



Road Brothers

Mark Lawrence

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10 short stories from the lives of Jorg and his Road Brothers. Contains spoilers for the Broken Empire trilogy. 5 of the stories have previously been published in anthologies, Contains the short story 'Sleeping Beauty' that is also sold separately. A total of 43.000 words or just over half the length of Prince of Thorns.

Cover by Pen Astridge.

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A Rescue

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Road Brothers Details

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Author : Mark Lawrence

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From Reader Review Road Brothers for online ebook

Bob Milne says

If you're a fan of The Broken Empire saga, then you know that it was very much Jorg's tale. While every reader has a favorite from his band road brothers, we really only got to know them through their interactions with their Prince/King. Any background that we were able to glean came largely from conversations on the road.

With Road Brothers: Tales from the Broken Empire, Mark Lawrence allows many of those brothers to step off the road and tell their own tales. These are stories that strip away the rough layers of bravado and expose the truth about who they were, and how they came to be the men that Jorg allowed us to know.

Sleeping Beauty are Select Mode are the two Jorg-centric stories here, and either one could be a missing chapter from the original trilogy. Both make interesting use of Builder technology, with the former an entirely chilling tale, and the latter a more humorous one. Hakin and the Nuban get a chance to shine here.

As for the other stories, they allow Makin, Red Kent, Brother Sim, Rike, the mutant Gorgoth, and Father Gomst all to have their moment in the spotlight. As an added bonus for fans of The Red Queen's War, we even get to meet Snorri ver Snagason's father in one of the tales. Rather than feeling like missing chapters, these are clearly side stories that would have interrupted the flow of Jorg's tale. Having said that, they're all fascinating character studies and really do serve to shed some additional light on the series.

If you haven't already read The Broken Empire, then step back . . . put the book down . . . and do yourself a favor by picking up the first three books. Not only do spoilers abound here, but you really do need the background to appreciate the significance of what's been revealed here. If you are already a fan, then this is a perfect chance to reconnect with the characters, and a perfect way to pass the time while we wait for The Wheel of Osheim this summer.

Originally reviewed at Beauty in Ruins

Disclaimer: I received a complimentary copy of this title from the author in exchange for review consideration. This does not in any way affect the honesty or sincerity of my review.

T.O. Munro says

My goodreads target of 42 books to be read (and reviewed) in 2015 continues to mock me, supremely confident in its inevitable victory as - even now - I just crawl over the halfway line. However, I am determined to go down fighting and Mark Lawrence's latest publication - an anthology of short stories about Jorg and his "brothers" - is an easily digested morsel which nonetheless packs quite a punch.

Jorg bestrode the Broken Empire trilogy dominating his stage as completely and charmingly as Shakespeare's Richard III. With a central character of captivating brilliance, I found that the brothers sometimes struggled to illuminate and define themselves. It is like the search for planets orbiting distant stars (exo-planet) where the planet's characteristics must either be inferred from the effect they have on the central star, or can be observed directly only when the central star is obscured.

This collection of short stories offers plenty of opportunity for individual brothers to showcase the subtle nuances of their own pasts, free from Jorg's dazzling light. We see Makin (twice), Red Kent, Brother Sim, the Nuban and of course Rike operating alone, driven (mostly) by their own motivations. It is interesting to see, in Makin and Kent's stories particularly, how slim is the line between the bandits and those that they prey on. Jorg's rampaging band of brothers, after all, was not a single aberration in the midst of a perfect civilisation (it's not called the Broken Empire for nothing). They were one band amongst many in an era reminiscent of the 12th century turbulence of King Stephen and the Empress Matilda - a time when it was said that God and his Saints slept.

There are also two stories specifically about Jorg - "Select Mode" and "Sleeping Beauty" - which I have a particular fondness for having read both when they were previously published. As a result of one of Mark's many competitions, I got to do a sound recording of Select Mode while the author Richard Ford did a recording of Sleeping Beauty - both were saved on soundcloud.com

I liked the economy of Select Mode - an insight into a young man still near the start of his road career. Sleeping Beauty, a longer piece, has all of Mark's inventiveness, more of Jorg's cursed refusal to lose, and an entertaining take on some familiar fairy tales.

