



Schism

Catherine Asaro

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In 2002, Catherine Asaro won the Nebula Award for *The Quantum Rose*, the sixth novel in her Saga of the Skolian Empire. This very same novel was also named Best SF Novel by the *Romantic Times*. *Schism: Part One of Triad* is the tenth novel in this multiple award-winning series, and represents an excellent entry point into the series.

For *Schism* harkens back to the early years of the Skolian Empire, back to the beginning of the war between Skolia and the Euban Traders. Twenty-three years have passed since the fateful vote in the Skolian Assembly that Roca missed in *Skyfall*. It created the first open hostility between Eube and Skolia, which has only deepened over the ensuing years.

Now, Eube senses an opportunity, for strife has riven the first family of the Skolian Empire. Sauscony, the daughter of Roca and Eldrinson, is ready to seek her fortune as an officer-in-training in the Skolian military. When her father forbids her to undertake such a dangerous path, a wedge is formed as Soz chooses duty over family. Eube hopes to make this permanent, a divide that will leave the Skolian Empire ripe for conquest. And they're willing to kill anyone to make it happen.

Revel in the latest adventure of this Nebula Award-winning series.

Schism Details

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Author : Catherine Asaro

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From Reader Review Schism for online ebook

Diane says

I really enjoyed this book. I would give it 3 1/2 stars if that were an option. But I'm trying to stick with GR's descriptions for the stars and reserving 5 stars only for the truly amazing books.

This one is very entertaining and a good introduction to Asaro's world, even if you haven't read the previous 9 books. This is the first in a trilogy, although I feel like this one and the 2nd one are really 2 parts of one long book.

Asaro is a physicist and an dancer/singer and I think that those two aspects of her person really come through beautifully.

Lois says

This is much better than Skyfall. It picks up about 24 or so years after the events in the previous book. This novel introduces a teenage Soz and the various other Valdoria-Skolia siblings. Otherwise there's more action is and the relationships continue to feel shallow and forced.

Kelly Flanagan says

This was an alright book. I wasn't enormously fond of it, nor did I feel the need to chuck it at the wall or open window. And, strangely enough, after I finished it, It tended to come to mind in odd times. Something only a book I enjoy does. So after a few days, I realize that even though my stack of 'to read' on my night stand is big (14 so far, always how holds go for me.. none for a month and a half, then bamn! 15 come in at once) I will read the rest of the series.

Oh, and might I also mention that the first reason I picked the book up is be3casue the cover artist is the same as the one who does all Julie E. Czerneda's covers. Her sci-fi is always 5 stars or more! So, judging a book by it's cover was helpful for a change!

Catburglar says

The story is interesting and enjoyable science fiction material. There are some romances. However, the writing style is weak. Too many abbreviations are not explained, probably because this is part of a saga and Asaro did not keep close track of where in each book the abbreviations first appeared. The 2004 hardback edition contains numerous typographical errors. There is too much backstory, i.e., telling, not showing. Perhaps Asaro also did not keep track of how many times she explained prior events. She repeats certain words and phrases too frequently. The story seemed to have at least six protagonists: Soz, Althor, Shannon, Eldrinson, Roca and Kurj. It was not completely clear to me where in the story were the turning points, climax, epilogue, etc.

Kerry says

Like *Skyfall* before it, *Schism* is set prior to Catherine Asaro's other Skolian novels, this time telling the story of Roca and Eldrinson's children, with special focus on Soz's entrance to the Deshian Military Academy and her younger brother Shannon's adolescence.

Soz is seventeen as the book begins, determined to follow her older brother Althor off Lyshriol and become a Jagernaut. Her father is violently opposed to this, both because women are not warriors by Lyshrioli tradition and, more importantly, because he cannot bear the thought of sending his children to war against the Traders. When Soz is granted early admission to DMA and Althor agrees to take her there, he disowns both his children. From there, the book follows three main characters; Soz, Eldrinson and Shannon.

