



Unfettered II

Shawn Speakman (Editor) , Brandon Sanderson (Contributor) , Naomi Novik (Contributor) , Jim Butcher (Contributor) , Charlaine Harris (Contributor) , Michael J. Sullivan (Contributor) , Janny Wurts (Contributor) , Bradley P. Beaulieu (Contributor) , more... Mark Lawrence (Contributor) , Seanan McGuire (Contributor) , Peter Orullian (Contributor) , Aidan Moher (Contributor) , Erin Lindsey (Contributor) , John A. Pitts (Contributor) , Anthony Ryan (Contributor) , Scott Sigler (Contributor) , Django Wexler (Contributor) , Rachel Caine (Contributor) , Sarah Beth Durst (Contributor) , David Farland (Contributor) , Terry Brooks (Contributor) ...less

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Life can kick us when we are down.

In Shawn Speakman's case, he is fighting back.

Lacking health insurance and diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2011, Speakman beat the disease as well as the massive medical debt he amassed from its treatment. He did this by publishing *Unfettered*, an anthology featuring short stories donated by some of the best science fiction and fantasy writers working today.

The fight will not stop there. In an effort to pay forward the aid he received—and to memorialize his mother who passed away from stomach cancer in early 2016—Speakman has again collaborated with celebrated genre authors to publish *Unfettered II*. All proceeds from the anthology will either help eliminate medical debt for other authors or be donated to cancer research hubs around the world.

Twenty-one original new tales comprise this amazing collection and, as the title suggests, the writers were again free to contribute whatever they wished.

Here is the line-up for *Unfettered II*:

Foreword by Terry Brooks

Bradley Beaulieu (Song of Shattered Sands)

“Day One” by Jim Butcher (Dresden Files)

“Figures” by Rachel Caine

“The Hedgewitch” by Sarah Beth Durst (The Queens of Renthia)

“The King’s Despatcher” by David Farland (Runelords)

“The Gunnie” by Charlaine Harris

“Bulletproof” by Mark Lawrence (Gunlaw)

“The Raven” by Erin Lindsey (Bloodbound)

“And Men Will Mine the Mountain for Our Souls” by Seanan McGuire

“The Red-Rimmed Eyes of Tóu M?” by Aidan Moher

“Castle Coeurlieu” by Naomi Novik

“A Slow Kill” by Peter Orullian (Vault of Heaven)
“Aokigahara” by J.A. Pitts
“A Duel of Evils” by Anthony Ryan (Raven’s Shadow)
“The Thrill” by Brandon Sanderson (Stormlight Archive)
“Victim with a Capital V” by Scott Sigler
“The Last Flowers of the Spring Witch” by Shawn Speakman (Annwn Cycle)
“Little Wren and the Big Forest” by Michael J. Sullivan (The Legends of the First Empire)
“Magic Beans” by Django Wexler
“The Decoy” by Janny Wurts (Wars of Light and Shadow)
Todd Lockwood (Cover Artist)
Don Maitz (Interior Illustrator)

With the help of New York Times bestselling authors as well as talented newcomers, Speakman has taken the platform Unfettered created to not only confront medical debt but to support the battle against one of our gravest illnesses. Unfettered II is a fantastic sequel anthology but it is more than that; it is proof that we are stronger together than we are apart.

After all, isn’t that what genre fiction is all about?

Unfettered II Details

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Format : Hardcover 584 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Short Stories, Anthologies, Fiction, Urban Fantasy

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From Reader Review Unfettered II for online ebook

Victoria says

when available. Dresden Files story - Day One (Butters POV)

Kristen says

As per usual, Shawn Speakman delivers a great anthology. I didn't outright not like any of the stories in this one (but I did find a couple a little boring- as is bound to happen). Here's a little more about which were my favorites:

My favorite story of this particular bunch was Magic Beans by Django Wexler. His coffee-shop erotica. I appreciate a story with both a sex closet and a dragon in it.

