



Shattered Shields

Jennifer Brozek (Editor) , Bryan Thomas Schmidt (Editor) , Seanan McGuire (Contributor) , Larry Correia (Contributor) , Elizabeth Moon (Contributor) , Sarah A. Hoyt (Contributor) , Glen Cook (Contributor) , David Farland (Contributor) , more... Robin Wayne Bailey (Contributor) , John R. Fultz (Contributor) , Dave Gross (Contributor) , Wendy N. Wagner (Contributor) , James L. Sutter (Contributor) , Annie Bellet (Contributor) , Joe Zieja (Contributor) , Cat Rambo (Contributor) , Gray Rinehart (Contributor) , John Helfers (Contributor) , Nancy Fulda (Contributor) ...less

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"In Shattered Shields, editors Brozek and Schmidt bring together both fresh and seasoned voices in settings both familiar and new to fill up this powerhouse anthology with the noise of battle, the mumbling of spells and the heartache of war. I hope to see more from this editorial team in the near future." - Ken Scholes, Award-winning author of the Psalms of Isaak

"An inventive and thought-provoking set of tales that capture the bravery and terrors of battle. Carries the banner of military fantasy proudly." – John Marco, author of The Bronze Knight Series

Table of Contents:

Ashes and Starlight (Runelords) by David Farland
The Fixed Stars (October Daye) by Seanan McGuire
The Keeper of Names by Larry Correia

The Smaller We Are by John Helfers
Invictus by Annie Bellet
Rising Above by Sarah A. Hoyt
A Cup of Wisdom by Joseph Zieja
Words of Power by Wendy N. Wagner
Lightweaver in Shadow by Gray Rinehart
Hoofsore and Weary by Cat Rambo
Vengeance (Frost) by Robin Wayne Bailey
Deadfall by Nancy Fulda
Yael of the Strings by John R. Fultz
The Gleaners by Dave Gross
Bonded Men by James L. Sutter
Bone Candy (Black Company) by Glen Cook
First Blood (Paksenarrion) by Elizabeth Moon

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From Reader Review Shattered Shields for online ebook

Sophie says

[So in this story we find out that merlins have only one magical scent, because their magic is less complex than fae magic. I'm 100% certain this is going to turn ou

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths Reviews

Shattered Shields edited by Brozek and Schmidt is an anthology focused on military fantasy, specifically heroic struggles and epic combat. Here seventeen short stories and novellas explore the vast expanse of military fantasy in all its varied forms from adventures in hither unexplored worlds to new tales from established worlds such as David Farland's Runelords, Elizabeth Moon's Pakseanarrion, and Glen Cook's Black Company. But no matter the setting, what each tale does superbly is capture that fantasy feeling of swords clashing, arrows flying, warriors screaming, and magic flashing in the most varied of any genre: military fantasy!

With all that being said, I'd like to focus on a few stories that really grabbed my attention.

First, "Ashes and Starlight" by David Farland was a story that began slowly, took a bit of concentration to understand the dynamics of the situation and the characters, but then moved along quickly to a furious conclusion. And while the action and adventure was enjoyable, what this tale did best was introduce me to the Runelord universe; a place that, without a doubt, I'll be visiting again in the near future.

"The Fixed Stars" by Seanan McGuire impressed in its ability to walk the fine line between fantastical and mysterious. This October Daye story was filled with magical beings, god-like creatures, a war between the gods and their children, and the boundless hope that through destruction the future could be saved. It was intricate, elegant, and enveloping in its fairy tale construction but endowed with enough visceral combat to keep any military fan happy. Great story.

"The Smaller We Are" penned by John Helfers focused on the remnants of fairy fighting a losing battle with the hordes of humanity. And while the combat comes at you furiously and frequently, it is the philosophical undertones dealing with humanity's desire to rule over or destroy everything we see that raises this one above the rest.

"Rising Above" is an effort by Sarah A. Hoyt which mesmerizes in its alternative history setting and fantastical creatures, similar to Naomi Novik's Temeraire series.

"A Cup of Wisdom" by Joseph Zieja was a fantasy filled with philosophical lessons, as a young boy going into his first battle learns not only about himself but also about those he faces.

"Words of Power" is an alternative fantasy future dreamed up by Wendy N. Wagner where world war has erupted and magic has turned warfare into one of magical constructs striving against one another. And it is the role of our guide Kadar to help repair and return these behemoths of magical might to the front lines to

hold off the enemy.

In “Deadfall” Nancy Fulda introduces a reader to a land tormented by screaming savages brought to the land upon their sky-rafts and pushed around the globe as they live upon the floating islands of the sky. Oh, and magic rains from that same sky.

John R. Fultz carefully crafts the tale of “Yael of the Strings”, and how some bad luck on his part led him down the path to immortality.

“First Blood” allows lovers of Elizabeth Moon’s Paksenarrion to return to that world, following along behind a young squire who finds himself riding toward his first battle.

