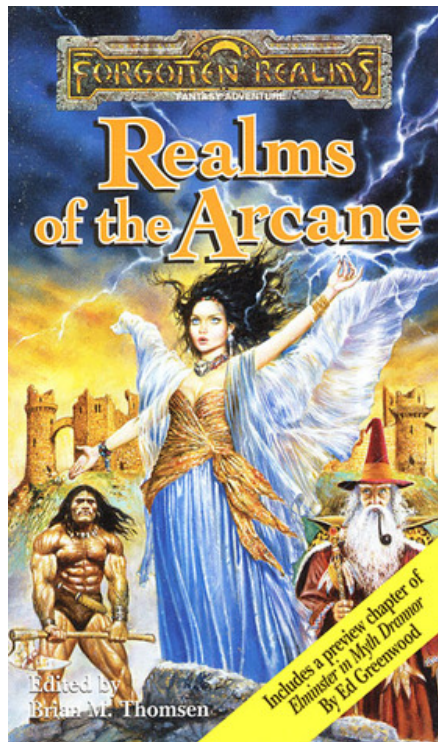




Realms of the Arcane

Brian M. Thomsen (Editor) , J. Robert King (Contributor) , Mark Anthony (Contributor) , Monte Cook (Contributor) , Jeff Grubb (Contributor) , Ed Greenwood (Contributor) , Philip Athans (Contributor) , Wes Nicholson (Contributor) , more... David Zeb Cook (Contributor) , Elaine Cunningham (Contributor) , Tom Dupree (Contributor) ...less

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Candlekeep boasts one of the finest libraries in the Realms, where the privileged few may conduct their research. But what about its secret collections? Volumes and scrolls long forgotten or hidden from the inquiring eyes of browsers. Volumes dealing with matters that can only be described as arcane. New tales of Toril past and present by favorite Realms authors, including: Ed Greenwood, Elaine Cunningham, Jeff Grubb, Mark Anthony, and others

Realms of the Arcane Details

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From Reader Review Realms of the Arcane for online ebook

James says

The Undermountain short story was great.

liquid soap says

Forgettable series, horrible Polish edition. Good job, Tom Dupree, David Cook, Mark Anthony. You were decent.

Nick M says

Great collection of short stories. I really like the one about the skull and the one about the Eye.

Jesse says

This was a pretty good collection of shorts by all of the standard forgotten realms authors.

An easy read, no big deal. As per usual, some stories are better than others.

David says

A collection of 10 short stories centered around an arcane theme. As with most such collections, they range from very poor to very good. Again, it tends to lean towards poor. The good stories came from Elaine Cunningham, Jeff Grubb, and Monte Cook, and a surprisingly fresh and interesting story from Tom Dupree, "Bread Storm Rising". The rest were mostly forgettable stories.

Stuart Schneider says

If it were not for the last three short stories in this book (not including the Candlekeep story about Wes throughout the book), this book would have been a complete waste of time, with no redeeming value. Since there were another 8 books after this one in the series, I'm guessing they get better again. If only I had it in me to skip books like this, but as a collector, the consumption is everything.

Travis says

Realms of the Arcane edited by Brian M. Thomsen was released in 1997. This anthology has 10 short stories

written by David Cook, Elaine Cunningham, Tom Dupree, J. Robert King, Mark Anthony, Monte Cook, Ed Greenwood, Philip Athans, Brian Thomsen, and Jeff Grubb. There is also a prologue, two interludes, and an epilogue written by Wes Nicholson, I will not comment on these except to give a basic overview of them. As you can guess, the stories within deal with things that are arcane.

"Prologue" by Wes Nicholson- As with all prologue, this sets up the following stories. A probationer, named Wes, is hoping to become a monk at the fabled Candlekeep. Abbot tells him to clean a reading room in which he finds a secret room filled with text and begins to read.

