



## The Knight

*Gene Wolfe*

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## **The Knight** Gene Wolfe

A young man in his teens is transported from our world to a magical realm that contains seven levels of reality. Very quickly transformed by magic into a grown man of heroic proportions, he takes the name Able and sets out on a quest to find the sword that has been promised to him, a sword he will get from a dragon, the one very special blade that will help him fulfill his life ambition to become a knight and a true hero.

Inside, however, Able remains a boy, and he must grow in every sense to survive the dangers and delights that lie ahead in encounters with giants, elves, wizards, and dragons. His adventure will conclude in the second volume of The Wizard Knight, *The Wizard*.

With this new series, Wolfe not only surpasses all the most popular genre writers of the last three decades, he takes on the legends of the past century, in a work that will be favorably compared with the best of J. R. R. Tolkien, E. R. Eddison, Mervyn Peake, and T. H. White. This is a book---and a series---for the ages, from perhaps the greatest living writer in (or outside) the fantasy genre.

## **The Knight Details**

Date : Published February 1st 2010 by Tor Books (first published January 3rd 2004)

ISBN : 9780765347015

Author : Gene Wolfe

Format : Paperback 544 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy, Speculative Fiction

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## From Reader Review The Knight for online ebook

### LordOfDorkness says

Wonder. Maybe that's it, that's what I can say about it. Here's some of the main "components" of the book: heros, honor, dragons, magic, humanity, strange lands and journeys. These are the primal elements, the "alphabet" of heroic fantasy. To anyone who reads a lot in this genre, these are so overworked and worn down that you can't feel anything anymore when you read about them. But you do when you read about them in *The Knight*. For anyone who enjoys fantasy, this is like the time you snuck downstairs to spy on all presents under the Christmas Tree, when your parents brought your new baby sister home from the hospital, or the first time you saw the Rockies. To put it another way, reading this book is like any time you saw something, and were overwhelmed by the power and beauty of it. Its achingly beautiful, and you should probably give it a try.

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### Terry says

This review covers both volumes of the Wizard Knight duology.

Gene Wolfe and I have an interesting relationship. Of course we have no actual relationship at all aside that which belongs to any reader/writer pair, but since I'm reviewing a book that's fair enough. Here's the thing: I really want to be one of those people who can sing Gene Wolfe's praises to the sky and knowingly wink about all of those complex and enigmatic stories that I totally got the first time I read them. But I can't. Don't get me wrong, Wolfe is obviously a huge talent and I like much of what he's done, but sometimes I just think he's more concerned with composing an elegant literary puzzle than he is with just giving us a good story. And sometimes I'm not even sure the supposedly complex literary puzzle is even there. I mean, have you ever perused some of the ideas and theories about everything Gene Wolfe has written that are on the Urth listserv (<http://www.urth.net/urth/>)? Have you? I dare you to go and wade through even 1/8 of them. Good. You back? Now....do you believe it!? I mean, it's crazy, right? There's no way that anyone knows everything about everything the way Wolfe apparently does and then codes all of those nuances into every word and punctuation mark he's ever written, right? Right!? Please say you agree, because I like to think I'm a pretty smart guy, but just glancing at some of those supposed 'references' and subtexts that Wolfe is apparently making makes me feel like a total moron.

Also, there's the fact that many of Wolfe's protagonists are, how to say it? Generally pretty annoying people, I think is the phrasing. I'm looking at you Patera Silk! I mean, really, can any of you tell me that you actually got part way through the books of the Long Sun without wanting to reach into the text and slap Patera Silk silly and tell him to "Fucking wake up!?" I mean, following this dude around for four large size books as he well-meaningly drifts in a holy stupor from one crisis to the next, forever agonizing over his moral inferiority is a fairly trying experience. And Severian? Well, let's just say that the boy's got some issues, even beyond the obvious. At least Latro has the excuse of actual brain damage for his behaviour.

All of this is merely a preamble to say, I understand and feel for all of you that scratch your head and wonder what all the fuss is about when everyone and their brother (I'm looking at you Neil Gaiman and you too John Clute) go on about how Wolfe is the Tolstoy, Shakespeare, and Proust of the speculative fiction world and if you just don't get it you're just not trying hard enough, damn it. I love most of the Books of the New Sun, though it took me two read-throughs for that; I thought the Books of the Short Sun had some of the most amazing writing he's done and I look forward to going back for my second dip; and man, those Books of the Long Sun? Well....I really want to like them, I mean there's some really cool ideas buried there underneath

all of that Patera Silk.

