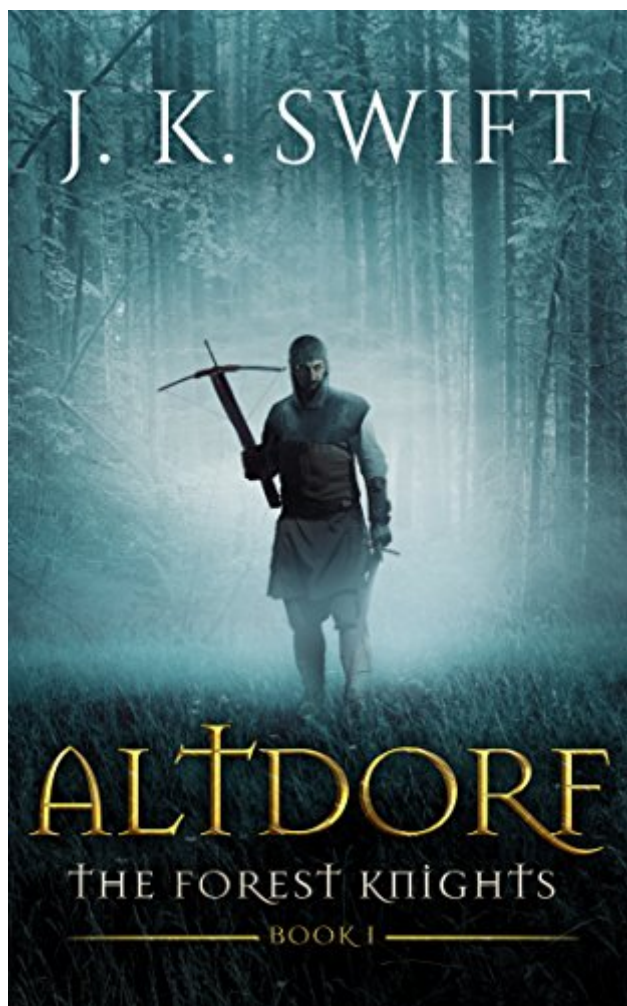


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ALTDORF: The Forest Knights: Book 1



Synopsis

A druid priestess enlists the help of an ex-Hospitaller warrior and a charismatic outlaw to fight Austrian tyranny in medieval Switzerland. A subtle blend of fantasy and history, Altdorf tells the events leading up to one of the greatest underdog stories of the medieval age, the Battle of Morgarten. "Re-imagining the William Tell legend--without William Tell." At the end of the thirteenth century, five hundred orphans and second sons are rounded up from villages in the Alpine countryside and sold to the Hospitaller Knights of St John. Trained to serve as Soldiers of Christ, they fight in eastern lands they know nothing about, for a cause they do not understand. Thomas Schwyzer, released from his vows by the Grandmaster of the Hospitallers, returns to the land of his birth a stranger. Once a leader of men, and captain of the Order's most famous war galley, he now settles into the simple life of a ferryman. He believes this new role to be God's reward for years of faithful service fighting the Infidel in Outremer. Seraina, considered a witch by most, a healer by some, is a young woman with a purpose. A Priestess of the Old Religion, and the last Druid disciple of the Helvetii Celts, she has been gifted by the Great Weave to see what others cannot. Her people need her guidance and protection now more than ever. For Duke Leopold of Habsburg, in his efforts to control the St. Gotthard Pass, builds a great Austrian fortress in Altdorf. Once finished, the Habsburg occupation will be complete, but the atrocities visited upon her people will have just begun. Set in medieval Switzerland, ALTDORF, a novel of The Forest Knights, is the first book in a two-book series.

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Customer Reviews

When I started reading this book, I wasn't overly impressed because it seemed like way too much time was spent creating the characters. My wife felt the same way later when she read the book. However, once we got past the introductions, and into the heart of the book, the reason for spending the extra time getting to know the characters became apparent. This book ended up being one of the best I've read in the past year. I ended up buying the sequel so I could find out how it ended.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book until I got to the nonexistent ending. I understand the desire to get the reader into the next book in a series, but to trick the reader into it by waiting to the stopping of the story to do it is very frustrating. Just tell me up front that I have to get two books, or more - that is just being honest. This is the second time I have been fooled by this trick and I don't appreciate it. So, reader beware. Again, I enjoyed the story, but know that you will need to get a second book to have a satisfying conclusion.

Altdorf is the first book of the Forest Knights duology and is set during Middle Ages in Europe. J.K. Swift has done a fantastic job creating an interesting world with compelling characters and a fascinating story. Perhaps more fantasy than history compared to other historical fiction novels, I still found it a fantastic read. If you're a fan of Angus Donald's Robin Hood series or Conn Iggulden's Emperor and Conqueror series then you'll be a fan of Swift's Forest Knights novels. Note: both books of the series (Altdorf & Morgarten) should be read together, i.e. one right after the other.

This was a hard book to review. It's well written, and the characters are interesting, but some of them are just so nasty! It's a tale set in Austria, when the Knights Hospitallers have been disbanded, and a group of them return to their homes in the countryside. Duke Leopold, a Hapsburg and a really not nice guy, essentially kidnaps locals and forces them to build a mighty fortress so he can

command the trade route that the fortress sits on. Commit a very small crime? Next thing you know, you are slave labor on the fortress. Not only is the pay not great, but the food and working conditions suck too. But all is not lost! A young man named Noll and his band of merry men are fighting the aristocrats for the freedom of their fellow man. And a young druid/healer sees the role Noll will play in changing the country they live in. Altdorf is the first in the series, and does a good job of setting the stage. I only hope the second book is a little cheerier!

The book is written in a conversational tone making it a delightful read. The dialogues are engaging and the fighting scenes are vividly described. The characters are lovable. Thomas is an ideal protagonist, quiet, hardworking, an accomplished healer, first-rate fighter and a loyal friend. Seraina is an admirable woman, generous, brave and compassionate. Noll is inspiring, stubborn and fearless. My favorite is Pirmin, Thomas' brother-at-arms. He is funny, sweet and endearing. Even Leopold is a well-developed character, mean and loathsome. I enjoyed this book a lot and I'm looking forward to reading the second book.

I enjoy historical novels. They provide an enjoyable way to revisit or learn about different cultures. This tale takes place when Christianity had a firm hold over all the kingdoms of Europe, & only a few of those who practice the old Druid religion; reverence of Mother Earth, remain. A chokehold on all of the advanced knowledge in Math & Science, from Asia & the Middle East, has been stifled for almost 200 years. Those who have studied this knowledge must hold it close lest they be accused of witchcraft. Out of hundreds of common orphan boys, rounded up & sold into the slavery of the church; four return home after twenty years of slaughtering men, women & children. Each believes that having served their masters with honor, in the Pope's first Navy, that they will have the freedom to choose, how they will live out the rest of their lives. Returning to their homeland, they seek to reconnect, if possible, to family who might be still alive. However, there is a political storm on the horizon as Kings prepare to war over power & profits; while the common man begins to question the rights these lords have over any of them.

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