



ROBERT SILVERBERG'S COLONIES

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IP: Robert Silverberg's COLONIES

Authors: Laura Zucheri, Robert Silverberg, Philippe Thirault

Related : The Fugitives of Borthan

Book Status : Published in English

Logline : Ex-lieutenant Eddie Gundersen returns to Belzagor, where he left behind his youthful illusions, the love of his life, and a shameful history as a brutal colonialist.

Genre : Fantasy, Redemption, Sci-Fi, Drama, Adventure, Alien, Animals/Nature, Exploration

AV Types : Live Action Series, Feature Film

AV Demographics : PG-13, R, TV-14, TV-MA

Part of larger Universe : Robert Silverberg

Characters : • Eddie Gundersen/Gundy: an idealistic lieutenant shipped off to Holman's world at the age of 21 to work for "Crazy Kurtz." Gundersen turns in Kurtz for trafficking naggiar venom which is known for its regenerative properties. He leaves the planet after an incident at the Monroe Dam which he oversaw. (We later learn that he had stopped a group of nildoror, intelligent elephant type creatures from going to their rebirth ceremony and ended up killing one of them when he refused to help fortify the dam that was about to overflow). 18 years later, Gundersen returns to the planet which is now called Belzagor after it was decolonized. His patrons, Drs. Dorothy and Sam Wingate want to witness the rebirth ceremony which is strictly forbidden for humans to observe. Gundersen will act as their guide to the mist country where the rebirth ceremony takes place. Gundersen is reunited with his former girlfriend, Seena who he abandoned because of his pride after the Monroe Dam incident. Gundersen has a fling with Dorothy which stirs up drama amongst the group. Gundersen must come to terms with his harmful behavior during the colonization era and realizes he must take part in the rebirth ceremony as Belzagor is the only place in the universe for him and if he doesn't go through with the ceremony, he will

forever be a foreigner. Gundersen makes amends with the nildoror and Seena and decides to stay on the planet.

- In the sequel, *THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR*, Gundersen aka “Gurugundy” is now visited by many pilgrims to aid them on their spiritual journeys. Kurtz returns threatening to have all humans removed from the planet by law. Gundersen makes a deal with Vol’himyor, leader of the nildoror to transport a baby to the Forbidden Region in the Icelands in exchange for Vol’himyor not signing the agreement to remove humans. Through his journey, Gundersen discovers the Belzadoror, the final metamorphosis of the nildoror and sulidoror; he also learns that climate change may threaten humans’ ability to stay on the planet as it will turn to ice and only be inhabitable by the belzadoror. Most importantly he comes to learn his children, Mila and Jessie are the most important thing in the universe.
- Seena Royce: Gundersen’s girlfriend on Holman’s world. After Gundersen is humiliated he asks Seena to come with him back to earth. She says she can’t just leave her whole life behind (she runs a farm and raises oriakas which are cow like creatures). Years after Gundersen leaves she ends up marrying Kurtz. She is angry at Gundersen when he returns but is still in love with him.
- In *THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR*, Seena and Gundersen are married and have identical twins, Mila and Jessie. Seena worries that the girls aren’t independent enough and that Gundersen acts more like a child than a parent.
- Dorothy Wingate: doctor of ethology who has come to Belzagor with her husband, Sam. She feels Sam is only interested in his research and doesn’t see her. She wants to experience things on the planet, not just observe them. She has a fling with Gundersen to try to get Sam’s attention. As they begin to mend their relationship, Sam is injured and Dorothy decides to take part in the rebirth ceremony in his place. The couple stays on Belzagor to continue their research. Dorothy is very much looking forward to her next rebirth ceremony.
- In *THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR*, Dorothy and Sam have broken up. It is revealed that Dorothy is actually Kurtz! Kurtz entered her body during the rebirth ceremony. He now wishes to obtain naggiar larvae to be able to bring it back to earth and harvest naggiar venom there. Gundersen ends up saving her not knowing she has become a host for the naggiar larvae herself, which will remain her secret until she’s back on earth.
- Jeff Kurtz: infamous for churning through lieutenants that are sent to his post, he drinks naggiar venom and gives some to the nildoror as well which is all illegal. Gundersen turns him in for trafficking naggiar venom. After he gets out of jail, he marries Seena and hides contraband venom on her farm. The venom eventually begins to rot his system and he believes the only way to save himself is to go through the rebirth ceremony. However, the rebirth ceremony ends up killing him.
- In *THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR* it is revealed that Kurtz survived! He entered Dorothy’s body during the rebirth ceremony. He is now driven by

greed and ambition to find naggiar larvae to bring back to earth in order harvest the venom there.

