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Unfettered: Tales By Masters Of Fantasy



Synopsis

You define life or it defines you. In Shawn Speakman's case, it was both. Lacking health insurance and diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2011, Shawn quickly accrued a massive medical debt that he did not have the ability to pay. That's when New York Times best-selling author Terry Brooks offered to donate a short story that Shawn could sell to help alleviate those bills - and suggested he ask the same of his other writer friends. Unfettered is the result: An anthology built in order to relieve that debt, featuring short stories by some of the best fantasy writers in the genre. Twenty-three tales comprise this incredible collection, and as the title suggests, the writers were free to contribute whatever they wished. Here is the table of contents: Foreword by Patrick Rothfuss Introduction: On Becoming Unfettered Imaginary Friends by Terry Brooks How Old Holly Came to Be by Patrick Rothfuss The Old Scale Game by Tad Williams Game of Chance by Carrie Vaughn The Martyr of the Roses by Jacqueline Carey Mudboy by Peter V. Brett The Sound of Broken Absolutes by Peter Orullian The Coach with Big Teeth by R. A. Salvatore Keeper of Memory by Todd Lockwood Heaven in a Wild Flower by Blake Charlton Dogs by Daniel Abraham The Chapel Perilous by Kevin Hearne Select Mode by Mark Lawrence All the Girls Love Michael Stein by David Anthony Durham Strange Rain by Jennifer Bosworth Nocturne by Robert V. S. Redick Unbowed by Eldon Thompson In Favour with Their Stars by Naomi Novik River of Souls by Robert Jordan & Brandon Sanderson The Jester by Michael J. Sullivan The Duel by Lev Grossman Walker and the Shade of Allanon by Terry Brooks The Unfettered Knight by Shawn Speakman With the help of stalwart friends and these wonderful short stories, Shawn has taken the gravest of life's hardships and created something magical. Unfettered is not only a fantastic anthology in its own right, but it's a testament to the generosity found in the science fiction and fantasy community-proof that humanity can give beyond itself when the need arises. After all, isn't that the driving narrative in fantasy literature?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am always very hesitant to read collections of short stories and the likes because they often take too long to get fully into, lack depth, or are incomprehensible without having prior knowledge. However, I will say that "Unfettered" should be seen as a great example of how authors should set up their stories. While some are much longer than others, they all have strong characters, avoid oversimplifications, and for the most part don't require the reader to have too much background knowledge. Instead, this should be viewed as a great way to get introduced to some of the best fantasy and sci-fi writers this generation has to offer from Sanderson, to Rothfuss, to Sullivan, "Unfettered" should not disappoint. Also it's for an amazing cause

Being a collection of stories, odds are some you'll like, some you'll hate, and some you'll be ambivalent about. But, if you like fantasy, you'll probably like a good deal of these. As a relatively newcomer to fantasy, I especially like how this collection has given me a number of new authors to look into. While most of the stories are stand-alone, some are part of, or at least tangential to, full novels and series. I didn't find that this made them unapproachable; instead it provided a nice glimpse into something I might investigate further. It's a good mix of everything from dark and intense to light-hearted and humorous, so there's something for everyone.

Story one "Imaginary friends by Terry Brooks- A tale of 9 year old Jack and his magic elf named pick and his battle against the dragon...analogous to Jack facing down his own disease and defeating it. Touching." Story two "How Old Holly Came to be is sort of like a poem or even biblical in its word choice. Very strange a tree a tower a woman a man a tower a tree...Time passes the tree grows the tower decays...Rothfuss declares his own work to be odd. He also states he wrote this in a single sitting." Story three "Tad Williams tells a story about an old retired dragon slayer who asks an old dragon to split his profits for slaying him. The dragon and the dragon slayer strike up a mutually beneficial deal and then convince the villages into paying the dragon slayer to kill the dragon in various places. Fun story." Story four "Game of Chance is a story of people who live outside the world and influence life within it. Godlike or playing a video game with a broader view of how

