



## Dangerous Women

*George R.R. Martin (Editor/Contributor) , Lev Gossman , Gardner Dozois (Editor) , Carrie Vaughn (Contributor) , Joe R. Lansdale (Contributor) , Megan Lindholm (Contributor) , Lawrence Block (Contributor) , Brandon Sanderson (Contributor) , more... Sharon Kay Penman (Contributor) , Lev Grossman (Contributor) , Nancy Kress (Contributor) , Diana Rowland (Contributor) , Diana Gabaldon (Contributor) , S.M. Stirling (Contributor) , Sam Sykes (Contributor) , Pat Cadigan (Contributor) , Caroline Spector (Contributor) , Joe Abercrombie (Contributor) , Megan Abbott (Contributor) , Cecelia Holland (Contributor) , Jim Butcher (Contributor) , Sherrilyn Kenyon (Contributor) , Melinda M. Snodgrass (Contributor) ...less*

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The Dangerous Women anthology contains following stories:

- Introduction by Gardner Dozois
- “Some Desperado” by Joe Abercrombie - A Red Country story
- “My Heart is Either Broken” by Megan Abbott
- “Nora’s Song” by Cecelia Holland
- “The Hands That Are Not There” by Melinda Snodgrass
- “Bombshells” by Jim Butcher - A Harry Dresden story
- “Raisa Stepanova” by Carrie Vaughn
- “Wrestling Jesus” by Joe R. Lansdale
- “Neighbors” by Megan Lindholm
- “I Know How to Pick ’Em” by Lawrence Block
- “Shadows For Silence in the Forests of Hell” by Brandon Sanderson - A Cosmere story
- “A Queen in Exile” by Sharon Kay Penman
- “The Girl in the Mirror” by Lev Grossman - A Magicians story
- “Second Arabesque, Very Slowly” by Nancy Kress
- “City Lazarus” by Diana Rowland
- “Virgins” by Diana Gabaldon - An Outlander story
- “Hell Hath No Fury” by Sherrilyn Kenyon
- “Pronouncing Doom” by S.M. Stirling - An Emberverse story
- “Name the Beast” by Sam Sykes
- “Caretakers” by Pat Cadigan
- “Lies My Mother Told Me” by Caroline Spector - A Wild Cards story
- “The Princess and the Queen” by George R.R. Martin - A Song of Ice and Fire story

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Author :

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# From Reader Review Dangerous Women for online ebook

## Andreas says

Cross-genre (fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, historical fiction etc.) anthology featuring stories about woman. There are lots of excerpts and reviews to be found at [tor.com](http://tor.com)

The broad range of genres working on the same theme is really good and fascinating. Some stories that would have been far worse when standing for its own work very fine here. On the other hand, GRRM's contribution is displaced and probably only for marketing purposes included, leading to a hype that the anthology cannot stand up to.

There are a couple of very good stories to be found and some positive surprises like Sam Sykes story. Most of the authors were new for me and now I want to read more from them. Other stories I will forget about which is the normal way for an anthology.

One general problem I have with the anthology are the editor's introduction to each story and author: They are just a dumb list of works the author has written and where he lives. In most cases, I'd rather read the wikipedia article and skip the introduction. If you want to read an example of good introductions, go for Harlan Ellison!

Overall it deserves 3.5 stars, rounded up - it is not the average 3 stars of the single ratings, because an anthology is more than the sum of its stories.

2.5 \* for fantasy "Some Desperado" from Joe Abercrombie: introduces Sly South from Red Country, set in the First Law world. Only action, no brain food, a bit weak for a short story of 17 pages. This very short story introduces Shy from Red Country who is really a dangerous woman. You don't need to know anything from Abercrombie's other works to enjoy the story. Just don't expect too much from it - there is no extraposition, no real background story, no brain food. Just plain action and you get a feeling for that bad girl.

Read it for free at [Tor.com](http://Tor.com) or as the first story of the anthology Dangerous Women.

3.5 \* for crime fiction "My Heart is Either Broken" from Megan Abbott. A weird crime fiction set in contemporary U.S., told from the point of view of a man whose daughter disappeared while his wife was watching. Suspicions, police and boulevard press poking around, weirdness starts but ends before it is getting horrific. Excellent prose and story arc, in fact much better than Abercrombie's. I've never read anything by Abbott and given the genre she seems to publish in, I won't pick up anything by her. But this particular story balanced out and contrasted the first one very well, so I'm glad to have read it. Quality would be 4 stars, it is just the theme that I don't like.

2 \* for historical fiction "Nora's Song" by Cecelia Holland. Eleanor of Aquitaine's 7 year old daughter observes a catalytic moment in history which sets a long list of major historical events in motion: In 1169, king Henry II of England and Ludwig VII of France met to settle several issues - one of them was about Samuel Becket, another was the betrothal of Eleanor's 12 years old son Richard the Lionheart to Ludwig's daughter Alys and swore oath of fealty concerning Aquitaine to Ludwig. She sees how politics develop between her parents and not everything is going right. The prose was plain and simple, there were too many complicate characters involved to give them their right place. In addition, historical fiction should try to stay correct about historical facts - there was no Germany but the Holy Roman Empire in 1169 and Henry the Lion was Duke of Saxony and Bavaria and not of Germany. Some other glitches concerning names were not

that important. In general, I liked this different perspective but sometimes it just didn't feel right and kind of a cut off of a larger work. At least, you should have a good basic understanding about mediaeval France and England.

4 \* for SF short story "The Hands That Are Not There" by Melinda Snodgrass. So far, this was the best story in the anthology. Prejudice and sexual relationship between races and politics are embedded within a frame story for different perspectives of this SF story: An aristocrat develops romantic feelings for a half-breed stripper (view spoiler).

It feels complete and not as ripped out of context like some of the other stories. Pacing, characterization, setting are all excellent. And the outcome made me think - a task that short stories should achieve at the very least. I haven't read anything by the author and I wasn't impartial at all when she was introduced as a Star Trek and Wild Cards author. But here she showed that she can swing a nice pen.

4 \* for the Urban fantasy novella "Bombshell" by Jim Butcher set in the Dresden Files universe. It doesn't involve Harry Dresden but his female apprentice mage Molly Carpenter trying to find and rescue some vampire.

I haven't read anything from the Dresden files. But I read the first two novels from the Codex Alera series - and lemmied it (read my review if you want to know why). That's why I was a bit hesitant to go for this one knowing that lots of people like the Dresden files. And it was worth the investment:

I had a blast with this story, I really liked it!

It's like popcorn kino, you don't have to think much but enjoy the firework. Butcher managed to build up tension and speed, and I liked the characters. The zoo of Edda's alba (the swartelves), Irish mythology with Fomorians and Sidhe and the usual werewolves etc. was nice.

In contrast to Abercrombie's story, this novella felt more closed in itself instead of a cutout from a larger novel. In fact, I was able to read it as a standalone and didn't need anything to know about the Dresden series.

Just don't expect too much thematic depth but lots of fun and humor.

4 \* for the historical fiction "Raisa Stepanova" by Carrie Vaughn. The author is probably better known for her Urban Fantasy series featuring Kitty Norville and it is interesting how she will proof in a foreign genre. Shooting five enemy aircrafts makes a fighting ace. There have been only two female aces in history - Lydia Litvyak being the first and the protagonist of this short story trying to be the second. Both fight in WWII for a female only USSR regiment. Raisa worries for her brother and for her family - we see how deeply in her letters. A conflict between the state and her brother adds depth to intense fighting scenes in the air where she has to prove double as a woman. Setting and characters in this historical fiction are great and fast pacing action after a longer exposition doesn't let you wish for more.

4 \* for weird fiction "Wrestling Jesus" by Joe R. Lansdale. Nothing religious here! Wrestling stories have a grand tradition in fiction and movies. This is a coming-of-age story like "Karate Kid" but with an emphasis on the old geezer. Wrestling here isn't the soft-porn version that is shown everywhere but a Fight Club version. It is told in a very lively way with perfectly adequate foul language. I just loved the old guys! The dangerous woman isn't the main protagonist, this time - she's a femme fatale in the background wielding voodoo forces to bind the two old guys to her will, fighting every 5 years for her love. She is a catalyst for the lust of the males. And the final fight was epic!

5 \* for "Neighbors" by Robin Hobb aka Megan Lindholm. As a fan of her work, I'm somewhat bias and I'd

have loved to read something from the Farseer's world. We got a weird story, instead. Alzheimer, worried children, a weird mist with an alternate reality creeps in. A perfect contrast to the previous story: slow, thoughtful, melancholic and immensely touching. The prose was perfect and Robin Hobb just nailed the old and slow Sarah's character. The best story in the anthology, so far.

