



The Sworn

Gail Z. Martin

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Summoner-King Martris Drayke must attempt to meet this great threat, gathering an army from a country ravaged by civil war. Tris seeks new allies from among the living - and the dead - as an untested generation of rulers face their first battle. Meanwhile, the legendary Dread are stirring in their burrows after millennia of silence and no one knows what hand wakes them and whom they will serve when they rise.

Now, Drayke turns to the Sworn, a nomadic clan of warriors bound to protect the Dread. But even the mighty Sworn do not know what will happen when the Dread awake. All are certain, though, that war is coming to the Winter Kingdoms.

THE SWORN is the beginning of a new adventure set in the world of The Chronicles of the Necromancer.

The Sworn Details

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Author : Gail Z. Martin

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From Reader Review The Sworn for online ebook

Brandon Zarzyczny says

Having read all of Martin's previous book, I welcomed a return to the world she created and it's characters. In an interview at the end of the book, the author says that this book would be a great spot to enter the series, but I disagree with her. While it's true that all of the enemies in this book are new, I think it would be a disservice to not read the previous books. The biggest reason for this is that, other than the very few new characters, none of the main characters evolve or change in this book, they are essentially static. There is no actual conflict in this book, other than a slight conspiracy at the very end, which I assume the author intended as the climax of the book. This book is basically the set-up for the next book which will contain an epic war. The author didn't even introduce any of the actual villains, who they are and why they're attacking. The only people you see in this book are the "Black Robes" who are trying to raise an ancient evil from the barrows that the Sworn guard. These villains aren't too impressive; they're never given a face or a background; apparently they're just some ancient cult that popped up out of nowhere yet are very resourceful and powerful.

So while I enjoyed reading this book, her words have a great flow that makes you want to keep turning the page, I was ultimately left disappointed. This is one of the main problems found in today's epic fantasy stories: they're sometimes so focused on the epicness of their overarching stories, that they forget to create a singular story in one book with a beginning middle and end. For any potential readers of this book, if you've already read her previous books you should definitely read this one or the next most likely amazing book won't make any sense. However, if you're new to Gail Z. Martin you would be much better served to start with the first book, which is amazing.

My Rating: 8.25/10

Cynthia says

SWORN, Gail Z. Martin, 2011

Book One of The Fallen Kings Cycle

We have the same characters as were in Chronicles, plus some new people.

Dark mage/s from across the Northern Sea threaten the Winter Lands. A group of Black Robes is trying to bring an old religion back to life. More trials and tribulations for our heroes.

I think the whole story is too much for one book, so SWORN gives us the background leading up to the war. The war is in the next book.

This is my second reading of this series.

I have to give this book three stars.

Sam McManus says

Book #1 in the Fallen Kings Cycle, sequel series to the Chronicles of the Necromancer series by the same author. I picked up this book not knowing it was technically a sequel and while you don't need to have read

the others to understand what's happening, I do wish I'd found those first. Big events from the first series are (obviously) spoiled and I would just prefer to know the back history ahead of time.

That said, I enjoyed the read. I was pleasantly surprised by the addition of werewolves and vampires. While I really enjoy these two fantasy races, it can be very difficult to find well written characters of their type in any genre. I liked that in this world it wasn't the usual 'Everyone's oblivious to their existence except for the secret few who see past the monster' deal and instead society for the most part knew about and accepted that there were 'others' out there among them.

I also liked the set up and pacing of the story. How it was once central storyline broken down into one or two characters' viewpoints per chapter. Kinda cool to see everyone heading toward to the same conclusion but maybe reaching it a little differently. Also the way they are all bonded to each other through history and friendship has me excited for a future gathering of them all in the same place to face the enemy.

Since I've already finished this book, I'm going to go ahead and read it's sequel *The Dread* before checking out *TCotN*. Just the little spoilers and whatnot in this last book has got me curious to read and actually experience all the events in the first series.

Nathan says

Pretty good setup for what I'm sure will be an epic battle.

Lindsay Stares says

I have only one quibble with *The Sworn*, but it's not a small one: it's not nearly as good a jumping-on point for this world as the marketing push would have you believe. If you are in the mood for some good epic fantasy, you might enjoy, as I did, the experience of catching up, but there is serious catching-up to do.

The author has written four previous books set in this world, dealing with most of the same characters. The prologue of *The Sworn* summarizes these books in a brain-numbing flood of names and events, and if I hadn't already read and enjoyed the first chapter, I might have put the book down right then. In the book proper, there are at least five major characters and/or pairs of characters, following plotlines taking place in different kingdoms and cities, and it took me a long time to get involved in the stories that had the most history. The characters who seemed to have been created for this book were the ones I found most immediately approachable.

