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Eyrbyggja Saga (Classics)



PENGUIN CLASSICS

Eyrbyggja Saga

With an introduction by JAY WINTER

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Synopsis

An Icelandic saga which mixes realism with wild gothic imagination and history with eerie tales of hauntings. It dramatizes a 13th century view of the past, from the pagan anarchy of the Viking age to the settlement of Iceland, the coming of Christianity and the beginnings of organized society.

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Customer Reviews

Imagine a society in which someone gets really cheesed off about his neighbor and decides to bushwhack him, and maybe his whole family and his servants while they're at it. Forget the police, forget the army. There isn't any. If you're unhappy about this, you try to get your favorite chieftain to intervene. Of course you'd better have a whole bunch of armed followers to show that you mean business. You can bet the murderer will too as a matter of course. How you come off in this hypothetical society depends on how much influence you wield on your neighbors. If you're willing to go to bat for them -- and vice versa -- your power will increase. Unless, of course, someone decides to swing an axe at your hatrack in the meantime. This is Medieval Iceland in the 13th

century, when this and all the other great sagas were written. The EYRBYGGJA is one of the best of the sagas -- provided that you can handle all the genealogies. (Virtually all the people in the saga were real people; and many of today's Icelanders can trace their families back almost 1,000 years.) If there is any hero in the EYRBYGGJA, it is Snorri the Priest. He manages to maintain his power despite several threats that unfold during the several generations of this story. At times, as in the case of the feud with Arnkel, Snorri seems to be in the wrong. But he is consistently faithful to his friends and therefore has no problem raising the forces to back up his position. His life bridges the conversion to Christianity in the year 1000: Snorri proves his adaptability by going from a priest of Thor to an advocate of the new religion.

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