1 \* for the contemporary crime thriller "I Know How to Pick 'Em" by Lawrence Sanders. Married woman hooks up with a man in the bar. Psychological setup, the incestuous mother being the dangerous woman. I was glad that it was that short because I didn't get into the characters and to be honest, I'm glad that I didn't.

5 \* for the cosmere fantasy "Shadows For Silence in the Forests of Hell" by Brandon Sanderson. *Don't kindle fire, don't draw blood, don't run*. Sanderson usually builds a rule-set like this for his magic wielders. Here, forest's inhabitants have to follow those rules to avoid being killed by spirits. Our dangerous woman is the inn-keeper who bounty hunts at night.

After a short introduction, the story turns into an action-heavy page-turner with a great, tense and dark atmosphere. I'll probably have to re-read it another time to get all the hints and turns.

Nearly as good as The Emperor's Soul. Sanderson proved with this work that he is able to deliver shorter works along his doorstopper novels.

He surprised me because I'm used to a lighter tone in his work - here we have Dark Fantasy!

1.5 \* for the historical fiction "A Queen in Exile" by Sharon Kay Penman. Some 20 years after "Nora's Song", the *stupor mundi* ("wonder of the world") is born - or the antichrist, depending who you ask: Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and Holy Roman Emperor. Much has been written about the Night at Jesi when he was given birth publicly by his mother Constance. She really isn't a dangerous woman here and the author has to motivate her entry in an epilogue. I found the historical setting to be interesting. But the characterizations are shallow, the dialogues dry and the story arc is boring. I'd rather have read a historical text book.

2 \* for contemporary fantasy "The Girl in the Mirror" by Lev Grossman set in his The Magicians world. I didn't read Grossman yet and I don't need a Harry Potter copy. Towards the end it was hard to follow and it wasn't that imaginative.

4 \* for post-apocalyptic SF novelette "Second Arabesque, Very Slowly" by Nancy Kress. I loved her novella/novel Beggars in Spain and yearned for this story: Decades after a decrease ripping female fertility, there are only a few packs hunting and gathering in upper Manhattan's Central Park and Lincoln Theater. Kress is strong in dialogue, characterization and builds a vivid and tense atmosphere. She mixes a bizarre setting of survival rules concentrating around fertility and ballet, contrasting beauty and brutality.

3 \* for contemporary crime fiction "City Lazarus" by Diana Rowland. New Orleans isn't the same anymore when the Mississippi changed its course. This is the setting for a noir post-apocalyptic romance. We see a femme fatale love triangle between the corrupt police officer Danny, his rich "business"-partner and stripper Delia. The setting and dialogues were good, characterization of Danny was great but the story lacked a bit and was predictable and not well-motivated.

2 \* for historical romance novella "Virgins" by Diana Gabaldon. This historical romance novella set within the Outlander series is published in Dangerous Women.

I've read the first novel in the series Outlander ages ago and don't remember much. But you don't need much from that background to enjoy the novella.

Jamie Fraser and his friend Ian are part of a mercenary gang convoying a Jewish bride and her dowry from 18th century Bordeaux towards her wedding in Paris. But the bride being the dangerous woman changes the

course of action.

Lots of action alternating with some more quiet passages.

This is not really historical fiction but a trivial and predictable romance story having a historical atmosphere - meaning, we don't encounter historical persons or events.

I don't know if the bride is the virgin or the Scottish lads are meant by the title. Some of the dialogues were quite funny because of their prudish reluctance. Dialect and slang in the dialogues made it harder to understand for me.

The story was ok for me and I even liked it in-between.

For series-fans it's probably a must and I can see where they'd really like the story. But as I'm not invested in the series (and won't be), it is so very unimportant to be remembered that I rounded it down to 2 stars.

1.5 \* for ghost story "Hell Hath No Fury" by Sherrilyn Kenyon. This contemporary Native American ghost story starts like Blair Witch project . It works within this anthology as it has a complete different tone and style than the other stories so far. But the story arc doesn't manage to get the story scary, it just drowns in moralistic preachery. Worst was the epilogue.

3 \* for alternate history/post-apocalyptic "Pronouncing Doom" by S. M. Stirling set in his Emberverse series. Civilization is broken down, machines don't work anymore (it isn't explained why), people settle in tribes and farm their homeland. In this community, people went for pagan religion. There was a crime that the external leader has to judge - without having an established judicial system. It is only later clear what the crime was - but it is predictable like the punishment for it. More interesting than the story itself were the setting, atmosphere and moral implications. My main problem was the basic assumption that after a year society would change in exactly that way - I found Nance Kress' post apocalyptic setup far more believable. But maybe that is explained better in the novels of the series. Like other stories in the anthology it seems to be cut out of the series.

5 \* for fantasy "Name the Beast" by Sam Sykes is one of the best stories in this anthology. Mother and child go into the forest to complete an initiation ritual - they are hunting a beast. The father wants to make sure that the child accomplishes the task. Sykes works with elliptical constructions to transport emotions and changing perspectives. The masterful prose alone makes the story memorable but also the transported emotions working around the concept of humanity. The surprising and open ending concludes why I think that this is short story how it should be. I haven't read anything by Sykes and now I wonder what I should read by him.

1 \* for detective story "Caretakers" by Pat Cadigan. Two sisters care for their dement mother in the nursing home. The younger sister volunteers at the nursing home and finds out that something is going wrong. It was the second Alzheimer story after Robin Hobb's "Neigbor" but far worse. Pat Cadigan can write perfect stories, she even won this year's Novelette Hugo for The Girl-Thing Who Went Out for Sushi. I just didn't manage to connect to the story, didn't care for the setting or story arc and would have rather read some cyberpunk story from her. The story was completely pointless for me or even illogical.

3.5 \* for super-hero comic story "Lies My Mother Told Me" by Caroline Spector. GR doesn't say anything about the author and wikipedia knows her as a RPG author mainly. This story is set in the Wild Cards Earth during Mardi Gras in New Orleans. The female super-hero Bubbles (former model getting fat to develop her powers) and her daughter are attacked by zombies. This is so fitting - New Orleans plus zombies, I had to laugh! Initially they thought that it was caused by a friend - super-hero Joey is a necromancer. But the real

antagonist just needed money to finance his internet bill for counterstrike gaming. The story turns from joking to a serious, dark and emotional undertaking. The characters developed very good in this setup. It was a nice contrast to the other stories.

3 \* for "The Princess and the Queen, or, the Blacks and the Greens" by George R.R. Martin. It is set 200 years before the A Song of Ice and Fire series, when Targaryen ruled Westeros and some two dozen dragons were alive. A civil war fights for the succession to the throne. Betrayal, murder, blood-baths, everything is in it. There is far more violence than the previous stories in the anthology together. And dragons! Lots of dragons and dragons fighting other dragons. This alone could be a good motivation to read the novella.

On the other hand, it is for hardcore fans, only: GRRM chose to tell the story from a historian point of view. Fans might find the massive list of "historical" characters fascinating, but other readers will get lost in the textbook details. It is well worth the effort as an appendix or in the style of a The History Of Middle Earth Index.

As a story standing for itself it lacks seriously.

I had to give it 3 stars because I'm that nerdy fan - objectively it would be more like 1.5 stars.

Is this a teaser for The World of Ice and Fire?

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### **Amanda says**

I bought this anthology solely for GRRM's short story titled "The Princess and the Queen." My 5 star rating is solely for that short story as it's the only one I've read. Should I read more of the short stories, I'll update this review.

The Princess and the Queen is nothing short of brilliant. It's some of his best writing, so far at least. The story gives us a "history" of the first Dance with Dragons, although a more fitting title would have been the Slaughter of Dragons. The history begins with the death of King Viserys I Targaryen. The chain of events that take place after his death sparks a war within the Targaryen families over who will sit on the throne. This brutal, bloody war over the Iron Throne doesn't end until almost the entirety of Westeros is ravaged, nearly every Targaryen is dead and almost every dragon perishes.

If this is just a taste of what's to come in A World of Ice and Fire then I can see why it's taken so long for that book to exist. Seven Hells, I can't wait for The Winds of Winter.

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### **Autumn says**

Really disappointed with this book. Had anticipated getting some really good bad-ass women stories and was surprised at how many of the stories barely featured women at all. Several had male protagonists and the woman featured spent most of the time off camera and hardly mentioned.