Right up until the end of this collection of short stories, I was unsure which would be my favourite. I had always liked Sir Makin and the Nuban so their tales - filling in back stories in a way which made sense of their behaviours in the main trilogy - had a head start in securing my affections.

But then I read the last story that of Father Gomst, and here perhaps I return to my initial observation for - intriguing as Father Gomst is - this is a story of the Ancraths - dazzlingly dark as they outshine all others. Gomst appears in their lives with all the hope but none of the power of a Mary Poppins figure put in charge of a murderously rebellious nursery of two young brothers. In this story we see Olidan - instinctively cruel. We see Jorg aged six and you may, like me, be reminded of the Jesuit saying, "Give me the child until he is seven and I will show you the man." We also see William aged four and see how even the very young can manipulate and control adults, snaring them in a mesh of their own threats and promises. It is this story too, where lines of Lawrence's prose most readily leapt out of the page at me.

"Clergy, no matter their station, do not bow to crowns, but Gomst felt the pressure on his shoulders even so."

"Gomst had told bigger lies for worse reasons. One could hardly rise in Roma's church these days without a crooked tongue."

"Lies are soft and accomodating. The truth is hard, full of uncomforatble angles. It rarely helps anyone."

In this venture Mark Lawrence joins the ranks of the self-published authors - or at least hybrid authors - ably assisted by Pen Astridge's wonderfully professional cover.

Within all the stories and their footnotes, there are massive spoilers for the Broken Empire trilogy, fateful forecasts and promises - enough to make those of us who have read to the end of Emperor of Thorns, smile at a circle completed, while others new to Jorg would find the trilogy denuded of some of its biggest twists.

But then, although these stories mostly precede the trilogy's bifurcated chronologies, they were not intended as an introduction to Jorg's tale, so much as an opportunity for those of us who loved it to revist some old acquaintances an ambition it fulfils splendidly

Daniel says

Odli?na kolekcija pri?a smeštenih u svet Slomljenog Kraljevstva. Jeste da ne dodaju previše informacija ali opet fino popunjavaju poneku rupicu i daju malo više detalja o nekim likovima. Ako ste ljubitelji ovog serijala rekao bih obavezno štivo.

Rescue: Pri?a koja nam malo pojašnjava jednog od likova iz Jorgove bande. Dovoljno kratko i po meni moglo je da bude bez problema u nekoj od glavnih knjiga.

Sleeping Beauty: Prepri?avanje poznate bajke na Lawrencov na?in.

Bad Seed: Sada znamo zašto Red Kennt ima ime koje ima :)

The Nature of the Beast: Po meni jedna od slabijih pri?ica pošto baš ništa ne doprinosi sve ukupnom pr?i i ne upoznaje nas ništa bliže sa likovima. Mada sama scena jeste interesantna.

Select Mode: Uvek je interesantno kada se na leti na tehnologiju koja je preživela sve te godine i koliko druga?ije ljudi reaguju na nju, odnosno koliko druga?ije interpretiraju njene poruke.

Mercy: E ova je bila odli?na. Ve?im delom samo razgovor ali tolko drži pažnju da ne mogu da se žalim.

A Good Name: Još jedna odli?na pri?a. Upoznamo drugi deo sveta i dobijamo po?etke od jednog od naj tajnovitijih ?lanova Jorgove družine. Me like. Plus je pri?a povezana ia sa trilogijom Crvene Kraljice.

Choices: Lepa pri?a o postojanju ili ne postojanju izbora smeštena u pe?ine ghoulova (Fallout fan pa su mi najja?a asocijacija za to :P)

The Secret: Za ovu mogu re?i da je dosta interesantno prikazana i uhvatite skroz ne spremnog.

Know Thyself: I za kraj fina pri?a o bra?i koja izgleda nikada nisu bila cute and innocent (Žara? sakriven u plišanjoj lutki :))

Lynn Williams says

Excellent 4.5 of 5 stars

<http://lynns-books.com/2015/12/29/roa...>

Road Brothers is a fantastic little book of treats which, if you love The Broken Empire, I feel you simply have to read. Coming in at approximately 120 pages it contains 10 separate stories that take us back in time and shares with us some of the histories and motivations behind the characters of Jorg and his brothers.