The Thrill by Brandon Sanderson was also super exciting. It not only ramped up my excitement for Oathbringer by a thousand percent, but reiterated what a badass Dalinar is. Excited!

Day One by Jim Butcher was amazeballs. Because Waldo Butters is amazeballs and a story about him is just a thing I love. That is all.

Bulletproof by Mark Lawrence reminded me how much I fucking loved Gunlaw. I should really read it again.

The Gunnie by Charlaine Harris was surprisingly awesome. The Sookie Stackhouse series disappointed me a great many times (especially near the end --) so, I had just thought to never bother reading her stuff again. This story has convinced me that it might be okay to bother again after all.

Little Wren and the Big Forest by Michael Sullivan was also a favorite. I just love the way the man tells a story. Elan's Rumplestiltskin was awesome.

The Red-Rimmed Eyes of Tou Ma by Aiden Moher was an awesome story. I want to read more stories about Farid!

Finally, The Last Flowers of the Spring Witch. This story made me very teary eyed. What a beautiful memorial story. I can't even get my thoughts in order about it. It was just... it was bittersweet.

I hope there will be more anthologies from Grim Oak. I hope they don't all have very sad backstories... But, I hope for more.

Connie says

I received this book though Goodreads Giveaways for an honest review. I really wanted this book for Mark Lawrence and there are so many authors I was excited to check out so as much as I want to review the stories

I'm not going to my rating is good enough. So yeah Cancer sucks ass and my heart goes out to Shawn Speakman and all those fighting the good fight, and to those we've lost and to every one affected by it. Cancer can come after anyone none of us are immune. The cover of this book is beautiful. Speakman your mom looks like an Angle. The Foreword by Terry Brooks is also beautiful it made me cry as well as the Introduction and oh did I cry.

Shawn Speakman says

I am biased.

But this anthology is about as wonderful and magical as any I've read. And I've read more than a few. I really enjoy having these *Unfettered* anthologies being themeless. It allows every contributor to do something that they otherwise wouldn't be able to do and it shows in the quality of the stories.

Add that this is my way of memorializing my mother -- who is featured on the cover - and it makes *Unfettered II* really special. My own short story contribution is about her last days as she struggled with cancer and its effects, all set within my fantasy world. I think she would have enjoyed meeting my two main characters. I'm just sad she didn't get to read it.

All proceeds from this book go to charity -- either helping authors alleviate medical debt or going to fund cancer research. So it has a feel good component too that cannot be ignored.

I hope you'll start telling others about it now.

It's an anthology for a worthy cause.

Marin Bratanov says

Very weak. I found the quality of the stories to be much poorer than the first. I tried to read through them to get a sense of the authors and still had a hard time finishing most of them. The best, by a huge margin is by Sanderson. I can't believe how boring the opening piece was. Mostly young adult, like for 12 year olds perhaps. Just...skip it

Krista D. says

I picked up this anthology specifically for Janny Wurts and Jim Butcher. Enjoyed both of their stories. Wurts' short story is a great example of what her epic fantasy style is like (plus the story had a great 'history lesson' feel to it, which I really enjoyed). Butcher's is basically required reading for mega Dresden fans.

Skylar Phelps says

A good short story by MJS. 3.5 stars

You can't help but like little Wren, she is adorable, unfortunate and simple. I love the setting to this story. Something about mysterious, dark forests haunt me, in an enchanted/wondrous sort of way. I can't help but sense that there has to be magic in the strange and mystical spaces between the trees.

This story had the feel of a bedtime fairytale. One that mothers and grandmothers would tell hundreds of years ago when tucking the little ones into quilts on beds of straw.

There were some descriptions, mostly vocabulary and verbs that I thought were too sophisticated to use for Wren's 8 year old viewpoint. That was a little distracting and yanked me from the narrative a few times. Still, the writing is very good and the story itself is marvelous. Especially for those of us who care to know about Elan's fables and lore.

Claudia says

==Little Wren and the Big Forest by Michael J. Sullivan==

A charming story about courage and love, involving a little girl, Wren, and the mythical villain dwarf from ancient times, Gronbach. Best to be read after *Age of Myth* to have a better visual of the surrounding world.