Total stories: 21



Dangerous Women: 6

Maybe if I closed one eye and looked sideways: 6

WTF: 9

story by story it shook out like this:

Some Desperado - Awesome start-out. Exactly what I was looking for. All about a woman, from her perspective. She's bad-Ass with a capital "A". One point to Dangerous Women

My Heart is Either Broken - From a guy's point of view and kind of confusing as the woman in question doesn't end up having killed anyone, but we're left thinking she might...at some point...in the future...and the protagonist needs to watch her? I guess that could be considered "Dangerous". One point to Maybe

Nora's Song - okay. fully admit that I'm not as up on every nuance of European history as I could be, but this seemed more like an excerpt from a novel than a short story...and not a particularly effective one. There are a lot of royal players. Something is definitely up and the Queen appears to be messing with the King. Attempted overthrow? not really enough to go on. Just that the royals pretty much hate each other. A google search filled in some of the blanks about how Dangerous Eleanor of Aquitaine was, but I didn't get anything from this story besides "bitter spouse". One point to WTF

The Hands That are Not There - Again, Male protagonist telling a story about a Stripper who was secretly a covert rebel and plotting to overthrow the government. Nothing is from her point of view and it's all about the guy telling the story. We're even left without knowing if she succeeds. Really? nothing more about her as a character other than Stripper/Secret Agent? One point to Maybe

Bombshells - Loved this one. Not only one, but THREE leading women shaking off their "girlfriend" roles from the main book series and showing their stuff. LOVED having capable women go in with a plan and save the day without tears or blubbery bullshit usually associated with women characters. One point to Dangerous Women

Raisa Stepanova - Starts off on a good note, female fighter pilot in WW2. What frustrated me is that other than her ability to fly a plane and shoot bullets from her plane, the character just allows things to happen to her. A couple small instances of slight bending of orders but then she just sits back and lets everything screw her over. Even how it ends with her crippled and the most she can get is a job teaching? She might be concerning in a plane but a total push-over on the ground. One point to WTF.

Wrestling Jesus - This one just plain sucked when it came to women. It's sort of a coming-of-age story about a boy and a retired boxer. The "Dangerous" woman in this story is just someone good-looking who only dates the winning boxer and that's not our guy anymore. How does having a guy too pathetic to get over a woman who dumped him 40 years ago make her "Dangerous"? One point to WTF.

Neighbors - A portal to a post-apocalyptic world that only elderly Women can see. Two decide to go there instead of being put in a home by their worthless children. While I appreciate the Character of Linda being strong enough to go first into this new land, what exactly makes her "Dangerous"? That she doesn't do what she's told? Independence is "Dangerous"? When did we get to 1984? One point to WTF.

I Know How to Pick 'Em - Male protagonist kills the woman who wanted to get him to kill her Husband. Although we never get her take on things since the whole story is from the Man's point of view, wanting to

kill your husband and taking steps to get there is (I guess) "Dangerous". Predictable and a rip off of every soap opera ever, but kinda "Dangerous". One point to Maybe.

Shadows for Silence in the Forests of Hell - Female bounty hunters? And she's a mother and business owner? Hells Fucking YEAH. Why has it been 5 stories since one of these? One point to Dangerous Women.

A Queen in Exile - Historical royalty again. While I applaud the Queen's decision to give birth and breastfeed in public to prove that her children are actually hers, that's the only thing she really does. Even when she knows her husband is a wanker, she doesn't stand up to him. She doesn't DO anything besides go where she's told even when she knows it's a totally BAD idea. She's shown to be highly intelligent and a very good potential for ruling, but plays the good submissive spouse instead of doing any of those things. "Dangerous"? Hardly. One point to WTF.

The Girl in the Mirror - Smart girl in magic-school plays a prank that kinda gets away from her and she almost gets eaten by a ghost. While the protagonist is spunky and intelligent and a whizz at magic...what is it that makes her any more "Dangerous" than your average sorority sister? One point to WTF.

Second Arabesque, Very Slowly - Post apocalyptic world where women are property and worth only the children they might bear. Fun. Although standing up for yourself and rebelling isn't specifically "Dangerous" in this instance to anyone but yourself, I'm so starved for something that I'm going to get it to this story for Kamikaze Grandma. One point to Dangerous Women.

City Lazarus - Another Stripper. Really editors? There are other professions women can have you know? Another case of a woman using sex to get a guy to do her killing for her. She takes it up a notch for having a big picture plan. Although I would have liked a little more originality, One point to Dangerous Women.

Virgins - Period Piece. Just in case we're not aware enough of a woman's place in this time, the protagonists stop to watch a woman chased down and then raped in public. No one bats an eye. Male protagonists hired to escort a woman to marry against her will. Amazingly enough, she decides to do something about it and escapes to marry who she wants. She tips off bandits to try and raid her Grandfather's goods so she can still live wealthy. Starting to think the editors think women who stand up for themselves and do anything but what they're told are supposed to be "Dangerous"? One point to WTF.

Hell Hath no Fury - Ghost story. Woman cursed a town and kills anyone not possessing of Native American blood who comes near. She kills people so I guess that's "Dangerous" but a ghost story seems like a ripoff since she doesn't have to live with any consequences and her personality is long dead. One Point to Maybe.

Pronouncing Doom - Post-apocalyptic (very popular theme) clans have reformed to try and get some semblance of humanity. Blatant rapist is being tried and sentenced by High Priestess who has to remind everyone that they really should have put a stop to his bullshit month's ago. She sentences him to death and he's executed. "Dangerous" for issuing a well-deserved death sentence or for being in charge? One point to Maybe for an awesome character.

Name the Beast - Woman in this is a trained hunter and killer from a tribal people who are killing anyone who enters her territory. She can go up to unarmed, untrained people and kill them. That makes her "Dangerous" by only the narrowest definition of the word as even she states that this is how all their people are. Dangerous as anyone. She starts to question towards the end and decides that maybe her daughter isn't as totally worthless as she'd thought by not being as good at the slaughtering as she is. How heartwarming. One point to Maybe.

Caretakers - two sisters bust an "Angel of Mercy" type serial killer and then one of them might decide to enlist in this type of work? but maybe not. but maybe SO. WTF in a big way.

Lies my Mother Told Me - Awesome Awesome Awesome female super heroes. Don't know that they needed to throw the lesbian angle in there, but the story was awesome. One point to Dangerous Women.

The Princess and The Queen, or, The Blacks and The Greens - OMG this story would never end. 81 pages of the driest battle accounts I've ever read. It's supposed to be a history account and boy did they deliver with this washed out crap. Yes, one of the claimants was a woman who helped destroy a country in civil war, but the story itself was over-broad and vague. She really doesn't make any grand decisions or anything amazing. The queen just refuses to surrender and then sends everyone she knows to die or kills them herself when her paranoia of being betrayed takes over. There's no fortitude or anything that stand out about her other than wack-a-doodle Targaryen. Oh, and the little paragraph at the end stating that this whole war can be traced back to the Princess showing up the Queen in a better dress at a ball decades earlier? I just threw up a little. Really hope book 6 isn't as phoned in as this story is George. One point to WTF.

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## **Dara says**

Full disclosure: I did not read every story in this anthology.

I liked *most* of the stories I read in this collection about dangerous women. Some stories stuck to the theme better than others. For instance, "Wrestling Jesus" by Joe R. Lansdale was more about an old man teaching a boy to fight more than any dangerous woman. The woman in the story appears briefly and is mentioned one other time.

My favorite stories were "Raising Stepanova" by Carrie Vaughn, a tale about a female Russian fighter pilot in WW2, "Shadows for Silence in the Forest of Hell" Brandon Sanderson (surprise, surprise. I love the Sanderson entry), a story about a middle-aged woman fighting creatures called "shades" and fighting to keep her business, and "The Princess and the Queen" by George R.R. Martin, a short history tale set in Westeros, chronicling the Dance of Dragons.

My real issue with the anthology/stories I didn't like was that they weren't so much about a dangerous women. I suppose that is my fault for having a wrong idea of the anthology and expecting strong female characters.

Overall, not a bad anthology. Maybe I'll go back and read the stories I skipped sometime.

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## **Robin Hobb says**

Caveat: Megan Lindholm has a story in this book. That's me, wearing a different hat. So perhaps it's not fair for me to review this book or give it five stars.

Except that when I read it, I didn't bother much with my own story, as I'd already read it several hundred

times in the course of writing and revising it.

