

Character Interview with Blade from TC Southwell's fantasy series, *The Queen's Blade*



The Queen's Blade is the story of an assassin who changes the fate of three kingdoms with his lethal skills. He is deeply embittered by his horrific past, when Cotti, an enemy kingdom, slaughtered his family and familiar, and enslaved and castrated him as a child. He escaped, but was forced to become an assassin in order to survive. His hatred extends to just about everyone, save for a few people who have helped him along the way, although he is reluctant to admit to liking or owing anyone anything.

When Queen Minna-Satu vows to end the Endless War between her kingdom, Jashimari, and Cotti, she tries to kill King Shandor and capture the heir to the throne, Prince Kerrion, in order to fulfil the Idol of the Beasts' prophecy. Her soldiers fail, and Blade offers to do the deed, since it may involve killing some Cotti. Minna-Satu appoints him as her personal assassin, and thus he becomes The Queen's Blade, destined to bring an empire to its knees. His name will live forever in legend for the time of strife and suffering he ushered in and the changes he brought about: the time of The Queen's Blade.

Before the interview, Southwell admits, "I'm somewhat surprised that Blade agreed to an interview, but I should warn you, his answers are likely to be curt. If you get too personal, he'll probably lie. I hope he's in a reasonably good mood. You won't see Rivan (Blade's familiar); he'll be on the roof, as the lookout."

Knowing Blade's reputation, I, too, was surprised. At the interview, my first question is: "You have a far-reaching reputation as a loner and being not much of a 'people person'. I'm curious: what made you agree to this interview?" Blade shrugs and replies, "Boredom? Retirement is dull, although Chiana does her best to either entertain me or keep me occupied, whilst also carping about my health. I thought this might be a little entertaining, but I will answer only twenty questions. Do you have wine?"

Although he prefers sweet white wine, Blade reluctantly accepts the red wine available. While he wrinkles his nose as he sips the wine, I ask what his initial thoughts were when he first heard that the newly crowned Queen Minna-Satu had vowed to end the Endless War. He says, "I thought nothing. I didn't care what she vowed to end as long as it didn't affect me."

Blade met Queen Minna-Satu for the first time when he offered her his services as an assassin. At first, she refused his offer, which annoyed him, though her refusal wasn't unexpected. He adds, "Fortunately, the failure of her soldiers made her reconsider."

When asked what thoughts went through his mind the first time he laid eyes on Queen Minna-Satu, Blade says, "She was young, and, therefore, probably foolish. A spoilt high-born who was accustomed to being obeyed, but her being cat kin made her a little less irritating than most." If he had never seen the queen again after that, the one thing he'd have always remembered about her would have been Shista, her sand cat familiar, which he describes as a noble beast.

As an assassin, Blade puts his life in danger frequently. I asked how much of a risk it is for most assassins, and how much of a risk for an assassin like him, who has such superior skills. He says, "If an assassination is well planned, as mine were, the risk is minimal, although the possibility of peril does get the heart pumping and warm the blood. For most assassins, it depends on how well-guarded their target is and how skilled the assassin is. Poisoners and crossbowmen take the least risks, but dagger men must get close to their targets. Of course, the risk is greatly reduced when the target is asleep. Garroters enjoy their victim's struggles, but they always attack from behind when they are alone. No assassin worth his mark takes unnecessary risks, but there are dolts, who soon end up dead. A good assassin certainly wouldn't take on a Cotti prince like he was just another well-guarded target, or he would pay the price."



Since we were on the topic of potential death, I asked how Blade would choose to die if he had a choice in the matter when the time comes. He snorts. "I would choose a quick and painless end, obviously."

Next, I was curious about who his greatest enemy is and how that person became an enemy. Blade pondered this question with a slight frown and sips his wine. "I think all the people I've met who were my enemies are dead. Cotti princes, mostly, and they became my enemies by being born Cotti, although they were also plotting, murderous little bastards. Kerrion is one such, but no one would hire me to kill him. I'd have done it for a copper."

The qualities Blade dislikes most in other people are nosiness, stupidity, bravado, boastfulness and cruelty. It was obvious he could have gone on listing qualities he loathes, but, when asked what three qualities he likes the most in other people, he smiles and asks, "There are three likable qualities?" I tell him there are a lot more than three, and his smile fades. "Not in my experience, but if you insist upon an answer to that question, I will say perhaps loyalty. Bravery is laudable too, I suppose. Helpfulness can also be a good quality."

I have inside information about one thing that makes Blade incredibly queasy, and, when I ask what it is, feigning ignorance, he says, "No, nothing." His eyes narrow. "If anyone told you different, they are lying." To protect the integrity of this interview, you'll have to read the series if you want to discover what it is that turns this man of steel's stomach.

Blade's skills as an assassin are second to none, but I wondered if there's another skill he wishes he'd learnt instead. "I should have been a goatherd, like my father. Goats are better company than people, so I think I would have enjoyed that. It requires little skill, and consists mainly of lying in the grass while the beasts graze. An excellent profession."

If Blade could shape shift into any animal, it would be a wood cat, so he could run and hunt with Rivan, and his favourite sound is Rivan's purr.

When asked where he goes when he's angry, Blade's eyebrows rise. "There's a place I should go? No one told me of this. I'm often angry, at my life and the people in it, so I prefer to be alone. Anywhere away from people will suffice, but if it is well-stocked with wine and ale that's a bonus. Unfortunately, those places are usually also well-stocked

with people, but that's bearable as long as they leave me alone. Chiana has tried to cure me of my anger, but so far she has had only moderate success."

To end, I asked Blade what three words best describe him. His answer was immediate and straightforward: "Cold, lying killer."

Those who find Blade as intriguing as I do can read his story in [*The Queen's Blade*](#) – Book 1 is free, so don't miss out!

A word from Blade's creator, fantasy author [TC Suthwell](#)

Well, that went better than I expected. I think he was in a fairly good mood, although on his guard, as always. He must be really bored to agree to an interview, and some of his answers were truthful. Seeing him here, sitting on your sofa, was quite a thrill for me. He looked out of place in his black leather and gold-trimmed velvet cloak. He still hasn't aged a day, although I haven't spent time with him since I finished *Lord Protector*. He wouldn't have been happy as a goatherd; he just hasn't ever thought of what else he'd have wanted to be. I think he likes being Lord Protector; it gives him the power to bully the nobles, and he's never liked them. Of course, he's very fond of Minna-Satu.

I'm delighted with the positive reaction readers have had to *The Queen's Blade* series. The wonderful emails people send me always lift my spirits, especially when they tell me they've added me to their list of favourite authors. Some readers have said they enjoyed the books so much they've read them five or six times, while others finished all eight books in less than a week! They must have suffered from serious sleep deprivation, and some said their spouses felt rather neglected.