

SPell / SWORD



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Rime is a wild mage. She can bend the very fabric of reality, but at a cost – a cost to her health and her sanity. Her power is unstoppable but it leaves her empty, weak, and often unconscious. Jonas is a squire on the run – running away from the shadow of murder. They travel together to find the one person that can save Rime from the wild magic, from the inexorable madness and death that comes to those who are born to ignore the rules of the universe. The Gray Witch of the Wheelbrake Marsh, a creature out of a fairy tale.

Spell/Sword Details

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From Reader Review Spell/Sword for online ebook

Sean Polite says

It Hasn't Left Me---

The above line was uttered by the character Linus in "Spell/Sword", a first-time novel by Derek Adams. For me, it has the feel of a classic line, the extra piece of limestone/cement in the foundation of a stellarly written yarn of swords, sorcery, demons, enchantresses, minotaurs, bounties, road trips, but most of all, a timeless tale of two initially reluctant companions, who through no fault of their own rely on (and possibly befriend) each other in the opening phase of a grand adventure. The book introduces a fresh new genre of storytelling, known as Sword-Punk.

The companions that lead off this story are Jonas, a rookie swordsman, and Rime, a wild mage. A wild night's tomfoolery and the morning's consequence suddenly thrust Jonas into Rime's world. Rime is a gifted practitioner of magic, and she has some shadowy parties after her. Not holding a horse's breath of trust in individuals who generally are---well, not her---she and Jonas eventually go on a sojourn of her determined design. As you read on, you learn more of the quest, and form a picture of why she's being followed, and what patience (or lack thereof) she has with Jonas (and vice versa). To tell you more would cheat you of what marvelous gems our good bard Mr. Adams has threaded in this introduction to a series of tales (book two currently in progress). You'll thank me for my restraint, but also for my analysis of the principal players in these next assortments of lines.

From this writer's perspective, what lies at the core of this book is Rime and Jonas, and what is embedded in the cores of their respective personas is potential. Each character has a capability of taking something about themselves to a different level.

Rime's analytical mind and humorous impatience with people are not simply the results of a survival based scenario---she's seemingly "beyond" many folks around her with her talents and intellect. She has a soaring potential for the magicks, but it comes at the dear price of shortening the potential of her staunch temperance and ending the potential to have many years beyond her young life. She deals with the capability of madness poisoning her mind and the connection to the few individuals in her life. Such madness has claimed the sanity of parties seeking her out. Her magic takes a great toll of her well being, and she becomes something which the reader is led to discern she ultimately dreads in her arcane logic---vulnerable.

Jonas is a rough hewn warrior who has the potential to become a masterful swordsman, but it is realized in the real life tussles with superior fighters and marksmen who lend him scrapes, wounds, and reminders of his vast inexperience. He is innocent to a degree of the full extent of mortal combat (death), and he has to contend with his moral disposition (kill or be killed, which Rime hammers to his attention) before he can advance his skills. He protects Rime, and fights for her, but to what lengths will he allow himself to go to carry out this duty?

Contributing to the wonder of the book are captivating characters like Linus (who for the mundane insidiousness of his rather mercenary tasks, possesses an arcane sense of charm), splendid battles (especially in how unevenly matched they are at times), pristine moments of contemplation, high stakes risk taking, and perhaps what are the strongest suits in Mr. Adams literary card: sharp dashes of tickling humor and the pathos of emotion nestled beneath the furrowed inconveniences (or charms) of the here and now.

I have an advantage in the story, in that I've spent some time talking with Derek about the creative process behind the book, as well as his initial leap into self-publishing. Much like Jonas, he takes the challenges, demands, and occasional hardships with a sweat-doused smile, making his way towards success beyond his wildest literary dreams via the undeniable and nearly endless struggle of getting off the ground. Here is a link to two interviews both before and after the completion of the book:

Movers & Shakers Project Interview w/ Derek Adams: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/sean-p...>

Official Spell-Sword Interview w/ Derek Adams:
<http://scpolite.podomatic.com/entry/2...>

It's a fast, engaging read, and Derek can use all the help that can be provided. The book is available for purchase on Amazon.com in physical and e-book form. But much like the skills of the sparring denizens of "Spell/Sword", he takes his reward in the acknowledged need for edits and refinement. He welcomes criticism (both positive and negative), as it is attention that his fine project dearly needs beyond simply having been read. Let him know how you feel about it, and the true wealth is paid in word of mouth---tell folks you think will be into the book about it-- in person, online, by phone, trebuchet, magic incantation, whatever works.

In short, the story will never leave you, the characters will never leave you, the mystery will never leave you, the questions will never leave you.....

Pick up "Spell/Sword" at your fastest juncture, and give Mr. Adams word about your thoughts on it at an even faster juncture.