Soz enters the Academy as plain Sauscony Valdoria, but knowing that Kurj has just selected both her and Althor as potential heirs and is waiting to see how they both turn out. Outspoken, impetuous and brilliant, she is soon racing through her classes and building up a mountain of demerit points. She rapidly progresses through the Academy, but still needs to do some growing and maturing to best use her great talents.

Shannon, fourteen, quiet and very different even among Roca and Eldrinson's different children, after a confusing encounter with Althor while he is home, decides the troubles that have now beset the family are all his fault. He takes his father's lyrine, Moonglaze, and literally heads for the hills. Shannon is a throw back to a Blue Dale Archer ancestor, and he heads into the Blue Dale Mountains hoping to find the legendary Archers and a place where he fits in.

As soon as Shannon is discovered missing, Eldrinson sets off to find him and falls into his own kind of trouble. He has to fight to survive at the same time as he is trying to reconcile himself to the fact his children don't have the same vision of their own futures that he does.

Schism is the first book of two, that together are titled *Triad*, suggesting part of the ultimate story will be how Eldrinson becomes the Web Key and the Dyad becomes a Triad, since we know from the later books that this happens. That is perhaps the main weakness of this book - we know what is going to happen, at least in general terms. The book ends on what would be a major cliffhanger, except for the fact that we already know the character this concerns is going to make it because we've already met them in the other books. For me, this isn't a concern. I'm more concerned about how and why things happen rather than what happens. It can be quite fun knowing what is going to be the end result and still navigate the curve balls the author throws at readers along the way. I might not need to worry about the endangered character's survival, but I sure want to know how the current mess is going to be resolved.

I am already predisposed to love Asaro's books, especially the Skolian series. I love the setting, I love the characters and I love the way she is changing the world from the black and white we first through it was. So I loved this one too. Soz would have to be my favourite character, so seeing more of her and how she became the woman I first met in *Primary Inversion* is a delight. I am finding that I don't remember everything that has already happened in other books, and I'm sure I've missed a few subtle moments of foreshadowing, which is a pity as I love the way Asaro does these. Still, I'm sure I'll be reading *Schism* again in the future, so hopefully I'll pick up things of missed that time around.

I do love the way Asaro plays with the characters and their companions. There is a lovely little scene where

Soz's room mates want to know how it is that she appears to know Emperor Kurj. She tries to prevaricate, but they are persistent. Finally, she admits that her mother knew his father and when asked how, states simply, "They were married" and waits for the penny to drop.

I think my only real complaint is that, in this attitude to his children's dreams and the way he deals with a major disability Eldrinson tends to come across as a whiny boy at times. I'm guessing this is intentional and he's going to grow out of it - after all, despite having ten children he can't be much older than his late thirties. But I did want to slap him around a bit, especially for the way he treated Roca.

I don't really think that this would be the best book to start reading Asaro's Skolian series with, but it is a great addition to the tale. However, it is clearly unfinished. I have a feeling I read somewhere that Triad was supposed to be one book, but it got too big. This makes sense, as it ends like the end of a chapter, not the end of the book. I'm eagerly awaiting the second half of the story.

[Copied across from Library Thing; 25 September 2012]

Christiana says

Decent. Skimmed Eldrinson's story because I got enough of him in Skyfall. Enjoyed Soz's story.

Omly says

A minor pet peeve of mine are books where a large number of the main characters have violet eyes. I am not sure why, perhaps simply because a lot of poorly written stuff I have read has that feature. Despite this book fits in the category of "filled with characters with violet eyes", it is a good read.

Similar to Anne McCaffrey's Rowan series, there is a family of psions/people with different degrees of empathy, telepathy etc. They are part of a network of people who allow faster than light travel.

Deb F says

Listening to the audiobook, which is read by Suzanne Weintraub, is making me want to tear my hair out.

In all previous books, Rocca and Eldrin lived on Lie-shree-ol and are sy-ons. Here, it's Lee-shree-ol, and they are puh-sy-ons. And all Denric thinks of is lit-a-ture (seriously, she says it at least twice this way).

Starjack Tahota sits in the OX-i-lary (Auxilliary) seat.