Anywho, I'm supposed to be talking about *The Knight* in this review so maybe I better start that now. This book and its companion volume *The Wizard* are my very favourite of Wolfe's books that I've read thus far. To be fair they already had a leg up on the others due to the fact that they mix three things I really love: Norse mythology, Christian mysticism, and Chivalric romances into a rather tasty stew. Maybe this simply means that I'm getting a few more of the references that I'd have otherwise missed if this were one of his other works. Regardless, I thought Wolfe did a great job blending those things into a believable and really interesting world.

The protagonist, Able, is a lot like most of Wolfe's other protagonists (that I've come across thus far anyway) in that he's another variation on the holy innocent archetype, with an emphasis on the innocent (in the sense of naive, NOT morally blameless) and much less so on the holy. He's a boy from our own world who wakes up one day to find himself magically transported to a medieval fantasy world and given a push onto the road of a magical destiny. All sounds pretty pedestrian so far, right? Well, keep in mind that Wolfe is doing something different here from the run of the mill quest fantasy. Able goes through a lot of growing pains on his journeys, from falling in love with an elven fairy who turns him into a full-blooded man (both literally and figuratively) a bit ahead of time, gaining a demon-dog companion and accreting to himself one of the motliest bands of travellers this side of Russell Hoban's *Pilgermann*. Able really does grow significantly from one book to the next as he learns to earn the manhood that was thrust upon him and goes from callowly fulfilling most of his adolescent male power fantasies to taking upon himself the load of responsibility that his position ultimately earns him.

There are some really great characters here that cross Able's path, from the lovable hound Gylf and the loyal manservant Pouk, to the irritating yet complex Svon and the suave, evil, and utterly likable, Garsecg. Even these secondary characters are allowed to learn and grow and do more than provide background colour for the tale of Sir Able of the Hight Heart (as he christens himself): Svon starts out as a real pain in the ass, a git we want to see humiliated in every way possible, but we learn to see him as something much more complex than a stuck up prig; and the story of Toug's growth from boy to man is at least as important, and central to the tale, as is Able's. In many ways Able acts not only as our window into the world that Wolfe has created, but also as the enabler (ha, en-Able-r...did you see what I did there?) for the growth of the secondary characters who have followed him throughout his story. Ultimately Able earns his place by growing into the man he needs to be and living in such a way that those people whose lives he has touched cannot help but react to him in a like manner and, for good or ill, become something more than they were.

Edit, Nov. 28, 2011: I was going to demote *The Knight* to a 4 star on this re-read given a few of Wolfe's tics that were bugging me in the middle of the book, but the ending, and those elements of it that do work so well for me, convinced me to keep the 5.

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## **Felicia says**

I TRIED.

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## **Andrew says**

This was not the first Gene Wolfe book I intended to read. It was by accident that I picked up this one, to be honest. But I love falling into the reading of something where I have no bearing of the landscape going in.

This book is a lot of what I have been trying to find in contemporary fantasy for a while now. As in, good writing. He actually challenges the audience. (And I think in at least one case the editor.) The writing bears a strong semblance to a dream. Disjointed, anachronistic, easy acceptance of the impossible, the waking sickness. It is coarse and raw at points, which makes it all the better. (It also fits the narrative voice.) I love crashing words together (and have come to realize that may have either come from Tolkien or is just why I love Tolkien's writing so much) and Wolfe does it in abundance. I don't feel I can properly rate this book until I have read the next and final book of the series. And then I may need to read them again... For now it sits at three stars with a growing hope for more. We shall see...

If you feel you need to know more about the book it takes place in a world built on the Yggdrasil cosmology (with a couple limbs trimmed off). Some of the worlds are familiar, some are new (at least to me). There's also a touch of Parzival to the story. Wandering naive knight, etc. (There was also a quick inclusion of Arthurian names which confused me but I was thinking Parzival long before that.) So basically it's like Wolfe fell asleep after reading the Voluspo and had a crazy dream.

More to be said after the next book.

Oh and much much better than The Name of the Wind. There are obvious similarities but, boy, is this book much better. Name of the Wind is really fading fast on me.

