



Reave the Just and Other Tales

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Stephen R. Donaldson's unique talents have placed his work alongside that of J.R.R. Tolkien and established him as a writer with the rare ability to expand readers' imaginations. Now he presents a magnificent new collection of eight stories and novellas--three of which have never before been published.

This outstanding volume commences with the fablelike title story, "Reave the Just," which highlights one of Donaldson's favorite themes: the individual's power to overcome adversity. This collection also introduces the morbid, soul-taking hero of "Penance," the mysterious beggar woman in the dark fairy tale "The Woman Who Loved Pigs," and the pampered antihero forced to make a choice between virtue and vice in "The Djinn Who Watches Over the Accursed."

Boasting exotic settings and suspense fueled by sudden plot twists, **Reave the Just and Other Tales** is a testament to Stephen R. Donaldson's talent to spin unforgettably spellbinding stories, and the astonishing scope of his mastery of magic and myth.

Reave the Just and Other Tales Details

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From Reader Review Reave the Just and Other Tales for online ebook

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in May 2000.

After enjoying the Thomas Covenant and Mordant's Need novels, and then finding the Gap series unreadable, I wasn't quite sure whether Reave the Just would be worth reading or not. Having read it, I now feel that some of the stories were worth reading, others not, much like Donaldson's only other collection of short stories, Daughter of Regals.

All the stories, written over a fourteen year period, pick up on the major theme of Donaldson's writing - the freedom to choose and the physical or metaphorical rape that is its removal. It is a fruitful theme, as the different ways that Donaldson has tackled it in his career testify, but its continued presence in his work is sometimes rather disturbing. The ironic theme of what is real is less obvious than in his early writing, though it remains there - in the way in which a tale shapes events in the title story, for example.

Most of the stories have something that grabs the reader, though they are of variable quality. Interestingly, the title story was among those I liked least. A major problem is that Donaldson is incurably prolix, a flaw which mars his novels - though to a lesser extent in the longer form. Some of these "short" stories are over seventy pages in length and yet cry out for shortening (one of the biggest culprits, with a particularly loose structure, is The Killing Stroke, a story which could be described in a short phrase as a homage to martial arts films).

Rose Vane says

One of the best collections of fantasy tales I've ever read. But I fully expected it - with a writer of Donaldson's calibre. I don't think I can pick a favourite here - every story in the book has something unique and provoking. And so memorable. I read this book several years ago, but I vividly remember each and every tale. If I were to pick one, I'd pick Penance, because of the chivalresque/Arthurian atmosphere it brings into a raw and stirring vampire tale.

Robin says

I enjoyed the Thomas Covenant Chronicles by this author when I was much younger, so when I came across a book of his short stories, I was intrigued. His verbosity made one or two of the stories almost unreadable: he likes to use ten or fifteen paragraphs when a sentence or two might do. But his writing is lovely, and his imagination rich. Many of the parables had a desert-nomadic-ancient middle-eastern feel to them, complete in some cases with harems, genies, and camel caravans. One sci fi story seemed quite out of place amid so many magical tales of the desert, or of small medieval villages. The title story was the most fascinating to me of all the stories in the collection.

I enjoyed the tales and am glad to have read them.

That said, this collection is full of rape, sodomy, slavery, murder, torture, heinous ways to die, and more, so it is NOT for children.

Charles says

This took me a long time to finish but that isn't a bad thing. Each story is long, often a bit cerebral but is set in such a fully-realized and developed setting that completing one felt the same as completing a novel. One 40-page story offers more character, more history and more interest in its setting than I ever had from 2.3 Game of Thrones novels. And while there is the escapism and imaginative wonder in the tales, they also have a literary edge to them and a fairy-tale or Chekhov-esque tone to them. This book is a prime example of what I consider to be good fantasy fiction.

Beth Meyers says

Donaldson absolutely refuses to absolve characters of their own responsibility. Which is really rather refreshing.

Colby says

It's hard to come up with an overall rating for a collection of short stories, but I'll rate it a solid 4, as several shorts were superb:

Reave the Just - 5 stars

The Djinn Who Watches over the Accursed - 5 stars

The Killing Stroke - 3 stars - plot dragged

The Kings of Tarshish Shall Bring Gifts - 4 stars

Penance - 3 stars - Had to deduct a star because there's no way a vampire who is shunned by society is eloquent enough to hold a ballroom of nobles enraptured for hours with his tale of woe.

The Woman Who Loved Pigs - 2 stars - Promising beginning, but fell apart in the end.