- Sam Wingate: doctor married to Dorothy. He is more focused on data and research than experiencing the things around him. Dorothy feels that he has been distant and has a fling with Gundersen to try to get his attention. Sam decides he will take part in the rebirth ceremony for research, finally joining in, when he is injured and has to be treated with naggiar venom to survive. Dorothy decides to participate in the rebirth ceremony in his place.
- In THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR, Sam has broken up with Dorothy as Kurtz took over her body in the rebirth ceremony. He is now a withering venom addict who wants to join Gundersen's expedition - he believes that Gundy may have found a new species. Gundersen refuses but Dorothy says she'll help (as she wants the naggiar larvae) and gives him a high-tech exoskeleton to allow him to traverse the icy terrain. Sam is still driven by his research to the very end. He ends up saving Gundersen from a purification ritual with the belzadir and dies in the process.
- Srin'gahar: Nildor. Gundersen's traveling companion. Gundersen's views on nildor begin to change on their journey to the mist country in large part due to his conversations with Srin'gahar. Srin'gahar goes through the rebirth ceremony and becomes a sulidor, Ti-munlee of the second birth.
- In THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR, Ti-munlee accompanies Gundersen on his journey to the Forbidden Region. He tries to make Gundersen and the others follow the rules, but when they forge ahead against his advice, he ends up paying the price during the purification ritual when one of the belzadir kills him.
- Vol'himyor: Nildor of authority who initially does not want to grant Gundersen passage to the mist country. After negotiations take place, he says he will allow it if Gundersen will retrieve Kurtz and bring him back as he entered the mist country without permission.
- In THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR, the Great Supreme Vol'himyor sends Gundersen on another mission to deliver a baby to the Forbidden Region in the Icelands. He communicates with Gundersen through the g'rakh, the planet's life force, which is often a terrifying experience for Gundersen. Rumor has it he may attend his final rebirth ceremony and become a belzadir. He is very passive when Gundersen delivers his vision of the mountain of rebirth, a volcano erupting killing nearly everything, triggering cataclysms on the planet which lead to never ending snowfalls.
- Alex Van Beneker: (only in COLONIES: RETURN TO BELZAGOR), weasly conniving man who used to report to Gundersen at the Monroe Dam. He is a naggiar venom addict and blackmails Gundersen into letting him join his expedition as he overhears the true nature of their journey – to see the rebirth ceremony which is forbidden for humans. Dorothy ends up killing Alex when he refuses to hand over his stash of venom which she needs to save Sam's life.
- Mila & Jessie: (only in THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR), Gundersen and Seena's identical eight-year-old twins. Mila wants to do everything like Jessie and never wants to be separated from her sister. Seena worries that

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they aren't independent enough. Each has a second name in nildororu. Mila is Rajah'hymiior, which means "she who walks in the forest," and Jessie is Dja'didjee, which means "she who swims under the stars." Their eyes turn blue and they are able to communicate and see through the g'rakh which their parents haven't realized yet.

- Gabriela Schweiz: (only in THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR), she has made the pilgrimage to Belzagor to meet with "Gurugundy." Gundersen asks what she is running from. She must face her fears or accept living with them. He tells her she will one day find her own planet. At the end of the story, she tells Gundersen she's found her planet... Borthan. She is a main character in THE FUGITIVES OF BORTHAN.

Book Plot/Twist : Based on Robert Silverberg's bestselling Sci-Fi novel "Downward to the Earth". Ex-lieutenant Eddie Gundersen returns to Belzagor, where he left behind his youthful illusions, the love of his life, and a shameful history as a brutal colonialist. Today, the planet has been returned to its two native, intelligent species: the Nildorors and the Sulidorors. Acting as a guide for a scientific expedition deep within native territory, Gundersen confronts his inner demons and settles old scores with a planet that hasn't yet revealed all its secrets to him.

