

Includes an all-new story
from Joe Abercrombie

EDITED BY

GEORGE R.R.
MARTIN
& GARDNER
DOZOIS



DANGEROUS
WOMEN

PART III

INCLUDES STORIES BY
JIM BUTCHER · PAT CADIGAN
MELINDA SNODGRASS

George Martin

Dangerous Women Part 3

«HarperCollins»

Martin G. R.

Dangerous Women Part 3 / G. R. Martin — «HarperCollins»,

Commissioned by George R.R. Martin and Gardner Dozois, these tales of dangerous women by the most stellar names in fiction are available for the first time in three-volume paperback. George R.R. Martin is the bestselling author of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the inspiration for HBO's hit series *GAME OF THRONES*. This third volume features an original short story by Joe Abercrombie. 'Some Desperado' centres on Shy South, the protagonist of Abercrombie's novel *RED COUNTRY*. Having robbed a bank, Shy is carrying 2,000 silver pieces, and she's on the run when her horse catches an arrow. Marooned in a dusty ghost town, she faces up to a trio of murderous, flea-bitten criminals... This volume of stories about hard-living bad girls, killers and superheroes also includes contributions from worldwide bestselling authors Jim Butcher, Melinda Snodgrass and Pat Cadigan. **DANGEROUS WOMEN 3** Gardner Dozois's introduction Joe Abercrombie, 'Some Desperado' Diana Rowland, 'City Lazarus' Sherlynn Kenyon, 'Hell Hath No Fury' Melinda Snodgrass, 'The Hands That Are Not There' Pat Cadigan, 'Caretakers' Cecelia Holland, 'Nora's Song' Jim Butcher, 'Bombshells'

Содержание

Copyright	6
Copyright Acknowledgments	7
Dedication	8
Introduction by Gardner Dozois	9
Joe Abercrombie	11
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	12

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AND

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Dedication

To Jo Playford, my dangerous minion.

[—George R.R. Martin]

[Contents](#)

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Copyright Acknowledgments](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Some Desperado](#) by Joe Abercrombie

[City Lazarus](#) by Diana Rowland

[Hell Hath No Fury](#) by Sherrilyn Kenyon

[The Hands That Are Not There](#) by Melinda Snodgrass

[Caretakers](#) by Pat Cadigan

[Nora's Song](#) by Cecelia Holland

[Bombshells](#) by Jim Butcher

[About the Publisher](#)

Introduction by Gardner Dozois

Genre fiction has always been divided over the question of just *how* dangerous women are.

In the real world, of course, the question has long been settled. Even if the Amazons are mythological (and almost certainly wouldn't have cut their right breasts off to make it easier to draw a bow if they *weren't*), their legend was inspired by memory of the ferocious warrior women of the Scythians, who were very much *not* mythological. Gladiatrix, women gladiators, fought other women—and sometimes men—to the death in the arenas of Ancient Rome. There were female pirates like Anne Bonny and Mary Read, and even female samurai. Women served as frontline combat troops, feared for their ferocity, in the Russian army during World War II, and serve so in Israel today. Until 2013, women in the U.S. forces were technically restricted to “noncombat” roles, but many brave women gave their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan anyway, since bullets and land mines have never cared whether you're a noncombatant or not. Women who served as Women Airforce Service Pilots for the United States during World War II were also limited to noncombat roles (where many of them were nevertheless killed in the performance of their duties), but Russian women took to the skies as fighter pilots, and sometimes became aces. A Russian female sniper during World War II was credited with more than fifty kills. Queen Boudicca of the Iceni tribe led one of the most fearsome revolts ever against Roman authority, one that was almost successful in driving the Roman invaders from Britain, and a young French peasant girl inspired and led the troops against the enemy so successfully that she became famous forever afterwards as Joan of Arc.

On the dark side, there have been female “highwaymen” like Mary Frith and Lady Katherine Ferrers and Pearl Hart (the last person to ever rob a stagecoach); notorious poisoners like Agrippina and Catherine de Medici, modern female outlaws like Ma Barker and Bonnie Parker, even female serial killers like Aileen Wuornos. Elizabeth Báthory was said to have bathed in the blood of virgins, and even though that has been called into question, there is no doubt that she tortured and killed dozens, perhaps hundreds, of children during her life. Queen Mary I of England had hundreds of Protestants burnt at the stake; Queen Elizabeth of England later responded by executing large numbers of Catholics. Mad Queen Ranavalona of Madagascar had so many people put to death that she wiped out one-third of the entire population of Madagascar during her reign; she would even have you executed if you appeared in her dreams.

