

Notes for Podcast: *Borne* Part 3a, Pages 197-264

At this point in the novel, the characters, the setting, and the political situation have all been set up. As readers, we have many questions. The Magician's attempt to destroy Mord has failed. Perhaps she has been killed. If she has, what will happen to Wick, who needs medicine? If she has not, what will she do? Borne has been kicked out of the Balcony Cliffs. What will happen to him? And of course, what will happen to Rachel?

**Mord**

The opening of part 3 has a big surprise. It begins, "A few days after we cast Borne out, Mord lost the power to fly." Notice how laconic and unemotional that statement is. It is a matter of fact statement, yet an earthbound Mord is a big change in circumstances. It was pretty amazing that Mord could fly, but now we are surprised when he can't. And Mord is surprised too. He keeps trying to fly, but falling to the ground. It is almost comical, but also almost sad.

Mord ruled the city. He was like a god, with a cult of followers, both human and bear. Now he has fallen. But in some ways, a flightless Mord is more destructive than ever. He is still huge and powerful. Instead of cruising over the cityscape, he is angrily crunching through it.

Why does the author take away Mord's ability to fly?

**Rachel**

Rachel has become a ghost, or so she says. She buries the dead astronauts that someone, perhaps the Magician, has left as a warning to her and Wick. She is reading Borne's journals. She misses Borne. She goes on nocturnal patrols to find him, clearly a dangerous thing to do. There are rumors of people disappearing, and she knows it is Borne's doing. Eventually, she finds him, mimicking a human near a band of scavengers, who try to sell her a little boy to sell to the Magician, because he is not good at scavenging and is an extra mouth to feed.

Why does Rachel call herself a "ghost"?

Are the members of this little band of scavengers bad people?

Rachel talks to Borne. He wants to come home.

Read 220-21

Should Rachel let Borne come home?

**The Balcony Cliffs**

The Balcony Cliffs are Rachel and Wick's refuge, their home, their fortress, the only place they can relax and feel somewhat safe. They lose this refuge when it is suddenly overrun by Mord proxy's. They escape through a passage made by Borne. Wick knows of a safe house. But on the way, they are almost trampled by Mord. Wick rescues Rachel. Rachel is

unconscious for a while, and the author gives us more flashbacks about Borne and about Rachel's previous life with her parents. The story has built up to a pinnacle of fear and excitement, but descends again into calm flashbacks. Are we disappointed? Are we bored? Do we hurry through this part to find out what is happening in the now? Perhaps we do. But a story can't be continuously at the peak of excitement. The characters, and the reader, need a rest.

## **Wick**

When Rachel wakes up, Wick shows her a "bean" that hatches into a damselfly. He says it is not biotech, but completely natural. What does the damselfly signify to Rachel, to Wick, and to us?

The cistern they have found is a safehouse that belongs to the Magician. It has a pack of supplies and a well protected from contamination by biotech slugs. The characters must be tempted to stay for a while and rest. After losing the Balcony Cliffs, they have a new shelter. We can relax a bit. But we know that they can't stay long. They have water forever, but they will run out of food. And someone may find them.

Wick needs medicine from the Company building or he will die. He doesn't want Rachel to go with him. He gives her a letter, but tells her not to read it unless he doesn't come back from the company.

As readers, we are very curious about this letter, but Rachel puts off reading it. Does the author do this purposefully to keep us in suspense? Letters are a pretty good exposition trick.

But instead of reading the letter, Wick starts talking and we get a lot more exposition about Wick's relationship to the Company and to Mord. Does the author do this knowing that we are curious about the letter, but to momentarily distract us from that curiosity by answering other questions?

Read 249-50

## **Borne**

The night before they leave, Rachel thinks she sees the Magician running from some Mord proxys. Then on the plain, they meet Borne.

Read 257-62

Borne asks a lot of existential questions. He seems to know both more and less than Rachel about these matters. Borne has absorbed a lot of lives. Also, he has more senses than Rachel, though we don't know all of them. He wants to know where we go when we die.

And then Borne becomes a huge copy of Mord and goes off to do battle, Mord versus Mord.

Mord keeps asking "Am I a person?" What is a "person"? Is Borne one?