This anthology was something of a revelation to me. I've always protested that I don't really enjoy short stories and I still maintain that stance – although now with provisos. I do prefer something I can really explore and let my mind wander around and with short stories it always feels that just as I'm getting comfortable they up and finish. The difference with this particular anthology is that whilst it is 10 individual stories they're all from a world that I've already become fully immersed in and they're extra snippets of information about characters that I'm already familiar with and want to know more about. I read each story eagerly, desperate to know what I'd discover next and frankly I could, even now, happily read some more – I'm greedy like that.

Seriously, this is the perfect companion to the Broken Empire. It's a quick read, or maybe that's because I simply couldn't put it down and not only do we gain these little nuggets of information about the characters but we get to spend some more time in this world which frankly is a win win if you ask me.

The one thing I must point out however is that this book contains spoilers for the Broken Empire trilogy so please be aware of that before you pick a copy up.

For me the stories here were perfect little lightbulb moments. They contain pieces of information not previously included in the trilogy and whilst you could get along reading the series without their knowledge they're wonderful to discover after completion. They feel like an insight into what the author had in mind for each of his characters and the substance behind their personality that helps to keep them all distinct. Also some wonderful pieces that provide closure on some of the storylines – pieces of information that you didn't know you needed to know but now you do know, well, they feel invaluable!

I'm not going to elaborate on the stories as that would be to spoil them and I confess I find it difficult to choose a favourite because each one was my favourite when I was reading it. I can say though that I was totally gobsmacked reading Rike's story! Kent's – fascinating to learn how he received his name. Gomst – scary. Basically, we take a look at all the main characters from the series and in fact revisit Jorg twice in two completely different settings and all of them were fascinating to read. But, even more intriguing than all of that – we get a glimpse into the character of Jorg's younger brother which I thought was very revealing. And we have a surprise – I know it's a bit of a tease to say so and then not expand upon it at all – but it wouldn't be a surprise then would it!

I found this anthology thoroughly enjoyable, in fact I loved it. Mark Lawrence has his own style of writing and it's one that I enjoy reading very much. He is undoubtedly a master of words and also has a gift for the element of surprise that usually leaves me speechless!

If you love The Broken Empire I think you will love this book of short stories too. It feels a little like watching the extended version of Lord of the Rings or the Director's cut of one of your favourite films. Let's

just be honest here – when you love something this much you never feel like you’ve had enough and this definitely fills a little gap whilst we wait for *The Wheel of Osheim*. What more could you possibly ask for – other than more books of course (no pressure there then Mr Lawrence).

Definitely recommended to fans of the Broken Empire.

I received a copy for review for which my thanks. The above is my own opinion.

Tracey the Lizard Queen says

More brilliance from Mr Lawrence. How I have missed the Broken Empire and its memorable inhabitants!

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

By now, most fantasy fans have either read or heard all about Mark Lawrence’s seminal work *Prince of Thorns* and *The Broken Empire* trilogy it launched. Some love Jorg Ancrath and his world; others hate him and/or the place; but everyone has strong feelings about the story. Yet Jorg’s tale is not a solitary one. In fact, throughout his journeys, the young Ancrath prince is accompanied by many companions, the most important of which are his road brothers. These individuals filled with passions, tragedies, and vile acts all their own; their personal stories demanding some of the spotlight which Jorg so greedily dominated.

Well, in this collection, Mr. Lawrence gives fans exactly what they have been craving: a closer look at Jorg’s “road brothers.” Here the curtain is pulled back on Makin, Red Kent, Rike, The Nuban, Gorgoth, and even Father Gomst. Each individual getting to air, at least, some of their hidden secrets for everyone’s reading pleasure.

It all starts with “A Rescue,” where Makin takes center stage. The tragic loss of his family at the hands of marauding knights is touched upon, used to explain why the jovial, beloved Makin of the past no longer exists, replaced by a bitter, vengeful man whose presence makes everyone uncomfortable. And when he becomes a soldier to King Olidan and helps avert a fiery end to young Jorg, the future seems set, especially as he foresees his own role in helping the young prince grow to manhood.

“Sleeping Beauty” is a Jorg centered tale, which I have previously enjoyed and reviewed.