It is part of the anthology *Unfettered II*, by editor Shawn Speakman, but also, courtesy of the author, it may be downloaded from Instafreebie: <https://www.instafreebie.com/public/L...>

Hilary says

A varied, well written collection of short stories to dip into between long books. Details of each one noted in other reviews. I enjoyed all stories, but some appealed more than others, depending on my own favourite writers or themes.

Terence says

Little Wren and the Big Forest

The forest near Wren's house is something of a mystery. Only her father ever enters, but only just slightly. When Wren's brother enters the forest following a sheep, he doesn't reappear. Wren's father and mother follow until only Wren remained. Now Wren could follow her mother's instructions or she could enter the forest to see if she can find her family. Wren may be little, but she's no coward.

Little Wren and the Big Forest is a fairy tale about the dwarf Gronbach. He's a vile clever creature who cares only for himself. Wren is a simply written girl like any protagonist of a fairy tale. The story is simple, but it's

point is achieved, do not trust Gronbach.

Bradley says

I wanted to review this only to say thank you to Shawn for including me in it, and to the other authors for contributing such great stories.

For my part, I have a SHATTERED SANDS story in the anthology. The story focuses on Dardzada, an apothecary who, for a time, is the foster father of Çeda (the heroine of TWELVE KINGS IN SHARAKHAI). I wanted to tell his tale because he became really interesting to me as I wrote about him in TWELVE KINGGS. He cares for Çeda very much, but goes about it in the wrong ways. He's extremely strict, and when Çeda rebels because of it, becomes even worse. Çeda eventually leaves and runs the streets with her best friend, Emre. But Dardzada continues to play a role in her life, and I wanted to flesh out his tragic story.

I'm always trying to do two things with the short stories I write. First, I'm trying to explore a particular character that interests me, finding out more about them along the way. And second, I'm trying to deepen the world. Sharakhai is such a metropolitan place. There are hundreds of influences from thousands of miles away in every direction. So part of the fun for me is to simply show more of this world while doing so through a few unique characters.

I hope you enjoy the story, and the rest in this unfettered set of tales.

????? says

I didn't actually read this book nor do I plan to. I'm not a fan of anthologies. I did pick it up though to read the Dalinar flashback that Sanderson published in it, and it was a good enough dose to satiate a little my thirst for some stormlight.

Chris says

Great little story set in the world of *The Legends of the First Empire*. Of course, once you get a taste you're going to want more....

Stefano G. says

I only read the Brandon Sanderson part so this is a review only on that.

The Dalinar Flashbacks from the new Stormlight Archive book Oathbringer, are real treats. They show some glimpses of the dark man Dalinar was in his youth, as well as a first glimpse to his forgotten wife. The fighting scenes are quite impressive but maybe not as polished as I would have expected (hoping for this to be cleaned up in the review process), also since the scenes are from three different chapters in the soon to be published book there is a bit of lack of continuity. The courtroom scene is also quite interesting where you

see Gavilar/Sadeas and their respective wives interacting with Dalinar, and you start to really fully understand the dynamics between them in the later books.

A good read overall, but I think it will be much better to read this in the grand context of *Oathbringer*!

Alissa says

This anthology is a precious gift, for the contributes, the editing, the cover, the interior art, the dedication and the cause.

Castle Coeurlieu by Naomi Novik: I liked Novik's novel *Uprooted*, and here I found again that mix of historical fiction and gothic fairytale I've so appreciated in her standalone. I also love her care for details and the way she writes female protagonists.

A Slow Kill by Peter Orullian: this story features a Machiavellian assassination. It's carefully planned, well-worded and chilling to the bone. Exciting!

And Men Will Mine the Mountain for Our Souls by Seanan McGuire: a short story about inevitable doom, with two PoVs. Odd and nice.

Day One by Jim Butcher: the story was okay, but being without a Harry Dresden background I felt like I was missing too many references.