I read the other stories, and found each one to offer me something of value. I would not give each, individual story in this anthology five stars. That would be silly. Each of the stories comes from a different background and author, and not all the stories fit me perfectly. But just as I may not care for taking a nice big bite of raw onion, the bite of onion in a mixed salad may be exactly right. And that's what I find here. That the variety of stories offset one another nicely. Some are very dark, and the Dangerous Women in them are nasty creatures I'd not like to meet. Some of the Dangerous Women have perfectly valid and logical reasons for being dangerous. Some of the stories are from established worlds, and some are entirely new works.

I'd be very surprised if any reader did not find at least one story here that fit him/her perfectly.

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**Sharon ∞🐉 is an emotional book junkie 🐉∞ says**

**\*\*only read Virgins by Diana Gabaldon - 4 ★'s\*\***

Loved reading about Diego and Juan but it makes me realize there's so much more we don't really know about Jamie. It was hard hearing about his early "love" but I got a kick out of their sexual frustrations!

I would definitely recommend this to all Jamie lovers...it's not a must read but why wouldn't you want to read it?

(can June get here any faster??!!)

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**Bookdragon Sean says**

I bought this book for two reasons:

1. George R R Martin's *The Princess and the Queen*
2. Joe Abercrombie's *Some Desperado*

I read them straight away. I've been reading the rest of the book rather sporadically since, adding to this review as time went on. But I didn't want to update it again until they were all finished. And now that I've finished them all, I can safely say that the title of the collection does not fit the stories. Certainly, it fits *some* of the stories. So as a collection it is an epic fail with authors pretty much writing about anything unrelated to the idea behind the book, but that doesn't mean it's a bad book. There's some good pieces in here, and also some very bad ones:

-Joe Abercrombie, *Some Desperado* -(4\*)- This is an action packed story that is, in essence, an encounter between an outlaw and some bounty hunters. This is told from the point of view of Shy, one of the main characters from *Red Country*. The events of this short story appear to have happened before the book due to her perception of Lamb being a coward. Readers of *Red Country* will be aware that Shy is a very dangerous

woman, so this story is a real smack in the mouth of an opener for this book.

-George R R Martin- *The Princess and the Queen*- (5\*)- A sibling rivalry over the matter of succession leaves Westeros soaked in the blood of both man and dragon. This is told as a history rather than a characters point of view and explains how all the dragons died off (The event known as the Dance of Dragons). A must read for those who have read *A Song of Ice and Fire*. I'm keeping my review of this fairly brief because I think this in itself is worthy of its own review. There's much to talk about here!

-Joe R. Lansdale, *Wrestling Jesus*- (5\*)- This is hilariously funny, entertaining and thoroughly gripping. Two men, now in their eighties, meet every five years to have a wrestling match and the winner gets the girl. Jesus always wins though; this time, however, with the help of a new protégé, X-man may stand a chance. This is an extraordinary read and a **very memorable short story**. I like this author's style that much I bought one of his books after reading this. This is the best story in here.

-Melinda Snoddgrass, *The Hands That Are Not There*- (4\*)- What starts as a seemingly boring conversation in a strip club erupts into a short tale of love and woe, of betrayal and injustice. Poor, poor Rohan, I cannot say too much in the way of a review without spoiling the story, though I must emphasize that this is a tantalizing read. Not for the faint hearted.

-Brandan Sanderson, *Shadows For Silence in the Forrest of Hell*- (3\*)- This tale had elements of magic, characters of a treacherous nature and an interesting setting. It's good stuff, but by Sanderson's standards it's a little mundane.

-Nancy Kress, *Second Arabesque, Very Slowly*- (2\*)- This depicts a world in which 99% of women are infertile and thus most of the population has died off. The remnants of society are forced to roam in packs and protect their few fertile women from rival packs. Women are treated as children bearers and nothing more until Guy finds a working TV and a love for ballet. Sounds odd, but it's worth a read.

-Megan Abbot, *My heart is either broken*- (2\*)- This short story revolves around a couple's missing daughter and their attempt to locate her. The dangerous woman is "revealed" at the end, but I called it after the first page. Not an overly remarkable piece of writing. Lorrie was obviously a nut case.

-Cecelia Howard, *Nora's Song* – (3\*)- Though Nora isn't as violent as shy or as unhinged as Lorrie, in her own way she is out of place. To be a woman who wants the same rights as a man, to be a king and a lord, to ride a horse into battle is in its self a dangerous notion for the time. It is one that emits a sense of counter culture in an otherwise prim and proper society. So it's a nice bit of feminism in fantasy.

-Caroline Spector- *Lies My Mother Told Me*- (4\*) – Having previously read some of the Wildcard series, those that were included in George R R Martin's Dreamsongs, I was dubious when reading this because I hated them. This however was excellent. Someone is stealing Hooda Mama's necromancer abilities in order to mess with her friend Bubbles' head. By using her daughter's telepathic abilities they try to repair her emotionally vulnerable state caused by childhood trauma. A fantastic read!

-Jim Butcher, *Bombshells*- (1\*)- I felt like I was missing something with this one. It is told in a familiar, chatty, almost annoying tone with characters that are poorly introduced. I believe this should only be read if you are familiar with the series in which these characters have come from otherwise it may just leave you puzzled as it did me.

-Carrie Vaughn, *Raisa Stepanova*- (2\*)- Raisa is a Russian pilot fighter obsessed with becoming an ace, which is to say, accomplishing the shooting down five enemy planes. It was good to see that it did not consume her, though it did leave the ending a little flat. Not much to talk about here.

-Megan Lindholm (Robin Hobb), *Neighbours*- (1\*)- I was very disappointed with this tale, especially considering the big name that wrote it, I found myself skim reading after about five pages. I gave up after ten. I guess a tale about a missing old woman, told in this way, is just a little bit flat. Sort of odd considering Hobb is one of my favourite fantasy authors.

-Lawrence Block, *I Know How To Pick 'Em*- (2\*)- A woman walks into a bar with the intent of finding someone to kill her husband but she finds someone much worse. And fate takes a turn for the worse for this dangerous woman. This was fairly entertaining, though forgettable.

-Sharon Penman, *A Queen in Exile*- (3\*)- This one had a footnote explaining the why the character was a dangerous woman. (okay?) Why not just have the book evolve around the events that make her a dangerous woman rather than exile, the birth of her son, then explain how she went on to be a dangerous woman in a short paragraph, a little bit silly. That being said I like the style of historical writing, but I just don't think it has a place within this anthology.

-Lev Grossman, *The Girl in the Mirror*- (2\*)- This tale just didn't work for me, it seemed a little childish. The only reason I gave it two stars and not one was because the Harry Potter reference made me laugh.

-Diana Rowland, *City Lazarus*- (3\*) – This gritty, corrupted, crime filled plot left me thinking, “Why?” as the final scene ended.

-Giana Goldom, *Vigins*- (1\*)- I found this annoying to read. The changing POVs in this were confusing as the characters were extremely similar and were only interacting with each other. I did It just didn't do it for me.

-S. M Stirling- *Pronouncing Doom*- (2\*) – A case in a citizen made court for a rapist a not very entertaining to read, full of fiction laws and codes with references to unexplained gods. Far too complex for a short story.

-Samuel Sykes- *Name the Beast*- (2\*)- This is an interesting enough read, though I just couldn't understand the characters mind set or what the girl's mother was talking about in relation to sound. I gave up in the end.

-Pat Cadigan, *Caretakers*- (3\*)- Two sisters are living together whilst their Mum is in a care home. One of them starts to volunteer at the home and consequently some residents have improved health. What going on? Whilst I wouldn't consider the women in this to be dangerous, the story was nevertheless quite good.

So it's a real mixed bag. There's a few in here that are really worth reading but some are just plain bad writing. I don't recommend this book at all. It's too random to be a decent collection.

