



## Casting Shadows (Babylon 5: The Passing of the Techno-Mages, Book 1)

By Jeanne Cavelos

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**Casting Shadows (Babylon 5: The Passing of the Techno-Mages, Book 1)** By Jeanne Cavelos

The spectacular space epic continues, as the techno-mages face the growing threat of the Shadows . . .

As Elric and his student Galen watch with taut anticipation, dragons, angels, and shooting stars rain from the sky, heralding the arrival of the techno-mages on the planet Soom. It's the first time Elric—a member of the ruling Circle—has hosted such a gathering, and if all goes well, Galen and the other apprentices will emerge triumphant from the grueling initiation rites, ready to embrace their roles as full mages among the most powerful beings in the known universe.

But rumors fly of approaching danger and Galen and his young lover, Isabelle, are chosen to investigate the dark tidings. An ancient race has awakened after a thousand years, thirsty for war, slaughter, and annihilation. Will the techno-mages be the deciding factor in the war ahead? Or the first casualties?

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### Editorial Review

#### From the Inside Flap

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#### About the Author

Jeanne Cavelos began her professional life as an astrophysicist, working in the Astronaut Training Division at NASA's Johnson Space Center. Her love of science fiction sent her into a career in publishing. She became a senior editor at Dell Publishing, where she ran the science fiction/fantasy program and created the Abyss horror line, for which she won the World Fantasy Award. A few years ago, Jeanne left New York to pursue her own writing career. She is the author of *The Science of Star Wars*, *The Science of The X-Files*, and the Babylon 5 novel *The Shadow Within*. Jeanne is also the director of *Odyssey*, an annual summer workshop for writers of fantasy, science fiction, and horror. You can visit her Web site at [www.sss.net/people/jcavelos](http://www.sss.net/people/jcavelos) or contact her at [jcavelos@sff.net](mailto:jcavelos@sff.net).

J. Michael Straczynski is one of the most prolific and highly regarded writers currently working in the television industry. In 1995, he was selected by *Newsweek* magazine as one of their Fifty for the Future, described as innovators who will shape our lives as we move into the twenty-first century. His work spans every conceivable genre from historical dramas and adaptations of famous works of literature (*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*) to mystery series (*Murder, She Wrote*), cop shows (*Jake and the Fatman*), anthology series (*The Twilight Zone*), and science fiction (Babylon 5). He writes ten hours a day, seven days a week, except for his birthday, New Year's, and Christmas.

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Soon the war would come.

With a cry of joy Anna swooped toward the barren moon,  
her sisters behind her. As her sleek body cut through the invigorating  
vacuum of space, she surveyed the training site  
eagerly, hungry for challenge. The Eye had specified the coordinates  
to be attacked. This exercise was to be at close  
range, surgical, precise.

Anna loved training, exploring her abilities, honing her

skills. She had learned the dizzying delight of movement, the exhilarating leap to hyperspace, the grace of flexion, the joy of the war cry. She had learned to deliver from their confinement great balls of destruction; to calculate the most efficient patterns of attack; to engage and never break off, not until the enemy was utterly destroyed.

This would be the first time she uttered her war cry. As she wheeled toward the target, Anna held her body in perfect control. She felt tireless, invulnerable. The machine was so beautiful, so elegant. Perfect grace, perfect control, form and function integrated into the circuitry of the unbroken loop, the closed universe. All systems of the machine passed through her; she was its heart; she was its brain; she was the machine. She kept the neurons firing in harmony. She synchronized the cleansing and circulation in sublime synergy.

She beat out a flawless march with the complex, multileveled systems. The skin of the machine was her skin; its bones and blood, her bones and blood. She and the machine were one: a great engine of chaos and destruction.

The rocky brown surface of the moon grew closer, taking on definition, detail. She located the seven targets, boulders within a wide, shallow crater. She and her six sisters were each to destroy one. She narrowed her focus to her assigned target, coordinated her speed with her course. Excitement gathered in her throat. She plunged into the crater and shrieked out her war cry. Her body rushed with an ecstasy of fire. Energy blasted from her mouth in a brilliant red torrent. The boulder was vaporized.

Around her, her sisters fell upon the targets, their mouths screaming destruction.

Chaos through warfare, the Eye said. Evolution through bloodshed. Perfection through victory.

One of the targets was not completely destroyed. A fragment remained. Anna pounced on it, eager to shriek again. She targeted it, screamed out chaos. The exhilaration shot through her. The fragment was obliterated, a hole scorched into the surface below.

Excited by the activity, her sisters fell upon the vanquished target, shrieking out a cacophony of chaos. Particles of rock flew up as they blasted a great hole into the moon, firing again and again. Anna drew energy up into her mouth, screamed it out in blazing red.

The greatest excitement is the thrill of battle, the Eye said.  
The greatest joy is the ecstasy of victory.

Anna's greatest desire was to feel it. And she knew she would soon.

For soon the war would come.

The ship sang of the beauty of order, of perfect symmetry and ultimate peace. It glided through the calm blackness of space, absorbing it. Energy circulated through its petals in a regular rhythm. The serenity of its silent passage, the unity of its functioning, the satisfaction of service wove through its melody.

Ahead, a blue-and-white orb glowed in the blackness, the goal of the journey. The ship slipped through the stillness toward it, following Kosh's direction eagerly. Obedience was its greatest joy.

Within the song, Kosh slowed the ship's speed, directing it to stop a safe distance from the planet, which was known to its inhabitants as Soom. Although most of the planet's inhabitants had little technology, two lived among them and served as guardians, two fabulists, who would detect his presence if he went too close.

Soon more would come as the fabulists gathered for their assemblage. Long had Kosh watched them, for three hundred and thirty and three such assemblages. He had watched as different races had become dominant within the group, the most recent being Humans. He had watched as the fabulists gradually transformed from anarchy to order. They had achieved some admirable goals, had created fleeting moments of great beauty.

But now the universe was gathering itself for a great conflagration. The forces of chaos had returned to their ancient home and had begun to build their resources for war. The Vorlons, Kosh among them, likewise prepared. The fabulists did not know the danger of their position. They carried great power. They could be the pivot on which the great war turned.

Many among the Vorlons thought the time for action was now. They did not trust the fabulists. Yet Kosh felt they must watch just a while longer. The fabulists faced a difficult decision, and they should be allowed to make it. If they chose wrongly, then they would die. But let them first choose. Great power carried both great danger and great possibility.

Kosh altered the ship's song, directing the ship to extrude several buoys, which would take up positions around the planet and observe it. Then he would return to Babylon 5. And he would watch this one, last assemblage.

## Users Review

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