

2010 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards
Best Novel

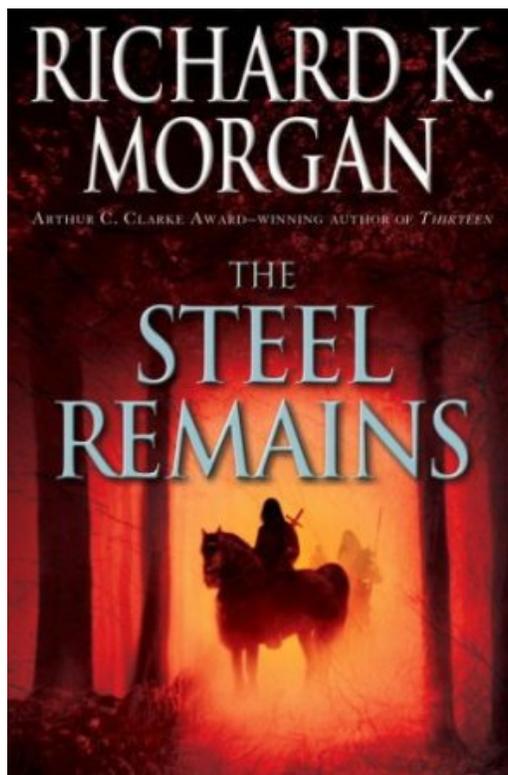
Winner

The Steel Remains

by **Richard K. Morgan**

Del Rey

ISBN13: 978-0345493040



Richard Morgan, the author of *The Steel Remains*, has made a name for himself with fast-paced and thought provoking science fiction novels with a post-cyberpunk flare. With this novel, Morgan makes the leap from science fiction to fantasy without missing a beat. *The Steel Remains* combines the gritty and aggressive style of his science fiction novels with a somewhat traditional fantasy setting, resulting in an action-packed heroic fantasy story, a fine example of “hard-edged” fantasy. (Other authors of this “anti-LOTR” type of fantasy are Steven Erickson, Ian Esslemont, Glen Cook, and Gene Wolfe for example.)

In *The Steel Remains*, human civilization is caught up between the contending influences of several non-human races, some of which are intruders from other worlds. Those influences impact a number of societies – from the mercantile to the imperialistic, from the nomadic to the feudal. The novel, the first of a series, deals with the resurgence of an ancient mystical (or perhaps other-dimensional) threat which has ripple effects throughout the various societies of the world.

Gritty, militaristic novels aren’t known for positive GLBT content, but Morgan has turned that on its ear. The main hero and one of the other primary characters are queer. The lead is Ringil, a former war hero and current high-ranking mercenary-for-hire who could be considered a sort of “gay pride poster boy” (“I’m here! I’m queer! Want to make something of it?”) - tough enough to make his point (swordpoint, that is). He’s made a place for himself in a world that (like our own) isn’t very supportive of queers. Granted, he’s not very polite and he doesn’t have a lot of finesse – but he’s intelligent and capable: a queer man beating the odds on his own merits, while not hiding his sexual preference. The fate of the world rests in the hands of a queer man with an axe to grind against his own family and culture, and Morgan never wavers from looking at how that might play out. Full of twists and turns and witty dialogue, *The Steel Remains* is an outstanding read.

2010 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards Best Novel

Short List

Ash by Malinda Lo
Little, Brown ISBN13: 978-0316040105

This engaging YA novel tells a less-than-conventional fairy tale: the story of Ash (a Cinderella analog) and her developing three-sided relationship with Sidhean (the elf lord who is obsessed with her) and Kaisa (the King's Huntress, with whom she falls in love).

Centuries Ago and Very Fast by Rebecca Ore
Aqueduct Press ISBN13: 978-1933500256

A series of linked stories that tell (across several centuries) various parts of the life story of Vel, a homosexual 14,000-year-old former mammoth hunter. (He is neither immortal nor invulnerable; he just has an extremely effective immune system.) Explores attitudes toward sex and family across various times.

Naamah's Kiss by Jacqueline Carey
Grand Central ISBN13: 978-0446198042

This novel takes place several generations later in the universe of the "Kushiel's Legacy" series. Moirin, the great-granddaughter of D'Angeline princess Alais the Wise and a child of the Alban folk of the Brown Bear, makes her way in the world, exploring her mixed heritage and her special gifts of magic and love. Like any good D'Angeline, Moirin loves as she will, both women and men, as she seeks her destiny in far-flung lands.

The Red Tree by Caitlin Kiernan
Roc ISBN10: 0451462769

A lesbian F&SF writer moves into an old house in rural Rhode Island. She becomes obsessed with gruesome local legends after finding a research document compiled by the house's previous resident (a suicide) – and she gradually comes under the malign influence of an ancient gnarled oak that is the subject of the document and apparently the center of all the gruesome local legends.

By the Mountain Bound by Elizabeth Bear
Tor ISBN13: 978-0765358523

The story of the Ragnorok-like events leading up to *All the Windracked Stars* (2009 Short List): solidly fantasy with a Nordic/Anglo-Saxon flavor. Strifbjorn (heroic warleader of the Einherjar) and Mingan (avatar of the Fenris Wolf) are lovers.

The Enchantment Emporium by Tanya Huff
DAW Books ISBN13: 978-0756406059

The Gale family is a family of power ruled by "the Aunties." Alyson Gale, a young woman of this family, is coming into her power and has moved to Calgary to look into the disappearance of her Grandmother. There she must counter the threats of a rogue sorcerer and an infestation of Dragon Lords. LGBT characters and themes are embedded throughout the story.

Palimpsest by Catherynne Valente
Bantam Spectra ISBN13: 978-0553385762

A rich, lyrical, and complex novel. In the world of Palimpsest, lives are lived and re-lived in a dizzying network of streets and passages that can only be traveled by people from our world following a moment of intense intimacy with another "marked" person, regardless of gender. The bits and pieces of the map of Palimpsest are as convoluted as the people who bear its marks upon their bodies.

Seven for a Secret by Elizabeth Bear
Subterranean Press ISBN13: 978-1596062337

A short novel featuring the wampyr Sebastien (the main character in a previous Bear novel, *New Amsterdam*). It takes place in an alternate 1938 England dominated by the Prussian Chancellor's army of occupation; it includes a budding romance between two young girls (one of them secretly Jewish) who are unwitting participants in a Prussian plan for world domination through dark magic.

Strange Fortune by Josh Lanyon
Blind Eye Books ISBN13: 978-1935560005

The setting is an alternate version of India in the time of the British Raj. In this world, Alba (analog-Britain) has been destroyed during the White Spice Wars (analog-Opium Wars), and the Monarchy has retreated to "the jewel in the Empire's crown," Hidush (analog-India). The story involves a quest for a mystical artifact that can save the world from the reincarnation of an ancient malevolent deity. In the course of the story, two men (a retired Lancer and a "witch") fall in love.