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## Ashley says

*This was pretty good for an anthology, but I really prefer longer stories, as it really takes a talented author to make me care for characters in such a short period of time, or to have a plot immediately interesting enough to trump my interest in the characters. Short stories also tend more towards the self-important and*

annoying. Anyway, this was worth it just for the Martin and Sanderson stories alone, and there were several others I really enjoyed as well including ones from Robin Hobb (as Megan Lindholm) and Jim Butcher, making it worth it for having to enjoy the stinkers (a surprising number of authors seem to have missed the point of the 'dangerous women' theme, though). Mini-reviews of all stories included below:

**“Some Desperado,” Joe Abercrombie** – Classic Abercrombie. Gritty fantasy world inspired by some other flavor of genre (in this case, Westerns). His prose is always entertaining and his sense of atmosphere is great, but this story lacked narrative urgency for me, which is the main thing I enjoy when I read. Very little backstory on the main character, we only spend a small amount of time with her, and the story moves on. Good, but not great. At least for me. Did however make me want to re-read his First Law trilogy. That thing is great. **3/5 stars**

**“Either My Heart Is Broken,” Megan Abbott** – Missing children, damaged and quirky women: Two of my least favorite things to read about (again, not really surprising, noir isn't really my thing). But this was surprisingly readable, probably because Abbott is good with words, but also because it was so short. There's no way I could have read an entire novel featuring these characters. Actually, reminded me very much of how I felt after reading *Gone Girl*. Very similar tones. **3/5 stars**

**“Nora's Song,” Cecelia Holland** — Reading this, suddenly realized (again) that I know diddly squat about English history. I've heard the name Eleanor of Aquitaine before, but until now knew nothing about her. Had to do some googling as a basis for this story, which was pretty good, although not really my thing, and a bit heavy-handed. Liked the characterization of Nora (the daughter of the estranged King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine). She was smart and fierce, but also appropriately naive to the shit going down around her. Also, according to Cecelia Holland, Henry II was a dickweed. **3/5 stars**

**“The Hands That Are Not There,” Melinda Snodgrass** — My first reaction to this story was, oh yay sci-fi!! Then it immediately got weird. The main story is couched in an unnecessary framing device, the dialogue is really unoriginal (even cliched), and the worldbuilding was really obvious and not nuanced at all. If it weren't for the twist at the end, the story of the lonely rich guy getting conned by a pretty, exotic stripper would have felt even more played out than it did. The first stinker in the collection. And surprising, considering the source (Snodgrass was story editor on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*). **2/5 stars**

**“Bombshells,” Jim Butcher** — The first story in the collection featuring a pre-established world, namely Butcher's Dresden Files series. The story takes place just before *Cold Days*, the most recently released book. Butcher has given us stories featuring the POVs of side-characters before (Murphy, Thomas), and this one was just as fun as those were. Harry Dresden's apprentice Molly has always been an interesting character, and it was gratifying to get a story from her POV. It also functions as way to fill in the blanks between how we left Molly (broken and homeless and on the verge of insanity) in *Ghost Story*, and how we meet her again in *Cold Days*, hooked up with a sweet-ass apartment, courtesy of the svartalves. Don't know how this would read to someone not familiar with the series, though. A large part of the fun for me was checking in with characters I love. **4/5 stars**

**“Raisa Stepanova,” Carrie Vaughn** — Loved the title of this story on a purely phonetic level, then learned it was a name. Takes away a little of the coolness, but not by much. Really enjoyed this one. Haven't read any of Carrie Vaughn's novels (contemporary urban fantasy isn't really my thing, unless it comes highly recommended), but wasn't expecting to get a story about a Russian woman fighter pilot in WWII out of her, especially one that was equal parts funny and suspenseful. This story sucked me in in a way that short stories rarely do, and if it wasn't for the fact that I think she flubbed the ending a little, this would have been my favorite story so far in the collection. **4/5 stars**

**“Wrestling Jesus,” Joe R. Lansdale** — This story reeeally wasn’t my thing. I suppose it was okay, for what it was. It felt like Lansdale was working out his masculinity issues, and the only ladies in the story were horrible, like some macho pig’s idea of what women are. Missed the point of the anthology, as far as I’m concerned. **2/5 stars**

**“Neighbors,” Megan Lindholm**— Well, that was new. And freaky. And kind of heartbreaking. I’ve never read anything by Robin Hobb before (writing under Megan Lindholm here, which is apparently closer to her real name?), although I do have used copies of her Farseer Trilogy ready to go for later this year. I’m not going to say anything about the story itself, because that would ruin it, but I will say that this is the first story in the collection to nail it from back to front. Definitely looking forward to reading more from Hobb/Lindholm in the future. **5/5 stars**

**“I Know How to Pick ‘Em,” Lawrence Block** — The hell was that? Ugh. I really don’t find stories about people who commit murder and do incesty things with family members interesting for their own sake. You have to have other things in a story for me to get behind characters who do these things, and it felt like with this one, that was the main attraction. Like it was this deep revelation that people are fucked up scumballs. Ugh, no thank you. **1/5 stars**

**“Shadows For Silence in the Forests of Hell,” Brandon Sanderson** — As expected from Sanderson, good characters, freakishly detailed and atmospheric worldbuilding with just enough of the familiar and just enough of the new and striking. This story, a sort of fantasy/horror hybrid, had the added benefit of being fucking terrifying as well. Plus, you know, female bounty hunters! **5/5 stars**

**“A Queen in Exile,” Sharon Kay Penman** — Follows Constance of Sicily, the Queen of Sicily and the Holy Roman Empress, mother of future King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick. There’s some stuff with her husband being a dick and trying to take over Sicily, and some stuff about her wanting a kid, and some riots, etc, etc. I’m not sure how to feel about this one. I think my problem with it is twofold. First, so much happens in the story that it probably needed a novel’s length to properly expand on all the themes and characterization she was working with. Either that, or she needed to choose a smaller period of time to concentrate on instead of breezing through literally years of events in less than fifty pages. She ends up telling us huge plot points in passing just to move the story to the points she wants to highlight. The second problem is the author’s note at the end, explaining that she chose Constance as her dangerous woman because of later events in her life, fomenting rebellion against her husband, taking back Sicily, protecting her son, etc. So . . . why didn’t she write about that instead? **3/5 stars**

**“The Girl in the Mirror,” Lev Grossman** — The second story in the collection that takes place in an established world, namely Grossman’s *Magicians* series. I read *The Magicians* back when it first came out and had very mixed feelings about it, but glad to report that I enjoyed this story very much, probably because it was notable in its dearth of Quentin (the awful protagonist from *The Magicians*), who only plays a very limited role as the narrator’s professor at Brakebills Academy of Magic. I’m very happy that I enjoyed this story, as I had already previously decided to pick up books two and three (when it’s published later this year) in the *Magicians* series, and it is now less likely that I will be bashing my head into my wall while reading. **4/5 stars**

**“Second Arabesque, Very Slowly,” Nancy Kress** — I suppose there isn’t really anything “wrong” with this story, but the whole thing felt very unoriginal and self-important. At a certain point, when the market becomes flooded with so many post-apocalyptic stories, you have to find a way to set yours apart, and I don’t think Kress did. Her wandering tribes with their focus on breeding felt overdone, but seemingly unaware that this particular scenario had been written ad nauseam in so many other stories/novels. And the thing that



supposedly set it apart — the focus on dancing — just came across as pretentious and trying too hard for me. It felt like just another tired iteration of ART GIVES US BACK OUR HUMANITY. Only, Kress's prose isn't evocative enough to pull the emotions needed out of the reader to make it work. **2/5 stars**

**“City Lazarus,” Diana Rowland** — Yet another story where the author is convinced the only way to portray a dangerous woman is to make her a sexy murderous stripper out to con men for vengeance or some such. Please authors, STOP USING THIS SAME TROPE OVER AND OVER. IT WASN'T EVEN GOOD THE FIRST TIME. Extremely tired of it, not to mention her cliched portrayal of corruption and sexism in a destitute New Orleans. Been done before, been done better. **2/5 stars**

**“Virgins,” Diana Gabaldon** — This story probably isn't going to work for everyone. And while it does indeed have a dangerous woman in it, the main character is actually Jamie Fraser, from Gabaldon's Outlander series. You can totally tell she just wanted to write about Jamie before he met Claire, and she shoved that other lady in there to fulfill a requirement. What this story is actually concerned with is something different, as implied by the title. Thought the way Gabaldon treated the 'virgins' theme throughout was very nice, and worked well for me, especially when you get the double meaning near the end. **4/5 stars**

**“Hell Hath No Fury,” Sherilynn Kenyon** — This story had no business being published in this collection, or at all. If this story is any indication of Kenyon's talent as an author, I will not be reading further in her body of work (not that I'd been planning to previously, but this only solidified my previous inclinations). This story was hokey, immature, offensive, stupid, and cliched, with prose that read like it was written by a twelve year old, and the worst dialogue I've ever read. I can't believe Martin allowed it in the collection. Can't speak for Dozois, though. No idea what his standards are. Haven't read anything he's written. **0.5/5 stars**