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### **Edward Rathke says**

Took me a crazy long time to finish the first 150 pages, but I read the last three hundred today, and it was pretty difficult to pull myself away for even just a bit. It's fast paced, surreal, and intelligent. For a novel with such a stupid premise, it's really quite brilliant, and though it's fantasy, it's not the kind of fantasy that's built around you, but more the kind that you simply slide into without noticing.

I'm super invested at this point, and hope I have the time to dive in and run through the second novel. Probably actually going to start it tonight.

Anystate, The Wizard, it's the journey of an accidental hero who continually proves he's worthy of being a hero at every turn, even though he sort of stumbles into it haphazardly. The prose is conversational but also that sort of powerful beauty that Wolfe's always pulling out. I could probably say a lot more, but I'll leave it here.

Oh also, go read this book.

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### **Pierre says**

When a novel starts off with a glossary, my eyes roll. When an author tells you in the second paragraph of the book that I am wasting my time reading the preface, I get annoyed. And when the author tells me this as a first person narrator, I get nauseous. And when the writing of the first three chapters fails to draw me in, I give up and toss the book into a pile to be returned to the library. Guess I won't be reading any more Gene Wolfe.

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## Christian McKay says

What a bizarre journey. One moment I was enthralled, mystified, anxious to turn the page, the next I was glazing over, bored, ready to quit.

I love how passive the protagonist is about all the fantastic situations he finds himself in. But that also contributes to the mundane feel of it all. I wavered back and forth between wanting him to have a bit more personality and happy he was so hollow so I could step into his skin and enjoy the ride.

Wolfe is a master of atmosphere, but the story reads like playing an MMORPG. I guess that's who I would recommend this to. Gaming nerds. Overly ambitious quests that can't be completed until you finish a dozen others (resulting in a hundred pages of seemingly random wandering), beautiful ever-changing environments, and characters that may speak like they're from a fantasy world or the fourteen year old brat down the street.

Don't really have any interest in reading the second one, unless someone can tell me that the structure changes completely.

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## Kyle Muntz says

A surreal, singular book, that does a lot of interesting things in ways that have never been done before. (It reinvents fantasy and YA in particular, and a lot of the time there are chapters that would be whole books by other authors, and a few sections so inventive and strange it's hard to believe.) But rather than reviewing it myself I think I'm just going to link to this great review by my friend Eddy Rathke, which sticks pretty close to a conversation we had about the book and that I pretty much agree with completely.

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

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## Ethan says

This book disappointed me. The world was complex, with lots of different mythologies layered into it, but the characters and prose style couldn't hold my interest, and I put the book down after about 100 pages.

I'd read Shadow of the Torturer, one of Wolfe's earlier books, and enjoyed its strange setting and interesting, detached voice. Unfortunately, it seems that Wolfe's writing style has evolved (devolved?) into something much more sparse. Typically, I'm not a fan of incredibly detailed descriptions (George R R Martin's doorstopper, A Game of Thrones, drove me batshit crazy with that), but I found myself wishing for more elaborate scene-setting; not a lot, but enough to breathe life into the world. Shadow did that. The Knight did not.

The unreliable narrator and the layering of the narrative was definitely interesting and kept the plot moving forward, but in the end I needed something more meaty. Even Cormac McCarthy has more internal "dialogue" than Wolfe. The main character, too, was a little too simpleminded for my taste. Sure, maybe that's the point, but I didn't enjoy the lack of self awareness. Maybe it was going to get better, but I couldn't push through. Typically authors use 1st person to make the character more immediate and engaging, but this one didn't work for me.

Oh well. Maybe I'll pick it up again someday.

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### **Nicholas Kotar says**

Looking briefly at the other reviews here on Goodreads, one thing sticks out. You either love Wolfe, or you hate him. Any writer, aspiring author, or editor will surely cringe at the number of "writing rules" Wolfe breaks from the first sentence of any of his books. But guess what? It doesn't matter!

Case in point. I heard about Wolfe from a scholarly article on First Things Magazine (!) and happened on him in an airport bookstore. The only book of his they had was *The Knight*, with a terrible cover and bad quality printing. Not a good beginning. But I had heard good things, so I jumped in. I was forty pages in, and only the fact that my backpack was cutting into my shoulder reminded me that I had been standing there for over half an hour, completely absorbed by his writing.

That isn't to say he isn't flawed. Some of the action scenes are impossible to visualize, his style is so surreal. He also skips major events, coming back to them in retrospect, and sometimes a major plot point that he purposely doesn't reveal for a very long time, when revealed, fails to give the necessary "bang!"