I was surprised at how widely the focus of the plot ranged across all the different characters, I suppose because I've been reading a lot of narrowly focused first-person narratives recently. The plots were starting to pull together by the end (at least into a few main threads), and I'm certain they will continue to do so in the sequels. This is true epic fantasy: dealing delicately with multiple threads simultaneously, the armies of good ranged against the forces of darkness, and the doings of kings and warriors.

The only reason the wide-ranging plot was a problem for me was that I kept being introduced to new characters and plotlines before I'd gotten a handle on the ones I had already read. It was chapter eight before

the book returned to the characters I'd liked so much in chapter one.

I have to say that to my surprise, the use of vampires and werewolves in place of other fantasy races works really well. They slip beautifully into a supernatural spectrum that includes a very present spirit world, elemental and ghost-based magic, shamanism, and a well-explored system of goddess-worship.

By the end of the book, I was invested in all of the characters, and had a hard time putting it down. I really like the world, and I like the plot, although there's nothing groundbreaking about it.

Overall, I enjoyed this book as a solid, original, large-scale fantasy. I'll watch for the next one, now that I know the characters, and perhaps in the meantime I'll go back and read the previous books. Unfortunately, I didn't really start loving it until about half-way through

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Geoff Battle says

The previous entries in the series have been hit and miss in delivering tension even though the characters and plots had been fleshed out enough to create credible fantasy. There are some unique ideas that carry this series and those elements are explored further, with some interesting plots concerning the relationship between the living and the dead.

The Sworn, due to the sheer scale of the plot, requires a diverse cast and this makes the first half quite dense, for the last four books have added many characters and they are spread across the Winter Kingdoms. Once the characters have been established Martin creates a strong feeling of foreboding, this entry is very much the calm before the storm; a prologue for the next chapter. Thanks to some unpredictable plot twists and careful manoeuvring of the protagonists The Sworn guarantees you'll be eagerly awaiting the next book, The Dread.

Amber says

This book is as action packed as the previous novels! I loved that the new cycle is giving more insight into the pasts of the kingdoms and showing how much the characters are being forced to change due to circumstances in the plot. An excellent read! I hope the next one is out soon!

colleen the convivial curmudgeon says

3 1/2

This book is marketed as "the beginning of a new adventure set in the world of the Chronicles of the Necromancer". It both is and isn't.

For the ways that it is, we are introduced to a few new characters, threats, and concepts which we haven't seen before. We also see more of the Winter Kingdoms, as the new threat is against the entirety of the

Kingdoms as opposed to being internal issues, as the previous books were.

Another way in which this feels like a new adventure is that this book is primarily information gathering and set-up. Not a lot happens, per se, in the sense that everything that does happen is either informational or sort of placing the pieces of the board for where they need to be for the big battle. Still, I was never really bored, which, for me, seems a rare feat - especially when it's mostly a lot of talking heads, with a few exceptions.

That said, I do have two main gripes:

1) This book is broken into multiple perspectives - 5, if I remember correctly - and they are in different places in the Kingdoms, so they're all gathering their own information; however, most of the information ends up being along the same lines, while it's realistic that different groups of people in different parts of the world would have to investigate things on their own and learn, generally, the same things, it becomes a bit repetitive when you're reading this happen in book form.

Luckily there are variations to the information, particularly in the gathering of the information (i.e. different types of magic, and a few quick and dirty battles), and this part, at least, added to the interest level.

2) Again with the perspectives, there's not really a lot of character development in this story, and you have a hard time really connecting with any of the characters, because a lot of what they're feeling comes from earlier stories and, also, once you get settled into a character/group the perspective switches and you're taken to a different group.

Now, I have a fondness for these characters, including ones like Carroway or were sadly underused in this book, but that fondness was grown over the last four books, in which the characters did grow and in which we saw much more of them as individuals. (I did like the addition of Jair and, especially, Talwyn and her magic to the mix, too.)

Which brings to me how this book is **not** the start of a new adventure. Or, at least, not a good place to jump into the series.

The "prologue" of the book is really just a 5 page summary of the first four books, to give the new reader an idea of what happened before - but it's not nearly enough, I don't think. It's useful for me, an old reader, to sort of jog my memory, but there's so much information dumped so quickly, I can't imagine it would actually be particularly useful.