S. C. Polite

Tony Valdez says

I loved this book. A breezy and fun fantasy read that scratches the surface of a realm of myth and magic that I can't wait to learn more about. A foolhardy squire that is 1000% heart, and a wild mage who hates relying on others. Looking forward to more of this duo!

Grace Troxel says

This review originally appeared on my blog, Books Without Any Pictures:
<http://bookswithoutanypictures.com/20...>

Jonas is good with a sword, but he has no common sense (or other talents, for that matter). After getting arrested for a brawl outside of a tavern, he ends up being sentenced to help guard a woman named Rime on her travels. Rime is secretly a wild mage, and wild mages aren't supposed to be allowed to live. Rime is on her way to chase a legendary witch who she thinks can help her contain her powers before she loses control and unleashes apocalyptic chaos upon the world.

Spell/Sword reads a little bit like a Dungeons and Dragons campaign. This is neither good nor bad, it just is. Many DND campaigns are imaginative and engaging, which is, in fact, the entire point of playing the game. It's just that as you're reading, you can tell that the story follows a bit of a pattern where there are scenes dedicated to conversations (roleplay), scenes where the characters fight (encounters), and scenes where the characters have to use their wits to get out of a tricky situation (skill challenge). There was a particular encounter involving frogs that reminded me nostalgically of my first DND campaign, so props for that. Scary frogs ftw!

G. Derek Adams has a fantastic imagination. Jonas and Rime encounter a vivid cast of characters ranging from your typical enemies on wyverns to less conventional frogs on roller skates. I enjoyed the fact that it was impossible to predict what challenges our heroes would encounter. I also enjoyed seeing the workings of Rime's mind, especially her mental library where she stores the knowledge from all of the books she's read in her life.

Spell/Sword is intended to be a funny book, but a lot of the humor didn't work for me. This is nothing to do with the book itself. As I mentioned in my review of Alice Will, I have a rather warped sense of humor that doesn't appreciate things that the rest of the world finds funny, such as the book Good Omens, which most people think is hilarious.

The thing that bothered me the most about Spell/Sword is that the worldbuilding seemed haphazard. There were important bits of information that we didn't learn until far too late in the story, i.e. what a wild mage is and why Rime is a danger, which wasn't revealed until something like 2/3 of the way through the book. Seeing descriptions of the basic way the world works so late into the story didn't work well for me; I prefer the worldbuilding to be more seamless and to be integrated into the story early enough to keep me grounded.

Overall thought – Spell/Sword was not quite as polished as I'd like, but the author has potential. The book could have used a bit more editing, especially to adjust worldbuilding and pacing issues, but there were elements of the story that I enjoyed and would have liked to see fleshed out.

Siobhan Armstrong says

It had potential. There is a lot of good material here, but it isn't tied together well. This needed some serious review before it was released, because things like an entire major scene ending without resolution and the characters saying, "oh, let's not talk about it," instead of explaining what happened. even a lime or two would have helped. The issue with that scene is compounded by the actions of the characters not matching what little they say about it after the fact.

It isn't a bad start, but I feel as though I am back in college in a creative writing course reading the draft of someone's novel with this. As with many of my classmates' work from back then, it feels as though the author is so taken with his cleverness and brilliant writing skills that any feedback would be ignored or derided. Flesh out characters? Explain what exactly is going on with the backstory and opening? Finish scenes and transition between them logically? Work on pacing? No, no, this is my grand artwork and you simply don't understand!

I wanted to enjoy this, and I see potential, but the debut of this series has fallen seriously flat. I am hopeful that future installments will build upon the premise without continuing the problems that made this book a tedious if short read.

G. Derek Adams says

In honor of this book being out for 5 years - I'm going to attempt to leave an honest review.

I really like it once they get to the cave! The introductions of each character are strong, but it makes the first third of the novel feel spare and windy - not enough plot weight to really get the machine moving. Pepperin in the villain introduction chapters sort of works? But knowing that I wrote them when I got stuck on the main plot, then sort of jammed them in at random where the plot sagged its easy to see the cracks now. Rime's introduction is waaaay better than Jonas' - it's interesting at the time I viewed them as co-leads, but over time in the series he slowly drifted to more of a second banana. The intro is pretty good, but then the plot just sort of wanders for a while - and as hilarious as I still think it is for them to fight a dinosaur (and also meta-textually appropriate for my Whole Thing), it kind of falls flat now. It's just a really short bit? I still chuckle that the dinosaur is really digging that violin music, though.

But yes! Once they get to the cave, that's where the book feels like it really begins - the two travellers, down and out, forced to work together and rely on each other. Something about the cave and their conversations there just feel right. I really love how abstract Rime's morning thoughts are and how Jonas manifests as a stupid brown blur interrupting her geometrically intricate mind -- I meant to call back to that at some point downstream, and have not yet. Probably should do that!

