



## The Last Wish: Introducing the Witcher

*Andrzej Sapkowski*

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# The Last Wish: Introducing the Witcher

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**The Last Wish: Introducing the Witcher** Andrzej Sapkowski

**A special collector's edition of the *New York Times* bestselling novel that inspired the international hit video game: *The Witcher*.**

Geralt of Rivia is a witcher. A cunning sorcerer. A merciless assassin.

And a cold-blooded killer.

His sole purpose: to destroy the monsters that plague the world.

But not everything monstrous-looking is evil and not everything fair is good. . . and in every fairy tale there is a grain of truth.

For fans of the video game and the uninitiated alike, *The Last Wish* is the opening chapter of **The Witcher** series.

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Translated from original Polish by Danusia Stok

## **The Last Wish: Introducing the Witcher Details**

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# From Reader Review The Last Wish: Introducing the Witcher for online ebook

## Knjigoholi?arka says

Review iz 2014.:

Iako nemam šta pametno za re?i, ose?am da moram da napišem nešto o knjizi koju sam pro?itala u 24 sata, doduše, nije da sam ?itala sve vreme, stigla sam i kupatilo da oribam.

Elem, epska fantastika nije moj fah, moram priznati. Ok, "Hobit" je sladak, i "Gospodara prstenova" sam na jedvite jade izgulila, drugari me za ro?endan uvalili u "To?ak vremena", a tre?i drugar, podjednako sadisti?ki nastrojen, u "Pesmu leda i vatre". Gde da strpam Lukjanjenkove knjige o moskovskoj Straži, još uvek ne znam. Urbana epska fantastika? Urbani vampirsko-pandurski roman? ?ek, tu je i Zelazny... dammit. Moja tvrdnja pade u vodu poput pijanog ribara.

Anyway... browsam ja tako ju?e po knjižari i setim se da nisam kupila stvari koje sam trebala da kupim jer sam, gle ?uda, zaboravila ot?i u prodavnici i same me noge odnele do "Bulevar Books-a". Baš mi se ?italo nešto ZABAVNO. I skontam Vešca na polici. (Naravno, ja sam od onih seljaka koji je prvo ?uo za igricu, pa tek onda za knjigu.) Duuugo sam se ja opirala, neee?u da ?itam Vešca, to ima sedam knjiga, neee?u i neee?u... i šta da radim? Na polici ostao jedan jedincati primerak prve knjige serijala. Stoji knjiga sama, niko je ne?e. Pogužvana joj malo korica, pa možda zato. I meni bilo žao, pa odlu?im da je udomim.

I tako, nakon što sam sino?ke shvatila da je polufinale SP u fudbalu tek narednog dana i da se vreme ne?e ubiti samo od sebe, odlu?im da se pozabavim novoudomljenim siro?etom.

Geralte... tiii... užasni ?ove?e. Veš?e. Belokosi vu?e. Whatever. Što bi rekli Mobi Dik iz veselih devedesetih, "Bacio si ?inii ?inii ?ini?ini naaa meeeneee!"

Ne znam da li ste primetili, ali kod slovenskih (naro?ito ruskih) pisaca fantastike, nemogu?e je zaobi?i pomalo melanholi?an ton pripovedanja. Uvek se tu nekako tiho prikrade i bar poneko pitanje o smislu života. Pozicije obi?nog, malog, smrtnog ljudskog bi?a u odnosu na ovaj veliki svet koji nas okružuje i prirodu. Strepnja za budu?nost. Duša. ?ove?nost. Šampioni ove inteligentne suptilnosti da od fantastike naprave ozbiljan žanr koji itekako daje povoda za razmišljanje su bra?a Strugacki. Odjeci njihovih dubokih i dirljivih premišljanja mogu se na?i ?ak i u senzacionalisti?kom "Metrou 2033" Gluhovskog, kao i u Lukjanjenkovim pri?ama o No?noj straži (doduše u manjoj meri, ipak je to klasi?an pandurski roman. Ali ruski pandurski roman. Nešto kao Filip Marlou u borbi protiv vampira, koji kod ku?e ?ita samo Dostojevskog).

Sapkovski, iako ne Rus, ve? Poljak, tako?e poseduje suptilnost i nežnost u pripovedanju, mada se trudi da ne baca previše direktnih aluzija o "velikim temama" ?itaocu u lice, ve? na maltene minimalisti?ki na?in, kroz dela svojih likova, ostavlja na volju ?itaocu ho?e li se samo dobrano zabavljati prate?i Geraltove avanture, ili ?e tu i tamo izoštiti uho za poneku kritiku ljudske prirode, budu?i da je svet o kome Sapkovski pri?a, odraz našeg sveta, poja?an maštom i obojen mogu?nostima koje ona pruža.