everything influences everything else. One of the characters is trying to influence things for wild political change. However the main character here is focused on the individual and not on the vast change she can make. It is a touching story."Story five "Martyr of the Roses" was inspired by the authors dream of a rocky outcropping on a beach springing forth a batch of roses. It is a tale of a woman trying to protect a religious relic from unbelievers and had to walk a crazy distance and die which she does on a rocky outcropping on a beach and her footprints bloom roses. Its interesting but strange I suppose she wrote the story to match her dream..."Story six "Mud Boy" sucked me into a world where demons rule the night and the houses need to be warded against their approach. After reading this short story I very much want to read "The Warded Man" The main character is a six year old who is doing his best to deal with the fear of demons and do his family proud. For a short story I became very invested. Very good."Story Seven "The Sound of Broken Absolutes" is dark...full of sadness and deal with feelings one has when someone dies. It deals with the feelings of complete helplessness, intensely riveting. Even the title when you have absolutes like a parent or a belief that is absolute and than a parent dies...The Sound of Broken Absolutes. It is not a pleasant sound."Story Eight "The coach with big Teeth" is heart wrenching. R.A. Salvatore tells in his introduction how he got black listed in little league baseball and how intimidated he was to play baseball for the adults. He was a good player when he played alone in "the sand lot" he was free to be himself. This is a story about how we pressure our kids to much."Story Nine "Keeper of memory is a story of a man who knew the history of his people and his city and when his city is besieged all the records and record keepers are killed. He runs into a child that is more dream than reality and than the question ends with maybe the Keeper of Memory himself is a dream to the girl...the only record of the people and the city preserved in a vision or a dream. Really cool."Story Ten "Heaven in a Wild Flower" is about reincarnated people. When they come back to earth they have to be adopted by a parent and than if the reincarnated dies or chooses to return to heaven the adopted parent also dies. The author was explaining that when someone we love dies the parent dies as well...in this story it was literal."Story Eleven "Dogs" Was a story of a man who is mauled by dogs and his recovery process. It was an analogy to rape victims.Story Twelve "The Chapel Perilous" is a short story starring the Iron Druid. Makes me want to read a longer story with him. He faces evils in a chapel and takes down a necromancer with earth magics. Very fun and exciting. Reminded me of Michael Sullivan's Theft of Swords series."Story Thirteen "Select Mode" is from the world of "Prince of Thorns" which exists in a medieval post modern apocalyptic dystopia if that makes any sense. A computer goes back and forth between saying Select and Failure. When the computer god Selects you, you get to live. When you fail you die. Good times Modern and yet ancient tech."Story Fourteen

"All the Girls Love Michael Stein" is about a ghost cat who strives to comfort her grieving owner. The cat makes a deal with the Catfather and his owner is given the ability to see and speak with dead cats. This was a gift from the author to his 13 year old daughter. Touching.

Story Fifteen "Strange Rain" is the story of two adjoined twins who were surgically separated at birth and how through lightning control become fused as one again. Sounds cool sort of like Frankenstein.

Story Sixteen "Nocturne" is the dellusion of a boy fighting with a bout of pneumonia not very enjoyable story.

Story Seventeen "Unbowed" is a master swordsman who is determined not to be a killer not because of the moral question but because the ease of it. Being the best made it to easy to kill so he had determined not to and he is put at odds against his father who is determined to make his son a killer.

Story Eighteen "In Favor with Their Stars" Space and Dragon combat! Fantastic!

Story Nineteen A short story about the bad guy in book 14 of the wheel of time series. Quick, brutal. Pretty fun.

Story Twenty "Jester" A short story with Royce and Hadrian from "Theft of Swords" it reads like the last chapter of a full feature. The hero is burned, scratched and has a broken leg. We get an epic final chapter and its a run and scream roller coaster ride!

Story Twenty one "The Duel" is brute strength vs every magical advantage in the book. Not that exciting of a fight, maybe there was more background that would of made this short story more enjoyable but it was a lopsided fight at its surface.

Story Twenty Two "Terry Brooks has a second and very short story that reads very much like a deleted scene on a DVD. It is an encounter between a druid and a dead man or phantom maybe a wraith and they have a confusing conversation not attached to any larger story. Uh Thanks?"

Story Twenty Three "Unfettered Knight" is the story of Charles the unfettered knight trying to keep the world safe from a world of trolls, witches and in this story vampires. I got the Harry Dresden vibe from this one. Also if you know the Orcs Must Die video game in which knights defend the rift from stuff coming through to our world that are not invited. It was a fun vampire story."

Although a few of the stories are mediocre, there are some definite gems that easily redeem the price asked. The main issue is that very many of the stories benefit vastly from familiarity with the world or canon of the author in question, so the reader who is relatively experienced in the genre will fare dramatically better than the average bear. Inexperienced readers should arguably be steered elsewhere first. Secondly, though the theme is nominally unfettered, this ends up being ironically quite misleading, as a large number of authors themed their submissions substantially around the themes of illness, loss, and perseverance that underpin the health care cancer costs affecting the author for whom this works proceeds are raising money for. Overall though, willing to four to five star it for the couple of enjoyable gems.

My experience with all star anthologies has been, for the most part, that within the collections the quality of the pieces varies wildly. Not so here. Perhaps it's because instead of writing a piece to order about "Female Elves Who Kick Ass" or somesuch, the authors were given an opportunity to find a home for beloved but orphaned stories. Or maybe it is a sign of the high regard in which they hold Shawn Speakman, for whom this anthology of donated stories is an attempt to alleviate cancer-related medical debt. No matter what the reason, the quality of the pieces in Unfettered is unusually and consistently good. Good enough to make me look up other works by authors I had not yet read. Good enough that if one could give fractional stars, I would probably give it a 4.66. Good enough that since one cannot, I rounded up. Buy this collection. You won't be disappointed.

I love the idea behind this anthology, it is a testament to the writing community. The stories included are as unique as the writers that contributed to them. This compilation includes works from some of the biggest names in fantasy, and the candid forward by Patrick Rothfuss had me actually laughing. I enjoyed many of the stories, but not all of them, and a couple of them changed my mind halfway through. All in all a solid effort for a worthy cause. I also bought the audible edition as a bundle, which was quite enjoyable, but you do miss out on the blurbs from the authors regarding why they chose to contribute to the collection. I did, however, find a couple of new authors to binge read after this.

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