And my personal favorite was “Bone Candy” by Glen Cook. This novella is set in the Black Company universe between *The Black Company* and *Shadows Linger*, taking a brief look at the continued adventures of my favorite mercenary company as they help Lady retake her empire from the vanquished rebel forces and somehow keep from getting too embroiled in the constant backbiting and political machinations of the Taken. It was a story I’d longed to read ever since becoming a fanboy of the series way back in the 1980s, and I can only hope it might be a sample of things to come with this untold history of the Black Company.

Overall, *Shattered Shields* was exactly what I envisioned it being: a book filled with military fantasy fun. Sure, I did not love every story as much as I did my fix of the Black Company, but there were a number of tales that really surprised and enthralled me. So definitely give this one a try, because I’m sure there is something in this book that you will fall in love with.

I received this ARC from Netgalley and the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. I’d like to thank them both for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Shattered Shields (October Daye #8.1), Jennifer Brozek (Editor), Bryan Thomas Schmidt (Editor), Seanan McGuire (Contributor), Larry Correia (Contributor), Elizabeth Moon (Contributor), Sarah A. Hoyt (Contributor), Glen Cook (Contributor), David Farland(Contributor) , Robin Wayne Bailey (Contributor), John R. Fultz (Contributor), Dave Gross (Contributor), Wendy N. Wagner (Contributor), James L. Sutter (Contributor), Annie Bellet (Contributor), Joe Zieja (Contributor), Cat Rambo (Contributor), Gray Rinehart (Contributor), John Helfers (Contributor), Nancy Fulda (Contributor)

Michael Cummings says

For all the fantasy and short fiction I read, I rarely read fantasy short fiction. The Shattered Shields anthology aptly filled this void in my reading, bringing together both familiar and unfamiliar authors. Like any collection of short fiction, not all of the story worked for me. The ones that did resonate, though, were especially astounding. Even considering myself well read, I was surprised at how many of the authors and

worlds on display were new to me.

I can't give a rundown of every story in the collection, but here are some of my favorites.

Starlight and Ash - David Farland. I've heard much about Farland over the years, but this was actually my first Farland story. While new to the world, I had no trouble diving in and immersing myself in his world.

The Fixed Stars - Seanan McGuire. There's something about the Celtic pantheon that has always seemed both exotic and familiar, and this story was no different.

Keeper of Names - Larry Correia. I've read some of Correia's Monster Hunter books, but this was the first time I've seen him write fantasy. The story was a little predictable, but still a fun read.

Words of Power - Wendy Wagner. This story could have led the collection in my opinion. I'd certainly read a full length novelization by Ms. Wagner. A mashup World War 1 and golems set in an alternate history, this was a really great story.

Hoofsore and Weary - Cat Rambo. Come on, Cat Rambo says it all. This story of centaurs on the march was a great story and star in this collection.

Vengeance - Robin Wayne Bailey. Woof - magic and death gods tickle a spot in this story. For a short story, it packs an amazing punch in a short amount of space.

There are of course more stories than these, including a Glen Cook Black Company story (Bone Candy). On average, the successes in this anthology were in the majority, making this a worthy read. The stories were consistently on theme, something you don't always see these days, while interpretations of that theme were varied enough to keep the stories fresh most of the time.

Special thanks to NetGalley and Baen books for the opportunity to read this book.

Ina says

Review of The Fixed Stars

2.5 stars

I'm sorry to say it, but even though this short story was told from my favorite character's perspective, I didn't enjoy it very much. It's not because the story was bad - it wasn't. Wars, fights and betrayals are just not my cup of tea.

Kelly says

Shattered Shields is an anthology of military fantasy edited by Bryan Thomas Schmidt and Jennifer Brozek. Included are seventeen new stories from such well-known authors as Glen Cook, Elizabeth Moon and David Farland. Some are set in established worlds, others in new universes. It's a wide selection of tales dark, light,

serious and humorous. Swords and sorcery, hack and slash. About half-way through the anthology, I did have to put it aside for a couple of days. I found it hard to consider each new story with a fresh perspective but I did actually read every single one of them, which is unusual for me. I'm not sure I've ever completed an anthology read without skipping at least one story.

The title of the anthology is taken from the first story, "Ashes And Starlight" by David Farland. Set in the Runelords universe, this story is easy to fall into. A prisoner of the Knights of Mystrarria proves himself to his captors by saving the king's daughter twice and uncovering a secret that may save the kingdom as well. In return, the king grants his daughter's request. The captive will be trained as a guard but she is warned to keep her distance, for

"He is a soldier, a shield. In times like those that are to come, such shields will be easily shattered."

I liked this story, and was intrigued enough to conduct a little research. It doesn't look as if the tale of Dval (the prisoner) and Avahn (the princess) is continued anywhere else, but the flavour of the universe was well-represented enough in "Ashes And Starlight" that I could easily imagine myself becoming immersed in any of the available novels.

I generally choose three or five stories to talk about in an anthology review. Those that stand out from the crowd and encourage me to fill my already overflowing bookshelves with more books. It's going to be difficult to constrain myself to so few recommendations this time 'round, particularly as I read every story in the anthology. Accordingly, I will keep my notes brief.