Iako tu i tamo ima ponekih manjkavosti (hej, a koja fantastika nema bar neki zdrljan deo?), autor je uspeo da epizodi?noš?u i neobi?nim "tajmlajnom" doga?aja postigne odli?nu dinamiku radnje koja ne umara ?itaoca, ve? pruža predah kada je potreban, ne davi suvišnim detaljima (da Džordane, TEBE GLEDAM!!) i postigne izuzetnu životnost likova koji, iako imaju potencijala za zgodan holivudski kliše, to ne postaju ni u jednom

trenutku.

Sjajna stvar je i to što postoji ?ak i "comic relief" u vidu poslednje Geraltove pri?e, njegovog se?anja na upoznavanje sa ženom koja je postala jedina ljubav i najve?a patnja njegovog života - absurdno, ali efektno! Tako?e, Sapkovski se oslanja na elemente slovenske mitologije i folklora, a uspešno parodira i popularne bajke - tu i tamo bljesne poneka slika koja nas podseti na Snežanu, Pepeljugu, ali taman toliko da izmami osmeh, i da se savršeno uklopi u tok radnje.

Naravno, u svemu ovome treba imati u vidu i da sam se ja uželela ovakvih stvari. Ne može se živeti samo na Džosu i Šekspiru, a kao nekome ko je oduvek imao bujnu maštu, povremeni izleti u fantastiku mi do?u kao povratak ku?i.

Mada, da me Geralt ?eka kod ku?e, ?eš?e bih joj se vra?ala, ako me razumete ;)

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### **Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

Hmmmm, I listened to this on audio instead of reading my paperback and the sound was really low so I didn't catch all of it. I know! I'm going to have dad pick me up some proper headphones for the tablet. If I order some they will be wrong and blow things up!

I enjoyed the stories of Geralt and I really, really, really want to play the game! But I was told it was only for PS4 and I have PS3 =( That sucks, really, really, really sucks! I don't know if or when I could ever get a PS4 so I shall wait.

I also think I could be in love with Geralt, don't judge me! I fall in love with lots of them in my books, so there.

Anyhoo, I'm going to read the rest of them and not try the audio from Overdrive just in case. It's great for re-reads but I don't know. The narrator for this book was Peter Kenny and he did an awesome job!

PS ~ Does anyone know when the Netflix show is coming out? < --- well, that was a duh moment, I could just google it.

Fin!

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### **Carol. says**

I'm not one for "as seen in the movie..." or tie-in type books, so I was initially dubious about reading *The Last Wish* until I learned it was the inspiration for the video game. *The Last Wish* reads like an adult fairytale; not because of graphic sex or violence, but because of the melancholy and cynicism that permeate the characters. It follows the story of Geralt, a man who has become 'something more' than a man through training as a witcher. Witchers are a specialized guild, "**itinerant killers of basilisks; traveling slayers of dragons and vodniks**" who generally work for money killing those outlandish beasts that prey on humans.

Geralt is very much the last of his kind, the drifter, riding into towns to collect a bounty, occasionally welcomed, occasionally chased.

Writing felt somewhat basic. It has that same streamlined style; basic composition, limited world-building, a focus on plot and external conflict. Though it could have been told as a straight sequence of stories in Geralt's career, Sapkowski has linked them together with Geralt telling one as background on how a particular conflict began, or how he met a certain person. Thus it slowly builds a picture of Geralt, mosaic-style. Fairy tale lore forms the basis of some of the conflicts, but the fairy-tales are interpreted in unusual ways. There's bits about towers and girls, beasts and beauties, a woman and some dwarves, and so on, that make their way into the stories.

I could absolutely visualize how this book was turned into a video game, though I haven't played it. While it may have been written first, I'd be surprised if it took much work to translate it into a game. I imagine the game might be even more interesting, allowing for fleshing out of the monsters and world. If there was a clear weakness for me, it would have been the world-building. In the first story, for instance, one of the local headman complains about all the foul things there are preying on humanity. In a later story, there are hints that these foul things are fewer and fewer, and are receding from the current age. There isn't really enough background to understand the claims or build a world-view; one has to just take these statements as context for this particular tale.

I also would have enjoyed greater detail on the 'monsters.' In general, detail was limited to the particular one in conflict with Geralt at that time, but Sapkowski is in the habit of dropping far more creature names without explanation: **"All sorts of filth has sprung up. Mahakam, in the mountains, is teeming with bogeymen... it's kobolds and spriggans wherever you spit, werewolves or some other vermin. Fairies and rusalkas snatch children from villages..."** These are all incidental, but do serve to confuse a bit more, as I recognize names from a large assortment of ethnic traditions. If Seanan McGuire had written this, there would be loads of detail about the 'monsters.'