Also, a lot of characters and events of those first four books are referenced, often with little "reminder blurbs", sometimes with enough information to help new readers, but not enough to really get a feel for the characters or what they went through before.

Since I'm a very character based reader, I think if I came into this book without reading the other four I would be very disappointed on that score, because almost everything about these characters comes from stuff that happened before, and, without that knowledge, it would be hard to connect with any of them based on the scant interaction you have with them here.

Not to mention reading this book is spoilerific for the four that came before it.

So, in some ways it is the start of a new adventure - or, at least, the introduction of a new threat. But I still don't think it's a good starting point because I don't think you'd really care so much if you didn't know

everything which had come before.

As the fifth book in a series, and the start of a new arc, it's very good. I wish it were a bit better, and a bit less repetitive in places, and that we, perhaps, lingered on my favored characters, but, alas, there's a lot going on, so I guess we gotta go along to get along, as it were.

All-in-all, I enjoyed it but it wasn't the best in the series, since it was mostly set-up, and I do hope the next one's better. And I recommend that anyone who picks this up and is interested in it goes back to the beginning and starts with The Summoner. You'll thank me for it later. ;)

Diana (Offbeat Vagabond) says

Review posted here: Offbeat Vagabond

Wow, this was better than I expected. Thanks to Netgalley, I had the pleasure to add this to my iPod. I must say, I have not had the pleasure of reading Gail Z. Martin's first series, Chronicles of the Necromancer, but I see why she is so popular in this genre. It was truly epic with all sort of supernatural beings that made it quite refreshing. I have never come across a series that was an epic fantasy that is full of zombies, demons, vampires, werewolves and more. It was 600 pages of greatness.

The Sworn is about individuals who come together to try and take on a group we know as Black Robes, that want to raise an ancient cult known as the Destroyer. They want to raise it so they can bring back the old ways of the Winter Kingdoms. But while all of this is happening, the Winter Kingdoms are swarmed with multiple problems. Crops are slowly running low, there is a plague happening that turns people into zombies (or ashtenerath) and there are also demons (or dimmons) being raised by the Black Robes to attack people. Even worse, the Black Robes are capturing vampires and werewolves to sacrifice their blood to the Destroyer.

I will not go too much in the details because there are a lot. Each chapter is a different addition to the plot. I love that there isn't just one or two main characters. Everyone is a main character. There were so many subplots that led to the big plot, it was a tad confusing, but I believe that was due to the fact that I just got into this world and haven't read the first series. The Sworn is a spin-off of Chronicles of the Summoner series for those that don't know.

I also loved how when the books changed from one character to the next, it is a different world. Each world is full of magic in one way or the other. Whether it be the world of summoning because of King Tris, who has the ability to raise the dead or talk to their ghosts. Or the world of Aidane, the serroquette (a ghost whore), who has the ability to harbor a ghost's spirit and let them live through her (but only for two hours). All their abilities end up playing a huge role in this seemingly inevitable war.

I am so regretful for not starting Martin's work earlier, but I definitely intend to. Her work is beautifully written and imaginative. It is full of fantasy, horror, and magic, it was hard not to get engulfed by this book. Actually this book leaves off on a sort of cliffhanger and even though it is a little over 600 pages, I was

literally screaming at iPod because I didn't want it to end. So if epic fantasy mixed with vampires, demons and werewolves sounds like your kind of thing, I highly recommend this book to you.

Darin says

meh.

Blodeuedd Finland says

I think this was a bit weird, I mean the last series took place just 6 months before this. At least make it 10, or 25 and have it about their kids or something. Let them fights some battles.

I am never awed by these books, yes I know that sounds bad, they are good, just never awesome. They are light, fast to read and since this is a two book series I will read book 2 even though I totally know it will not be awesome, but it will be good.

Right, so it has only been 6 months since that last series and something bad is coming again.

Tris and Kiara worry about their kid, and the fate of their two kingdoms since peeps are all we will not be ruled by those other guys! Omg chill people. You are still your own kingdom, they just have to make enough babies to go around.

Jonmarc and his wife are with their vamps, to be honest, I was never a fan of his. But I liked how there are vamps in this world, it fits considering all the ghosts too.

A new player comes in, a prince from another country and his wife has knowledge of those who could help. I liked these two, they could totally have a tragic book of their own.

So yes it's a light fast fantasy, sure it has many pages, but it's so light that they just disappear. People die like flies, but it still totally light. At least to me.

Since it's only one book left I guess the war will come and end.

Lyn Mckenzie says

This is the first book that I have read by this author although I had heard some very good things about this author's work so I had wanted to read her books for a while. Along with this book I bought the second book and I am so glad that I bought them both as I can't wait to read the next book.