I still think the dance-lock section is dope. Please no one ever tell me there is some glaring logistical problem with it as I worked on that a lot. Fun fact! The dwarven song is to the tune of Elton John's 'Saturday'.

I like Jericho, and especially Canteen and Larabell. Larabell's tale is still one of the best things I've written. The fight on the bridge is oooookay? I mean, I like how it starts with Jonas and Rime being sweaty and angsty with each other - but the actual fight feels a bit, hmm, rushed? Like don't check my math, they get away audience, okay??

Ah, I love the bit on the wyvern with Jonas. I also solemnly swear to never tell you what happened to the wyvern.

The Wheelbrake section is good - the fight with the turtle, Rime just burning herself up from inside her mind library, dig it. Fun fact! The whole library idea didn't appear until this part of the book - almost the end! - in original draft, but then I went and added it way earlier so people wouldn't hate Rime so dang much.

The Gray Witch chapters. Fuck you, they good. I mean, she wrote most of them, but still. If you're reading the series beyond this - I'm calling a very long shot in this section. The Gray Witch does not lie.

The fight on the beach with the hunt is...fine. It's rushed and doesn't really feel satisfying, but it essentially works. Sort of.

Overall - it's okay! Some cool ideas, some fun characters, some good moments - but structurally it is all over the place, and the frantic need to jump on to the next chapter or scene robs a lot of the weight from the plot machinery. The later books are better - but you kiiiiinda need to start here if you want to know what's going on in the other two.

Nope - I will not rewrite it or put out an 'improved' version. This work of art is what I made at that moment, it is true if imperfect.

Three stars seems fair as I do like it, but it is hampered by some dodgy writing and weak structure.

Kelly Stark says

This is a quick read, but entertaining with good characters and some creative twists. I liked the glimpses into Rime's thought processes. My only complaints are that it had a random F-bomb and the ending leaves a lot unresolved. Still, good effort.

R says

3.5 - Fun and original. I read book 3 first and then looked for the 2 earlier books. The writing in Spell/Sword is a bit less polished than the later books, but it is good fun. It is always lovely to find something that is different and unpredictable and all 3 books in this series so far fit the bill. I hope that more people give this series a read.

Kat Mitchell says

I am an action/adventure/scifi buff. I use to say I was a fantasy person, till I met real fantasy peeps. Not really sure why I never got into (or understood) the fantasy side of things. There have been times when I've tried to insert myself, but to no avail. So, it was with excitement and trepidation that I opened Spell/Sword. Would I get it, would it get me, would there be names and places and 'history' I'd know nothing about? Would I be confused, lost, would I give up in frustration...

My fears were swept away within the first page and from the Ogre's white liquid oozing eye to the roller skating frogs; from the dinosaur to the enormous swamp snapping turtle I was engrossed. Not only did Adams create minor characters in such a way that you knew exactly who they were, what they looked like, how they would act, he created a damsel in distress who's wild magic can level an enemy with the wave of a finger and an young man who is the epitome of loyalty with the wave of his sword. As you grow to know and love Rime and Jonas, you hope their adventures never end.

This book grabs you from moment one and takes you on a ride you never want to get off of. Maybe Adams should have waited to release this book when he had already written number 2 and 3 and 4 and more!

Because when you are done with Spell/Sword you will immediately want to read the next G. Derek Adams book.

This new movement he has created, SWORDPUNK, is one I want to be a part of. It's one I know I can be a part of. I've already been planning my costumes...

The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

I LOVE this cover! The snark alone is worth the price as it is. And humor is always a plus in fantasy.

Dan says

I've read a good amount of fantasy and sci-fi novels in my life, often at the expense of not reading supposed "important" novels. I tend to enjoy escaping into new worlds more, places and times I would obviously never see, and just be immersed in them. Many of these are in established universes (like Star Wars), others in entirely new worlds that the author has created. Some authors can fall into a habit of trying to over-explain their newly created world, bombarding the reader with the rules of their universe, geography, races, or supposed histories. You come away feeling like you're reading a textbook or tour guide of their world. It usually takes me out of their tale, and the book is quickly abandoned. The better authors just get into their story, and let the reader discover things as they go along, as the characters naturally encounter them. They make the reader want to know more about a battle that was casually mentioned as an aside, or why a certain race no longer exists.

Fortunately, G. Derek Adams falls into the latter camp.

Adams' debut novel is a quick read, but in that time you are given glimpses of a much larger world. What seems to start out as an almost typical sword-and-sorcery fantasy slowly reveals elements you wouldn't find in a George R.R. Martin book, the best part being that enormous attention isn't even given to them by the characters: they've dealt with these things before, it's not new to them (I'm being intentionally vague so as not to spoil any surprises).

There were also several times throughout where I got the feeling, "Hey, this would make a pretty good game". The trio of characters known as The Hunt (easily my favorite in the book) felt like they would be at home in an old-school Squaresoft RPG, and the quest of the two young heroes could easily be a tabletop campaign.

