In Dark Ages Britain, Arthur has been banished and Merlin has disappeared; a child-king sits unprotected on the throne and magic vies with religion for the souls of the people. Going far beyond the usual tales of romance and chivalry, The Winter King introduces us to an Arthur who is both utterly convincing and a true hero: a man of honor, loyalty, and amazing valor; a man who loves Guinevere more passionately than he should; a man whose life is at once tragic and triumphant. This magnificent novel will forever change the way the story of Arthur is told.

Forget knights in shining armor performing chivalrous deeds for damsels in distress; forget Camelot and massive castles with gleaming stone turrets and round tables. Bernard Cornwells The Winter King rips a bleak and gritty tale of the legendary Arthur, a realistic rendering of life in Britons 5th Century, a period of history described as The Dark Ages for good reason.

As always, Cornwells fiction based-in-history is well researched and fast moving. And while the evidence of Arthur is inconclusive, his faithful depiction of Britons warlords fighting each other, even while the dreaded Saxons occupy the eastern half of the island, is fact. The ancient Pagan religion vies with the emerging Christianity for mind share of the populace, while Druids and Christian Priests intermingle with no love lost. Its been a couple of generations since the Romans packed up and left, taking with them, it seems, any semblance of civilization, leaving the natives in awe of their knowledge. The once great Roman roads and cities have drifted into disrepair, and rival tribes raising armies and taxes to battle their brethren drain the land. In this war torn land, Cornwells Arthur returns from service across the sea in Armorica (France). Arthur is not a king, but a noble and loyal leader sworn to protect the infant and crippled King Mordred, heir to the recently deceased Uther Pendragon, Britons high king. While admittedly anachronisms, the author includes familiar figures from the legend: Merlin, Galahad, and Excalibur, but Lancelot is a cowardly fraud.
and Guinevere is a shallow and witchy seductress who inadvertently leads the courageous but naive Arthur into war that never should have been.

While it may take a few chapters to get into the swing of medieval people and place names, this is soon a rousing and bloody tale of politics and war told from the horror of hand-to-hand combat across a shield wall, of sorcerers, witches, priests, and wizards offering sacrifices, curses, and prayers to whichever Gods may be listening at the time. In short, a realistic first chapter in Cornwells trilogy of a truly tragic hero and the legend that, nearly fifteen centuries later, continues to captivate and fascinate.

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The Winter King (The Arthur Books #1) by Bernard Cornwell - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!