“Bad Seed” chronicles the poignant yet grievous tale of Alann Oak. This youth committing a horrible crime at a tender age; the act haunting him his whole life, even as he tries to forgive himself for it, deny his baser nature and live a peaceful life as a farmer, husband, and father. Something he seems to be successful in doing until fickle fate destroys it, turning him into Red Kent.

“The Nature of the Beast” takes a closer look at Sabitha the witch and her interactions with and observations of Rike, as he and his road brothers pillage her village. Naturally, a witches curse is involved.

“Select Mode” finds Jorg and the Nuban as prisoners of brigands. Their captors driving them toward “the

arc” where they will be judged worthy or unworthy to join this band of “Select.” Broken remnants of the Builders technology play a major role here, as an ancient message is mistaken for something much more divine.

“Mercy” sees Mr. Lawrence returning to Makin. Now, his quest for vengeance upon his family’s murderers takes center stage. A woman named Ellen is his co-conspirator, while the terrified Gorlan is the cowed youth, who attempts to negotiate his own survival. And during the three’s conversations, Makin’s desire for justice through vengeance becomes very clear.

In “A Good Name,” readers finally get a glimpse at the Nuban’s mysterious past. The how and why of his presence in the Broken Empire is suggested, even as a special guest star (the father of Snorri from *The Red Queen’s War*) plays a major role in the Nuban’s growth into a man. All of it offering a logical reason why this warrior would go on to become somewhat of a mentor to the young Jorg.

“Choices” centers on the choices of Gorgoth. This enigmatic monster of a man risking all to save his family from the dangerous, toxic depths of their mountain home. The whole story somewhat of a morality play, as Gorgoth wishes to be a good person in a harsh world — even if he might be selling his soul to the devil to accomplish what he believes is right.

With “The Secret,” Mr. Lawrence takes his storytelling to new heights. This tale within a tale mesmerizing in its pacing and progression; the narrator slowly weaving his story of betrayal and assassination to a bedazzled princess, who never sees the truth until it is too late.

“Know Thyself” ends this collection on a high note, as Father Gomst and his interaction with King Olidan’s two young sons is highlighted. Naturally, Jorg and his brother William steal the spotlight with their youthful viciousness, but Gomst’s feelings toward his old student is certainly put into a new light.

For me, short story collections work best if there is a narrative focus; a common thread which holds the separate pieces together, molding them into a coherent whole. And *Road Brothers* has exactly that quality. Each of these diverse tales highlighting the hidden past of these characters, exposing their personal travails, and grounding their actions in *The Broken Empire* into a realistic whole. All of which means that if you love Jorg and his story, then you will love this collection of tales, but if you hate the Ancrath prince and his road brothers, then these stories won’t change your mind about them at all.

Ant says

Despite being a fan of Mark Lawrence, I didn't buy this book straight away as it's a series of short stories - not my favourite format. I was wrong to not to believe in him. I strongly recommend reading the Broken Empire series first, but if you do, this is a fantastic addition.

I really liked the author's footnotes for each story, giving additional information on the background of each tale.

Highly recommended for those who fondly remember the likes of Rike and Red Kent and would like to know more about their lives.

J.M. says

A killer (hah) collection casting limelight on Prince Jorg's boon companions. The stories are action-packed and thought-provoking at the same time with many a familiar face.

Mark Lawrence writes some of the most well-rounded characters in genre fiction. Good can be bad, weak can be strong, down might, in fact, be up. With this author, expect nothing, expect everything.

Parallelism!

—The only thing I did wrong, seeing this is #3.5, was read this out of order. What's also neat is to see his Sim story, which also appeared in the Blackguards anthology I edited, in the pages of Road Bros.

Caidyn (SEMI-HIATUS; BW Reviews; he/him/his) says

So, it's basically been two years since I read The Broken Empire series. I read it in my freshman year of college, and now I'm a junior in a few months. I've forgotten most of the side characters and plot lines, but retained the main ones. (Not the fault of Mark Lawrence, but it's just that I've become an adult and I can't ruminate on plot lines of books past forever. I've got work and school to focus on.) This was more of an experience of really finding out just how badly I need to re-read the series.

All said and done, my total ratings were a solid **4.65**. I rounded it up to 5, just because all the stories were brilliant.

A Rescue: 4/5 - My first response to this was: "Makin!" Because, I did like him. There were so few characters in The Broken Empire that had some morality to them, no matter how slim, and he was one of them.