At any rate, it's fun. It doesn't all center on killing monsters. Woven in are conflicts with sorcerers, a fair amount of problem-solving to everyone's satisfaction, and sometimes problem-solving to everyone's dissatisfaction. It's diverting, but easily finished without being filling, kind of like Chex-mix. A notch up from potato chips, a tad spicy, and a little bit of difference from story to story.

A solid three and a half stars.

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**XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says**

[unlike that of most Little Barnacles of my acquaintance (hide spoiler)]

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**Mogsy (MMOGC) says**

At present, I'm working my way through The Witcher 2 video game which is probably the main reason why I've finally decided to tackle The Last Wish, which has been sitting in my to-read list for almost two years. I am in love with the game so far, and curiosity naturally led me to the books that inspired it.

The book collects seven short stories in a "frame" format, so we have an overarching frame story and six more that are told in a flashback or a memory, each forming a story of its own. Not surprisingly, I found all of them quite enjoyable; after all, I can hardly complain about getting more Geralt of Rivia (though, I could have done with less Dandelion).

What both delighted and surprised me, however, was when I realized that the author was taking the character through several stories which were interwoven with familiar fairy tales -- albeit his own grittier, darker and more mature versions of them, and that's even compared to the originals.

Interestingly, while I was reading this, I couldn't help but compare this book and the Witcher to Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian. Perhaps it was the format, but it did have that sword and sorcery "pulpish" feel. And this was most certainly not a bad thing.

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### **Samir says**

After finishing this I knew there was a review somewhere in the darkest depths of my mind. As I'm currently playing *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, which inspired me to start reading this in the first place, I thought it would be a good idea to seek help from virtual Geralt and hire him for this quest and help me find it and it turned out to be a quest filled with illusions and borderline insane thoughts.

Geralt of Rivia is a witcher. He was forced at young age to undergo training and numerous mutations thanks to which he gained some cool physical and mental abilities. There were some side effects from these dangerous experiments; Geralt was permanently left with pale skin and white hair and because of them he is known as the White Wolf. After completing his training he received a set of swords, one made of steel to fight humans and non-humans, the other out of silver to fight monsters. He also received a Wolf medallion, a silver symbol shaped to represent the school a witcher comes from. It is sensitive to magic so it vibrates when Geralt is near such threats. He was also given a horse named Roach and he was ready to become a full time monster slayer for hire.

I knew these facts even before starting this novel thanks to my gaming experience. I was an avid gamer back in the day so I spent a lot of hours playing the Witcher games. I already mentioned I'm currently playing the latest installment so after a couple of pages, I've found myself on a familiar territory, having a *déjà vu*.

I was aware that the Witcher book saga came before the games and that the games were/are based upon them but I wasn't aware how good of a job the team from CD Projekt Red did and reading this made me appreciate the games even more.

This was supposed to be a review about the book and here I am, rambling about video games, damn you, virtual Geralt!

This book gives the same feel as the games (games again, seriously?!), not just because of the vibrant setting and the monster infested world, but because of its format. This a collection of short stories (quests), all presented through Geralt's POV. Even though they seem unconnected, there is one story that connects them all and that is *The Voice of Reason*. Fragments of this story are basically interludes cleverly nested between each story giving us a nice intro to the following story.

I'm not gonna describe each story because I tend to write non-spoiler reviews but I'll provide you with a couple of glimpses. Through his quests, Geralt faces a lot of fun and dangerous situations; he encounters a striga (a woman transformed into a monster by a curse), spends some time in an enchanted house owned by a peculiar man, finds himself in a predicament with no positive outcome, he dines with a queen and helps her resolve an urgent matter in his own unique way, he has an iron ball fight with a devil-like creature and he even meets some elves, so if you like exploring worlds populated by a myriad of interesting creatures and mysterious characters this might be a book for you.

Besides Geralt, we have a chance to meet his friend and a travelling bard, Dandelion, and his role in this novel is to provide fun interaction with Geralt and to drag Geralt into trouble with his quick judgement and hasty actions. One of those hasty actions leaves a great impact on Geralt's life because thanks to Dandelion, he crosses paths with Yennefer and her role in Geralt's life is a story of its own.

In the end, Geralt once again did his job, and completed this quest. He helped me find a deep cave in my mind, guarded by a vicious monster, an opposite of a muse, and slayed the monster, unlocking my inspiration in the process. Finally, he found a dusty scroll with some Slavic words inscribed on it. So here is my review: I liked this book very much!

