



The Swordbearer

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Forged on the anvil of death, imbued with the souls of its victims and bearers, the sword had chosen Gathrid. In his hands, it would taste blood and cleave its own path through war, seeking vengeance for mortal--and immortal--treachery.

The Swordbearer Details

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Author : Glen Cook

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From Reader Review The Swordbearer for online ebook

Bogdan Capitanoiu says

Why should I read this?

Such a short read(everything is speed-up as to focus on choices and personal conflict), with such a solid topic(the unveiling hero with no control on his destiny) but with such a Glen-ian/erikson-ian ageless backstory.

What else is this book about/Any other way describing the plot in a technical non spoiler way?

One might say is a deconstruction of the teen-adult dream to become a hero. Perfect I could not ask from more from a book...

Any 1 warning?(not to be taken as criticism)

Although it looks like it's one of his first, or before he got famous, or before he mastered the pen for the Black company series, or written in a rush, I think the style (fast skimming through the plot progression, and the political subplots, and the third personarson event depicting) is perfect as to focus on the anguish of being a hero not in control of his own fate and also giving depth, and context to his motivation&action.

Johan Sonesson says

On the face of it seems like a bit of a dull plotline, but Glen Cook just does it better than mostly everyone. I think this story might have inspired Icarium and Mappo in the Malazan Book of the Fallen

Steven Wilber says

Premise was good but execution was lacking

Pye Josephus Joestar says

I very much enjoyed this book, I couldn't put it down once I started reading, it was short but sweet, the characters were all really awesome and the villians were pretty kick ass for the most part. The world building was pretty decent too except for the few name drops of legendary heroes/villians/kings that were never delved deeper into. The book was action packed and had some really creative concepts. My favorite part of the books is reading how the main character Gathrid grows over, I believe it's 2 years? The end was interesting as well and definetly left it open for a sequel if Glen decided to write one, which I am all for because this is one of my now tops favourite books.

Jackalovich says

The story itself is amazingly captivating. It played the strings of my imagination in a very dark, off-time

way. Having said that, I wish the book was written with a little more clarity. It can get confusing at times. Especially with the dialogues and names. But don't let that stall you from reading it till the end. Would have given it 5 stars, had it been written better.

Peace!!

Paulo "paper books always" Carvalho says

This is dark fantasy at its core. No doubt about it. There is no hero, per se. There are goals and objectives and our main character will do anything to achieve it. Excellent!

But some things are just too damn confusing. Sometimes I can't really figure it out who is talking or why they are saying the things they are saying. It's a confusing tale.

The Swordbearer begins with giving us a lesson in history, geography and mythology which is nice but if I hadn't a book where I write the characters names and places and special events I would be at loss.

Almost no descriptions, a crude writing language (probably on purpose) but it confuse me. And the names of places and characters? Most of them are pure gibberish.

On the other end of the spec you've got a bleak, gritty, betrayals and almost near suffocating book.

Glen Cook is a odd duck. In one side you've got a great dark fantasy story but in the other you don't involve too much because most of the book alienates you with his characters and names and narration.

The Sword and the Boy reminds me of Elric but that's where the similarities end. Don't forget this book was written 30 years ago. Most of the fantasy you read nowadays didn't exist - Sven Erikson, Robert Jordan, George RR Martin and others

"You want to stay alive, Sword or no, you'd better learn this lesson. You get your enemies, any way you can. Fight Fair, play the brave chevalier, and your're going to get your gut spilled."

"-You fight fire with fire in this world. You don't see these Ventimiglians counting scruples do you
- If you sink to their level, we're no better than they are.
-What gives you idea that you are? Human is human boy..."

"Theis, no. I couldn't.

-What?"

-Kill men while they're sleeping."

-Best time. They don't fight back. You remember who they are? They could be the men who tortured your mother. Aren't you hungry? They have more than horses. Boy your age usually eats a ton of fodder a day. Gathrid needed no reminder .His navel was grinding against his backbone. But to kill men over something to

eat...He was not that hungry.Not yet."

