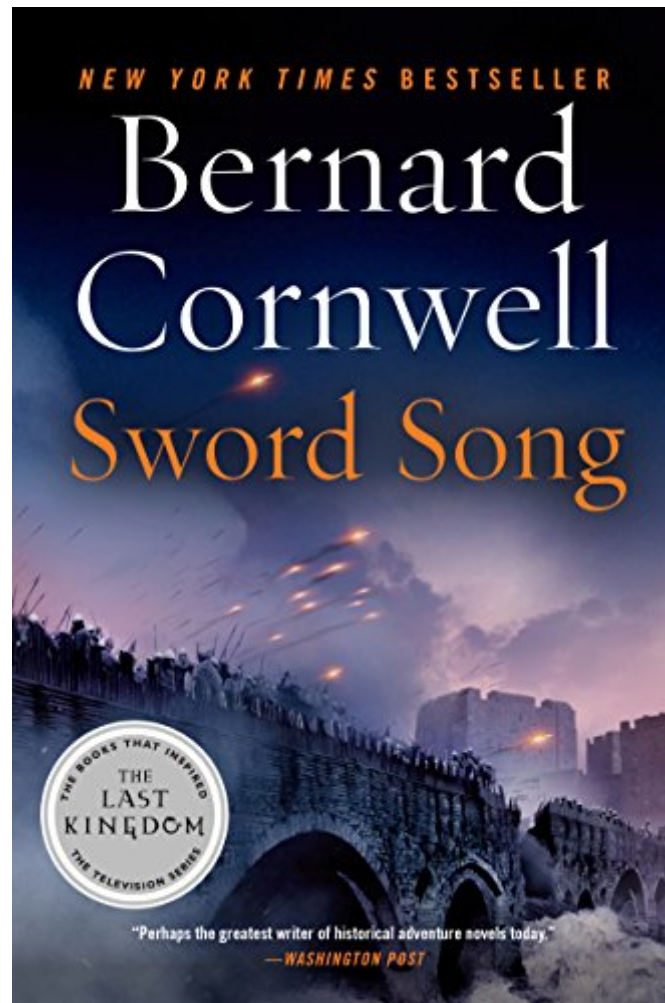


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Sword Song: The Battle For London (Saxon Tales Book 4)



Synopsis

The fourth installment of Bernard Cornwell's bestselling series chronicling the epic saga of the making of England, a *à la* Game of Thrones, but real (The Observer, London) "the basis for The Last Kingdom, the hit BBC America television series. The year is 885, and England is at peace, divided between the Danish kingdom to the north and the Saxon kingdom of Wessex in the south. Uhtred, the dispossessed son of a Northumbrian lord "warrior by instinct, Viking by nature" has finally settled down. He has land, a wife and two children, and a duty given to him by King Alfred to hold the frontier on the Thames. But then trouble stirs: a dead man has risen, and new Vikings have arrived to occupy the decayed Roman city of London. Their dream is to conquer Wessex, and to do it they need Uhtred's help. Alfred has other ideas. He wants Uhtred to expel the Viking raiders from London. Uhtred must weigh his oath to the king against the dangerous turning tide of shifting allegiances and deadly power struggles. And other storm clouds are gathering: Alfred's daughter is newly married, but by a cruel twist of fate, her very existence now threatens Alfred's kingdom. It is Uhtred "half Saxon, half Dane" whose uncertain loyalties must now decide England's future. Sword Song is Cornwell's finest work yet "vivid with period detail, this breathtaking adventure thoroughly reimagines one of the most fascinating tales in all of history "the birth of England" and breathes life into the brilliant king who made it possible: Alfred the Great.

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Customer Reviews

"...Nor doom one doom to your friend; another to your foe!" King Alfred in the Doom Book or Code of Alfred. Bernard Cornwell has given us another smashing tale of war and love from 9th century "England". The year is 885 CE and King Alfred of Wessex struggles to consolidate his control of the Saxon lands as defined in the treaty with Guthrum that divided the island between Saxon and the Danelaw. Cornwell's once again uses the narrative voice of Lord Uhtred of Bebbanburg as he reflects on his life in extreme old age (probably around 940 CE). Uhtred, now 25, is a Saxon raised as a Dane, pagan serving a most Christian king. Uhtred worships the old Norse gods and looks forward to long days of battle and nights of song, drink, and women at Odin's Death Hall (Valhalla). In Uhtred's eyes, Alfred worships the 'Christian nailed god', a god who fences men in with laws and rules so limiting that a man is not allowed to lust after his neighbor's wife! Alfred needs Uhtred because as Lincoln said of Grant, 'he fights' and exceedingly well. Alfred seeks to reclaim Mercian Lundene (London) and that battle forms the centerpiece of the first half of the book. The latter half centers on battles on the lower Temes (Thames) at Beamfleot (Benfleet), including some crashing marine assaults. Sword Song does not lack for ringing swords, shield walls, smashed skulls, splintered oars, battle fear and death - and also broken hearts. Uhtred requires assistance and Cornwell supplies with him familiar friends from earlier volumes: Steapa, the warrior priest Pyrlig, and most necessary of all, Uhtred's wife Gisela. Uhtred is a simple man, violent in battle, bound by his sense of honor, an esteemed and rightly feared warrior, and a loving and loved husband.

The Saxon Chronicles, panned from the outset as Cornwell trying to return to his British roots, has proven to be a juggernaut that cannot be stopped by bad and, in this case, off-base, press reviews. Book 4, 'Sword Song: The Battle for London', continues the story of Lord Uhtred, Saxon born, Dane raised, sworn man of King Alfred the Great. In this installment, Uhtred fights to take London back from the invading Northmen, the Vikings. Uhtred, who loves the Vikings far more than he cares for the Christian religion of the king he is continually sworn to serve, now must fight to take back London and to save Alfred, and his family, from defeat at the hands of the Norse invaders. This book, beginning in the year 885, probably doesn't see the end of 886 before the final page is turned. Unlike the first 3 offerings in this series, this book covers a very short period of time, perhaps 6-8

months. It is a fast moving, blood-letting adventure as Uhtred overtakes Danish controlled London whilst his estranged cousin, Aethelred, marries King Alfred's daughter, Aethelflaed, in search of a kingdom of his own. Uhtred is ordered to produce that kingdom as a gift to the newly married couple. Aethelflaed, a young woman whom Uhtred has known and loved as a daughter since she was a child, marries Uhtred's cousin, Aethelred, a man who Uhtred respects little and whom Uhtred, thanks to Alfred's order, owes much; beginning with the city of London. As we again hear Uhtred continue the story of his service to Alfred (All of the books in this series are told in first person), we find that a dead Dane skald (poet) is rising from his grave and announcing that Uhtred is to be King of Mercia.

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