"Wishing You Many More" by David Cook- The story is unique in it's telling because it's told through correspondent letters between Perfect and Absolute Magister Fannol Pavish and a conjurer named Torreb. Pavish and Torreb were both classmates in an academy in which Torreb was the first student and Pavish was the second. However, Torreb let go due to claims of plagiarism and cheating. Pavish sends a letter to Torreb asking for his help with finding a very powerful staff. Why would a former classmate and a rival ask for one's help when the one bettered Pavish in every way.

Negatives:

- 1) Predictable. What happens in the story you could tell from, probably, the first five or so pages. Nothing really came as a shock or anything.
- 2) "Hatred." I never really felt the hatred between the two characters. It just seemed maybe a little forced and ingenious.

Positives:

- 1) "Gift Exchange." I thought that the exchanging of various gifts were pretty clever. It really seemed like an "Oh look, the Smiths have a new car. Bob, why don't we have a new car. Oh wait, even better, make it a new boat" scenarios.
- 2) Correspondence Letters. I like how the story was told this way. It made it a little different and pretty interesting.

Overall: 4/5

I liked the story and how it was told. It really made it interesting.

"Secrets of Blood, Spirits of the Sea" by Elaine Cunningham- This is a tale of how the sahuagin came to exist. A dark elven wizard named Ka'Narlist created these creatures from his blood and the blood of other creatures. His servant, a wemic named Mbugua, wants to ruin Ka'Narlist so he sabotages the dark elf's experiments and Mbugua creates a sahuagin/ sea elf named Malenti. However, does Malenti take down Ka'Narlist?

Negatives:

- 1) The Ending. While it is okay, the problem I have is that, it didn't really say what happened to Ka'Narlist. Did he receive god-hood or is he dead?
- 2) The storyteller. During some scenes in which the storyteller is talking to his elven captures, it just didn't seem to fit. I do like the idea, but it just seemed a little weird to me at times.

Positives:

- 1) Telling. I do like the telling of this "creation" story. It isn't boring like some of the ones I have read, and it actually is pretty exciting.
- 2) Sea Elves. There isn't many stories (at least to my knowledge) about the sea elves. Sure there maybe was a quick cameo or a short story here and there, but nothing really focused on just them. Granted, this story doesn't really have much about these creatures, but any story with a little information just really interests me.

Overall: 4/5

It kept my attention for a creation story, which if you didn't know, I don't like at all. It was just interesting.

"Bread Storm Rising" by Tom Dupree- The story follows Wiglaf Evertongue, an apprentice mage, and Sasha, a warrior in charge of his safe keeping, on a vacation back to Calimport, Wiglaf's home. When showing the city to Sasha, Wiglaf comes across a bottle with dough in it that can stop a famine, or at least that's what Wiglaf is able to translate.

Negatives:

- 1) B-Horror Movie Feel. The whole story just felt like a B- horror movie. You get the "normal" stuff happening at the beginning, and then some crazy monster comes along and terrorizes. Cliché and overdone.
- 2) "Saved." This is the second short story featuring Wiglaf and yet again, his master saves him. Been there, done that.

Positives:

- 1) Wiglaf and Sasha. The characters were interesting. As I mentioned before, Wiglaf and Sasha were in another short story in Realms of Magic. It was nice to see Wiglaf develop more and have Sasha actually have a main role. I would like to see more about them.
- 2) Build-up. All the way up to the freakishly pathetic "monster" was interesting and good. You see how Wiglaf was treated by everyone and how everything was for him back in Calimport. It was pretty entertaining.

Overall: 3/5

I don't really enjoy the B-Movie feel of this story.

"Interlude" by Wes Nicholson- This just basically tells of how Wes is still looking through the books in the secret room as told in the prologue.

"When Even Sky Cities Fall" by J. Robert King- The story is about an attack of a sky city called Lhaoda by another sky city called Tith Tilendrothael, which are both inhabited by the ancient Netheril. The main characters are a griffon named Peregrin and the mage Josiah, who are leading the attack on Lhaoda. Things go as planned except that Josiah and Peregrin notice that the city is falling, but how can the city fall if the attack just began?