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### **Kevin Kelsey says**

Fantasy isn't really my thing, but this was enjoyable enough. It's nice to read some non-English fantasy, especially since this didn't seem to be as influenced by the usual Tolkien style stories as most English written epic fantasy. A few of the stories were casually misogynistic, but there were also some really good ones in here as well. The second half is much, much better than the first.

#### **The Voice of Reason: 3/5**

Kind of an interstitial story, broken up into chapters between each other story. A clever way to tie it all together into a more cohesive novel, comprised of several mostly unconnected stories.

#### **The Witcher: 3/5**

I enjoyed the world built here, and the concept of a striga being born of a curse, etc. Sort of a tragic story, but seems to be a good introduction to the Witcher. Little girl monster idea seems a little played out, but whatever.

#### **A Grain of Truth: 2/5**

Sort of like a twisted Grimm fairy tale. The casual misogynistic tone that this one took was pretty bothersome, and Geralt's "code" isn't really making sense to me yet. It seems to just be whatever the plot needs it to be. He takes pity on a man who is turned into a monster by the priestess that he raped, and then saves him from his new girlfriend who (TA-DA!) turns out to be a monster who is just using him for protection. So far there's a theme of women being evil.

#### **The Lesser Evil: 1/5**

The "monster" that Geralt has to kill in this one is literally just a woman trying to exact revenge on a wizard who conspired against her, ruined her life and is responsible for her having to sell herself for food. The wizard happens to be Geralt's sort of friend? The wizard is also a real piece of shit, Geralt refuses to go up against him, and instead tries to convince the woman to forgive this wizard - because of this illusive "code"

that he follows. Of course, that's not happening, so he has to kill her (after he has sex with her of course). Oh, but he feels really bad about it later so...

### **A Question of Price: 4/5**

This one was really fun, and dealt with some cool cultural aspects and social conventions of the world that exists here. It gave some interesting background info on Geralt, and feels like it's setting up a return for some of these characters.

### **The Edge of the World: 3/5**

Halfway through it played out a lot differently than I thought it would. Built up some cool mythology of the world, still kind of a plain story though. The innocent looking girl didn't end up being a monster. Wait, is this the same author as the other stories?

### **The Last Wish: 4/5**

Best story of the collection, most definitely the best written story as well. Every character felt real, and 3 dimensional. Yennefer is pretty bad ass, maybe this author isn't always a misogynist?

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## **Monty Cupcake ? Queen of Bloodshed ? says**

Geralt of the lush white hair is a witcher - a sort of monster slayer that's not 100% human. He's mutated in some way that's not explained. Maybe they talk about it in the next book. He spends his life traveling around seeing if any towns need any extermination of beasties. Lots of slicing and dicing with his sword.

When I first started reading this I was confused as it starts with a chapter titled "Voice of Reason" and then the next chapter is a completely different setting, place, time. Just a heads up, this is a collection of short stories or tales from Geralt's cases/killings. It's like flashbacks of cases and not in chronological order. The Voice of Reason chapters seem to be set in present time.

I enjoyed learning more about Slavic mythology and the various creatures. Geralt's friend, Dandilion, who I nicknamed Dandy in my head, was a great secondary character. His impudent way with words was amusing and he's quite smart despite all his troubadour bluster. Nenneke was another awesome secondary character. She's the head priestess at a Melite temple and a mother figure to Geralt. She's brass, cranky, and liable to smack you upside the head if you annoy her.

Best - lots of fighting and Geralt giving people a nasty, evil, smile.

My favorite stories were about the devil/sylvan and the present day encounter with Tallies.

For a much better review & to know if Geralt is available or not, read Sarah's.

Another much better review with nice illustrations of Slavic mythology characters, read Evgeny's.

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## **Bookwraiths says**

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

Before picking up *The Last Wish*, I was briefed by my friends on what to expect, prepared to experience a pulp fiction story similar to Robert E. Howard's Conan and Michael Moorcock's Elric, so I was not surprised to find this novel a "frame" tale collecting a series of unrelated short stories. Certainly, I could see that there was an overarching plot right under the surface, but the fascinating thing about this volume was the unique spin on old fairy tales, the compelling introduction to the main character. And so — for the type of book it was — this initial installment of *The Witcher* series was a damn fine read.

The protagonist, Geralt of Rivia, is a witcher: A man trained and transformed to hunt and destroy monsters. In his world, monsters — few though they may be — still torment humankind, and to be rid of their threat, nobles and commoners alike are willing to employ witches to hunt down and destroy these creatures. But though he and his fellow witches are useful, Geralt's kind is not loved, but viewed as a necessary evil at best, charlatans at worst. Even worse is the reality that as witches go about ridding the world of vile threat, they are, in reality, slowly creating a world which does not need or want them in society. This inevitable situation leading Geralt to struggle to find a balance in life, second guessing his decisions and, ultimately, causing him to look for a new place to create a new life.