At the beginning of this book I did struggle a little bit with the previous history and all the different characters living in different parts of the Winter Kingdom but I think that is mainly down to the fact I have memory loss and not the way that this author wrote it. This is an extremely detailed storyline with many aspects to it, I loved how all the different tales from the different characters end up coming together at the

end and make complete sense, I loved that! This is most definitely not a storyline that you can predict and the more chapters that you read, the more hooked you become on the story and the more that you want to read!!!

The characters in this tale are many, I loved how different that they all were and it was amazing to read how much obviously went into the creation of each character, the care and attention that is put into them is very obvious and comes across throughout the pages. The way that these characters are written draws you as the reader into their lives, you want to know more about them and their pasts.

I highly highly recommend This book and this author's work, especially if her other books are as good as this book. This author is extremely talented and I am super excited to read more of her work!!!!

Heather Codename: ?Dutchess? says

I know the book says you don't have to The Summoner to get into this book, but, you really do. However, I couldn't get into The Summoner and Gail's writing is too basic for me to consider her a high fantasy author. I can also only take so many 21st century ideologies in a book that takes place during the 12th century before I have to stop.

Mimi says

Have just came back to read Martin's the Sworn. Having read the other books previously, this one does not disappoint. Very good.

Melanie says

I read the introduction to this book and thought 'Wow! This could be a book in itself. I wonder why she hasn't written it?' It was then reading the author Q&As in the Extras section and found out that she had: a series of books which had intrigued me, but of which I'd been put off by a number of bad reviews I'd seen. In this section, Martin also says that this is a good place for people who haven't read the first series of books to join the characters.

I have to whole-heartedly disagree with this.

The introduction is a summary of the first series - I think 4 books - into about 5 pages which is too much to take in and obviously no relationships are built with the characters. The beginning of this book is too confusing with too many unexplained terms for me to feel like I really knew what was going on. These characters have relationships which I know nothing about and are spread all over a number of kingdoms, each doing their own thing for which I have no background. There are times where a very obvious 'this is what happened in a previous book' filler paragraph has been inserted, for the benefit of others like me who haven't read the previous book.

I'm sure this would be a great book if I'd read the previous ones set in this world, but without this background I have no trouble giving up on this book - something I normally hate doing. I just feel like...any feeling built

between characters and readers has already been done. Missing this, I have nothing to hold me to carry on reading this.

Chelsea says

This review was originally posted at Vampire Book Club.

Gail Z. Martin knows how to craft big-scale fantasy. And she includes elements we adore: noble warriors, magic, vampires and werewolves. Martin is well-known for her *Chronicles of the Necromancer* series, and *The Sworn* is set as a gateway into that series for new readers.

The Fallen Kings Cycle series is set in the same world as *Chronicles of the Necromancer* with many of the same characters. The goal for this book was to allow new readers to join in, but the prologue filling in the Winter Kingdoms' histories (a.k.a. the events of the Necromancer novels) may put first-timers into information overload. If you're going into Martin's layered world for the first time, skip the precursory brief and jump right in. It'll quickly become apparent who is who and the historical events will be peppered in as needed. So, in that way, *The Sworn* really can be an entry point.

The *Sworn* by Gail Z. MartinThe overarching story in *The Sworn* is of followers of an ancient cult — ones who worship The Destroyer — seeking to bring him back into the world. These cult members, or Black Robes, seek to bring chaos to the Winter Kingdoms, to bring things back to the ways before there were lords and kings. And the more blood they spill in the process (and demons set free) the better. Vampires and shifters are being captured as sacrifices, the dead rising, war is coming and powerful magic is awakening.

Martin shifts among characters in various realms — all encountering effects of the Black Robes' magic. This gives us a great understanding of the scope of what's happening and helps with the big picture, but with that you lose strong connections to the characters. I really loved the parts spent with *The Sworn* — a nomadic group of mages who protect the places where the ancient magic is secured. The group dynamic and the primary couple in that storyline is gripping, and each time the novel shifted to another subplot or point-of-view, I was sad to leave them.

Those new to Martin's layered Winter Kingdoms world may find the first bit of the book a little heavy and confusing (lots of names, places and events), but if you're a fan of big-scale fantasy you'll enjoy journeying into *The Sworn*. (Not sure if this is your thing? If you dig George R.R. Martin and *LOTR*, it's likely you'll get into Gail Z. Martin.)

