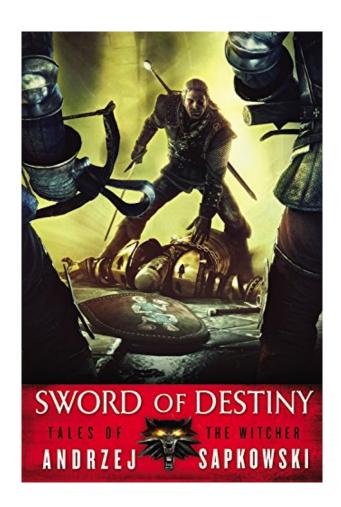
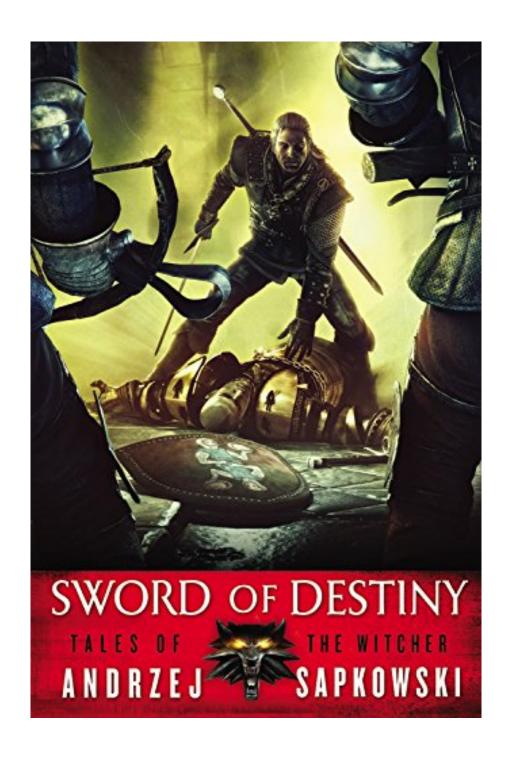
## SWORD OF DESTINY (THE WITCHER) BY ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI



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#### Review

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The New York Times bestselling series that inspired the international hit video game: The Witcher.

Geralt is a witcher, a man whose magic powers, enhanced by long training and a mysterious elixir, have made him a brilliant fighter and a merciless assassin. Yet he is no ordinary murderer: his targets are the multifarious monsters and vile fiends that ravage the land and attack the innocent.

This is a collection of short stories, following the adventures of the hit collection THE LAST WISH. Join Geralt as he battles monsters, demons and prejudices alike...

Witcher collectionsThe Last WishSword of Destiny

Witcher novelsBlood of Elves

The Time of Contempt

Baptism of Fire The Tower of SwallowsLady of the Lake

The Malady and Other Stories: An Andrzej Sapkowski Sampler (e-only)

Translated from original Polish by David French

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Original language: English

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• 400 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

58 of 59 people found the following review helpful.

An Excellent Read

By Andrew Jeffreys

After a very long wait (seven years), we finally have the official English translation of the second set of short stories about Geralt of Rivia. Why the publisher waited so long to translate this collection is beyond me, as The Sword of Destiny introduces some very important characters to the next book: Blood of Elves. However, that's a discussion for another day.

The Sword of Destiny is similar to its prequel collection, The Last Wish. It's a series of short stories about Geralt, one of the last Witchers (a guild of monster hunters), and his many adventures. Unlike the The Last Wish, all the stories are in a fairly linear order and deal mostly with the topic of destiny. They also build on Geralt's relationships and what it means to be human.

Whereas The Last Wish dealt more with philosophy that is grounded in real life, The Sword of Destiny

concerns itself it the philosophy of destiny and is more rooted in a traditional fantasy story. For a while, I thought the story would take a clichéd approach to destiny, but was pleasantly surprised by how the author chose to tackle it.

This book is an excellent read if you enjoy medieval fantasy and a must-read if you're a fan of the Witcher series.