Jim Heivilin says

The Endless Game?

Elements of stories you've read and enjoyed mixed together in a different pattern. Not quite the old stuff but not quite something new. Entertaining in any event.

Christopher Buza says

Having recently purchased the audiobook from Audible, I felt the need to return to and review this quick and entertaining read.

I'll begin by briefly addressing my one negative point. In this book, more so than in any other of Cook's that I've read, the possibility of being overwhelmed by a flood of names is deeply present. Take, for example, the following excerpt from the first few pages of the novel:

"[They] lived in a small fortress called Kacalief. Their father was Safire, or knight protector. The Dolvin's Savard March, guarding the kingdom of Gudermuth's easternmost frontier, had been in dispute between the Kings of Gudermuth and Grevening for decades. The Sheriff of Rigdon, a town on the Grevening side of the border, had a habit of sending small bands of bravos over to cause trouble."

That is quite possibly the worst single paragraph in the text; when he wants to, Cook can make George R.R. Martin's penchant for complex family trees look like a mild fascination. Fortunately, the majority of the novel that follows is free of this kind of grating parade of titles.

After that somewhat rough opening, the narrative really starts to shine. The novel is a coming of age story that focuses on themes of masculinity and addiction, painted against a backdrop of fantasy warfare and millennia-old divine grudges. As with several of his other works, Cook addresses masculinity's relationship with violence through the engrossing lens of aggressive female characters, in this case by way of the central antagonist Nevenka Nieroda. Nevenka's entire identity—but in particular her gender—is a convoluted point of engagement for the reader, becoming an obsessive fascination of our adolescent protagonist. Cook's simultaneous gendering and de-gendering of violence calls into question its relationship with masculinity, making his oft-praised point that war is in the business of killing men rather than forging them. While this message is perhaps not as effectively conveyed as in some of his other works, such as his most successful release, 'The Black Company' series, it is certainly more affectively conveyed. Through the lens of our teenage protagonist, the emotional punch of this novel is a bit more potent than the cynical, distant accounts of Cook's more prominent works. It reads less like the 'The Things They Carried' and more like a well-constructed YA novel.

Beyond his character-driven plot, Cook continues his trend of using selective description to draw the reader into a fantasy world that both feels lived-in and produces wonder in the reader. Forgoing the extensive appendices so often found in today's fantasy novels, Cook's use of a limited third-person perspective allows us to walk around in the world he's invented, stumbling upon its wonders and quirks just as our protagonist

does. It all contributes to the novel's large sense of scale in a compact page count.

As a coming-of-age novel that lies somewhere between the graphic fantastical extremes of C.S. Lewis and George R.R. Martin, it hits all the right notes and does its job well. Moreover, it does so with a sub-300 page count. If you're looking for a quick read with a compact and potent sense of philosophy and atmosphere, give this one a shot.

Art says

Violent, dark, nearly hopeless and yet strangely uplifting, this book is entirely in Glen Cook's style. Yes, even though I've only read two (this one included), I'm quite sure it's his style. Epic battles, casual destruction of human life and human works, all seemingly pointless and yet a point is found somewhere in all that carnage.

A weak, nearly crippled kid sees his home kingdom destroyed by a superior enemy force. They appear the epitome of evil at first, and he vows revenge, though at first all he needs is to survive. He flees, and in a cavern finds a sword and a strange dwarven companion. The sword gives him power, the dwarf - hard, blunt advice for a harsh world where naive idealism has no place. And the boy finds himself enslaved to this strange sword and its insatiable power for destruction, a power he cannot at all control. And as in any other Glen Cook novel (I'm sure) things aren't very simple. Evil is not quite evil, good is not quite good and the whole world often appears little more than someone's feverish dream.

As far as I know there are no real sequels to this one. I'll keep looking, because the end is surprisingly open and unsatisfying. When you read this one, keep a full weekend open: you will not be able to put it down until the wee hours. I definitely could not.