But all that doesn't matter, ultimately, because his writing is just gorgeous. No less a person than Neil Gaiman calls Wolfe the best writer in English alive today. I agree wholeheartedly.

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### **Gary says**

Gene has gone for a change of pace and style with this one. It reminds me a little of James Branch Cabel in it's slightly old fashioned manner. It's a bit like a faery tale epic (this being the first in a series) with a slightly incongruous angle (to me) of the main protagonist being a 'modern day' guy who has found himself in the land from the sagas and is writing his memoirs to a family member who he thinks he will never see again.

The story moves along with some interesting characters but it's a tad slow and plodding at times. I can't give it a big score but I did enjoy reading it.

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### **Christopher says**

This was my first Gene Wolfe book I have read. I know this book was not considered his masterpiece, but what a fantastic adventure.

I am trying to find the words to describe Gene Wolfe's style of writing. Someone once explained to me that reading Gene Wolfe was like drinking wine. For those who develop a taste for his writing are very well rewarded. I have to agree. I read every page with anticipation.

Gene Wolfe plays with your mind by giving you biased and unpredictable narration. His understanding of world culture, beliefs, and mythology is incredible.

Maybe it was just a fluke that I was sailing away from the city of Malta while reading this book, but I began to wonder what is it that makes one a knight. For some it is their birth and for others it is their call. Honor,

bravery, compassion are not qualities that one is born with they have to be earned. These are the true knights.

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### **Andreas says**

This is an amazing book. A boy enters a fantasy world (how is never explained, at least not in part 1) that borrows much from the Norse mythology. By magic he is turned into a bold and strong young man. He wants to become a knight so he starts to act like one and calls himself *Sir Able of the High Heart* - and the troubles start...

On the surface there is the rich fantasy world with all kind of creatures (fairies, talking animals, giants) and the usual quest that the hero has to undergo, but what I liked most is that Gene Wolfe succeeds in describing convincingly **what it means** to be a knight, including such trivial things as looking for the daily food. Sir Able himself is a unique character. One can easily see that he must get used to his body and to the whole fantasy world. His honesty makes it easy for the reader to grasp what's going on, his naivety on the other hand makes it sometimes very difficult. References to future events are common but a look at the character list at the beginning of the book helps to put everything into the right place. Gaps are easily filled later, I had no problem with that approach.

Another thing that I found very interesting is how the society reacts to Able's non-noble birth. Able's position is continuously questioned and also the relation to his friends / slaves causes trouble. Following the rules would be easy if he would know the rules... What I noticed though is that he is also short-tempered and stubborn and that he treats other beings quite arrogantly, well knowing that he is stronger and in a superior position. He is definitely not the usual hero.

P.S. I want Baki for myself. :-)

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### **Mike (the Paladin) says**

Another book that may be better than I'm rating it. Admittedly I've had a bad few months (read couple of years). This is the second time I've tried this book and it just doesn't hold my interest. I've read better Wolfe.

The attempt here is to tell a story from the point of view of a boy "yanked" into "manhood" (apparently body only) by a queen of the Aelf (I'd call her a Fairy Queen), who is apparently guilty of statutory rape. The boy/man continues with an obsessive love for "Disiri" from then on. I would say this is Wolfe's attempt at relating the situation to the "courtly" or "chivalric" love from older type stories.

I realize that Wolfe is shooting for an older style of story telling here and I have read those who go on about it in wonder and love it. Okay, fair enough, that doesn't mean that those who are less than enchanted by the way this story is related are somehow "less literate" than those who are enamored with it. There may be a reason we don't primarily use this form of story telling anymore. This book comes across as always slightly disjointed and almost hesitant. (In this case the "unreliable narrator" is really unreliable.) I really never got close to the narrator of this story. (By the way I've read Mallory etc. and the fact that it is Mallory gives it a charm that this [for me:] lacks).

To each their own and if you like it great, but not for me, I just couldn't get into it.

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## Anthony says

Wolfe is a flawed genius. I read this book and it's prequel in 48 hours while I was laid up with a cold. It is easily one of the best fantasy books I have ever read. I would put it on a shelf next to Lord of the Rings and Alice in Wonderland. While its achievements are incredible its shortcomings are equally enormous. Wolfe as usual has created an enormous and breath takingly realized world. One that is vivid and recognizable as well as wondrous and strange as fantasy should be.