Obviously, my favorite part of *The Last Wish* was getting to know the mysterious Geralt; the tidbits of information about his past and his hopes for the future delectable morsels that I savored, even as I was thrilled by his pulse-pounding monster hunting adventures. The horror infused and moody atmosphere of many of his adventures especially compelling.

As for criticisms, I don't have any important ones. Certainly, the translation from Polish into English did result in a few rough edges and problematic prose here and there, but it wasn't too distracting. And, no, I personally did not love Dandelion very much (though I realize other readers seem to adore him); his more humorous personality detracting from the moody atmosphere which otherwise prevailed around Geralt at all times. But these were minor issues in the scope of the reading experience.

Overall, *The Last Wish* was a great introduction to *The Witcher* series. This book delivering a nice collection of stories which introduced me to this world, entertained me with intriguing adventures, and inspired me to carry on with Andrzej Sapkowski's well loved fantasy series. Definitely, I want more of the dark, brooding magic of the initial stories in this volume, but I am willing to endure more Dandelion if that is the only way I can see where Geralt's path takes him.

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## Evgeny says

*"People," Geralt turned his head, "like to invent monsters and monstrosities. Then they seem less monstrous themselves. When they get blind-drunk, cheat, steal, beat their wives, starve an old woman, when they kill a trapped fox with an axe or riddle the last existing unicorn with arrows, they like to think that the Bane entering cottages at daybreak is more monstrous than they are. They feel better then. They find it easier to live."*

It is my personal belief that when it comes to myths nobody beats Ancient Greeks. Those are widely known and appear from time to time in literature (Cerberus - I mean Fluffy - in the first Harry Potter book for example). Thanks to Tolkien however the majority of fantasy written since his magnum opus borrows heavily from Celtic mythology. I can only think of Arabian jinns as another mainstream example of a mythological being.

While not as well-known as the examples above when it comes to myths and fairy tales Slavic people can give others good run for their money. Consider the following guys and girls:

### **Koschei the Immortal.**

A traditional bad guy; as his name implies he is immortal and as such cannot be killed by any conventional means. His downfall is his weakness to young beautiful women. He usually kidnaps one only to have her extremely pissed-off boyfriend/fiancé coming and beating the crap out of the poor baddie - using highly unconventional means: love conquers all and such.

### **Dragon.**

Not only Slavic version has 3 heads, he also has the ability to put one back after it has been chopped off. So a poor hero battling such guy would finally cut off one of his heads and starts working on another only to find the first one is back in place and fully functional.

### **Baba Yaga.**

I saved the best one for last. This Slavic witch lives in a hut on chicken legs which can turn around using them if you know the right words (and feel lazy to walk around to get to the front door like most passing by heroes do). The lady flies in a mortar using a broom for steering. For an icing on a cake she often has a drop-dead gorgeous granddaughter. As far as mythical creatures go, you really cannot get any cooler than this.

Coming back to the book: this is the first one of the series on which three very successful games were based. The last one won practically every imaginable gaming award so it is fairly safe to say the majority of the people know at least the main idea. Geralt of Rivia is a witcher. This means his job is to hunt monsters - most of them are based on Slavic mythology. He is not entirely human as he undergone a mutation as a part of his training, and as a result tries to find his place in a society where witchers are not as needed as they used to be.

This tension brings all kinds of conflicts making Geralt rethinking his outlook on life and coming to the terms with the fact that people can be the biggest monsters there are - see the first paragraph of the review. The guy tries to stay neutral in the internal struggles between people and mostly failing at that. The best he can do is to choose the lesser evil, but it is completely unclear which evil is lesser in the long run.

It all sounds kind of gloomy and the book actually is, but it also has its share of humor found in unexpected places. Speaking of which, in the last story called The Last Wish (I forgot to mention that this book as well as the next one is a collection of several short stories) I really pitied the jinn. I mean I would be equally pissed off in his place; poor supernatural creature. I will not spoil it, but people that have read the book know exactly what I talk about.

People familiar with Slavic fairy tales can find retellings of quite a few of them - often with a hilarious twist. Their knowledge is not necessary to enjoy the book, but it definitely would not hurt. The book is quite good and it gives a nice introduction to the witcher's world and Geralt himself. I have my sights on the next installment.

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## Markus says

A Netflix production of the Witcher is now confirmed, set to portray the book series as a TV show. Despite being an adaptation abolitionist, I am actually somewhat excited!