Popular fiction, though, has always had a schizophrenic view of the dangerousness of women. In the science fiction of the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, women, if they appeared at all, were largely regulated to the role of the scientist's beautiful daughter, who might scream during the fight scenes but otherwise had little to do except hang adoringly on the arm of the hero afterwards. Legions of women swooned helplessly while waiting to be rescued by the intrepid jut-jawed hero from everything from dragons to the bug-eyed monsters who were always carrying them off for improbable purposes either dietary or romantic on the covers of pulp SF magazines. Hopelessly struggling women were tied to railroad tracks, with nothing to do but squeak in protest and hope that the Good Guy arrived in time to save them.

And yet, at the same time, warrior women like Edgar Rice Burroughs's Dejah Thoris and Thuvia, Maid of Mars, were every bit as good with the blade and every bit as deadly in battle as John Carter and their other male comrades, female adventuresses like C. L. Moore's Jirel of Joiry swashbuckled their way through the pages of *Weird Tales* magazine (and blazed a trail for later female swashbucklers like Joanna Russ's Alyx); James H. Schmitz sent Agents of Vega like Granny Wannatel and fearless teenagers like Telzey Amberdon and Trigger Argee out to battle the sinister menaces and monsters of the spaceways; and Robert A. Heinlein's dangerous women were capable of being the captain of a spaceship or killing enemies in hand-to-hand combat. Arthur Conan Doyle's sly, shady Irene Adler was one of the only people ever to outwit his Sherlock Holmes, and probably one

of the inspirations for the legions of tricky, dangerous, seductive, and treacherous “femmes fatale” who featured in the works of Dashiell Hammett and James M. Cain and later went on to appear in dozens of films noir, and who still turn up in the movies and on television to this day. Later television heroines such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Xena, Warrior Princess, firmly established women as being formidable and deadly enough to battle hordes of fearsome supernatural menaces, and helped to inspire the whole subgenre of paranormal romance, which is sometimes unofficially known as the “kick-ass heroine” genre.

Like our anthology *Warriors, Dangerous Women* was conceived of as a cross-genre anthology, one that would mingle every kind of fiction, so we asked writers from every genre—science fiction, fantasy, mystery, historical, horror, paranormal romance, men and women alike—to tackle the theme of “dangerous women,” and that call was answered by some of the best writers in the business, including both new writers and giants of their fields like Diana Gabaldon, Jim Butcher, Sharon Kay Penman, Joe Abercrombie, Carrie Vaughn, Joe R. Lansdale, Lawrence Block, Cecelia Holland, Brandon Sanderson, Sherilynn Kenyon, S. M. Stirling, Nancy Kress, and George R. R. Martin.

Here you’ll find no hapless victims who stand by whimpering in dread while the male hero fights the monster or clashes swords with the villain, and if you want to tie *these* women to the railroad tracks, you’ll find you have a real fight on your hands. Instead, you will find sword-wielding women warriors; intrepid women fighter pilots and far-ranging spacewomen; deadly female serial killers; formidable female superheroes; sly and seductive femmes fatale; female wizards; hard-living bad girls; female bandits and rebels; embattled survivors in postapocalyptic futures; female private investigators; stern female hanging judges; haughty queens who rule nations and whose jealousies and ambitions send thousands to grisly deaths; daring dragonriders; and many more.

Enjoy!

Joe Abercrombie

As the sizzingly fast-paced and action-packed story that follows demonstrates, sometimes chasing a fugitive can be as dangerous for the pursuers as for the pursued—particularly when the quarry has no place left to run ...

Joe Abercrombie is one of the fastest-rising stars in fantasy today, acclaimed by readers and critics alike for his tough, spare, no-nonsense approach to the genre. He's probably best known for his First Law trilogy, the first novel of which, *The Blade Itself*, was published in 2006; it was followed in subsequent years by *Before They Are Hanged* and *Last Argument of Kings*. He's also written the stand-alone fantasy novels *Best Served Cold* and *The Heroes*. His most recent novel is *Red Country*. In addition to writing, Abercrombie is also a freelance film editor and lives and works in London.

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