The next absolute standout story for me was "The Keeper Of Names" by Larry Correia. I was looking forward to this entry as I really appreciate Larry's sense of humour. I've been following his blog for a while and have enjoyed his 'Monster Hunter' books. The humour in "The Keeper Of Names" is subtly interwoven and very dry. It makes the story lively and the characters more real and accessible. It's a simple tale. The casteless are planning a rebellion. The announcement that a Protector of the Law will be arriving soon advances their schedule. A stranger appears first and gives advice to Keta, the leader of the rebellion, before ultimately passing on more than Keta bargained for.

There was a great sense of history and background to this story, none of which overwhelms the reader. At no point did I feel I had started reading a book in the middle, which is the fault of so many short stories. It's difficult to build a world in so few words. Larry Correia manages it beautifully here and I would definitely look for more epic fantasy from him.

Sarah A. Hoyt has been a favourite of mine for years. I adore her 'Darkship' novels and have formed the habit of haunting her blog while I wait for the next entry in that series. Her entry here, "Rising Above", introduced me to a new universe, one populated by dragon-shifters. I'm hooked. Coincidentally, I found two books in her 'Shifters' series in the library bin only a day after I read this story. They are both now safely tucked into that teetering pile of books I call my 'To Be Read' shelf.

Air supremacy changed hands between the Germans and the Allies several times during World War I. "Rising Above" puts a different spin on events by introducing dragon-shifters into aerial combat. Shapeshifting is a treasonous offence. Captured by his own people, Freiherr Manfred Von Richthofen argues that his shifting cannot be responsible for the volume of magic detected. Even after two more dragon-shifters are captured and brought in, the equation is still unbalanced. Manfred makes a suggestion and after proving his theory, he and his fellows are inducted into a new aerial squad.

This story is quick and concise, giving just enough detail to invest the reader in a new world and perhaps entice them to read further. One of my favourites from this collection.

“A Cup Of Wisdom” by Joseph Zieja is the sort of short story I hope to find in every anthology. A story that was born to be a short story, no more, no less. Would I read the novel if I could? Sure, but I got so much from this simple tale that the idea of reading on is largely irrelevant. This story is about a concept, an idea. The characters and their interactions frame that.

A boy and his father on the eve of battle share a ritual cup. Every time the boy drinks, he falls into a vision of war. He is a commander by default, one who is betrayed and a simple soldier crushed in the first rush. The boy believes his father is working to discourage his desire to fight. Rather, his father aims to teach him what war really is, and to pass on the idea that he will never be ready, no matter the number or value of his lessons. The last vision in particular drives home this point. I’m not going to share it here; it wouldn’t necessarily spoil the story, but the boy’s reaction to this last glimpse of what war means is what makes this story so special.

Another tale of alternate history set during World War I, “Words Of Power” by Wendy N. Wagner inserts giant golems into the conflict. One of the golem mechanics finds a way to animate one of the machines she loves. During the process, she becomes a part of the corps herself. This is a short, encapsulated story with a good dose of action.

“Yael Of The Strings” by John R. Fultz stands out from the collection because the hero of the tale is not a warrior. After spending the night singing courage to troops, a minstrel watches the infantry cut down by a plague of spiders that arrive with the dawn. A pike and sword are thrust into Yael’s hand and he is ordered to fight. He learns that the enemy values something other than holy spiders. When he takes that knowledge back to the queen’s palace, he is knighted, given to the griffon he saved and taken in to the confidence of the knight who bid him to fight.

The missing element in this collection was addressed by the story “Bonded Men” by James L. Sutter. There are many reasons to go to war and many reasons a man or woman will fight. Being as I am the romantic sort, I find stories where a warrior fights for love to be the most powerful, whether that love is for a partner, a family or something broader. The Bonded Legion is a legendary troop of mercenary warriors. They fight for coin, pledging their loyalty to the highest bidder. Their honour is not for sale, however.

What makes this legion special is the fact that they fight in pairs. Each pair are lovers and they share a bond that makes them stronger together, on the field and off. When the legion is ambushed, half of the men are either killed or captured, leaving broken pairs and broken hearts scattered across the field. The warlord that captured these men believes he can tarnish the honour of those remaining by setting a bargain. He will release those they love, if the legion will switch sides.

This story set such an unusual twist on traditional military fantasy. Needless to say, I loved it. The battle scenes were exciting and the emotion was finely wrought. The questions of love and honour beautifully answered. I would love to read more stories set in this universe.

The anthology ends with two stories that are sure to please fans of Glen Cook and Elizabeth Moon who both deliver tales set in the well established universes of the Black Company and Paksearrion. I enjoyed both stories, but found Elizabeth Moon’s more captivating. It’s the tale of a young man out to prove himself. Coming of age tales are amongst my favourites and this one reminded me of why I enjoyed the ‘Paksearrion’ books so much.

If you like military fantasy, *Shattered Shields* is an awesome collection. It's not a doorstopper, though in the age of electronic books, size isn't as much of an issue unless you have your eye on the percentage marker at the bottom of the screen. Still, at 260 pages, this is not a tome that will collect dust on the nightstand. It's an easily digestible volume with a good mix of stories. The introduction by the editors clearly illustrates their enthusiasm for the genre and the biographies that pad the end have plenty examples of further reading.