***“People” - Geralt turned his head - “like to invent monsters and monstrosities. Then they seem less monstrous themselves.”***

Arguably the least famous one among my favourite fantasy series, *The Witcher Saga* by Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski is something of a diamond in the rough. This is not something I'd recommend to just about anyone, but I would call it absolutely amazing without a moment of hesitation.

While it is not a part of the main saga per se, *The Last Wish* is definitely my favourite Witcher book. It's a collection of tales about a man hunting monsters for money. And it's amazingly good.

Like a lot of other people, I was introduced to the world of Andrzej Sapkowski through the video games *The Witcher* and *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings*. These are easily some of the best fantasy RPG's ever made (I would certainly recommend them to all the gamers here), and they made me want to know more about this fascinating world.

Do not make the mistake of thinking these are mere tie-in novels. The games were based on the books, not the other way around. And not only that, but the games are sequels to the books, and thus the books should by all means be read first. That does not mean you cannot enjoy them if you've already played the games, but to fully experience this wonderful saga in the best way possible, reading the books first is the way to go.

Sapkowski introduces the reader to a beautiful combination of Slavic mythology, a distinct eastern European setting, and classical high fantasy. That makes for a different read from a lot of other works within the genre, while at the same time keeping all the mandatory aspects of epic fantasy (magic, elves, kings...). The writing is almost lyrical, but in a relaxed manner, and the English translation is good. But the characters and the setting are what really makes this a great novel. Geralt of Rivia is the most interesting and fascinating protagonist in the fantasy genre, bar none, and the world in which he lives is in many ways different from all others.

The creativity when it comes to the setting is brilliant. The whole concept of Witchers, human mutants bred and trained to slay monsters, is extraordinarily fascinating. And the monsters themselves no less so. You have well-known monstrosities like vampires and werewolves, legendary creatures like chimeras and manticores, and the most interesting of them all, the deadly striga. Most of the world is built on the foundations of fairytales and mythology, mainly Eastern European, but Sapkowski forges it into something truly astounding.

The narrative is also really well constructed. The book opens up with a frame story set in a Temple of Melitere, where Geralt is recovering from his injuries. From there, he tells stories of his greatest exploits, every now and then going back to the present for a short interlude.

This is, as mentioned earlier, a collection of short stories about the witcher Geralt riding around the countryside, talking to people, killing the occasional monster, and riding on. Sometimes he accepts a contract from a peasant, sometimes from a king. All that matters is the reward. If what you're looking for while reading fantasy is just an epic story of wars and politics and intrigue, you could probably just skip this and

continue on to *the Witcher Saga* itself, starting with Blood of Elves. But you would really miss something.

I loved this book both for its simplicity and for its beautiful descriptions, and would not hesitate to recommend it to anyone who loves fantasy, especially those who would like to try something a little different.

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**Witcher reviews:**

- #1 The Last Wish
  - #2 Sword of Destiny
  - #3 Blood of Elves
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**Aaron says**

Think about a fantasy book. Think about your favorite fantasy book. Chances are, it included elves or maybe dwarves. It probably had knights or something like them. It was, most likely, heavily influenced by Tolkien, or his successors, and it was probably based, at least in part, on a certain Anglo-saxon, or maybe French, sort of medieval culture. And if you read fantasy, there's probably 15 or so more like it on your bookshelf or your e-reader of choice.

So here's my recommendation: put down Lord of the Rings. You've already read it. Put aside that new George R. R. Martin. It'll give him a chance to write a little further ahead, and you'll get a chance to read it again before the next one comes out. Set aside your Jordan, your Eddings or even your Pratchett. Do it, just for a little while. Just for the 2 days or so that it will take you to devour a series of short stories that have a totally different flavor. The stories of Geralt, the Witcher, professional monster hunter, sorcerer, swordsman and mutant. And you should do it for the same reason that you shouldn't have the exact same food at every meal. These short stories will leave you wanting so much more, and by the time you put it down, your last wish will be for the rest of the series to finally be translated from Polish to English so you can find out what happens next.

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**?Tash says**

Now that I've read the The Witcher in it's original form, well not exactly original because I do not understand Polish, I can say that The Witcher is truly worth the nearly 30 years of hype in both literature and gaming.

The Last Wish introduces us to the legendary Geralt of Rivia the White Wolf and his exploits as a Witcher. The story isn't linear as it is a collection of short stories as Geralt goes to different kingdoms and hamlets in need of his Witcher services. In here we read fantastic reiminations of classic fairy tales Beauty & the Beast, Snow White and the Seven Dwarves and Swan Princess with a brutal and oftentimes kinky twist.

