my opinion. Still, *Glory Season* is worth a read for its sociological value alone. And the story isn't *too* bad, just not great.

Laura says

[I can't believe that Leie

Dark-Draco says

This is just the sort of SF I like - intelligent without being too difficult to follow, great plots without being cheesy and some excellent characters.

The story follows Maia, a 'variant' born by fatherhood, rather than the cloning that is the norm on planet Stratos. When forced to leave her childhood home, with her twin, Leie, they plan on becoming rich, finding their niche and creating a clone family of their own. But when tragedy strikes, Maia finds herself drawn into a political and radical conspiracy. What first seems like a simple drug trafficking problem, soon encompasses an alien visitor, secret basis and the corruption of so much of the planet's history. Maia, using her ability to see patterns in everything, finds herself one of the keys to solving the whole thing.

This is such a brilliant world to set a story, different in so many ways to other books with its kind of setting. The characters are immediately likeable and Maia is a very gutsy girl!! I didn't like the ending that much, but only because I like happy ones, and was left with a big craving to return to this world for future stories. Unfortunately, it doesn't look as if the author has thought to flesh it out into a series.

So, overall, one of the best books I have ever read - firmly one of my favourites.

Tim says

Interesting. This is a weird brand of fiction that explores an idea far better than it tells a story. Unfortunately, that doesn't become clear until about 2/3 of the way in.

Glory Season makes for a good anthropological/sociological what-if book, and uses a coming-of-age story as the narrative adhesive.

This book is heavily flawed in terms of what it is trying to do as a book, but if you can bring yourself to appreciate the underlying ambition, it ends up a pretty decent read.

Susan says

When I read this book in Australia I remember it being really good. So I've bought it and intend to re-read it.

And Fred Gambino is SO NICE!!! he sent me hi res scans of both covers he did. Isn't that Super Sweet?