19 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Is it good? Oh yes

By asymon

This is long awaited second book with short stories, where author continues creating world and weaving plots. It contains "Something more", story that should be read before Witcher saga, "Blood of Elves" and so on...

Is it good? Oh yes, you won't be dissapointed, it's not another Tolkien-high-fantasy clone, I hope it's not lost in translation (I read original, Polish version).

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

An amazing collection of short stories

By Amazon Customer

"Not this war, Geralt. After this war, no-one returns. There will be nothing to return to. Nilfgaard leaves behind it only rubble; its armies advance like lava from which no-one escapes. The roads are strewn, for miles, with gallows and pyres; the sky is cut with columns of smoke as long as the horizon. Since the beginning of the world, in fact, nothing of this sort has happened before. Since the world is our world... You must understand that the Nilfgaardians have descended from their mountains to destroy this world."

The Sword of Destiny is the sequel to the Witcher's first collection, The Last Wish, picking up where the previous book left off. The continuity is surprisingly fluid with the stories being surprisingly interlinked and best read in the order that they are published. The Sword of Destiny is also absolutely essential to understanding the later novels in the series, which is unusual when dealing with short stories.

The Sword of Destiny is also surprising in that it contains some of the lightest and darkest of the Witcher universe slammed together in one volume. There's stories which include silly stories about Medieval stock market manipulation and a retelling of The Little Mermaid alongside tales of genocide as well as forced relocation of native peoples. This is a really impressive display of the variety of Andrzej Sapkowski's work.

I'm particularly fascinated by the character development of Geralt, new character Ciri of Cintra, and the Nilfgaardian Empire. Geralt gets expanded from The Man With No Name with swords, basically, to a man who is deeply suffering for his inability to find love. Ciri of Cintra is one of the rare non-annoying children in fiction, rivaling Newt from Aliens for how much I like her. The Nilfgaardian Empire? Well, they are an embodiment of evil who don't get much screen-time but manage to be both believable and terrifying at once. I started the review with the quote about them because, truly, it gave me chills.

The supporting cast in the book is particularly strong this time around as well. The tragic but wonderful character of Essi Daven, the snobbish but enjoyable Istredd, the self-confident but heartbroken Yennefer, the imperious Calanthe, and (of course) Dandelion are all characters who fly off the page despite their little screen-time. I'll go into more detail but, really, I should address each of the stories individually.

"Limit of Possibility"

This is a deconstruction of the dragon-slaying epics which we all know, even if we've never seen them outside of The Hobbit. Geralt of Rivia is the one professional monster slayer in the surrounding kingdoms who isn't interested in killing a dragon when a prince puts up a fabulous reward for slaying one. This attracts a holy knight, a wizard more interested in saving one than killing one, a would-be peasant hero, and some cold-blooded mercenaries. The fact the dragon is an intelligent individual who may be the last of its kind on the Continent doesn't effect their motivations one bit.

This story picks up on Geralt and Yennefer's relationship immediately after The Last Wish.

Geralt, apparently, abandoned her soon after the story which did not sit well with Yennefer in the slightest. This is one of her best appearances as she gives some truly staggering justifications to convince herself that it's alright to kill the dragons for her very personal selfish reasons. It's a humorous, silly, and yet surprisingly well-written and observant story.

#### "Splinter of Ice"

This is not really a typical Witcher story in that while it has a few nods to being an deconstruction of The Snow Queen, it's actually a romance about Geralt and Yennefer. Well, actually it's only a romance in it's an analysis of how the two (actually three as Geralt finds out) are deeply dysfunctional people who have difficulty loving or being loved. Both Yennefer and Geralt have terrible self-esteem as it turns out, which effects their ability to say how much they care for one another.