I'll admit I raised an eyebrow when I first read the back-cover copy describing this as "swordpunk", but I get it now, and it definitely earned it.

Maria Mitchell says

I received this book for free from Goodreads First Reads.

In the beginning I loved this book. It was creative, witty and adventurous. Magic, swordfights, fantasy, dragons, you name it this book had it. However I discovered about halfway through the story started to really drag for me and keep my interest long enough to finish. I can't exactly place what went wrong. It felt like too many villains started to be introduced and even though the story was starting to pull together by around page 160 I had already lost interest in the other characters. I really only continued reading because Adams had done such an excellent job on main characters Rime and Jonas.

Rime is a mage (has magic). She has this power but when she uses it there is a rather unfortunate side effect: unconsciousness. She will pass out for minutes, hours, days, and be helpless to anyone and anything around her. She's fearless and determined despite this huge drawback.

She enlists the help of squire Jonas (well he's really forced into it but that's a whole other explanation). He ends up being loyal to her and her mission despite learning she doesn't have the money to pay for his help.

Jonas is a bit of a lovable screw up. He seems to be always getting drunk to often hilarious and disastrous results. Yet he's also a smart and brave protector.

I didn't love this book but I didn't dislike it either and I would be willing to read more about Jonas and Rime in the next book of the series.

Bryn Adamson says

What a wonderfully original story! I am a READER...as in, I read a great number of books all the time, and as a result can oftentimes see the plot coming from a mile away. No so here! Not only did the "world" of the story surprise me at every turn, but the characters and action are like nothing else I have ever read. I had no idea what was going to happen in any given moment! I can't even say "well, if you liked such-and-such...then this is kind of like that", because it isn't. This stands alone. I can't wait for the next one. Hurry up.

WarBiscuit says

Wonderful, light-hearted adventure story. Easily left me wanting more (so I read the rest of them).

There's certainly a heavy D&D influence in the setting, but more importantly in the writing, since there's the understanding of the need to balance a character's strengths and weaknesses.

Particularly, he does a great job at one of my favourite things: Having antagonists who, rather than being villainous caricatures, have their own personalities and motivations. Instead of a reductionist good-vs-evil, they are painted sympathetically enough that you understand exactly where they're coming from; yet still root for the main characters.

(This last bit stands even more so for the later books in this series).

Bumbly says

I first stumbled upon G. Derek Adams when I read 'Asteroids Made of Dragons'. Who doesn't want to read a book with a title like that?

Well, nothing has changed about my opinion of his writing. He is a silly writer, interspersing very serious moments with true life events, like "how the hell did that potato get there?" in the middle of a sword fight; The dialogue feels like actual dialog, not spellchecked-grammarchecked-stuffy talk.

Spell/Sword is a great story, reminding me of some Dungeons and Dragons games I've made up. A mage is looking to travel across the world and needs some help. Read the synopsis if you want more! The beauty of this book is that it doesn't go into too much detail with the main characters pasts. It doesn't matter to the book, because you learn about them 'here' and 'now' and discern their personalities that way. It makes the book much more fun to read in my opinion. Most of the side characters are easy introductions as well. Even the main 'villain' is given a brief background.

The story itself is very grabbing. I think I read it in 2 days, minus a few hours of sleep. It really wants you to

read it, weaving itself into your thoughts easily.

Very good read, and much recommended.

Nicole says

I read this book in one sitting while enjoying some beautiful weather in a lawn chair in the middle of my complex's courtyard. I tell you this not because I think you care about how I conduct my reading, but because I want to impress upon you that I spent several hours sunburning for the simple reason that I couldn't put the book down. It isn't a traditional page-turner in the "WHOA, THINGS ARE CONSTANTLY HAPPENING" sense; rather, it is just plain fun and easy to read. The prose is not bogged down by Tolkien-esque descriptions, and what is described with greater detail is done thoughtfully, with a keen eye for metaphor. The fight scenes -- which I often have trouble reading in many sci-fi/fantasy books because I find many authors have a hard time describing complicated action sequences in a way that I can follow -- were very clearly described, and I had no trouble following along. These are some things that make the book good. What makes it GREAT is the world-building. Adams places the reader in a world where swords, magic, DINOSAURS, elves, dwarves, FROGS ON STEAM-POWERED ROLLERSKATES, and long-dead, mysteriously advanced civilizations coexist side-by-side like it ain't no thang. And it isn't: somehow Adams manages to write all of these various anachronistic bits in in a way that leaves you saying "Well yeah, of course there's a jukebox in this medieval tavern, how else would the patrons have music to drink to?" rather than "What the actual heck is going on here?" Fear not, dear readers, Mr. Adams is very much in control. And that is a very wonderful thing.