Chris says

I am really over this author. 5 books and she still hasn't found another way to talk about someone's hair without using the word "framed". Every word she invented for the universe gets italicized not once, but **EVERY SINGLE TIME IT SHOWS UP**. It's beyond annoying. I was really hoping she'd mature by now, but she hasn't. And I don't care much about what happens going forward, because so far it's pretty much the exact same arc as the first 4-book series.

Daniel says

I really had to force myself to get through this book. The characters are introduced in a prologue that explains the past four books, but there is so much information laid out that it fails at its purpose. In one sense, I like Martin's writing, but in most cases I do not. It gets tiring reading the same italicized names for vampires and werewolves. Nothing here is original. We have a powerful king, a bard, villains who wear black robes and are a cult, a lame magic system, zombies, ghosts, vampires, and werewolves.

I randomly picked this book up, so that's my fault, since I did no research before purchasing. I will not bother with the next book in the cycle, as the first one moved at such a slow pace and failed to keep me wanting more.

Three stars are given since I did find some of the characters enjoyable, the writing was smooth for the most part, and I was mildly interested in some of the well-written action. However, the unoriginality, slow pace, lack of events, and boring characters have left me irritated at the author's work.

In the end, the book does start to pick up the pace, as beginning at Chapter 15 I found myself truly interested in the book. It's a shame that the elements before this chapter left me struggling to pick this book up and finish it. Would I recommend it to most readers? Probably not, as most do not have such patience and are not as forgiving when reading a novel.

Though I state that I will not pick up the next book, *The Dread*, that may be a lie. However, I do not plan to do so any time soon.

Marleen says

Copy received from and reviewed for Bookgeeks.

The Winter Kingdoms are a troubled place. A plague and famine scourge the lands, old problems and rivalries are either still around or resurfacing and an invasion is threatening from across the Northern Sea. Several people in different parts of the kingdoms can feel the danger and are trying to investigate what exactly they are up against, and what they discover is deeply disturbing. Not only does the invasion appear to be headed by a traitor as well as a dark spirit mage wielding blood magic, forces are also trying to bring forth the Dread and the dark force they hold, deep underneath the earth.

The Dread are a force to be reckoned with, and also an unpredictable factor. The Dread are allied to no one but might choose to join either the invaders or those defending the Winter Kingdoms. As the Sworn, a tribe dedicated to keeping the Dread confined in their borrows, knows it might be best for all if the Dread would stay out of the conflict all together.

This is a fantasy novel and as such there are a lot of characters to get acquainted with, a lot of friendships, feuds and enemies to keep separate and all sorts of creatures and powers not known in real life. We find magic, ghosts, vampires (called vayash moru) and werewolves (vyrkin) in these pages.

It has been years since I last read a fantasy novel, and I wasn't sure how much I would end up enjoying this book. But I was pleasantly surprised.

I found myself caught up in the story and the characters almost from the first page and kept on turning the pages until I had read the last word. And although the next book in this series won't be published until next year, I think I will probably read it when it comes out. I find myself liking the characters and wanting to

know who their story will unfold.

I would give one (small) warning to those deciding to read this book. Although this title is the first in a new series, it does follow on from an earlier series of four books, The Chronicles of the Necromancer. The author herself says that this book was written in such a way that it could be read, without problems, by those who had not read the previous series. And that is true. However, I do think that I might have gotten even more out of this book if I had been familiar with the back-story.

As it is, I had a very enjoyable time reading The Sworn and am grateful for the opportunity to re-aquaint myself with the fantasy genre.

MissM says

This was a tough one. It hovers between 2.5 - 3 stars for me. I loved the first four books ("The Chronicles of the Necromancer") and this is really just an extension of that. (The author claims you can pick this up and start fresh if you never read the others but man do I disagree! It's really just Necromancer book 5 but with a different series title.) So, on one hand, I was happy to have more of this world. I like the characters and the setting is well worn in after four books.

On the other hand, NOTHING HAPPENS. It's 400 pages (in Nook form anyway) of a new, threatening menace that every single character in each of their respective kingdoms gets the same basic warning is on the way. The book literally ends without anything happening; it ends as the enemy is spotted approaching.

UGH.

So now I have to wait until 2012 for actual content and actual events to occur?

I take that back. Two characters die but it feels sudden and random and more like she wanted to change up things but didn't want to invest time into writing out a full story of progression. (And yet everything ELSE was overwritten and overexplained ironically.)

Anyway, it was a little frustrating because it was long but without any payoff in this book. I'll read the next because I'm invested in the series but...it doesn't exactly leave a great taste in my mouth.