**“Pronouncing Doom,” S.M. Stirling** — This story apparently takes place in Stirling's Emberverses series, although I didn't know that at the time I read it, and it worked fine for me as a stand-alone. Good take on a post-apocalyptic world where all the electricity stopped working (so basically Revolution without the Civil War thematics, Billy Burke's gruff voice, or Elizabeth Mitchell's fabulous hair). Thought it was a bit far-fetched that a group of people could be persuaded to behave like Celts and embrace Wicca, but Stirling made it organic in the story, and I bought it in the end. Particularly, because the focus of the story isn't the world, but the characters living in it, and in specific, the characters having to deal with punishing a severe crime for the first time in their new lives. It was actually kind of fascinating. **4/5 stars**

**“Name the Beast,” Sam Sykes** — I haven't read anything else by this author, although a quick googling of his name made me realize I sat in on a lecture he gave with Pat Rothfuss and Diana Gabaldon about epic fiction at last year's Tucson Festival of Books. He seemed pretty eloquent and knowledgeable at the time, but this story I think just shows how young and inexperienced he is as a writer. Some of his language and worldbuilding intrigues me, as does the fact that he writes fantasy (yay fantasy!), but this story was just too complicated, too overwritten, trying too hard. Maybe when he gets a little older his stories will relax and I will actually be able to enjoy them. **3/5 stars**

**“Caretakers,” Pat Cadigan** — This was an unexpectedly interesting read about two sisters whose mother is in a nursing home, suffering from Alzheimers. The older sister by fifteen years feels responsible for the younger sister, Gloria, who has never been able to hold down a job, and who instead focuses on silly things like true crime shows on TV. During the course of the story, Gloria becomes convinced that something untoward is going on at their mother's nursing home, and right up until the climax, like I said: unexpectedly interesting. But I think the ending sort of biffed it. Very anti-climactic. **3/5 stars**

**“Lies My Mother Told Me,” Caroline Spector** – The coolest thing about this story was the premise, but as that’s not something that originates with the story itself, I’m not counting it towards my rating. It takes place in the Wild Cards universe, where superheroes are created by exposure to a virus, and they can either turn out as Aces (the most powerful type of superhero, as the heroine of this story is), Deuces, or Jokers. This one is full of zombies and New Orleans and it really wasn’t my thing, although I suppose it was well-written. Did make me curious to check out the Wild Cards novels, however. **3/5 stars**

**“The Princess and the Queen, or, The Blacks and the Greens,” George R.R. Martin** — The star of the collection, “The Princess and the Queen” is the story of the original Dance of the Dragons, set about two hundred years before the main events of A Song of Ice and Fire, in which two Targaryen claimants to a throne just go at each other for all they’re worth. Going to admit right up front that this is probably not going to be a five star read for everyone, for two reasons. First, because I don’t think anyone who isn’t familiar with Martin’s Song of Ice and Fire series, or at the very least *Game of Thrones*, would enjoy it very much. He throws a lot of information about Westeros and the Targaryens at you right away, and expects you to keep up. Without the benefit of previous experience in this world, I don’t think that would be easy or fun to do. And second, because it’s a 35,000 word novella written in the form of a false history, as if we’re reading an actual history book written by a Maester in the Citadel, recording events for posterity (not that anyone in Westeros would learn anything from it, those idiots). Because I’m a huge nerd, and I’ve always loved the idea of taking history lessons and other types of classes in order to learn about fictional worlds, this strongly appeals to me. I don’t imagine it would appeal to everyone, especially readers who need more focus on character and dialogue. Here, it’s mostly just event after event (although very interesting events, particularly when dragons and dragon riders are involved). **5/5 stars**

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## Armina says

Update 30/12/2014

*Virgins* by Diana Gabaldon

Buddy read with **Gavin**

### 3 STARS

I started reading this novella in August and finished it an hour ago. Strange, eh? It’s 3 hours in audio. Does this mean it’s bad, you would say? Nope, it’s not bad. It’s nothing special either. It’s the kind of read which you could drop at any time and return back to it months later (obviously). The story still has the ability to keep your interest but on the other hand you won’t lose anything if you do not read it.

I started reading it kinda unintentionally. I needed a read for a Saturday afternoon (between buddy reads; I’m a buddy read addict!) and picked it because of its length and we had just finished reading Diana Gabaldon’s *Outlander* back then in August and liked it well enough. And this novella is like a prequel to the *Outlander* series. I managed to listen to the first 2 hours. Then something in RL happened and I had to postpone finishing the story. The next day was the start date of the next big buddy read and I never managed to finish *Virgins*. I only decided to finish it now because I hate to have unfinished business when the New Year is on the doorstep!

The novella, indeed, is a prequel to **Outlander** and you could read it rest assured there aren't any spoilers for the main series. It has the engaging Gabaldon's writing style, the humour, the richness of the language(s) but the story itself is not so interesting. Still I would recommend reading it after Outlander. This way you will understand the characters much better!

You definitely want to read it if you are a Jamie Fraiser(the male protagonist) fan because the story gives good perspective and details on some unpleasant and important events happening to him in **Outlander**. Also it shows how strong is the bond between Jamie and Ian. The story is about a little ... adventure/work of theirs and in time frame terms it's happening way before Jaime meets Claire. I like the way Gabaldon treated the "virgins" theme throughout the story.

23/01/2014

*Shadows for Silence in the Forests of Hell* by Brandon Sanderson

### 3.5 STARS

It was a nice surprise to find a Sanderson novella in this anthology. Our MC is a *dangerous* woman who plays an inn-keeper through the day and a bounty hunter through the night. One of the things I very much like in Sanderson books is that there is always at least one very strong female character around and this story doesn't make an exception.

The plot though was nothing special and there were some quite vividly cruel scenes which I didn't like so much. The world building is marvelous(I'm always game for a nasty Shades) and I'm giving the half star exactly because of the setting and the audio narration by Claudia Black.

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### Alex Ristea says

Let me begin by saying that expectations are everything.

With names on the cover like Abercrombie, Hobb, Sanderson, Grossman, and Butcher, you expect a certain quality of story. When the editors are Martin and Dozois, you can't help but think that this anthology will be a masterpiece.

I was extremely disappointed.

First, the "Dangerous Women" theme failed miserably. I am still shocked at how few strong female leads there were, and how many of the stories were outright sexist. I guess I was expecting something like Women Destroy Science Fiction, but instead got stories where if you replaced the females with men, you'd be hard-pressed to call them dangerous.

If you'll let me make this comparison, it was like expecting to read a book about non-white protagonists, and instead getting stories about the exotic Orient and all sorts of racist nonsense.

So don't expect an anti-patriarchy book here.

Second, this anthology didn't feel as if it were created from the ground up. As in the editors had an idea, and

put the call out to authors to write stories specifically for it. (Rags & Bones: New Twists on Timeless Tales is a fine example of this). *Dangerous Women* felt like it collected big names, and asked for any stories they had shelved away that simply had a woman in it.

As a result, even putting all of my frustrations and disappointments aside, the stories themselves were poor quality.

Overall, I'd say skip this one. I tried my best to read all the stories (though some were so bad I had to move on), and it's too long and expensive to trudge through even if you have a favourite author in there. The Brandon Sanderson story was by far the best, but I wish I would have come across it another way. Even the Martin story read more like *The Silmarillion*, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but is a let down since it's the last story and the longest.

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## Markus says

Well... what should I say about this?

*Dangerous Women* is my first fictional anthology. An anthology co-edited by George R.R. Martin and Gardner Dozois, with an intriguing theme and lots of famous authors seemed like a safe bet when it came to choosing one. And it was not.

The wildly interesting 'Dangerous Women' theme was mostly absent, to the extent that I forgot about it while reading each of the stories. I expected female warriors, assassins, ruthless queens. I got lying whores, mothers tired of their children, and madwomen. The only thing all of them had in common was not that they were dangerous women, but simply that they were terrible characters. Either none of the authors knew how to actually write a 'dangerous woman', or they just searched their shelves for anything containing a woman when GRRM offered them to take part in the anthology.

In addition to that, most of these so-called dangerous women were secondary characters. Most of the protagonists and the other important characters were men. How do you justify that in an anthology with a name like this? Again, it simply seemed like the authors did not know how to write female characters at all.

And even looking away from the ridiculously poor use of the anthology's supposed theme, I found these stories to range from 'almost okay' to 'absolutely terrible'. The best ones were those written by heavyweights such as Joe Abercrombie and Brandon Sanderson, but not even they did a particularly good job of it. But these two were also among the few whose protagonists actually were dangerous women.

