



The Archer's Tale (The Grail Quest, Book 1)

By Bernard Cornwell

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At dawn on Easter morning 1343, a marauding band of French raiders arrives by boat to ambush the coastal English village of Hookton. To brave young Thomas, the only survivor, the horror of the attack is epitomized in the casual savagery of a particular black-clad knight, whose flag -- three yellow hawks on a blue field -- presides over the bloody affair. As the killers sail away, Thomas vows to avenge the murder of his townspeople and to recapture a holy treasure that the black knight stole from the church.

To do this, Thomas of Hookton must first make his way to France; So in 1343 he joins the army of King Edward III as it is about to invade the continent -- the beginning of the Hundred Years War. A preternaturally gifted bowman, Thomas quickly becomes recognized as one of England's most deadly archers in King Edward's march across France. Yet he never stops scanning the horizon for his true enemy's flag.

When Thomas saves a young Frenchwoman from a bloodthirsty crowd, her father -- French nobleman Sir Guillaume d'Everque -- rewards his bravery by joining him in the hunt for the mysterious dark knight and the stolen holy relic. What begins as a search for vengeance will soon prove the beginning of an even higher purpose: the quest for the Holy Grail itself.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The young archer Thomas of Hookton joins the forces of King Edward III to fight against France in Cornwell's latest, which takes place in the mid-14th century at the beginning of the Hundred Years War. Thomas, a brilliant, handsome warrior who combines physical strength and skill with the bow, survives the pillaging of his village to become an archer and then rescues a female counterpart known as the Blackbird after she's nearly raped by Sir Simon Jekyll during one of the troop's raids in France. The nobleman becomes Thomas's chief rival as Jekyll continues to pursue the Blackbird, and Thomas is finally cast out of his unit after failing to kill Jekyll in an ill-conceived assassination attempt. He recovers to join and couple with the Blackbird, making his way through France and parlaying his skills into a royal pardon even as his opportunistic partner leaves him for the libidinous Prince of Wales. The three members of Cornwell's romantic triangle eventually meet during a huge climactic battle at Cr. cy, where Thomas must face up to a demanding family legacy involving a quest for a special lance. Cornwell has been down this path many times before, and he's a consummate pro when it comes to plying the tried-and-true combination of heroic characters; a fast-moving, action-packed plot; and enough twists and turns to keep the narrative from lapsing into formula. He uses his historical expertise judiciously as well. This book mark the beginning of a promising new series that brings an intriguing period to life. (Oct. 9)Forecast: Cornwell, the author of the Richard Sharpe series, set during the Napoleonic Wars, has a strong and growing U.S. fan base. The Archer's Tale, already a bestseller in Britain, should strengthen his hold on the Patrick O'Brian crowd.

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From Library Journal

Already a best seller in England under the title *Harlequin*, this novel is the opening salvo of a new series by the author of the well-known Richard Sharpe books (e.g., *Sharpe's Trafalgar*). Set in the early 1400s at the beginning of the Hundred Years War between England and France, this novel depicts one of the most bloody and violent periods in the history of conflict between these two nations. After the theft of the treasure of Hookton, a broken lance thought to have been the weapon St. George used to slay the dragon, young Thomas, the bastard son of the village priest and a skilled longbowman, joins the English army in hopes of recovering the relic. Instead, he finds himself caught up in the invasion of France. Cornwell has crafted an extremely well-written novel, grounded in actual historic events. As in the Sharpe books, Cornwell's battle scenes are particularly memorable. This series, however, promises to be a bit meatier. More attention is paid to fascinating secondary characters and the roles they play in the political, religious, and social arenas of the time. Highly recommended.

- Jane Baird, *Anchorage Municipal Libs.*, AK

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From [Booklist](#)

Cornwell, one of the undisputed masters of historical battle fiction and author of the best-selling Richard Sharpe series, spins an irresistible tale of honor and revenge set on the brink of the Hundred Years' War. Thomas of Hookton, the bastard son of the eccentric local priest, is the sole survivor of a horrific assault launched on his seaside village by Norman raiders. As his father lays dying, he reveals to Thomas the secret of his aristocratic heritage. Vowing revenge on the French nobleman who orchestrated the raid and subsequently stole a treasured relic, he joins a select group of archers prepared to wage war in France in the name of King Edward III. Battling his way through the French countryside, Thomas' quest takes on greater

danger and significance as he makes a bitter enemy from within his own ranks, uncovers a dark family secret, and becomes embroiled in an idealistic scheme to reclaim the vanished Holy Grail. Authentically detailed and appropriately gruesome, the medieval battle scenes fairly crackle with tension; however, what sets Cornwell's work apart from most run-of-the-mill military adventures are his meticulously developed story lines and his razor-sharp characterizations. *The Archer's Tale* is no exception as an increasingly intricate plot unfolds and the initially callow protagonist matures into a suitably complex, multifaceted hero.

Margaret Flanagan
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Atkinson:

This *The Archer's Tale* (*The Grail Quest*, Book 1) book is not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you get by reading this book will be information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get information which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. That *The Archer's Tale* (*The Grail Quest*, Book 1) without we comprehend teach the one who reading through it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't end up being worry *The Archer's Tale* (*The Grail Quest*, Book 1) can bring when you are and not make your carrier space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even mobile phone. This *The Archer's Tale* (*The Grail Quest*, Book 1) having very good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not experience uninterested in reading.

Harold Houston:

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Theodore Mullis:

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Robert Garcia:

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