Ch 10 opens with "Daisha memorised Soz". While in an Asaro story this may be true, I think the text probably says 'mesmerised'. How did the recording engineer or producer miss this stuff?

Cat says

When I first started the Skolian empire books, Soz was my favorite character. I'm not certain this book fully lives up to my memory of my impression of Soz, and now I'm interested in reading these books in reverse publishing order (skolian timeline order). But having said that, I definitely enjoyed getting the backstory for how Soz first got started on her career path.

Sandi says

I wasn't expecting much from this book. I read it for an online group I belong to. My first impression (based on the hideous 1985 style cover) was that it would be one of those cheesy space operas with too many one-dimensional characters. I will say that it does get cheesy sometimes and it does have quite a few space opera cliches. But, it is a good book overall. Asaro has really thought out the science of her science fiction but doesn't beat us over the head with it. Her characters are fully realized and I grew to care very much about what happened to them. I think it's rare to find a science fiction book that sacrifices neither science nor fiction. I also liked that it stood on its own, leaving room for a sequel without ending in a cliffhanger.

Iaan says

It's sad to see Asaro pushing out more books when she's obviously lost any interest in the world she's created. Each book is successively more dumbed down and repetitive. In this novel she explained three times about Rhon psions and the psiberweb. I don't know why... Once would have been more than enough considering it is the foundation of the Skolian universe and every other book in the series. It'd be like if Tolkien explained how the rings were created three times in the last book of Lord of the Rings.

Lisa says

I enjoyed this book, but only when I gave up trying to figure out what most of the proper names referred to. Most of the planet, empire, city, race, and family names were a vast puzzle to me until at least 200 pages into the book. That's a long time to be left in the dark when reading a book that deals at least partly with politics. I was told this was a good place to start reading in Catherine Asaro's Skolian Empire books, but I'm just going to stick with my method of reading series books in the order they were published, regardless of which book comes first chronologically.

I had some problems with how the main character. Namely, who it was. I still don't know. I'm guessing it was Soz, but for all the times the book said she'd gained demerits and was a whirlwind personality who spoke her mind, we didn't really see any of it. When she did exhibit personality, someone always called her on it. A personality like that should be more abrasive and intimidating. People shouldn't react with "Are you always this frank?"

Also, I skimmed the physics stuff. I respect that Asaro has a PhD in physics, but a discussion of quantum mechanics and whatever doesn't belong in a battle sequence.

This review makes it sound like I hated the book. Sigh. I AM planning to read the next book, though.

Jadetyger Sevea says

This book comes smack in the middle of a series. Even so, it was billed as a good entry point for newcomers. I ended up enjoying *Schism* by the end of the novel, but I admit it was slow going at first.

Schism suffers from two major faults. The first is a series of Tom Clancy-esque point of view switches. Thankfully, Asaro doesn't change POV multiple times per chapter(as Clancy does). However, I wasn't as engaged with some characters as I was with others, and I was often impatient to skip less interesting sections.

The second issue is that of worldbuilding. I admit, I grow impatient with worldbuilding. I don't need to know what dialect your character is speaking, unless it's germane to the plot (I'm probably the only person in existence who cannot get through Lord of the Rings, no matter how many times she tries!).

I feared Asaro's work was going to go down the Tolkien path. Thankfully, the infodumps seemed to taper off as the book went on.

Once the plot kicked into high gear about midway through the book, I actually found myself intrigued by both the premise and the world, so I will be reading *Schism's* sequel. For anyone interested in this novel, I would recommend hanging in there until the end. It's worth it.

Steve says

Schism jumps you into the middle of a long series of books by Catherine Asaro. Multi-talented Asaro brings to her writing hard science (Harvard PhD in Chemical Physics), serious music (she's a jazz vocalist and dancer), and inclination toward space opera and soft romance of a young adult type, at least in this series. Intrigued? *Schism* seems a good place to start.

Schism comes toward the end of the series yet takes place in more of a prequel zone. I don't suspect you will suffer if you decide to read the rest. Though this book starts a trilogy of its own, it seems far removed from the main events that follow long after. In general, we have a Star Wars-esque far future empire, fewer aliens yet more varieties of human, and post-human species. One strand of human notably have hands that fold down the middle instead of an opposable thumb. I found the descriptions hard to imagine, though it seemed equally useful to the characters with that adaptation.