The historical fiction stories were the worst of the bunch. I normally quite enjoy historical fiction, and some of these stories appeared to be right up my alley. Especially two, set in Angevin England and Hohenstaufen Germany, I had high hopes for. But in the end both they and a story from Soviet Russia were nothing but a waste of my time. I want it back, you authors!

There was one story in this anthology which I found worth reading, and that was of course *The Princess and the Queen* by George R.R. Martin himself. It was brilliantly written, the characters (among them a few actually dangerous women) were intriguing, and everything was more or less perfect. I would recommend this story to all fans of *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

At that point I had unfortunately given up on the rest of the stories, so there were about ten stories I did not even bother to read, but from what I've heard I did not really miss anything with that decision.

My advice to people considering this anthology would be to read the GRRM story, and possibly the Abercrombie and Sanderson stories if you are a fan of either of those authors. Other than that, move along and find yourself something better.

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## **A. Dawes says**

This was another ongoing review that took a while as I wanted to ensure every story enjoyed some time in the sun.

Dangerous Women is a loosely themed anthology and although a couple didn't do it for me, I thought there were plenty of stories to love. Although Rogues is better, both anthologies have some superb stories on the menu. Both anthologies present a broad range of genre too.

5 \* "Some Desperado" from Joe Abercrombie. Shy from the Red Country is a lethal girl on the run. This is more of an action packed western story than a fantasy. Shy takes on a hole gang of horrid bounty hunters in a deserted saloon. Although all action, Abercrombie manages to bring all the characters to life though his exquisite prose and witty dialogue. A thrilling story from the start until the finish.

5\* "My Heart is Either Broken" from Megan Abbott. I've avoided Abbott but I won't any longer. This is a masterful story of psychological intrigue. Things are constantly unraveling and unveiling in a story that you can't help but admire. Riveting, disturbing, captivating and ingenious.

3.5 \* "Nora's Song" by Cecelia Holland. More of an alternative historical fantasy. This brings alive lineage and family and power. Felt very traditional when compared to the rest of the anthology. Well drawn characters.

4.5 \* "The Hands That Are Not There" by Melinda Snodgrass. A very clever futuristic story of interracial love. Snodgrass cleverly structures this impressive story. Everything about it is class.

3.5 \* "Bombshell" by Jim Butcher. This is a Dresden novella but revolves more around his apprentice mage, Molly Carpenter. Entertaining, but I always feel as though Butcher targets a teen audience (which he most likely does on purpose). Good but not great. More of a popcorn story.

3.5 \* "Raisa Stepanova" by Carrie Vaughn. Two female Russian pilots, one an ace and one almost an ace. This is about ambition and family and those left on the ground too. There are letters. Felt traditional but liked the focus on the female pilots. A solid story.

5 \* "Wrestling Jesus" by Joe R. Lansdale. I love everything I read by Lansdale and this is no exception. A young, down-and-out kid is taken in by a fit, wrestling wiz, who happens to also be an old geezer. Every five years there's a battle between this geezer and another old pro over a femme fatale. It's hilarious and brilliant - and it's great to see some aged kick-arse characters for a change.

5 \* "Neighbors" by Megan Lindholm. One of the all time great stories. Lindholm impresses here with this marvelous urban fantasy, which deals with age, dementia, identity and life in general. Poignant and beautiful.

3\* "I Know How to Pick 'Em" by Lawrence Sanders. A guy picks up a woman at a bar, yet finds more than he was ready to deal with. More of a psychological thriller. Good but not at the same standard of some others here.

5 \* "Shadows For Silence in the Forests of Hell" by Brandon Sanderson. A female innkeeper is a bounty hunter in a forest full of spirits. Great turns in this wonderful story. I couldn't turn away from it. Sanderson at his best. Playful, dark and fantastic

2 \* "A Queen in Exile" by Sharon Kay Penman. An historical fiction that reads like an historical text. Hard to connect with the story as a result. One of the lesser stories in a great bunch.

1 \* "The Girl in the Mirror" by Lev Grossman. I've always been curious about Grossman, the famed book reviewer from Time Magazine. But if his series is anything like this adult Harry Potter story, then I won't ever be bothered reading Magicians. Grossman is way out of his depth here.

5 \* "Second Arabesque, Very Slowly" by Nancy Kress. A beautiful story in a dark, barbaric, uncultured dystopian world. Learning to dance ballet is indicative of what the arts can give to a culture. An incredible story that showcases our need to be courageous and also our need to be more than just survivors. The arts are an integral part of what it means to be human. Beautiful work.

3.5 \* "City Lazarus" by Diana Rowland. Post apocalyptic romance in a shattered US. Good.

4 \* "Virgins" by Diana Gabaldon. A fun historical romance with a few twists and turns. Enjoyable. A Jewish bride is being taken to a wedding by troop of paid mercenaries. A couple of Scots speaking brogue makes it all the more comical.

3 \* "Hell Hath No Fury" by Sherrilyn Kenyon. A modern day urban fantasy horror involving American Indian myth. Will depend on your taste. For Blair Witch fans.

4\* "Pronouncing Doom" by S. M. Stirling The future world has returned to a baser agricultural clan civilisation. Interesting story that explores notions of justice.

4\* "Name the Beast" by Sam Sykes A strong story of an initiation ritual in the forest. Liked that the ending isn't completely tied up. The story's vague qualities make it all the more enjoyable. I'm curious now about reading more from Sykes.

3 \* "Caretakers" by Pat Cadigan. Another story about dementia but at a nursing home. A few twists in this solid who-done-it story. Not a patch on Lindholm's though in term of tackling dementia.

4 \* "Lies My Mother Told Me" by Caroline Spector. Mardi Gras time in New Orleans. This is an X-Men/Heroes type story and a stack of fun. The superhero Bubbles (once a model but she now gets fat with her powers) and her daughter are targeted by zombies. Fun, comical and energetic.

2.5 \* "The Princess and the Queen, or, the Blacks and the Greens" . After reading all the stories of this superb anthology, the King of Fantasy failed me at the end. I understand George RR Martin's intentions: this is an experimental history rather than a well-composed narrative. And while the history would be beautiful in a fleshed out story, here it's just a series of colourless facts and events as we race through the narrative timeline. As such, I didn't have any emotional connection with the characters at all. I'm a huge George RR Martin fan, but this isn't anywhere near the quality of let's say an excerpt from the similarly styled, The

Silmarillion by JRR Tolkien - it's even a story I'd suggest to leave off your reading menu.

The anthology, however, as a whole is first class. Kudos to George RR Martin & Gardner Dozois for making it so.

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## **Vderevlean says**

Mai precis 2,66. Cine are r?bdare, las mai jos notele pentru fiecare proz? în parte. 2, 3 texte chiar merit?, îns? deseori antologia amestec? prea multe genuri ?i pare s? fie improvizat? cât s? ias? ceva!? nu a? putea spune ce, îns? la ce nume sunt pe copert? a?tept?rile mele sunt mai mari decât ceea ce prime?ti în realitate.

Abercrombie - Halal desperado! // O povestire bun?, cam de 4 stele

Un peisaj western cu o r?fuial? în mijlocul unei bande care duce la urm?rirea lui Shy ?i încol?irea ei într-un or??el abandonat. Intriga alert?, personaje bine schi?ate. Scriitur? bun?, foarte diferit? de ce am citit pân? acum din Abercrombie.

Care m? face s? vreau s? ?tiu cum ar continua povestea.

Megan Abbott - Sau m-a l?sat inima // 1 stea

Povestire deloc interesant? despre o familie în care dispare un copil, aparent din neglijen?a mamei. Aer de thriller. Îns? nimic din scriitur? nu te face s? vrei s? ?tii ce se întâmpl? cu adev?rat.

Cecilia Holland – Cântecul Norei // 3 stele

Fragment dintr-un roman, probabil. Oricum, a?a pare. Povestire istoric?, surprinde un fragment din certurile de curte: Regele are amant?, so?ia îl confrunt? prin intrigi politice, unul dintre fii poate deveni pretendent la tron, sus?inut de mam?. Regele probabil vrea s?-l închid?. Nora, fiica mare a familiei, asist? neputincioas? la jocul de putere ?i viseaz? la o via?? de eroin?, îns? are parte doar de dezam?giri. Povestire ok, nimic spectaculos, nu neap?rat genul meu de literatur?.

