

[PDF] Cruel As The Grave: 2 (The Queen's Man)

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Description:

Readers of , Sharon Kay Penman's first book about young Justin de Quincy, will feel right at home as Justin--the bastard son of a bishop--continues to help England's aged Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine find out if her son Richard Lionheart is still alive in a German prison while trying to keep another son, John, from usurping the throne. Newcomers might take a few more pages, but Penman's skill at making the daily life of 1193 England so immediately accessible should soon have them equally comfortable. Why would a messenger grab his mantle but not his boots before jumping out of a Winchester bawdy house window on a mild April night? Because that's where a traitorous message is hidden. What would Justin and his friend Luke have for supper at a Thameside cookshop? "Pork-filled pie and ginger wafers, washed down with cider." Why was "breakfast the day's dubious meal,

not quite respectable?" Because, Penman tells us, "people were supposed to be able to satisfy themselves with a hearty dinner and a lighter supper." Details like these bond us quickly with distant ancestors--and make us wonder what particulars of our own lives will be fodder for future writers of historical fictions. --*Dick Adler*

From Publishers Weekly Penman, known for her historical novels, delivers a sequel to her first mystery, *The Queen's Man* (1996), an Edgar nominee for Best First Mystery Novel. Young Justin de Quincy, bastard son of a highly placed clergyman, toils as a special agent for Eleanor of Aquitaine. The dowager queen is attempting to hold the throne for her beloved son, Richard the Lionheart, held captive by the Holy Roman Emperor, against the machinations of her youngest son, John. A neighbor asks Justin to investigate the death of a young Welsh girl named Melangell. Two brothers from a wealthy mercantile family, nephews of Justin's neighbor, are the chief suspects in the murder. Justin balances snooping into the murder with his duties as the queen's agent, at one point risking his life to carry a message to John, besieged in Windsor Castle in his bid for the throne. Penman ably links two main story lines, the one about ordinary folk caught up in a drama of passion and power effectively echoed by the second, about aristocrats maneuvering for power at the highest levels. Despite the occasional anachronistic word or concept, Penman has a good feel for the period. This mystery may lack the depth and detail of Penman's longer historical novels, but it delivers atmosphere, plotting and nicely modulated characters.

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