Joshua Bizeau says

It's a shame Glen Cook has never continued this tale; the ending unarguably leaves room for a follow-up and we as readers can only hope Glen returns to this particular world of his creation one day. "The Swordbearer" is a deftly-written, action-packed high fantasy tragedy with a truly compelling and sympathetic lead character and a host of memorable side personalities. A young boy's idealistic dream of becoming a warrior is thrust upon him all too suddenly and violently in a manner that not only demands he grow up whether he likes it or not but own up to those demons most dark and personal as his goddess-determined fate forces him to become the wielder of a blade that incorporates the souls and memories of those he slays into his own consciousness.

The promise of character development through personal tragedy and global disillusionment inherent in a tale of this magnitude is taken full advantage of by Mr. Cook who manages to add a heaping dose of political double-talk, intrigue and personal betrayal into the mix along with his penchant for a full serving of crackling, perfectly-scored swords-and-sorcery action; no one quite writes action with the rhythm, timbre or intensity of Cook. If you love Glen's work, you shouldn't miss this particular stand-alone read. The worst thing that can be said about it would be that the author has never explored further into the world of our hero Gathrid and his dwarf companion Theis Rogala. I truly hope Cook decides to return to this particular miniature saga in the future; it would be a tremendous character study well worth further pursuit.

Evgeny says

A very weak boy finds a sword (actually, it is the other way around) which gives him physical strength and ways for vengeance. If this sounds like Elric books by Michael Moorcock, it is because I had exactly this impression. The similarity soon ends; the rest of the book is distinctively Glen Cook: bleak, gritty, full of betrayals and double-crossings.

I am a big fan of Glen Cook, but this is probably his weakest book I read. It is not bad by any means, but everything else by the author is better. If you are interested in his works, read Chronicles of the Black Company, Garrett, P.I, The Tower of Fear, or even Dread Empire series first.

Viktor Davion says

From the first pages this book reminds me of Elric tales by Moorcock. Mainly because of the sword Daubendiek and eternal game of Ancient Old Ones. Story is captivating, there are no dull places in it. I read it in one breathe. Book exploits my favourite themes of free will and conscious, though not in a serious-minded manner. But this is fantasy, not some philosophical work, so no wonder). Plot holds some mysteries from the very beginning and many of them unfolds at the end. Book could become good start for nice series of stories about Swordbearer. But sometimes it's better to leave story without sequels, I guess. Mood is dark, grim and sad at the end. In my opinion this story is good example of dark fantasy and sword and sorcery genre, recommended for every fan.

Ben says

The further along I read in this book, the more I disliked it. Thankfully, it contained only 250 pages. There is this teen boy who wants to be a warrior, but because of infirmities suffered from polio (yes, even in the mystical fantasy world concocted in the book, there was this very specific disease) is belittled and scorned. Cliche # 1

However, danger threatens. An ancient enemy approaches, an army of awakened dead with horrible black magic (Cliche #2)destroys all in its path, including the boy's home. Fleeing the slaughter and chased by a black- robed demon, he falls into a cave where he discovers a sleeping dwarf who is the guard of a magic sword. Cliche #3

A sword so powerful it makes a heroic, Arnold Swartenegger gladiator out of the weak teen. But there is a price, of course: the sword is sentient and thirsts for blood. In fact- or fantasy, that is, blood of enemies creases the sword's power over who wields it. # 4 and 5

And blah, blah on for the next 200 pages. Treachery, dragon- things, blather, adamsel in danger of sacrifice, combat, blather, wandering the countryside.Rinse, lather, repeat. Not a cliché is missed. What was missed was any depth of character development.

I am not sure if the book was meant for the YA audience or not, but it sure was not meant for this reader.

Matt says

An interesting tale of swords and souls - Cook's take on Elric?

Ending seems to be crying out for a sequel that never was...

(This edition has a pretty dire cover)

KJ Parliament says

I love Glen Cook, but not one of his best works. It's short and the ending is good, so I would stick with it.