Written for SFCrowsnest.

Beth Roberts says

I really cannot laud Seanan McGuire's talent enough. Her October Daye series appears on the surface to the casual reader as yet another in a multitude of fluffy urban fantasy series.

One would be dead-wrong in going with that assumption, as this dark and richly crafted tale affirms.

I have only read through Book 4 of the series, and I really would not recommend reading this short story, found in the compilation "Shattered Shields" any sooner than that. This is the story of the Luideag, here referred to as both Antigone and Nimue, with an appearance by her great-grandson, Emerys and her brother, Blind Michael, in a time-almost-before-time. Blind Michael is not yet the monster he will become in *An Artificial Night*, October Daye #3.

The Luideag remains one of my favorite McGuire characters. This story is but one of many reasons why. I look forward to continuing her history and the burdens she bears. I hope there is much more to come.

XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

Overall rating: 3.48273333 stars. Yes, I did have to use my waterproof calculator to figure this out.

Arthropodic disclaimer (updated April 6, 2018): I got this collection because it features a story from a semi-crappy series called the **Mostest Awesomest Black Company of Shrimpy Gloriusness** (MABCoSG™), by some semi-talented guy called **Glen Cook is a God** (GCiaG™). I ~~might~~ did bother to read the shorts by Annie Bellet and Larry Correia (because reasons) ~~in the near future, provided my murderous children leave me the fish alone, and don't get involved in yet another silly skirmish with one of their buddies from the Marianas Trench Abyssal Plain~~, since I was finally able to find a babyshrimp-sitter for my homicidal kids and get some glorious time off and stuff.

*Trevor here is a real cutie, isn't he? Best shrimp-sitter ever. He'd be the perfect addition to the **Plain of Fear Menagerie** (PoFM™), too.*

But anywayyyyyy, here goes and stuff:

? **Bone Candy** by [insert preemptive DUH here] Glen Cook:

? Rating : 4 stars. *And a half of a quarter.*

Post-disclaimer pre-crappy non review disclaimer: very disjointed this thing shall be. And mostly pointless. And longer than the short story it pathetically intends to non-review, too. Because my two grey cells are not quite them little selves these days and stuff. Quite welcome you are.

You can never go wrong when a Black Company short opens with **Croaker** my **Croakie** playing yet another game of tonks with some of my favorite **mercenary babies**. I mean, I could read about these guys **cheating at playing cards** for all of subaquatic eternity and never get bored. Anyway, I knew something was up the second I realized my **Two Favorite Bickering Award Winning Sorcerers Ever** (TFBAWSE™) Goblin and One-Eye were away. Together. As my buddy Otto pointed out, *"Them two are gone together, that could be bad."* **Truer words were never spoken and stuff**. So. My TFEBAWSE™ were very fishily absent, obviously doing very fishy stuff. Then **a guy called Two Dead showed up**. Two Dead. Most scrumpalicious name ever (view spoiler). So **this guy**—who, according to my Croakie *"needed more legs and eyes to complete himself"* (don't ask)—is a **Whisper goon**, hence a **Lady goon** (if you don't know who Whisper or Lady are, well, what can I say, your life sucks and has no meaning and stuff), and momentarily in charge of **supervising my mercenary babies**.

My thoughts exactly.

So Two Dead interrupts—very rudely, if you ask me—the tonks game. And then **stuff happens**. Don't ask me what, I have no idea. I mean, this story was **kinda sorta confusing**. Which is pretty much a given in any **Glen Cook is a God of Delicious Bewilderment Narrative** (GCiaGoDBN™). Still, I must admit that this one even beats The Dragon Never Sleeps on the **Cook Scale of Total and Complete Bafflement** (CSoTaCB™), which should tell you something. But since I don't give a fish about feeling like a **retarded moron** when I read **Wondrous Cook Stuff** (WCST™), this mystifying state of sheer discombobulation didn't bother me at all. **My point being** (because yes, I do have a point, thank thee very much): I have no bloody shrimping idea what really happened in this story, but **I can tell you that**:

① I lurves **My Grumpy Sarcastic Croakie the Honey Bear** (MGSCtHB™) ? ← this, translated to *disgusting, non- nefarious speak* = ?, just so you know.

② **Suicidally** homicidal (or was it homicidally suicidal? I forget) bugs with humongous jaws crawling out of, um, people's, um, **nostrils** are slightly yummy.

③ There's a **walking building** called Buzzard Neck.

④ And a few **most exquisite references** to bloody shrimping Port of Shadows!!!!!!
Aaaaaaahhhhhh!!!!!! Aaaaaaahhhhhh!!!!!!

Yes, this is a perfectly sane and normal and controlled reaction to the imminent release of a new Glen Cook is a God book ← this in case you were wondering.

⑤ **Not everything** is what it seems and vice-versa and versa-vice.

⑥ There's a **magic munchkin** with a turd brain.

⑦ Also, there's **stuff**.

⑧ Also, also, there's **more stuff**.

⑨ **Bye now** [insert collective (if a little barnacled) sigh of slightly huge relief here].

