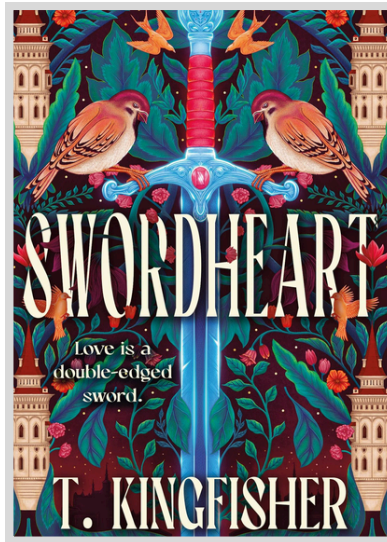


Swordheart by T. Kingfisher



Summary

The delightful charm of *The Princess Bride* meets the delicious bodyguard romance of *From Blood and Ash* in this cozy fantasy romance from New York Times bestselling author T. Kingfisher

Halla has unexpectedly inherited the estate of a wealthy uncle. Unfortunately, she is also saddled with money-hungry relatives full of devious plans for how to wrest the inheritance away from her.

While locked in her bedroom, Halla inspects the ancient sword that's been collecting dust on the wall since before she moved in. Out of desperation, she unsheathes it--and suddenly a man appears. His name is Sarkis, he tells her, and he is an immortal warrior trapped in a prison of enchanted steel.

Sarkis is sworn to protect whoever wields the sword, and for Halla--a most unusual wielder--he finds himself fending off not grand armies and deadly assassins but instead everything from kindly-seeming bandits to roving inquisitors to her own in-laws. But as Halla and Sarkis grow closer, they overlook the biggest threat of all--the sword itself.

Provided by Publisher: Tor Bramble

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About the Author

Ursula Vernon, aka T. Kingfisher is the author and illustrator of far more projects than is probably healthy. She has written over fifteen books for children, at least a dozen novels for adults, an epic webcomic called “Digger” and various short stories and other odds and ends. The daughter of an artist, she spent her youth attempting to rebel, but eventually succumbed to the siren song of paint (although not before getting a degree in anthropology.) Ursula grew up in Oregon and Arizona, went to college at Macalester College in Minnesota, and stayed there for ten years, until she finally learned to drive in deep snow and was obligated to leave the state.

Having moved across the country several times, she eventually settled in New Mexico, where she works full-time as an artist and creator of oddities. She lives with her husband and his chickens.

Provided by author's website: <https://redwombatstudio.com/about-the-author/>

Discussion Questions

1. How does Halla grow over the course of the novel, and what makes her a compelling protagonist?
2. In what ways does Sarkis's bond to the sword shape his identity and his relationship with Halla?
3. How did you feel about the pacing and development of the romance? Did the slow burn work for you?
4. The novel blends humor with serious topics like abuse and power. Did that balance feel effective?
5. Did the comedic tone ever clash with heavier themes, or did it enhance them?
6. What does the story suggest about control, autonomy, and who gets to make decisions—especially for women?
7. How does the book treat the idea of justice versus legality? Were there moments where the law clearly failed?
8. Did the lighter worldbuilding help or hinder your enjoyment of the story?
9. Which secondary characters or scenes stood out most, and why?
10. Would you classify Swordheart more as fantasy, romance, or cozy fiction—and does that matter?

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Reviews

Locus Magazine (01/18/2019):

Hugo and Nebula Award-winning Ursula Vernon, best known for her middle-grade Hamster Princess books, writes as T. Kingfisher when the work is more suited to adults. *Swordheart*, which is set in her Clocktaur War world but has nearly nothing to do with the events of *Clockwork Boys* and *The Wonder Engine*, is most definitely a book for grown-ups.

Not for every grown-up, mind. This title is a witty romance between a very respectable widow, Halla, and Sarkis, a warrior trapped in an enchanted sword. Halla's uncle Silas has just died and left her his worldly goods. The financial support is exactly what Halla needs, but her aunt and cousin connive to keep it from her. Halla is about to fling herself onto a sword in order to escape a forced marriage to the cousin when Sarkis appears. And our plot is wound up and released.

While Sarkis and Halla are wonderfully drawn, fully fleshed-out characters, what makes the story really crackle is Vernon's silliness and heart, both of which thrum just under the story. Her touch feels light, but is a skilled breeziness that is surprisingly deep. The romance unfolds organically, rather than as an enforced meet-cute. The banter between the two would make any screwball comedy fan shiver with glee. Vernon also expands the boundaries of this world from what we saw in the also excellent Clocktaur duology.

Compared to those books, not much is at stake in *Swordheart*. No one is saving the world as they know it, nor will anyone perish if Halla's quest to have Silas's will honored fails. Look elsewhere if an epic hero's journey tale is what you want. Dive in, however, if you are looking to be charmed and delighted. (Adrienne Martini)

Adrienne Martini has been reading or writing about science fiction for decades and has had two non-fiction, non-genre books published by Simon and Schuster. She lives in Upstate New York with one husband, two kids, and one corgi. She also runs a lot.