The Last Wish is surprisingly very easy to read, even when it's heavy on dialogue with a pseudo-medieval

third person narrative. I think it's made easier with the fact that it's rife with sly humor and ribald exchanges between the characters.

I've always had a little crush on Geralt of Rivia ever since I started playing The Witcher, and he doesn't disappoint in the book. What I did not expect was to like the supporting characters in the book better than the game, but I guess that's a given because the book is always better. Because of its non-linear storytelling format, some character development wasn't really focused on.

Highly recommended for fans of the game and for those who want a crash course on the world of The Witcher.

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### **Lyn says**

The Last Wish, first published in Polish in 1993 and later in an English edition in 2007 by Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski, is a cool and different approach to high fantasy, distinct from Tolkien inspired adventures.

More akin to urban fantasy, Sapkowski's The Witcher (Wiedźmin), was published in Fantastyka, Poland's leading fantasy literary magazine and the protagonist, Geralt of Rivia, is closer to Harry Blackstone Copperfield Dresden than to Aragorn.

A witcher is kind of a cross between a sorcerer and a fighter with special training allowing him to fight and kill monsters.

Sapkowski crafts together a series of connected shorter works with a framing story as Geralt recalls past adventures. There are various references to central European / Grimm's fairy tales fantasy that further separates this work from most other high fantasy works.

Good fun.

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### **Melanie says**

Last summer I became completely obsessed with *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, where I took screenshots like this:

(Add me on Steam!)

And once I was finished with the DLC I knew I had to finally read the books to fill the void I now carry in my heart.

This book was translated from Polish to English. It contains seven short stories, and introduces our main protagonist in both games and books, Geralt.

**“People”—Geralt turned his head—“like to invent monsters and monstrosities. Then they seem less monstrous themselves.”**

The events in these seven stories take place before Sword of Destiny, which is another short story collection, and before Blood of Elves, the first actual full length novel in this series.

Just like the video-games, *The Witcher* world is so magical, whimsical, full of twists, and it never disappoints. Two of these stories are so very important in understanding why Geralt feels the way he does about two very predominant characters that are talked about in much greater detail later in this world. And seeing Geralt and Yen's origin story gave me all the feels (sorry Triss fans, but gtfo.)

I'm going to break down each story with my personal feelings and beliefs. **There will be SPOILERS ahead!** So, please be cautious while reading, if you have not read this short story collection and do not wish to be spoiled on the events that lead up to the main story and video-games!

**“In order to become a witcher, you have to be born in the shadow of destiny, and very few are born like that. That's why there are so few of us. We're growing old, dying, without anyone to pass our knowledge, our gifts, on to. We lack successors. And this world is full of Evil which waits for the day none of us are left.”**

### **1.) The Voice of Reason**

This story starts out in true *Witcher* fashion: with Geralt having sexy time with a random girl! We are also introduced to Geralt's notorious sidekick, Dandelion the Bard. Geralt starts to speak up about how hard it is to be a witcher and make a living off of it. When upon leaving, a man approaches Geralt and pretty much forces Geralt to fight without being able to touch his opponent. Geralt quickly proves how smart and cunning he truly is, and why he makes this series so addictive to read and learn about.

### **2.) The Witcher**

Geralt goes to a new town, where a king has gotten his sister pregnant seven years ago. Sadly, the sister and the child died in birth, but the child is now awake, and seems to be a werewolf, and is causing chaos in the town. Geralt is sent to kill her, but someone gives him a tip that if he prevents the werewolf from going back to its coffin for three days, she will turn into an ordinary girl. He is also bribed to run away, but Geralt, being the outstanding and honorable man he is, uses the briber as bait instead! Geralt is able to hide in the girls coffin for three nights, and she turns into the regular girl on the third morning!

### **3.) A Grain of Truth**

The imagery of this story really is a tier above what fantasy normally gives us nowadays. Geralt is traveling once again, and finds two bodies that appear to have come from an abandoned mansion. Upon further inspection, a cursed man named Nivellen owns the house. He was cursed by a priest to become a beast, but the house obeys his every wish. Traveling merchants even come from all around and trade their daughters to him for a period of time for currency. Nivellen has tried everything, and the curse is never broken! But when his newest girl, who ends up not being all of what she seems and who was responsible of the two bodies Geralt originally found, starts a fight with Geralt, Nivellen is forced to help him, and the curse is broken. Yes, this is legitimately a wrapped version of *Beauty and the Beast*.