Brightwine in the Garden of Tsitsian Village by Bradley P. Beaulieu: very, very good. Beaulieu is really skilled at short format, this is the second short story of his I read, and I immersed very easily in the investigation. High time for *Twelve Kings in Sharakhai*.

Aokigahara by John A. Pitts: A sci-fi short story, not my usual read, but fascinating and thought-provoking.

The Decoy by Janny Wurts: She is my favourite adult fantasist, and with reason. Here she regales new and returning readers alike with a tale of unique balance, which shows another facet of the rift between the human cultures in Athera but it's primarily a harrowing and upbeat standalone. I didn't anticipate the final twist and I had goose bumps by the time I reached the last word.

The King's Despatcher by David Farland: very good story, a prequel in the established universe of the author, whose first book of the Runelords series is now in my TBR. Traditional fantasy, straightforward and very catchy.

Figures by Rachel Caine: I'm familiar with Caine because I'm reading *The Great Library* trilogy. She is talented, and her very very short story is original and interesting.

The Red-Rimmed Eyes of Tóu M? by Aidan Moher: Moher is a known ex fantasy blogger now turned writer. A broke mercenary priest is called to save the day. Okay read.

Magic Beans by Django Wexler: Wexler is an author I've had my eyes on for a while, and I've already appreciated a short story of his. His main series is epic/military fantasy, so imagine my surprise when I read this hilarious short piece featuring a magic coffee-maker and sex.

The Hedgewitch by Sarah Beth Durst: cool setting, I like tree dwellings and spirits with a “dismember first, apologize later” policy. The story is simple and flows nicely.

Victim with a Capital V by Scott Sigler: a fantasy story with a weird western vibe set in a San Francisco where metals don't exist anymore. The author managed to convey the right atmosphere even without guns. Raw and hard, I really liked it.

A Duel of Evils by Anthony Ryan: I've not had a chance to try Ryan's first trilogy, but this is the second short story of his I read and this time he chose the form of an historical document. My lack of context notwithstanding, it was ultimately satisfying because I liked the style and the military parts. Successful experiment.

The Raven by Erin Lindsey: a prequel about the main villain of Lindsey's Bloodbound series (which just moved higher up my TBR). I'm probably biased, because if done well, I love morally questionable protagonists. At first I thought it simplistic, then I became very absorbed in the story, the pace was just right. Very good!

Bulletproof by Mark Lawrence: I'm current with everything Lawrence has penned, but I miss a few of his short stories and his Gunlaw novel; I'm happy this piece is in the anthology, so I could read something new. It's a weird western about the nature of strength and making the right stand, I liked the setting.

The Gunnie by Charlaine Harris: this is the second fantasy story featuring guns of the anthology, whose plot is probably inspired by the Mexican/US border reality. It's a brutal tale, skilfully written (well, considering the author's fame I expected no less) and emotionally involving.

Little Wren and the Big Forest by Michael J. Sullivan: another writer I like. This is a dark fairy-tale from his Riyria universe, a "simple and charming fable, which is so popular around campfires and as a bedtime story". I'm always sold to an author who calls sheep "woolly puffballs".

The Thrill by Brandon Sanderson: this is my first Sanderson experience. I met the guy in Lucca this year, and he was fun and very audience-minded, able to skim around the language barrier with ease. This tale is an excerpt from his upcoming book (meaning he warned this may not be the final cut) but it's self-contained and it was easy to read even if I missed the context.

The Last Flowers of the Spring Witch by Shawn Speakman: Speakman is the editor of this anthology, an author, a cancer survivor, a son: nothing of this factors in my review but anyway, this is a well-written fantasy story, full of hope, framed by a beautiful landscape and shaped around the author's love for his mother and her final battle against cancer. This is the third short story (more Nix please) of his I read, and it's always a pleasure.

The first anthology ever where I could not find a single story that I disliked. Only a couple were a simple pass, the rest ranged from nice to amazing. Absolutely recommended!

The butterflies carried her will and farewell.