A former lieutenant, Eddie Gundersen returns to the now decolonized planet of Belzagor to take Doctors Sam and Dorothy Wingate on an expedition to see a rebirth ceremony which humans are not allowed to see. Gundersen must confront his past and see how his behavior during the colonization era was harmful to the native nildoror (intelligent elephant type creatures). Gundersen is surprised to see the nildoror and sulidoror (ape type creatures) working side by side as they were always separate during the colonization era. Alex Van Beneker who used to report to Gundersen blackmails his way onto their expedition as he overheard they are going to see the rebirth ceremony. Gundersen convinces the nildor, Vol'himyor to allow them passage to the mist country where the rebirth ceremony takes place but it's on the condition that he bring back Jeff Kurtz who has entered the mist country without permission. Gundersen had turned Kurtz in for naggiar venom (known for its regenerative properties) trafficking which sent him to jail many years ago. Gundersen's ex, Seena also joins the expedition. To complicate things further she is married to Kurtz now. Dorothy feels ignored by her husband and has a fling with Gundersen which stirs up more drama among the group. Along the way Gundersen learns more about the g'rakh, a force that emanates from the planet, from his traveling companion, a nildor named Srin'gahar. One of the nildor on the journey is eaten by carnivorous moss which really upsets Gundersen. He tells Seena what really happened at the Monroe Dam which caused him to leave Belzagor in shame – he kept a group of nildoror from going to their rebirth ceremony in an attempt to reinforce the dam before it broke. When one didn't listen, he killed him. He knows he has to face his past. The humans sneak in to see the rebirth ceremony which involves a very violent massacre, a purging ritual. Gundersen realizes that Belzagor is the only place for him and he needs to go through the rebirth ritual to no longer be an outsider. Kurtz, Dorothy and Gundersen participate in the rebirth ceremony. The big secret is revealed when Srin'gahar finds Gundersen after the ceremony. Srin'gahar is now a sulidor, Ti-munlee – the rebirth ceremony

involves them changing from one form to the other - the nildoror and sulidoror are one species.

THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR – During the rebirth ceremony, Kurtz entered Dorothy's body. Dorothy aka Kurtz has come to Belzagor with a complaint and petition that if approved will force all humans to leave the planet. Gundersen pleads with Vol'himyor to not sign the agreement. Vol'himyor says he won't if Gundersen will deliver a baby to the Forbidden Region of the Icelands. Seena is upset that Gundersen is leaving her and their children behind for another mission. Gundersen is joined by the two nildoror who had the baby and Ti-munlee. Sam wants to join as well as he believes Gundersen has found a new species, but his health is declining due to his venom addiction and Gundersen refuses him. Dorothy says he'll go with Sam in exchange for finding naggiar larvae which she can bring back to earth to harvest naggiar venom. They discover the Belzadir, the final metamorphosis of the nildoror and sulidoror. However, a belzadir being born naturally is the signal of a prophecy to come. Gundersen has a vision in the g'rakh that the mountain of rebirth, a volcano will explode causing massive climate shifts that will only allow the belzadir to survive on the planet. Gundersen realizes through his journey that his children are the most important thing in the universe.

- AV Key Attributes :**
- Based on influential and prolific sci fi author, Robert Silverberg's **DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH** which is both commercially and critically successful
 - Robert Silverberg is a Grand Master of Science Fiction and has won four Hugo Awards and six Nebulas
 - Multicultural themes of sin and atonement; the challenge of confronting oneself, flaws and all and being reborn through that
 - Commentary on colonization, imperialism, and oppression which can be tied in with current day issues
 - An extraordinary journey to an unknown world that also invites us to explore the depths of the human soul
 - The nildoror and sulidoror, once seen as two separate and inferior species being discovered to be one and the same species could be used to explore finding what unites us as living beings and finding compassion for others
 - Visual world building full of fantastical creatures in the nildoror, sulidoror, naggiar, oriakas, maldaror, calamines, ursuriaka; other visual specifics of the world include the path of colorful crystals up to the mountain of rebirth and vegetation that can eat you alive
 - Sci-fi homage to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*
 - Addresses climate change in **THE CHILDREN OF BELZAGOR**
 - Critically acclaimed writer Philippe Thirault (*Miss: Better Living Through Crime*, *Balkans Arena*, *Mandalay*)
 - Award winning artist Laura Zuccheri (*The Swords of Glass*)

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