His prose, dialogue and characters are masterfully done. His command of plot is stunning. As usual the mobius strip like creation he makes out of the overall plot is a tour-de-force- a puzzle that like a game of chess is working on many layers. A reader could return to the book again and again and find new hidden meanings and riddles. ( I still find myself scratching my head over the time travel trickery involved in his magnum opus *The Book of the new Sun*).

However . . . unfortunately, Wolfe's strengths as a writer seem to have blinded him to a huge list of annoying tics and traits flaws that made hundreds of pages so unenjoyable it was at times unbearable to keep reading. The major ones are worth noticing for any writer, fantasy or otherwise:

1. He often skips the battle scenes or glosses them over hastily.
2. In order to create his abundance of puzzles and riddles his first-person unreliable narrators withhold essential information over and over again. Pull this trick once in a great while and it is a formidable device with powerful results. But doing all the time and it feels like your being taken for a long ride by a story teller you can't trust. No reader enjoys that.
3. The middle of the book should have been trimmed a lot. (Basically everything that occurs in the land of the giants is extremely dull. Unfortunately that's a third of the series. The beginning is 5 stars the end is 5 stars the middle is zero. I speculate that Wolfe knew his beginning and end but created filler in order to stretch a 1 volume story into 2 volumes)
4. His heroes are too virtuous. The reader never feels there is much chance of the hero actually failing.
- 4.5 And because his heroes are so dependable, his HUGE cast of supporting characters are sadly not given much to do. They do a lot but it has no GRAVITAS. It matters not, as they are overshadowed by the main character. Which is a shame because all of his characters are vivid and often quite believable. This is perhaps his biggest flaw.
5. His characters spend way too much of the time playing 20 questions with each other. Wittily fencing with each other, trading little bits of information. It is a strange tic that he imbues all of his works with.

Lastly all of Wolfe's work is basically a re-telling of the story of a Christ figure. This, and the fact that he is quite challenging is probably why he is not more popular. This writer is a maverick and his mistakes are as big as his talents. I am sure I will ponder this book for a long time to come. Likewise I don't plan on reading another book by Gene Wolfe for a long time to come either.

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## Johnny says

Gene Wolfe is a master at offering something that seems familiar and giving it an amazing freshness. I never would have thought that I would have liked reading about a torturer in an Inquisitorial environment before Wolfe gave it his spin and my first glances at the covers of *The Wizard Knight* series failed to give me any clue as to how different this book could be from standard fantasy fare. *The Knight* seemed to start off with a familiar psychological trope. When I began reading this account allegedly sent by the protagonist to his brother Ben in our world, I thought Wolfe was going to tread the familiar ground of Donaldson's white gold wielders and Brooks' Landover with their respective psychological membrane between the two very

different worlds. Unless the second book is handled very differently from the first, my initial impression was wrong indeed.

If I were to describe this book in the language of a wine connoisseur, I would suggest that I perceived elements of Farmer's *Riverworld* (without that marvelous riverboat, of course) on the palate with hints of Farmer's *World of Tiers* in the finish. Yet, even such rich connotations only touches on a surface element, Wolfe's fascinating continuum of seven worlds from Niflheim's Norse-sounding origins at one end to Elysion's Greek-sounding dimension at the other. In between, there are marvelous re-interpretations of classics like the Green Knight of medieval England and the land of faery generally tied to Celtic mythology. Even this description seems superficial.

Perhaps, I could describe this as a coming of age tale, a narrative of maturing innocence. Such a simplistic description would be technically correct, but would probably suggest more of a Young Adult novel than *The Knight* represents. One might describe Wolfe's play with the time continuum such that the different worlds have different paces, but then one might think it was a time travel or time paradox narrative. It is not.

In short, *The Knight* is a mystical, magical fantasy with some scenes that seem as gritty as some of *Game of Thrones* without sacrificing the magical elements and supernatural mystery. The novel explores the self-discovery of Able, the protagonist who is knighted by a faery queen but attempting to function within the restrictive feudal system of the world where he seems fated to come into his own. Yet, the story has an epic scope without the distracting acrobatic moves from character to character in most epic novels. The perspective is as focused as Sir Able of the High Heart is himself. As such, it is an incredible book and has me on the lookout for the sequel.