### **4.) The Lesser Evil**

Again in a new city, Geralt killed a monster and is looking for compensation. He goes to see a mage that he

knew from before, and he asks Geralt to kill "a monster" for him. The monster ends up being a young girl, and when Geralt talks to her he realizes she is seeking vengeance for what the mage did to her. After her and Geralt "get to know each other", she promises to back down because nothing good will come of it. Geralt awakens in the morning and realizes that she lied. He knows where she will be, so he meets her and ends up having to fight her. He wins, and she must die, but Geralt faces the question of what is truly evil, and refuses to let the mage to take her body.

***"Only Evil and Greater Evil exist and beyond them, in the shadows, lurks True Evil. True Evil, Geralt, is something you can barely imagine, even if you believe nothing can still surprise you. And sometimes True Evil seizes you by the throat and demands that you choose between it and another, slightly lesser, Evil."***

### **5.) A Question of Price**

This story completely blew my mind, and probably has the biggest life changing event for Geralt in it. Again, Geralt is traveling and meets with Queen Calanthe, and she tells him what she truly thinks of witchers. During the party where this meeting is taking place, a knight comes and demands Queen Calanthe's daughter, the princess, which he has earned. Sadly, this knight is also cursed, but Geralt is able to lift the curse. The knight is then able to marry the princess, but Geralt knows they have been seeing each other for some time, because the princess is pregnant. They ask Geralt what he would like for payment, and he gives a very veiled response, and says that he will be back in six years time to see if he is lucky. (view spoiler) Knowing what I know from the games, this story was oh so special to my heart.

### **6.) The Edge of the World**

Geralt and Dandelion have stopped and are looking for work. A local tells them about a devil who is up to no good. Side note, I listened to this on audio book and the devil's voice made me want to murder someone. Good Lord, please, never do this if you are a voice actor. Anyway, the devil, named Torque, likes to play games and Geralt and Dandelion end up being captured. When they awaken, they find themselves among elves, still tied up, and hear all about how the elves want revenge on humans. The Queen of the Fields comes and saves them, and tells Geralt that he is destined for greatness and that they will meet again.

### **7.) The Last Wish**

Be still, my heart - this chapter was everything I never knew I wanted in my life. Again, Geralt and Dandelion are together and decided to fish up breakfast. Dandelion ends up fishing up a djinn, or genie, in a magical vase. It ends up hurting Dandelion, and Geralt says what he thinks is an exorcism to make it stop. Dandelion takes a turn for the worst, and Geralt knows he has to act fast. He rushes Dandelion to a town, where he is informed that his best chance at survival will be a sorceress named Yennefer. Yes, this is their origin story, and it ends up being everything I ever wished it to be. Yennefer is able to heal Dandelion, but she has an alternative motive; she wants to harness the genie's power for herself. She also demands payment from Geralt, which she receives by possessing him to publicly punish men who have wronged her. He wakes up in jail, where he tells a mean guard to blow up, in which he does. Geralt doesn't have any time to think about this, because Yennefer comes to town with the genie, which is destroying everything. Geralt is able to save the townsfolk, but while trying to save Yennefer herself, she refuses, and it looks like she would rather die trying to take the genie's powers. Geralt then realizes the reason Yennefer couldn't possess the power was because the genie is viewing Geralt as its master, and he has accidentally made two of his three wishes. Yennefer urges Geralt to make a third and final wish so she can try, but Geralt knows that the genie will kill her once the request leaves his lips. Geralt then makes his last wish, which none of us know what it truly is, only that it binds him and Yennefer together forever.

We knew Geralt fell in love with Yennefer as soon as he laid eyes upon her. There are so many theories of what he wished for, but I do not think we will ever get a confirmation. He could have wished for Yen to love him, but that is so un-Geralt, I can't believe he would ever do that. He could have wished for them to have a baby, and since witches are sterile that could be why Ciri comes into their lives, and would have still protected Yennefer from the genie. Hell, it could seriously be as simple and binding their lives together forever, which is why, throughout the games, it feels like they go through the same things together, even when they are not physically together. We will never know, but I sort of think that's beautiful all in itself.

***“Love and blood. They both possess a mighty power. Wizards and learned men have been racking their brains over this for years...”***

This world, these characters, these adventures, all of it is truly above all the expectations I set before reading any fantasy novel. This is something special, that I can't form the perfect combinations for words to be able to praise this enough. Please, give this world a try, whether it be the games or the novels, because this kind of perfection is beyond words.

Oh, and this book totally ends with Geralt and Yen having crazy "oh my God, we are alive still" sex, and I wouldn't want it any other way. Also, Dandelion is such an innocent little cinnamon roll, I can't deal.

***“During his life, the witcher had met thieves who looked like town councilors, councilors who looked like beggars, harlots who looked like princesses, princesses who looked like calving cows and kings who looked like thieves.”***

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