You are..." Lundist traced the passage with his finger. "A difficult man, given to black moods, prone to violence."

Makin shrugged.

This story is pre-everything, really. All of it takes place before Prince of Thorns begins, and it is a more in-depth telling of what happened. If you've read the book, you know what Jorg does as a nine year old. Plus, you get a good background with Makin. Since it's been almost two years since I read the series, I don't remember much about specific details, such as if Makin's backstory is even given or talked about much. So, I really enjoyed that aspect of it. I love authors showing how deep their planning and plotting goes for characters that are minor compared to the rest in the series.

Although I enjoyed this one, it felt that it was missing something. Maybe a bit more length would have been nice to it, but that's my only complaint.

Sleeping Beauty: 4/5 - Who would have thought I'd miss Jorg? He's a conniving, evil little shit that does terrible things. Yet, he's a great character that you oddly root for, even if you don't agree with what he's doing at all.

Even though this one was published before, I never read it. Maybe because after reading *The Broken Empire*, I didn't want to read the rest and see it all really end for me. Again, I never thought I would like Jorg, but here I am, missing him and taking advice from him. (He does give some good advice.)

Dwell too long and we become the prisoner of our dreams, or someone else's. Move too fast, live without pause, and you'll miss it all, your whole life a blur of doing.

Like the one before, my only thing was that it was missing something. I enjoyed how it was framed after *Sleeping Beauty*. Don't like the fairytale, but I loved imaging Jorg as Aurora. Imagining him in that pink dress (or blue) singing and dancing about love really made my day. Still, it missed something. I love how it expanded on the world that Mark created. (After reading five books by you, I feel I can address you by your first name, Mark.) Still, missed something. Solid story, but I just wanted something more that wasn't there.

Bad Seed: 4.5/5 - Red Kent. I do remember enjoying you, just because you were -- as Mark said in his footnote -- so plain and normal. A killer, yes, and a great one, but normal. Any other sort of man. One who actually has some pretty good insights:

"Children know. It's grown men who see what they want to see."

or

"There's evil in most men -- just waiting for its chance."

This had what the others missed for me. Besides great background to Red Kent, it had a good stream of consciousness and a struggle that he had to go through. A real one, too. Something very human that everyone has to face at some point in their lives. Plus, I loved how it sort of followed the hero's story. A feeling of being out of depth in his real world. Trying to fit in, then failing. Realizing his power and what he can do. Then, at the very end, deciding whether to accept this new world or reject it.

The Nature of the Beast: 5/5 -

"You can never know what moves a beast to action. Even the simplest of them will surprise you."

Ugh. Rike, sort of Chella, witches. And, the way Mark blended the title into the rest of the story. Be still my heart! This story didn't have the backstory the others did, mainly because Rike is Rike. He never had much depth to him, not that I remember. And, this story sort of reflects that. He has depth, just a different sort than I would think of. You know, depth in knowing when to kill and how to loot. Definitely a different depth than I would think of.

Select Mode: 5/5 - Jorg, you are nine years old. You are nine years old and this is not the first time you've slaughtered. Jorg. Jorg. My sweet honey child. I'm a sucker for evil baby Jorg. He's so evil and cute and still full of insights about the world. I've always read him as a twenty year old, even though in the first he was still a kid. I absolutely loved the way this story blended the world in *The Broken Empire* series and ours together. Just a fun, playful thing that worked really well with highlighting how evil Jorg is. Even as a baby.

Mercy: 5/5 - Makin again! And, this one only built on the first in this anthology, "A Rescue". I thought this one was a lot better than the first, likely because I had already read the first so it just built on what I'd read. I like things that do that. They're always more satisfying that way, at least in my case.

This short story is all about revenge. Makin exacting his revenge on the people who killed his wife and daughter. And, I can completely get behind it. While revenge isn't my favorite sort of story, it tends to be interesting and Mark really knows how to tell a good revenge story. It's throughout his Broken Empire series and his new series, Red Queen's War. And, I absolutely love the way he does it. So masterful, even with the minor characters.