⑩

? **The Keeper of Names** by Larry Correia:

? **Rating** : can't remember 3.5648 stars. *I think. Probably. Can't really, um, you know, recollect and stuff.*

My excuse for reading this one? I slightly enjoyed Monster Hunter International and wanted to read something else by Correia and saw that there was **one of his stories** in this collection and thought I might read it and stuff because I sort of enjoyed Monster Hunter International, and thought...**Sorry, what?** Oh, you get the idea? Clever, clever Little Barnacles. **Move on we shall, then.**

Good news! I just remembered I seemed to remember (with clear clarity) the **rating** I wanting to give this short, so yay and stuff! **3.5648 stars it is!** The story itself isn't worth more than **3 miserably pathetic little stars**, to be disgustingly honest, BUT. This is kinda sorta my **unofficial biography**. Yes it is. Don't believe me? **Check this out:**

"THE DEMONS MUST BE EMERGING FROM THE SEA AGAIN."

That would be my murderous children, yes.

"I've seen the ocean beasts myself. Only a fool would be unafraid."

Truer words were never spoken. One should be very afraid indeed, whenever I unleash my homicidal babies on the world.

"It was demons from the Haunted Sea."

Which, in Shrimp Talk, loosely translates to mean: "They were killer crustaceans from Sarah's Subaquatic Kingdom." ← no, I will not be charging you for this simultaneous translation. You are quite welcome and stuff.

"If it is demons, and we're raided, the warriors are to protect the master's household first, then the town, then the livestock next, and once the cows and pigs are safe, only then see to the casteless quarter."

Two things, my good man: 1/If it is my Decapodic Army of Doom (DAoD™), **RUN** and 2/You might want to rethink your **Save the Bovines Before the Plebe Priorities** (StBBtPP™). I mean, I'm slightly nefarious

and stuff, but even I don't treat my ~~slaves~~ boarders with as much **derogatory disregard** as you do. You puny humans really have no heart. Quite **tragic** this is indeed.

Don't ask.

So, you see, all this stuff here ? being obviously about my **gloriously ruthless life**, I could not NOT rate it lower than **3.5648 stars**. Even the lowliest of barnacle would understand that. **But anyway**.

Yes, it's true, this story could have been much **cooler** and stuff, if it had been much **longer** and stuff, because the world has **potential** and stuff. But it wasn't (much cooler, I mean), so it wasn't (much cooler, I mean). It was pretty, well, **forgettable and stuff**. (view spoiler) Still, there was some pretty yummy, err, what's the **technical term** for it? Let me think for a minute there...Oh yes, "stuff!" That's the word I was looking for! So, yes, there was some **pretty yummy stuff** that played in Correia's favor here. Stuff like **blood**. And **gore**. And **severed limbs**. And **spilled guts**. And, as any subaquatic overlord (or Cute Little Gertrude, for that matter) will tell you, **one can never go wrong with spilled guts**.

Ergo, this might not be a **very faithful rendition** of my devilishly criminal, ferociously depraved life, but it's **mildly entertaining and stuff**. If in a slightly, um, **you-read-it-you-forget-about-it way** and stuff. And now **toodeloo and stuff**.

? **Invictus** by Annie Bellet:

? **Rating** : 2.8759 stars. *Not that I remember much about this story (sounds familiar? It should) and stuff. But I do remember it wasn't super cool and stuff. So there.*

Why did I read this one, you ask? Because I ~~thought it was about rugby~~ am a moderate fan of Annie Bellet's Twenty-Sided Sorceress series and have always wanted to read **one of her fantasy stories** and stuff. Alas, this was not the **Piece of Utter Awesomeness** (PoUA™) I very naively expected.

It was **reasonably unexciting**, in an "I'd rather be getting it on with an anemic barnacle" kind of way, but I've read **much, much, MUCH worse** stuff. Trust me on that one. Or check my DNF shelf. Yeah, that works, too. Anyway, this wasn't **terribly fascinating** mostly because it felt like it was nothing but ~~part of a paragraph in the first chapter~~ in a full-length novel. Which felt kind of like, you know,

Nevermind.

What kinda sorta saved this story is that it's about ~~half of a quarter~~ of a naval battle. And naval battle stuff never fails to remind me of stuff like The Sea Hawk and The Crimson Pirate and Captain Blood and stuff. Which I've **always slightly liked** since I was a newborn nefarious baby and stuff. Also, **sea creatures**. Not nearly as cool as my murderous crustaceans, mind you, but one has to **laud authors** who do one the great honor of mentioning some of their **third cousins seven times removed** in their work and stuff. Even if only in passing.

What did **slightly discombobulate me** here is that the main character's name is Alonso Xabi. Xabi Alonso

(please note the very tricky reversed trickiness) being a very famous Spanish **soccer player**. So you can imagine my **moderate befuddlement** whenever I read the MC's name. I mean, I came here expecting to read about **hardy rugby**, and what did I get? A story about a **wimpish soccer player** leading a naval battle.

My thoughts exactly.

Ergo, unless you like **silly soccer players** who enjoy pretending they're Errol Bloody Shrimping Flynn while holidaying above **MY subaquatic domain** (quite a risky move, by the way), I'd probably advise you to NOT perhaps read this story. **Maybe**.

