



Death of Kings: A Novel (Saxon Tales Book 6)

By Bernard Cornwell

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The sixth installment of Bernard Cornwell's bestselling series chronicling the epic saga of the making of England, "like Game of Thrones, but real" (*The Observer*, London)—the basis for *The Last Kingdom*, the hit television series coming to Netflix in Fall 2016.

As the ninth century wanes, England is perched once more on the brink of chaos. King Alfred is dying; with his passing, the island of Britain seems doomed to renewed warfare. Alfred wants his son Edward to succeed him, but there are other Saxon claimants to the throne—as well as ambitious pagan Vikings to the north.

With the promise of battle looming again, Uhtred, the Viking-raised but Saxon-born warrior, whose life seems to shadow the making of England itself, is torn between competing loyalties. Uhtred's loyalty, and his vows, are to Alfred—not to his son—and despite long years of service to the old king, Uhtred is still reluctant to commit to Alfred's cause. His own desire is to reclaim his long lost ancestral lands and castle to the north. As the king's warrior he is duty-bound, but the king's reign is nearing its end, and his death will leave a vacuum of power. Uhtred is forced to make a momentous choice: either take up arms—and Alfred's mantle—to realize his dream of a united and Christian England, or be responsible for condemning it to oblivion.

Death of Kings is a harrowing story of the power of tribal commitment and the dilemma of divided loyalties. This is the making of England magnificently brought to life by "the best historical novelist writing today" (Vince Flynn).

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

George R.R. Martin Interviews Bernard Cornwell

George R.R. Martin sold his first story in 1971 and has been writing professionally since then. He spent ten years in Hollywood as a writer-producer, working on *The Twilight Zone*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and various feature films and television pilots that were never made. In the mid '90s he returned to prose, his first love, and began work on his epic fantasy series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*. He has been in the Seven Kingdoms ever since.



George R.R. Martin: It has long been my contention that the historical novel and the epic fantasy are sisters under the skin, that the two genres have much in common. My series owes a lot to the work of J.R.R. Tolkien and the other great fantasists who came before me, but I've also read and enjoyed the work of historical novelists. Who were your own influences? Was historical fiction always your great passion? Did you ever read fantasy?

Bernard Cornwell: You're right--fantasy and historical novels are twins--and I've never been fond of the label 'fantasy' which is too broad a brush and has a fey quality. It seems to me you write historical novels in an invented world which is grounded in historical reality (if the books are set in the future then 'fantasy' magically becomes sci-fi). So I've been influenced by all three: fantasy, sci-fi and historical novels, though the largest influence has to be C.S. Forester's *Hornblower* books.

Martin: A familiar theme in a lot of epic fantasy is the conflict between good and evil. The villains are often Dark Lords of various ilks, with demonic henchmen and hordes of twisted, malformed underlings clad in black. The heroes are noble, brave, chaste, and very fair to look upon. Yes, Tolkien made something grand and glorious from that, but in the hands of lesser writers, well ... let's just say that sort of fantasy has lost its interest for me. It is the grey characters who interest me the most. Those are the sort I prefer to write about... and read about. It seems to me that you share that affinity. What is it about flawed characters that makes them more interesting than conventional heroes?

Cornwell: Maybe all our heroes are reflections of ourselves? I'm not claiming to be Richard Sharpe (God forbid), but I'm sure parts of my personality leaked into him (he's very grumpy in the morning). And perhaps flawed characters are more interesting because they are forced to make a choice... a conventionally good character will always do the moral, right thing. Boring. Sharpe often does the right thing, but usually for the wrong reasons, and that's much more interesting!

Martin: When Tolkien began writing *The Lord of the Rings*, it was intended as a sequel to *The Hobbit*. "The tale grew in the telling," he said later, when LOTR had grown into the trilogy we know today. That's a line I have often had occasion to quote over the years, as my own *Song of Ice and Fire* swelled from the three books I had originally sold to the seven books (five published, two more to write) I'm now producing. Much of your own work has taken the form of multi-part series. Are your tales too 'growing in the telling,' or do you know how long your journeys will take before you set out? Did you know how many books Uhtred's story would require, when you first sat down to write about him?



Cornwell: No idea! I don't even know what will happen in the next chapter, let alone the next book, and have no idea how many books there might be in a series. E.L. Doctorow said something I like which is that writing a novel is a bit like driving down an unfamiliar country road at night and you can only see as far ahead as your somewhat feeble headlamps show. I write into the darkness. I guess the joy of reading a book is to find out what happens, and for me that's the joy of writing one too!

Review

Praise for *THE BURNING LAND*: 'Cornwell draws a fascinating picture of England as it might have been before anything like England existed' *The Times* Praise for *AZINCOURT*: 'This is a magnificent and gory work' *Daily Mail* 'The historical blockbuster of the year' *Evening Standard* 'If Bernard Cornwell was born to write one book, this is it. No other historical novelist has acquired such a mastery of the minutiae of warfare in centuries past' *Daily Telegraph* 'A runaway success' *Observer* Praise for Bernard Cornwell: 'The characterisation, as ever, is excellent...And one can only admire the little touches that bring the period to life. He can also claim to be a true poet of both the horror and the glory of war' *Sunday Telegraph* This is typical Cornwell, meticulously researched, massive in scope, brilliant in execution' *News of the World* 'He's called a master story-teller. Really he's cleverer than that' *Telegraph*

From the Back Cover

The fate of a new nation rests in the hands of a reluctant warrior in this thrilling sixth volume in the acclaimed *New York Times* bestselling Saxon Tales series.

As the ninth century wanes, Alfred the Great lies dying, his dream of a unified England in danger and his kingdom on the brink of chaos. While his son, Edward, has been named his successor, there are other Saxon claimants to the throne—as well as ambitious pagan Vikings to the north.

Uhtred, the Saxon-born, Viking-raised warrior, whose life seems to shadow the making of England itself, is torn between his vows to Alfred and his desire to reclaim his long-lost ancestral lands and castle in the north. As the king's warrior, he is duty-bound, but Alfred's reign is nearing its end, and Uhtred has sworn no oath to the crown prince. Despite his long years of service, Uhtred is still loath to commit to the old king's Saxon cause of a united and Christian England. Now he must make a momentous decision, one that will forever transform his life . . . and the course of history: take up arms—and Alfred's mantle—or lay down his sword and allow the dream of a unified kingdom to fall into oblivion.

A harrowing story of the power of tribal commitment and the dilemma of divided loyalties, *Death of Kings* is the latest chapter in the epic saga of the making of England, magnificently brought to life by "the reigning king of historical fiction" (*USA Today*).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christine Kaufman:

Do you have something that you prefer such as book? The guide lovers usually prefer to choose book like comic, short story and the biggest one is novel. Now, why not seeking Death of Kings: A Novel (Saxon Tales Book 6) that give your pleasure preference will be satisfied through reading this book. Reading habit all over the world can be said as the means for people to know world far better then how they react towards the world. It can't be stated constantly that reading habit only for the geeky man but for all of you who wants to always be success person. So , for every you who want to start studying as your good habit, you are able to pick Death of Kings: A Novel (Saxon Tales Book 6) become your starter.

Kathleen Elder:

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Barbara Palmer:

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Dolores Albert:

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