Some jaunts into "world-building" human colonies work better than others. Asaro takes care with the details, if you like that sort of thing. I focused on the story. The story definitely has a military theme to it. I don't usually go for that, yet it seems a rising trend again, including among women science fiction writers, and it makes sense to see what its all about.

The most interesting science focuses on how humans get trained and adapted (in-plants and all) to merge with their fighter craft to do some fairly spectacular maneuvering. Speculative fiction has classically focused

on machines-we-hope-we-can-trust to take care of business (think HAL in 2001). Given the pace of computer technology, this has seemed like the like reach. Some other writers have explored the human mind/machine merge, and Asaro handles it as realistically as you would expect from a serious science person. I suspect we will see more thought go in this direction: Google's new glasses seem just the beginning, and as usual, science fiction will continue to show the way speculatively. If you work with computer software all day and wonder if tablet touch interface (or even the kind of stuff in *Minority Report*) really improves that much on keyboard and mouse, well, read some of this and realize things will likely unfold in more dramatic ways in a generation or two.

I admit that I found it hard to keep track of the vast royal family. I don't really follow British royalty or most such things and have struggled with Game of Thrones. You probably need to train harder than I do to stay on top of dynastic sagas. If you are more like me, start drawing that family tree from page 1. As mentioned, the book does have safe-for-teens romance in it. It works OK, though I suspect Asaro does more with it in other of her writing.

Overall, worth a read, and though I didn't feel compelled to immediately read on, I will probably come back to Asaro's universe and science at some point.

John Loyd says

In the Skolian universe six thousand years ago a mysterious group of aliens took a group of humans and settled them on the world of Raylicon. The Ruby dynasty begins and spreads over hundreds or thousands of worlds. But because this was propped up on the alien technology spaceflight was lost. Several thousand years later spaceflight was rediscovered. A group of scientists started the Rhon project in order to use the ancient technology. An effort to create a more stable Rhon instead created the Aristos. The Aristos created the Eubian concord, a.k.a. Traders, and the Rhon create the Skolian empire. Later on Earth achieves interstellar flight, creates the Allied worlds. In Skyfall Roca, a Rhon psion, gets stuck on a backwater planet finds Eldrinson who happens also to be Rhon. They have 10 children, Ruby heirs, and now 23 years later they are a bunch of teenagers and young adults. Meanwhile the Traders have been busy over the last decades plotting to capture the Ruby psions which will destroy the Skolian ability to use Kyle space for instantaneous communication. The one advantage the Skolians have over the larger Trader fleet.

Seventeen year old Soz wants to go to Diesha Military Academy and become a Jagernaut. Her father's Lyshrioli values make him dead set against allowing his daughter to join the military. As it turns out Soz did extraordinarily well on her preliminary exams and not only is she accepted immediately she also gets to waive the parental consent. Eldrinson gets angry and disowns his daughter. At the same time he forbids Althor, who is a senior cadet at DMA, to return without a wife. 13 year old Shannon thinking he is somehow to blame for Althor's exile runs away from home seeking the Blue Dale Archers. Eldrinson follows Shannon and is captured by Vitarex Raziquon. How did an Aristo get on to Lyshriol one of the most protected planets in the Imperialate? There is an attack on Onyx station and a routine training mission for Blackstar squadron, including newly graduated Althor, becomes a battle with casualties.

More attacks by the traders directed at the Dyad, Kurj and the Ruby Pharaoh Dehya, threaten the stability of the psiberweb. When Kurj entered the Dyad twenty years earlier it killed Jarac. So any attempt for Roca or Soz to enter they Dyad would surely end in the death of someone.

All of the Skolian books have been excellent. No exception with these two. Some of the books have followed

one character, here the story follows several -- Eldrinson, Soz, Shannon, Eldrin, Kurj, Roca, Althor, etc. -- keeping us interested in all.