Emily says

I picked this up for the Seanan McGuire piece, but found myself plunged into many different worlds in the other stories as well. I enjoyed nearly all of them, and was particularly happy with the diversity in the pieces.

Althea Ann says

** Ashes and Starlight (Runelords) by David Farland

Number of 'Runelords' books read by me before reading this story: 0. Number I'll read after having read this story: yeah, still likely 0.

'Classic' fantasy with a very 80's feel, mixed with 'alien-invasion.' Almost felt like a tie-in to a D&D-style game. The story is action-oriented, with a captive warrior-prince, a buffoonish king, and a winsome young princess. It felt like an episode from a longer story, not a self-contained piece. The writing is a bit clunky overall, including misspelled faux-German, and some odd word choices.

Checking out the full-length books in this series, well, sometime WYSIWYG. If covers like this appeal to you, you will probably enjoy: <https://d.gr-assets.com/books/1388210...>

** The Fixed Stars (October Daye) by Seanan McGuire

A mix of Welsh myth and Arthurian lore appear in this tale of a besieged castle of Brocéliande, and a Nimue who betrays her native Faerie. This is apparently a tie-in to McGuire's other work; and I think it might work better in context. As it was, I remained somewhat uninvolved in the characters and uncertain why they might be making the decisions they do.

*** The Keeper of Names by Larry Correia

Like the previous selection, this felt like a prequel to a larger story. Keta is a casteless man in a rigidly structured society. He's planning a bloody rebellion against his masters. However, just when his uprising is planned; a powerful enforcer arrives in town. Coincidence - or not? Plans are thrown into chaos, but after a mysterious visitor, the way things turn out promises more adventure to come.

Not bad - but not impressive enough to get me to immediately seek out more from this author, either.

** The Smaller We Are by John Helfers

Faerie is at war against the humans who are destroying the forests to build villages and cities. I didn't feel like the story contained anything new, and the writing was rather clunky. Reminded me a bit of a blow-by-

blow transcription of a D&D-style battle: each character has different 'powers,' etc. The setting felt very vague - not sure if it's our world or an alternate one.

*** Invictus by Annie Bellet

Yet another one that's definitely part of a larger work. This is one-half of a naval engagement. A ship carrying two non-human ambassadors with gifts and a treaty to be ratified, is attacked by two legendary opposing warships. Outgunned, it will take clever strategy and cooperation between the seamen and the, well, sea-men, just to survive, let alone succeed. This would be just fine as a chapter in a novel, but there's not enough here to be fully successful as a stand-alone piece.

*** Rising Above by Sarah A. Hoyt

Germany, WWI. A couple of soldiers have tried, unsuccessfully, to hide the fact that they are were-dragons: shapeshifting is shameful, illegal, and punished by death. However, in a dungeon cell, a realization occurs that may change both their fate - and the direction of the war.

**** A Cup of Wisdom by Joseph Zieja

A father prepares his young son for war by giving him magical visions of past battles. Really nicely done; the brief 'visions' are very immersive and powerful for such short segments. I felt the boy's resentment, confusion, and wavering convictions. I remain uncertain as to whether this is a winning strategy for the characters, but as a piece of writing I very much enjoyed it.

The first piece in this book that I felt was emotionally moving.

*** Words of Power by Wendy N. Wagner

In this alternate-history piece, an American-Hungarian alliance is fighting the French. There's a fierce competition to remain one step ahead of the enemy, in both technology and magic - which here, comes in the form of ceramic-enhanced fighting golems. The focus is on one overworked woman, doing her utmost to keep this military equipment serviced and functional - even under fire. Not bad at all.

*** Lightweaver in Shadow by Gray Rinehart

Unexpectedly, when the tough soldiers they accompanied fall in battle, a couple of young boys - one literally a little drummer boy - are the last survivors of their group. Now they must use talents of stealth to try to accomplish the final mission they were tasked with.

*** Hoofsore and Weary by Cat Rambo

A rag-tag band of military survivors seek to retreat to safety through dangerous territory. Insubordination, hunger, and stress make their difficult task even harder. The soldiers just happen to be female centaurs (and one snake-handling witch). This story was very much what I was expecting from the theme of the anthology. Pretty good.

*** Vengeance (Frost) by Robin Wayne Bailey

A classic-style sword-and-sorceress tale, which I felt would've fit right in to Marion Zimmer Bradley's extensive anthology series. (And indeed, checking the bibliography, I see that Bailey's been featured in 'Swords and Sorceress' more than once!) This story is a tie-in to the 1980's 'Frost' trilogy, which I haven't read.

*** Deadfall by Nancy Fulda

Villages are being attacked by hordes from the sky... One remote outpost's military leader notices that they don't seem like normal attackers... are they possibly bewitched into their aggression? He risks leaving his post, against orders, to bring the dismaying news to the King. This is another story that feels like the

beginning of a novel.

*** Yael of the Strings by John R. Fultz

After a disastrous rout, a minstrel is pressed into military service. I very much liked the minstrel as a character, and his strength and doing what he must - and incorporating his natural talents into what he must do of necessity - but the sword-and-sorcery battle action is a little cheesy. ("Ghothian" wizards that control spiders? That's... pretty goth, I guess.)