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## Cloud says

I could not stand this author's writing style. The only reason I kept reading was to figure out what just happened and any hope that the plot might go somewhere. It felt very disconnected between chapters and jumping from one thing to another. The main character is doing X then he turns around and he is in Y place. But the book never goes back to the people/situation he just left. By the last few chapters I was thinking there might be some kind of conclusion, no matter how small, nope. The character makes another jump to somewhere else and it just ends. I don't think I have ever so strongly disliked a book as much as this. One I will not keep to take up shelf space. I have no interest in the characters future or how the plot will continues in the next book.

However I will say there were a few and far between moments of the book that made it passable. A few side characters that I had more interest in than the main character.

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## Christopher says

Gene Wolfe's THE KNIGHT is the first half of a fantasy diptych called "The Wizard Knight". Abel, an American boy in his early teens, finds himself transported to another world with similarities to Norse mythology, divided into seven tiers of reality. Abel lands in Mythgarthr, a plane similar to medieval Earth, and dreams of becoming a knight. He has intriguing interactions with the Aelf, a race of elemental spirits and tricksters, and the dragons who inhabit the worlds below, and he has his sights set on the flying castle of the Valfather in the world of Skai above.

Over the three decades prior to THE KNIGHT, Wolfe had developed a distinctive method of storytelling where narrators are unreliable and some important plot events are not described directly, but left to be subtly revealed through other events. Certainly this helped make early Wolfe efforts like THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS or "The Book of the New Sun" so great, though these works also had a number of other fine points such as excellent prose and clearly developed settings. Unfortunately, with THE KNIGHT it seems that all that is left to Wolfe's style is this principle of unreliability and enigma. Abel gratuitously leaves so many things undescribed for no reason other than Wolfe being stuck in a rut of book as enigma. Half of the action is passed over only so that Abel can fill it in later, the human characters are wooden and even the amusing animals seem like throwbacks to earlier Wolfe novels. Wolfe's use of Abel as narrator, writing a long letter to his brother Ben back in America, is also inconsistently applied. For the most part, Able writes like a 13 year-old kid, but at times he launches into highfaulting explanations or ethereal descriptions of the plot where it's clear that Wolfe has taken over as he would in third-person storytelling. And Abel's boyhood reluctance to write about sex and violence becomes most apparent only after he has become a man and has already been through fierce battles and gotten lucky with a fairy queen.

I read THE KNIGHT as soon as it was first published in 2004, as Wolfe had been favourite writer for many years. My disappointment with the book was so crushing that I stopped following what Wolfe has written since. Sure, if you're looking for a riproaring fantasy novel, then THE KNIGHT may entertain you, though you might not find all of it to your taste. But when Wolfe had written some major masterpieces, a novel that can only be satisfyingly read as light entertainment seems like a failure.

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### **Christopher says**

Every Gene Wolfe novel is a f'n revelation. Consistently challenging and constantly rewarding, this first of a two volume series has been described as his most "accessible" and it's easy to see why. It's Wolfe's turn at high fantasy. And tells the story of an American teenager who quickly finds himself (without explanation, because none is needed) transported to a fantasy world and imbued with great strength and stature and the rank of "knight."

He quickly falls in love (lust) and goes a-questing on behalf of his quasi-mystical love. This is Don Quixote and it's wonderful.

Wolfe's novels are less about the destination than they are about the journey and this is one is no different. But with every encounter, he imbues Sir Able of the High Heart (because he's a knight you know) with the arrogance and ignorance that all teenage boys would act with if thrust into the "hero" role they so thoroughly crave and fear.

Wonderful in every respect.

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### **Tim says**

In The Knight Gene Wolfe has created another complete world, familiar to us (and thus easier to enter than with some of his other books) but also foreign. It begins in medieval history and folklore, heavy with Norse mythology, but expands in Wolfe's hands. The main character Able is a knight, who will become a great hero. In his ambling journey he makes many friends who aid him in his quest to find the sword Eterne and earn a place with his love Disiri. The first story is self-contained and is a delight for Wolfe's writing, especially for the characters and settings he has placed them in. Its focus on Able's development provides a

clearer plot. The second book, The Wizard is a wonderful return to this world, but I feel like Wolfe's plotting is not as sure, that he loses track of certain of the wonderful characters, and too many scenes feel rushed through. If he had left the story at the conflict with the Angrborn (the giants) that dominates the first half of the book and finished his tale in a third book it might have felt more complete and less hurried. That said it too is a delightful book.

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