A Good Name: 5/5 - This one broke all the walls. Every single one of them. We have Red Queen's War meeting Broken Empire. AND it's all pre-everything. Pre-Jorg. Pre-Jalan and Snorri. It was beautiful and if I could give it more stars, I absolutely would. The Nubian features in here again, then there was Snorri's father. So, not technically the two meeting, but in a way they did. You should have seen my face at the reveal.

Close enough.

Choices: 4/5 - I will be honest. I don't remember Jane or Gorgoth. At all. Like, don't remember them at all. Never mind. Did a quick search to see if anything jogged my memory, and it totally did. I have a slight remembrance of them from Prince of Thorns. So, with that in mind, I would give the story more like a 3.5. Even if I didn't remember them, it was an interesting story and I was engaged the whole time. I bumped it up to 4 because of the footnote. Mark is so right. Really, how real are our choices?

The Secret: 5/5 - You know how proud you feel when you take a step back and think about what you're reading? Then, you make a guess about what's coming up? And, then, you turn out right? Yeah, that's how this story was for me. I had a feeling about the whole set up, and it sort of clicked. Which made it all the better since I always feel happy when I guess something right. This story was a bit of fun. Very simple, yet very good. It was just fun. And that, for me, is the mark of a good short story. Either has to be extremely fun or very deep.

Know Thyself: 5/5 - If I had to choose one, *this* was my favorite of the whole anthology. For sure, this was my favorite. "The Nature of the Beast" and "Mercy" were close ties, but this one takes the cake.

Father Gomst tells the story. I sort of forgot who he was. (view spoiler) From reading this, I realized I wanted a whole book told from his perspective of young Jorg and William. Who are both incredibly terrifying for kids of six and four, respectively. Yet another reason why children terrify me.

Edit December 16, 2015:

CHRISTMAS CAME EARLY

Joel says

A brilliant collection of short stories, which give background to some of the characters in the Broken Empire series. The stories are the kind I really love - short, to the point, but full of nuance and story elements. I miss this series and love getting to delve back into it a little bit.

Mark Lawrence says

So this is the old, shorter Road Brothers with ten stories. You can no longer buy this edition.

The new, 50% longer Road Brothers with fourteen stories can be found here:

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...>

& can be bought in kindle on Amazon.com and in kindle & hardcover on Amazon.co.uk or bookdepository.com AND on Amazon.com there is also a kindle catch up that contains just the additional 4 stories!

Vote on which of the ten stories you liked best here:

<http://www.easypolls.net/poll.html?p=...>

DeAnna Knippling says

A collection of short stories from the Broken Empire.

I stretched this out as long as possible, but alas, I have finally come to the end. I enjoyed it, although none of the stories knocked my socks off the way the novels do, which I suspect comes from the length more than anything else.

Recommended if you're a fan of the world; otherwise, there's not enough information to put things in context.

Mitriel says

***update: a little info here on the upcoming print edition: <https://thatthornguy.com/2017/06/02/o...> ***

I read some of these tales as far back as the summer of 2014 and after all this time they still resonate with me. To me Mark Lawrence is and has always been an artist unmatched in talent and skill. His stories beat with a heart that makes them both powerful and unique.

I would also like to take this opportunity to applaud Pen Astridge for her once-again brilliant cover, it is fantastic!

Alina says

A Rescue - a story about Makin in different moments of his life at the Tall Castle - **3★**

Sleeping Beauty - a mix between the famous Perrault/Grimm's fairytale and SFF - **3.5★**

Bad Seed - a story about Red Kent - **4★**

The Nature of the Beast - a story about Rike and Chella's sister, wonderful in its implications - **4.5★**

Select Mode - a story of Jorg and the Nuban - **3★**

Mercy - a second story about Makin, this one about a most common theme in this series: revenge - **4★**

A Good Name - the most interesting and touching story in this collection (in my subjective opinion, of course), about the Nuban's adolescence - **5★**

"No man's an island. Not even the ones that think they are. Especially not them."

Choices - a story of Gorgoth and Jane and what else but... choices - **4.5★**

The Secret - a story about Sim - **4★**

Know Thyself - the second best in my opinion, about Father Gomst and a very young Jorg and an even younger William, with some very interesting psychological elements - **5★**

lee d woolsey says

illuminating

Really liked the insight into the supporting characters, and the very interesting character of the landscape. His style is an attractive blend of economy and lyricism. More more more!