*** The Gleaners by Dave Gross

Another classic-feeling sword-and-sorcery tale, but this one contains some nicely original touches and some very horrific images. Three partners make their living collecting the valuable magic from enchanted weapons that are found on the field after a bloody battle. It's dangerous and unpleasant work - but becomes even more so when one day they encounter a witch.

*** Bonded Men by James L. Sutter

An argument against the idea that gay people in the military will weaken an army, harking back to the Greek idea that men will fight fiercely for their lovers. Of course, here it's portrayed in a classic fantasy setting.

**** Bone Candy (Black Company) by Glen Cook

This one is yet another in this collection that feels more like an introduction to a longer story than a complete work. However, in this case, I don't really care. I really enjoy the Black Company tales, but I didn't feel that a previous familiarity with the series is necessary to enjoy this. I was quickly engaged by this episode featuring the down-and-dirty mercenaries and some sly and slippery wizards.

**** First Blood (Paksenarrion) by Elizabeth Moon

Moon is deservedly one of the biggest names in military fantasy, and this anthology closes on a high note with this selection. Set in the world of her 'Paksenarrion' series, fans will find tie-in of interest, but the story fully works as a stand-alone. (Yes, this is how it's done!) The tale is a classic theme: young yet noble squire is sorely tested and rises to the occasion in battle, gaining the respect of his men and a new level of maturity. The execution makes it a strong and enjoyable piece.

Many anthologies seem to start with a bang and then fizzle out... my personal experience with this one was the opposite; I felt like it got stronger as it went along...

Many thanks to NetGalley for the opportunity to read...

Maria Dimitrova says

Review only for *The Fixed Stars* .

The Fixed Stars is a short story set in October Daye's world about a 1500 years before the events in the series. It's told from the point of view of my favourite side character the Luidaeg. Back then she was still going by the name given to her by her parents - Antigone but she was already bound by her sister's geas. In this story she betrays Faerie to ensure the future of all mixed-bloods and in thus making sure that our favourite changeling will be born and let to live. The story is very short but it gives an unique perspective on Faerie and how far back the corruption goes. Just for that it's worth reading. Add to the mix a cameo from Blind Michael before he became the monster we see in the main series and it becomes a must read for all of

Toby's die-hard fans.

Evgeny says

Please note: this review will be updated as I read more stories from the anthology.

So as I mentioned this is an anthology of short fantasy stories. The collection consists of the following:

The Keeper of Names by *Larry Correia*.

In an oppressive medieval society a rebellion is brewing among its lowest cast (slaves). Suddenly a guy shows up among rebels who seems to have overall cynical (or realistic, depending on the point of view) attitude toward the whole revolution thingy. Can he convince others before the point of no return is reached?

It was 3 stars read: decent, but nothing to write home about. One of the scenes comes straight from the original Star Wars movie - and I am not saying this is bad. Entertaining, but ultimately forgettable.

Bone Candy (Black Company) by *Glen Cook*.

The tale takes part between the first and the second books of the main series. A whole lot of familiar faces are back, including Captain, Lieutenant, Elmo, Silent, Otto, Hagop, Goblin, and One-Eye. The Company is occupying (resting in?) a small town mentioned before in another short story. It feels practically like a vacation except that the Company got itself an overseer from their bitter enemy Whisper and another employee of their common employer, The Lady. It seems very strange and weird happenings keep occurring to the overseer and his bodyguard.

This was **the** reason I got my hands on this anthology. People familiar with my reviews know I love the series. This was way too weird. It looks to me Glen Cook decided to pull of Steven Erikson and wrote the story without bothering to explain anything whatsoever. As the result it was confusing from the very beginning to the very end. The only saving grace was familiar people. Oh, and trademarked Croaker's humor. **3 stars** is the final rating.

So the final rating for now is **3 stars** which I will update later with review of more stories.

Samantha says

Only read The Fixed Stars by Seanan McGuire

While this was a nice glimpse into the Luidaeg's past I really didn't understand the significance of it, but hopefully I found that out soon. In this story there's a battle between Faerie and The Merlin's, and the Luidaeg betrays her own kind, because she knows what will happen if she doesn't. As of right now all these short stories involve either Tybalt or The Luidaeg. I don't why that is, but I do enjoy a look into their pasts. We always get hints of what happened before throughout the series, but I like actually seeing it. This story is very small, but it's something. It also involves a Blind Michael who is still loved by his sister and not crazy which was interesting to see, and that he understood her motives was even more interesting. I just wish we

got more stuff like this. I wish we could get a spin off series in The Luidaeg's POV of the earlier days of faerie; where the children of Maeve and Titania fought each other, and their parents were still around. I want to know more about her and the betrayals of her past! Damn I just want to know more about the Faerie world before the deep realms were sealed and the Kings and Queens went missing. There's so much story and it sucks to only get these small glimpses and the comments they make. I just want so much more!

Beth Cato says

I received an early copy of this book through NetGalley.

