

Luck is a strange thing. Men speak of good luck and bad luck, but who is to say which is one, and which the other? One man's pain is another's pleasure, one man's trash is another man's treasure, and often neither knows which he's found until much later.

So when they say that Tyrfinn is bad luck to everything it touches, who's to say whether it's the truth? Liberty for the wolves means death to the lambs. So if a wolf should die, that may be tragic to the wolves, but the lambs rejoice. But liberty for the lambs can often be the death of the grass. So is this good luck or bad? Who's to say?

Some call the sword a force of destruction, and these folk are wiser than the first. But the line between destruction and protection, as well, is a narrow one, and more blurred than a casual onlooker might imagine. Protect a man, and live with the destruction he causes. Destroy a man, and protect those he might have harmed. It is not an easy thing to find the one without the other.

Consider, then, the proud and powerful king, betrayed by his servant and laid low by his own sword. This is a tragedy, it seems, but dig deeper. Is the king a good man? Is he wise, is he kind, is he noble, is he just? Does he deserve life? Those who his armies laid waste to might have a different answer than the king himself.

The man who slew him gives the sword to his eldest son, the first of twelve, and every one a savage berserker. The dozen of them raid and ravage their way across the land, and kings tremble in fear of them. Are these good men? They would say that they are great, and those they fight for would agree, and even those they fight against could be persuaded. But what of the wives and children of those they slay?

One of twelve lusts for a king's daughter, and though she favors another, he will not be dissuaded, and challenges this hero and his companion. Twelve fight two, and of the lot only the companion of the man challenged walks away from that island. The king's daughter chooses death rather than to live with the loss of the man she truly loved. Is this a sad story? Perhaps, but where lies the blame? Is it with the sword that killed the hero, or with the men too proud to listen to the truth when they hear it?

The father lays his sons in state upon the isle of his death, and leaves the sword in the barrow of the eldest. But his daughter will not be satisfied with things of peace and plenty, and makes of herself a raider and a killer. She hears of her father's sword, and decides to claim it for herself. The captain of a ship dies and she takes his place, and none think to ask why such things would happen.

She goes to her father's barrow, though forewarned by peers and kin, and asks of him the blade. He warns her away, but she will not listen, and in the end she goes away with the sword in hand. Is this the sword's fault, then, that she rejects the wisdom of all those who would warn her away?

Is it the sword to blame when she takes it up and makes of herself a great killer of men? The sword is the reason such can happen, certainly. She would be a skilled fighter without it, but with the sword in her hand she is so much more, a great warrior that can lay berserkers low with a single blow.

She comes to dominate the land, and many, many people die at her hands. But is the sword at fault for what she does with it? Perhaps not.

She has two sons, and one is kind and one is cruel, and it is not the sword that makes her love the cruel more. It is not the sword that makes the cruel to kill his brother; that darkness was born in his own heart. When that boy takes the sword and goes out on his own to go to war, he would say it is a very good thing that the sword slays all his foes for him, and his new king would agree with him. His foes, naturally, would not, but is that opinion worth more than the other?

When the cruel boy grows to be a cruel man, it is not the sword that makes him ask for his king's daughter in marriage, nor is it the sword that makes the king agree. When he then turns on the king, and kills him, it is the sword that strikes the final blow. The king's daughter then takes her own life, for how could she go on to live with the man who slew her father? Again, there is a tragic story to be seen, but who bears the burden of guilt? Is it the sword, that drew the blood? Is it the cruel man, who swung the sword? Is it the king, who clutched a viper to his breast? Or perhaps the right answer is that all of these must share the fault.

When the cruel king is visited by a wise man, and by and by this man reveals that he is none other than the All-Father himself, and the cruel king draws the sword against him all the same, is that to be blamed upon the sword? No, though the sword was used in the act. Lay fault at the feet of the wise, or of the foolish, for both played a part in bringing it to that point, but the blade itself was merely the tool.

When, for his foolish hubris, his own slaves take the blade and slay the king, the sword is just a sword. When the king's son takes the blade and slays the slaves, the sword is just a sword. When he goes to war with his own brother for the birthright, and cuts him down amid a great battle that fed the crows for miles around, the sword is just a sword.

Men say that the sword Tyrting is bad luck to everyone. This is a foolish thing to say for many reasons. The first is that they are hypocrites. No man or woman ever held Tyrting except that they were a killer; they kill, but they expect the sword not to. Worse, for they expect the sword to kill their enemies, and leave them untouched. But why should the sword care for such a distinction? It is just a sword.

The second reason it is a foolish thing to say is that good luck and bad luck cannot be so easily distinguished. The world looks different depending on where you're standing.

The third reason it is a foolish thing to say is that the sword does not judge nor decide the circumstance of its use. One man wields the sword to defend the innocent, another to crush them. Either way, the choice belongs to the wielder. The sword is just a sword.

The fourth reason it is a foolish thing to say is that the blade has a reason to be. Sometimes the cure may be a harsh one, but that does not make it less necessary. The sword was forged for war and

built for blood, made to serve a terrible purpose; to expect it not to do terrible things in the pursuit of that purpose is a naive hope.

The fifth reason it is a foolish thing to say is that those who fall foul of the sword are seldom pure of heart. It attracts a certain sort of person to be its wielder, and that sort of person seldom find themselves in conflict with the innocent. There are exceptions, but for the most part those who taste the blade's edge have done something to earn their fate.

The sixth reason it is a foolish thing to say is that the sword was designed to limit the damage it inflicted, not to exacerbate it. In order to achieve their goal, its makers had to tap into great and destructive forces, the power of raw, untamed possibility. What mortal men call a terribly destructive blade is the gentlest application of this power that they could manage, and should be judged as such.

The seventh reason it is a foolish thing to say is that death and entropy are natural processes. In accelerating that the sword is not doing anything that is not in line with the natural course of events.

The eighth reason it is a foolish thing to say is that the sword does not do force its wielder to do anything. When it drove the soul that held the hilt to wrath and violence, it was not so much forcing them to the fight as unlocking something already held within their heart. Men are eager to blame their demons for their own faults, but the devil almost never *makes* anyone do anything. That's the whole point.

The ninth reason it is a foolish thing to say is a secret never to be told. The best is what none but one's self does know.