Melinda M. Snodgrass – Mâinile care nu exist? // 3 stele

O povestire SF, destul de bine scris?, despre peripe?iile unui be?iv dintr-un bar care sus?ine c? e de fapt unul dintre cei mai importan?i oameni din galaxie ?i c? i s-a furat identitatea de c?tre o ras? extraterestr?.

Povestire simpl?, liniar?, pentru a oferi spre final „întors?tura de situa?ie”. Se simte puternic influen?a lui Philip K. Dick.

Jim Butcher – Bombardele // 5 stele

Urban fantasy de cea mai bun? calitate. O proz? scurt? despre mo?tenirea l?sat? de celebrul vr?jitor Harry – ucenica sa e pus? în situa?ia de a rezolva o alian?? dubioas?, care pericliteaz? echilibrul fragil dintre for?ele magice. Mult? adrenalin? ?i, în general, aerul ?mecheresc ?i pu?in noir al romanelor din Dosarele Dresden se simte din plin ?i aici.

Carrie Vaughn – Raisa Stepanova // 1 stea

O proz? scurt? plasat? în timpul celui de-al doilea R?zboi Mondial, pe frontul rusesc, unde dou? prietene bune lupt? în avia?ie al?turi de restul militarilor b?rba?i. Sugestii feministe, multe, multe stereotipii despre ru?i ?i cam pu?ine detalii despre ce înseamn? o lupt? aerian?. Proz? f?r? culoare ?i f?r? nicio emo?ie. O ui?i imediat dup? ce ai citit-o.

Joe R. Lansdale – În ring cu Iisus // 3 stele

Proz? decent? despre un pu?ti care are probleme pe str?zi ?i e ajutat de un b?trân s? înve?e s? lupte. P?cat de scenariul sut? la sut? hollywoodian, care transform? o idee bun? în text previzibil ?i plin de stereotipii.

Megan Lindholm – Vecinele // 2 stele

Sincer, mi-am pus multe speran?e în textul ?sta, citind câteva dintre romanele lui Robin Hobb, îns? cam degeab?. Scriitura nu e rea, îns? povestea m? las? rece. O b?trân? r?mas? singur? în casa sa începe s? aib? probleme de memorie ?i se lupt? cu fiii ei pentru a nu fi dus? la azil. O vecin? dispare, b?trân? observ? diverse personaje pe strad? ?i în cur?ile vecine ?i treptat timpul ?i spa?iul devin diferite pân? când face un pas definitiv spre altceva. Nu ?tim dac? spre un alt spa?iu, moarte sau pur ?i simplu un spa?iu în propria imagina?ie.

Lawrence Block – ?tiu cum s? le ag?? // 1 stea

Mare dezam?gire textul ?sta. Lawrence Block era unul dintre numele mari pentru care m-am apucat s? citesc antologia. Proz? insipid? despre un tip bine f?cut, pus pe b?tut colegii de bar, dar care e ag??at de o bomb? fatal? ?i urmeaz? câteva zile de sex în hotel. Totul, pân? când realizeaz? c? poate nu doar pentru sex a fost el ag??at, c? ?i fizicul poate ajuta la ceva.

Brandon Sanderson – Umbre pentru T?cere în Codrii Iadului. // 5 stele

O minun?ie de proz? despre un han la marginea unei p?duri blestemate în care spirite înfuriate se declan?eaz? noaptea, la vederea sângelui sau a violen?ei ?i devoreaz? orice fiin?? vie. Hangi?a ?i familia ei sunt celebre pentru protec?ia magic? pe care o ofer? prin hanul lor, îns? l?comia unora sfideaz? frica de moarte ?i de blestem, sco?ând la iveal? secrete bine ascunse. Splendid!

Sharon Kay Penman – O regin? în exil // 2 stele

Proz? realist-istoric? despre o regin? care se chinuie s? r?mân? îns?rcinat? între intrigile de curte ?i conflictele dese pentru putere dintre Pap? ?i statele italiene. F?r? leg?tur? cu subiec?l antologiei, de altfel proza are la final o postfa?? care s? explice evolu?ia ulterioar? a personajului feminin în sensul c? poate fi puternic de?i e clar un instrument jucat de intrigile vremii. Nu prea se încadreaz? în volum.

Lev Grossman – Fata din oglind? // 2 stele

Nu ?tiu dac? e un fragment din seria Magicienii, dar a?a pare. Eu am citit câteva pagini din primul volum ?i am v?zut 2,3 episoade din serial. Nu am înc? o p?rere format?. Povestea nu e deloc grozav?, prezint? aventurile unor studen?e de la ?coala de magie care vor s? se r?zbune pe unul dintre b?ie?i pentru c? la cin? pune prea pu?in vin în pahare. R?zbunarea implic? furarea unor obiecte personale, îns? drumul spre camera b?iatului pare întortocheat ?i dezgroap? istorii vechi ale cl?dirii. Povestire interesant? poate pentru fanii romanelor.

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## Tanya says

I am a diehard *Outlander* nerd (don't judge me) and got *Dangerous Women* so I could read Diana Gabaldon's "Virgins" novella. I'm obviously not very objective, but I did enjoy it. It offers insight into Jamie's history, his relationship with Ian Murray, and how he developed into the character we meet in *Outlander*. If you're



into *Outlander*, read it.

I read "Virgins" first and then looked forward to having a book of snack-pack stories I could enjoy when I had a few minutes here and there. Unfortunately, the "snacks" were the literary equivalent of the celery or raisins your mom threw in your lunch. No one is trading their Oreos for your celery. Much of the collection was lack-luster and failed to pique my interest. Slogging through each piece started to feel like homework. I might've just stopped reading them like a normal person, but I'm just not wired that way and had to read it all to be sure.

My main beef, however, was that for a book titled *Dangerous Women* not many of the characters fit my ideals of what might constitute a dangerous woman. Where was the hellfire, the glow of wrath-filled crazy eyes that only the most fearsome women possess?! Sure, there were some guns, a garrote, and a dagger or crossbow here and there, but when I'm reading a book called *Dangerous Women* I want to see some real eeeeevilllll. Cold hearts. Malicious intent. The will to destroy... something. I mean one of the character's weapons was bubbles. They killed zombies, but still, bubbles?! Seriously?

Most of the women seemed more determined than dangerous and few were working towards evil ends. The ones that were didn't seem very good at it and tended to end up dead. Usually at the hands of some seriously dangerous men. Of course. Some were driven by the need to protect loved ones or themselves and took action when provoked. Granted, a fierce momma protecting her cub or failed villainess may technically land in the dangerous category, but it just wasn't enough for me. Great expectations, right?

My overall impression was that not many of the authors had a healthy respect for what a truly dangerous woman is capable of. Even "Virgins" failed on the danger scale. I liked it because it was another tasty *Outlander* morsel, but I would not have placed it in a collection of stories about dangerous women. Beyond that, many of the stories just weren't that memorable.

Worth mentioning:

"Some Desperado" by Joe Abercrombie - Some good action and the "heroine" was dangerous, but she was also desperate (I know, I know, *Some Desperado*).\*\*\*

"Bombshells" by Jim Butcher - Dresden Files related. Funny and fast-paced, but still felt like a complete story. Mild danger in the grand scheme of things. \*\*\*\*\*

"I Know How To Pick 'Em" by Lawrence Sanders - Definitely left an impression. (view spoiler)\*\*\*

"Virgins" by Diana Gabaldon - \*\*\*

"Neighbors" by Megan Lindholm - So, so boring. No stars for you.

"The Princess and the Queen" by George R. R. Martin - I didn't think it was possible to make a *Game of Thrones* related story boring, but somehow George managed it. An epic fantasy stripped of all excitement and suspense and morphed into the most tedious, eye-watering inducing, boring history lecture imaginable. Will this be on the midterm? I don't care, I'm dropping the class. \*\*

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## **Jill says**

### **A tale of two virgins....**

Jamie (aka Diego) and Ian (aka Juan) are the titular virgins.

The story begins in October, 1740 near Bordeaux, France. Jamie has just arrived from Scotland, delivered by Murtagh, instructing him to stay and not return to Scotland. To earn their way, Jamie and Ian work as mercenaries, protecting and delivering goods and people safely to destinations for payment.

Diana Gabaldon has done a great job of the characterisations of Jamie and Ian as young men. Interesting to note here that Ian being slightly older (20 years to Jamie's 19), often has the level head and common sense that we so associate with the older Jamie.

A beautiful, little 'bulge' giving insight into Jamie as a young man, and his best friend, Ian. A lovely story of deep friendship and brotherhood.

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