Negatives:

- 1) Lack of action. Yes, there is some action, but I didn't think that it was really written to be exciting. It just felt kind of stale and boring.
- 2) Characters. I didn't really care for the characters. Maybe because they weren't the main focus, or that they were dull and bland. They weren't interesting at all.

Positives:

- 1) Sky Cities. I haven't read much about them, but they were the most interesting part of the story. The only problem I didn't like is that there wasn't much detail about them. However, the falling down part was entertaining.
- 2) Help. When they noticed that the city is falling, the attackers start to help. It thought it was a nice touch but honestly, nothing really major or ground breaking.

Overall: 2/5

The whole story seemed kind of boring and unexciting. There really was no interesting characters, which is the major downfall of this story.

"The Grotto of Dreams" by Mark Anthony- The story is about a skull named Muragh Brilstagg, who once was a priest of Lathandar, god of the dawn. Muragh tells about how he came to be a skull and his "travels" in the Undermountain, which is under the city Waterdeep. During his Underdark "travels" he meets a half-elf named Aliree, who is searching for a place called The Grotto of Dreams. Throughout the journey, Muragh learns an important lesson.

Negatives:

None.

Positives:

- 1) Humor. The way Muragh tells the story is very humorous. It's funny and kept me interested.
- 2) Muragh. I liked his outlook on this and as I said above, his humor. He was a very interesting main character.
- 3) Descriptions. Mark Anthony did a great thing by doing descriptions of various creatures that I wouldn't know what they are.

Overall: 5/5

I liked how this story was told and Muragh was just great.

"A Narrowed Gaze" by Monte Cook- The story is about a bard, Tiuren, returning to Vantir and his friend the King of Vantir, Kohath, when the king needs help. Tiuren finds out that a wizard placed a curse upon the queen to get Kohath to step down as king. Things don't go as planned.

Negatives:

- 1) Boring. The whole story was just not exciting and I didn't care for the characters. Everything was just bland and cliché.
- 2) Pacing. The whole story really blew by. It just flowed way too fast and there was hardly any description or time to develop a character or any events.
- 3) Characters. No one in this story was memorable or exciting. They weren't developed enough and they weren't interesting.

Positives:

- 1) The Beginning. The start was really the only interesting part. The whole Dark Eye of Gavinaas was pretty interesting but very underdeveloped.

Overall: 2/5

Boring, no character development, and all very cliché. The whole story was really missing the details.

"The Whispering Crown" by Ed Greenwood- The story is about the Lady of Dusklake named Aerindel and is awaiting the coming of the Lord of Grand Thentor named Rammast. Rammast wants Aerindel to himself for a slave and "play" thing. So Aerindel is going to duel him and of course, loses. However, Rammast was unable to gain his "prize" and Aerindel goes down to the family crypt to visit her beloved father, who taught her magic. There she finds a crown given to her by Mystra, the goddess of magic, and finally gains the power to defeat Rammast and the armies of Grand Thentor. With awesome power, comes dire consequences.

Negatives:

- 1) Some parts seem fast. There were times in which I didn't know what just happened and rereading it didn't help find out. It was like there was a sentence or key word missing.
- 2) Lack of Information. While you do get a brief history of Dusklake and the feud between Aerindel and Rammast, there seemed something lacking.
- 3) The ending. I didn't care for the last words. I didn't understand why Aerindel said them and it just seemed pointless and silly.

Positives:

- 1) Story. I did like how the story went. It was interesting and fun. I'm not the biggest fan of Ed Greenwood's storytelling but here it was great (aside from my complaints).
- 2) Characters. You really got a good look into their personalities and how they are. Once again, in Ed Greenwood's other stories, I never really identified or knew who the main characters were and I wasn't able to see how they act and are. Here it's different and simplified, which made everything easier to follow and understand.