What Makes Us Human 1 star - Stick to fantasy, Steve! Sci-fi didn't work out so well.

By Any Other Name - 3 stars - amusing, but again, pacing problems.

Mean Mr. Mustard says

4.5 Stars. Solid read.

Jon Lederman says

Interesting short stories that serve as precursors to Donaldson's later fantasy/adventure masterpieces, especially *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, Unbeliever*, which he has been writing for almost 20 years (one book to go). Lots of kings, princes, princesses and wizards, but also an interesting way (in some of his work) of merging the present and the past -- and despite the adventure aspects, his goals are not so much about good vs evil, but about the human condition and the struggle to recognize good from evil in ourselves.

Bookwraiths says

I'm a Donaldson fan, so there really wasn't any doubt that I'd enjoy this collection of novellas and short stories, but I didn't realize that it would be as good as it was. Honestly, Mr. Donaldson did a wonderful job mixing classic fantasy and grimdark-esque themes with some memorable characters to produce a great fantasy work. Just my initial thoughts. I'll write a proper review later.

Erik says

A nice little collection of shorts from one of my favorite authors. Well worth the read.

A. Dawes says

Donaldson was a power-force in the late 70s, 80s and early 90s. He brought a dark edge to the fantasy genre. I admired his uniquely verbose style. At times he was Kafkaesque, at other times like Chekov, and at the time he held his own in the shorter form against most other writers. His detailed descriptions weren't for everyone's liking, but I enjoyed the fact that you were not on a roller coaster ride with turns on every single page.

This is an excellent collection.

But the fact does remain. Donaldson may feel heavy handed in terms of language for modern day readers. Having recently read *Abercrombie*, I could really feel the difference in eras.

4.5* "By Any Other Name" Long winded at times and entertaining at other times, which really is emblematic of Donaldson's writing as a whole.

4* "Penance" Details the specifics and horrors of torture. Told in an older style narration reminiscent of a Victorian work, whereby a shunned vampire tells his sad tale to the gentry of the era. A good story, but may be tiring for some who aren't used to this style of narrative.

5* "Reave the Just" The title story is a winner. Strong fantasy tale, which is what Donaldson does best.

5* "The Djinn Who Watches Over the Accursed" What's not to love? The title says it all.

4.5* "The Killing Stroke" This one drags at times, but is also original and v. clever. Worth the lulls in pacing as it is a rewarding story by the end.

4* "The Kings of Tarshish Shall Bring Gifts" Another strong work.

4* "The Woman Who Loved Pigs" Unusual ending but a great journey until then.

3.5* "What Makes Us Human" This sci-fi felt out of place here, but it does showcase Donaldson's versatility. I don't think he writes as well in this genre, but it's still better than many others.

Despite the pace problems, which may be an issue for modern readers, I'd still happily recommend this collection for fans of fantasy.

Sarah says

Great collection

Derrel Schnurr says

A great collection of short stories for Donaldson fans. A intriguing departures from his usual Donaldsonian (yeah, I just made that up) conventions, showing some fantastic talent outside of his usual box. Highly recommended for Donaldson fans. (However, the story from which the collection gets its name — Reave the Just — is the worst, or second worst, of the bunch. I think it was chosen because it was the most intriguing title.)

Bob Rust says

Reave the Just • (1992) • novelette

The Djinn Who Watches Over the Accursed • (1989) • shortstory

The Killing Stroke • (1998) • novella

The Kings of Tarshish Shall Bring Gifts • (1995) • novelette

Penance • (1998) • novella

The Woman Who Loved Pigs • (1993) • novella

What Makes Us Human • [Berserker] • (1984) • novelette

By Any Other Name • (1998) • novella

Stefanie says

I feel like this is one of Donaldson's weakest books. I liked a lot of these short stores, especially "The Woman Who Loved Pigs" and "What Makes Us Human." However, a lot of the stories were slow in getting to the point, or seemed over long for the story they were trying to tell. I especially disliked "Penance," which seemed to me just an excuse to detail a horrific torture. The rest of the story was so cheesy and conventional that I didn't bother to finish it. I actually bought this book when it came out about 10 years ago, but I got about halfway through the title story before abandoning it. "Reave the Just" takes so long to get going that I got bored before it resolved. The book at on my shelf until recently, when I didn't have anything else to read and felt I should take another stab at this one, since Donaldson is one of my favorite authors. I found "Reave

the Just" just as difficult to get through the second time, but I pushed on and am glad I did as I enjoyed the rest of the story. But it proved to me that 10 years really didn't make this a better collection.
