

SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE *Blade Dancer*
AUTHOR S. L. Viehl
PUBLISHER Roc
COPYRIGHT 2003
PRINTING 2004

Viehl is an author I know little about, she hasn't been at any conventions I've gone to and I don't see much about her in the blogs but she has written 5 or 6 sci-fi novels. This is in the middle of the pack I believe and it is a solid effort.

The story is about a woman whose father is human and mother is alien. Mixed breeds are not well liked in the universe and especially on Earth (why does that not surprise me). Jory is fortunate that she passes for human except for her eyes and a few other easy to hide features so she becomes a professional shockball player. Think of football on steroids and you get the game. Her alien characteristics make her faster and stronger which has helped her become one of the biggest players in the game. This all ends when she is caught burying to bury her alien mother on the sly and she gets exiled.

The rest of the story deals with her finding her mother's clan on her home planet, meeting a blade dancer (highly trained assassin) and then gathering the rest of her half breed siblings and ending up at the blade dancer training planet. In fact the whole second half of the book is about the training process and also finding out about the tie that is family.

The book has some well written action sequences and the developing relationship of Jory to her one brother is interesting, but I felt the second half began to drag as it took so long to get through this training business for the final climax.

I also felt some of the characters were given the short shrift on development but overall it was an enjoyable read.

I give it 3 rings of Saturn.