Overall: 4/5

Another Ed Greenwood story I like, making it two out of the five short stories I've read by him. I like how simplified and easy to read this story was.

"Interlude" by Wes Nicholson- Again, just as before, this is about Wes still looking through the books. However, there is a little bit of history about Candlekeep and that Wes keeps picking up a book telling the history.

"The Lady and the Shadow" by Philip Athans- The story is about an assassin attempting to kill an archwizard. The assassin, Alashar Crywinds, was told to kill an archmage named Shadow by a fellow archwizard, Grenway. Alashar completes her assignment, but things aren't as easy nor as crystal clear as she thought.

Negatives:

None. I really enjoyed this story.

Positives:

- 1) Alashar. She was a very interesting character. She seemed like the kind of assassin that does it and doesn't enjoy it. It does help that her weapon, a whip-rapier, is just neat.
- 2) The story. It was a well thought out story. Everything was pretty well covered and, all in all, it was fun and interesting.
- 2) Shadow. He seemed to be unique in the sense that he didn't seem like an archwizard.

Overall: 5/5

I really did enjoy the story and the characters. It was fast paced and action packed.

"Shadows of the Past" by Brian M. Thomsen- The story is about a man who lost his memory. He doesn't know who he is or what he was. He slowly regains some of it with clues and being employed by a man named Murph. Murph has the man go and steal a manuscript from a famous author. Throughout the story you find out what happened to the man.

Negatives:

- 1) No Resolution. There wasn't really any climax or real ending it seemed. This kind of made it seem pointless in a way. You want to know who this person is, yet you never find out.
- 2) Nymara Scheiron (A.K.A. Kitten). She was interesting yet not. I really have mixed feelings about this character. There are times when she is appealing and then there are times when she's just there.

Positives:

- 1) The Idea. The whole idea behind the story is really different (for a Realms story) and well thought out. It's interesting that his abilities from his past stayed intact in his present state. Then having these clues in which he picks up on was, I think, unique.
- 2) The Man. Since I have no way to name him. No really though, he was an interesting and different character. As I mentioned above, it is interesting that he can keep what he learned in his life even though he doesn't know who he is.

Overall: 3/5

While the story and the main character I really liked, but the story never really amounted to anything important made me a little annoyed. I felt cheated.

"Tertius and the Artifact" by Jeff Grubb- The story is about a man named Tertius Wands and his search to recover an artifact. Tertius' family are powerful mages, except he lacks the magical touch. Because of this, his grand-uncle, Maskar, needs him to recover the Tripartite Orb. The orb causes an anti-magic field, so to speak, and seeing as Tertius lacks magic, he was the logical choice. Tertius finds out who the thief was and goes about looking for him, at least he thinks he is.

Negatives:

- 1) Twist. The "twist" is too obvious and it really is easy to tell right away that the story is going to have an obvious twist. It was lame and honestly kind of dumb.

Positives:

- 1) Tertius. For being a drunken whatever he is, he sure does act like it. Yes, you read that right. I think that Jeff Grubb really did pick a good main character in someone who is so inept in doing things and amazingly, he doesn't do them right. It was different.
- 2) Ampratines. Tertius' djinni. He was the sole voice of reason and smarts in the story. In stead of coming off like most "all-knowing" characters, Ampri really does seem to serve his master in such a way to not really mock him. I just really enjoyed this character.

Overall: 4/5

Although the twist is obvious, the characters and the telling of the story seems new and fresh. It really was a fun read.

"Epilogue" by Wes Nicholson- The story picks up with Wes reading the book containing the history of Candlekeep. He learns the reason for novices to disappearing and he finds out something that he has to do.

OVERALL ANTHOLOGY: 4/5

Overall, good stories. Some are better than others, obviously, and then there are some that weren't great by any means. The thing I should have included was the prologue, the two interludes, and the epilogue; which I thought were boring and kind of lame.