I like this story's surprisingly unglamorous portrayal of Geralt and Yennefer's romance, which is how these things sometimes go. Yennefer is constantly cheating on Geralt while he isn't all that much better, not the least bit because he won't really identify what it is they have. The introduction of Istredd is excellent as he is a character who really would be better off seeking anyone else than Yennefer but wants her anyway. Despite some truly nasty things he says to Geralt, you also get the impression he's not that different from our hero.

#### "Eternal Fire"

A comedy about economics, identity theft, and assimilation in a Medieval city. Geralt and Dandelion find themselves bankrupt (again) in the city of Novigrad. Going to visit a halfling friend of theirs, they find that he's been replaced with a mischievous doppler who has stolen all of the man's wealth. Joining with their friend, who has escaped imprisonment, they proceed to chase the doppler around the city only to find out he's built a veritable economic empire in just a few short weeks. Much discussion is had about the definition of monster and what kind of opportunities we allow the disadvantaged.

I got a lot of fun out of this story since I read it while playing the Novigrad section of the Witcher 3. The doppler character, Dudu, really impresses me with his statement about how arbitrary the rules of society can be. Dudu would very much love a chance to live amongst "normal" people but he's forbidden it because of an accident of birth. This is perhaps the lightest story in the whole of the Witcher series and is quite enjoyable as a comedic romp.

#### "A Little Sacrifice"

The final "humorous" story in this collection, A Little Sacrifice is a re-telling of The Little Mermaid with a Lovecraftian twist. Geralt and Dandelion find themselves bankrupt (notice a theme?) and the latter is forced to be the backup entertainment at a wedding. This is after as disastrous attempt by Geralt to try and serve as a go-betweener for a Duke with his mermaid sweetheart. Once there, they meet a young rival of Dandelion's who Geralt swiftly develops feelings for.

A Little Sacrifice is much like Splinter of Ice in that it's more a story about love and relationships than the supernatural. While the Little Mermaid parody is hilarious, it's really mostly about Geralt's relationship with Essi Daven and how he could find love with a woman other than Yennefer (but doesn't want to). The ending is touching, even if it's a bit hard on the mermaid. I also like the random inclusion of Deep Ones in the setting.

#### "Sword of Destiny"

The Sword of Destiny is the first story to really have a heavy focus on the myth arc of the Witcher as well as set up the events of Something Greater. Geralt goes into a Dryad-filled forest in order to carry a treaty offer from a nearby king. The Dryad race is dying out but they would prefer to go down fighting than watch their lands turned into lumber except for a tiny section. Meanwhile, Geralt stumbles across the lost Princess of Cintra, Ciri, who has the potential to change his destiny forever.

There's a lot of heavy subtext about native displacement, extinction, racism, and the problem of cohabitation looking a lot like surrender. There's no good answers here and the ending is ambiguous. Ciri's presence is, however, adorable and I loved her deconstruction of arranged marriages as well as the runaway princess trope. We also get a lot of foreshadowing for where their story will go next.

#### "Something Greater"

Something Greater is, hands down, the best of Sapkowski's short stories. It's powerful, emotional, dramatic, and tension-filled. The fact it's mostly about Geralt recovering from a horrible injury sustained fighting run-of-the-mill bandits belabors the point that it is a well-written story about loss as well as the horrors of war. Geralt struggles with the idea that his mother may be dead without ever having met her or that Yennefer might die on some battlefield somewhere. He also struggles with the fact he has no legacy since he rejected the possibility of taking Ciri as his child/apprentice.

The introduction of Nilfgaard is truly horrific and done extremely well. In a world as horrible and filled with suffering as the Northern kingdoms, they are something worse and come to bring an end to the old way of life (as well as possibly its people). The destruction of Cintra is one of the most harrowing short bits of fiction I've read.

Bravo, Andrzej!

I recommend this book strongly. It's got humor, drama, action, character insight, tragedy, and wonder. Is it the best fantasy I've ever read? No. However, it's up there. For the short story format, the author manages to really crank out some wonders.

10/10

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