Epic fantasy was my preferred genre through my teen years and feels like a cozy read for me. As with most anthologies, this was hit and miss for me, in part because I was not familiar with all of the existing settings that were used and that did make it difficult to follow along sometimes. It was nice to see diversity reflected through the stories, from varied skin colors to bonded pairs of warrior lovers. It definitely felt like a collection of modern epic fantasy stories--a good thing--not the old-fashioned white-washed tales out of the '80s.

My favorite story by far was Elizabeth Moon's "First Blood," set in her Paksenarion series. I have read the full series and am sad it recently ended, and this short story was like a perfect bite of fudge--sweet, cozy, and just the right amount.

Another strong one was Wendy N. Wagner's "Words of Power," which evoked golems, magic, and a machinist in way over her head.

"Cup of Wisdom" by Joseph Zieja shows a boy on the eve of his first battle, being provided a hard lesson by his father. It struck me as odd at first, how it hopped around, but I like how Zieja developed a full perspective of battle and the toll it takes on participants.

Daniel (Attack of the Books!) Burton says

If you're on my Christmas gift list and you read fantasy, I'm sending you a copy of Shattered Shields. It's just that good of a collection.

One of the most surprising and enjoyable selections on my reading list this year, Shattered Shields has something for everyone. In addition to providing hours of enjoyable reading, the collection of stories from authors like Larry Correia, David Farland, Glen Cook, and Seanan McGuire is full of bite-sized portions of fantastical adventure. If commitment is a problem for you, each story gives you a full dose of adventure and daring. If you're looking for new authors, then you'll be pleasantly surprised at high number of quality stories in the collection, including at least a few authors you've not read before.

Jennifer Brozek and Bryan Thomas Schmidt deserve serious credit for finding and curating the collection of thrilling, exciting, and thought provoking tales. Not a single one is a loser and some are among the best short stories I've read.

The premise behind Shattered Shields is simple, but leads to incredible results: a look at the

soldiers—"ordinary and otherwise—struggling against extraordinary odds to survive the day."

In "Ashes and Starlight," David Farland turns to his Runelords series to tell a story about an outcast who must betray his own to survive.

Seanan McGuire's "The Fixed Stars" turns to Irish folktales for a story as heartbreakingly moving as it is moving, weaving myth and mystery.

"The Keeper of the Names" by Larry Correia is his first foray into high fantasy and, as far as I can tell, it bodes well for the novel that the story presages.

"The Smaller We Are" is tragedy done right, and John Helfers puts the spotlight on the very lowest of the soldiers in a fight much bigger than themselves without losing perspective.

"Invictus," by Annie Bellet, was perhaps the most intriguing world in the collection, for me, mixing something of Patrick O'Brian with otherworldly creatures to show a battle on the waves.

If dragons are your thing, then "Rising Above" by Sarah A. Hoyt, which places the legendary beasts in a World War I setting, will prick your interest. I'm sure there are more tales where Hoyt got this one.

"A Cup of Wisdom" by Joseph Zieja takes a step back from the glorification of violence and measures the weight of war on the soldier.

"Words of Power" by Wendy N. Wagner is a gritty and well-spun story from the perspective of a golem mechanic who finds herself closer to the front than she wants to be.

In "Lightweaver in Shadow," Gray Rinehart creates a magic system and a hero whose resourcefulness and wits keep him alive when the battle seems to turn against him.

"Hoofsore and Weary" by Cat Rambo is about centaurs caught behind enemy lines, but more, it addresses the conflict and friction between commanders and their new recruits.

"Vengeance" by Robin Wayne Bailey is one of my favorite stories from this collection. In a world that reminded me of Conan the Barbarian's Hyborian Age, Samidar seeks justice and revenge for the destruction of a village.

"Deadfall" by Nancy Fulda follows a soldier on the frontier of the empire as he tries to get to the heart of a threat that seems to be growing in strength. Between floating cities and addictive magic dust, Fulda spins a solid tale and creates fight scenes that were vivid and colorful.

"Yael of the Strings" by John R. Fultz was very fun to read, but left me frustrated at how tidily everything wrapped up. Maybe I wanted the result to be just a little more gray, but Fultz made it just a bit too easy. The story is beautiful, weaving in the importance of music over arms.

Dark and grim, "The Gleaners" by Dave Ross does not end well...for the protagonists. As a story, it's full of awesome and I'll be adding Gross to my list of authors to read more frequently.

"Bonded Men" by James L. Sutter has one of the most innovative ideas I've ever seen in military or fantasy fiction: a military unit entirely composed of gays and their partners. Sutter proceeds on the assumption that

they would fight differently than soldiers who have a family to go home to, and while I'm not sure that I agree, it's an interesting idea.

I've never read Glen Cook before, but his "Bone Candy" selection in *Shattered Shields* was curious enough to get me interested. Long time fans will enjoy this story set in his Black Company universe.

"First Blood" by Elizabeth Moon is a truly wonderful story, a hero's origin tale that I loved from the start. It asks the question common to each soldier: will you rise to the challenge when you are tested? If there's one story you read from the collection, this should be it.

But read them all. *Shattered Shields* is full of great writing, interesting stories, and gripping action. It's well worth adding to your collection or your Kindle.
