



The Last Kingdom (Saxon Tales Book 1)

By Bernard Cornwell

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The first 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.

This is the exciting—yet little known—story of the making of England in the 9th and 10th centuries, the years in which King Alfred the Great, his son and grandson defeated the Danish Vikings who had invaded and occupied three of England's four kingdoms.

The story is seen through the eyes of Uhtred, a dispossessed nobleman, who is captured as a child by the Danes and then raised by them so that, by the time the Northmen begin their assault on Wessex (Alfred's kingdom and the last territory in English hands) Uhtred almost thinks of himself as a Dane. He certainly has no love for Alfred, whom he considers a pious weakling and no match for Viking savagery, yet when Alfred unexpectedly defeats the Danes and the Danes themselves turn on Uhtred, he is finally forced to choose sides. By now he is a young man, in love, trained to fight and ready to take his place in the dreaded shield wall. Above all, though, he wishes to recover his father's land, the enchanting fort of Bebbanburg by the wild northern sea.

This thrilling adventure—based on existing records of Bernard Cornwell's ancestors—depicts a time when law and order were ripped violently apart by a pagan assault on Christian England, an assault that came very close to destroying England.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Bestseller Cornwell leaps back a millennium from his Richard Sharpe series to tell of the consolidation of England in the late ninth century and the role played by a young (fictional) warrior-in-training who's at the center of the war between Christian Englishmen and the pagan Danes. (Most of the other principal characters—Ubba, Guthrum, Ivar the Boneless and the like—are real historical figures.) Young Uhtred, who's English, falls under the control of Viking über-warrior Ragnar the Fearless when the Dane wipes out Uhtred's Northumberland family. Cornwell liberally feeds readers history and nuggets of battle data and customs, with Uhtred's first-person wonderment spinning all into a colorful journey of (self-)discovery. In a series of episodes, Ragnar conquers three of England's four kingdoms. The juiciest segment has King Edmund of East Anglia rebuking the Viking pagans and demanding that they convert to Christianity if they intend to remain in England. After Edmund cites the example of St. Sebastian, the Danes oblige him by turning him into a latter-day Sebastian and sending him off to heaven. Uhtred's affection for Ragnar as a surrogate father grows, and he surpasses the conqueror's blood sons in valor. When father and adopted son arrive at the fourth and last kingdom, however, the Danes meet unexpected resistance and Uhtred faces personal and familial challenges, as well as a crisis of national allegiance. This is a solid adventure by a crackling good storyteller.

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From Booklist

An acknowledged master of rousing battlefield fiction as evidenced by his crackling Richard Sharpe series, Cornwell also deserves praise for his mesmerizing narrative finesse and his authentic historical detailing. Here he introduces a new multivolume saga set in medieval England prior to the unification of the four Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, East Anglia, Mercia, and Wessex. Weakened by civil war, Northumbria is invaded by the fearless Danes, and Uhtred, the rightful heir to the earldom of Bebbanburg, is captured by the enemy. Raised as a Viking warrior by Ragnar the Terrible, his beloved surrogate father, Uhtred is still torn by an innate desire to reclaim his birthright. Fighting as a Dane but realizing that his ultimate destiny lies along another path, he seizes the opportunity to serve Alfred, king of Wessex, after Ragnar is horribly betrayed and murdered by Kjartan, a fellow Dane. Ever watchful and ever practical, Uhtred awaits his chance to settle the blood feud with Kjartan and to seize Bebbanburg from his treacherous uncle. Leaving his hero suspended on the threshold of realizing his desires, Cornwell masterfully sets up his audience for the second volume in this irresistible epic adventure. *Margaret Flanagan*

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Review

“Masterful....[An]irresistible epic adventure....Cornwell deserves praise for his mesmerizing narrative finesse and his authentic historical detailing.”

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gloria Brower:

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James Wendler:

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Fred Prentice:

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