ForeWord Reviews

HISTORICAL

Edric the Wild: Sons of Mercia, Volume 3
Jayden Woods
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It is 1059 A.D., and Edric celebrates his sixteenth birthday by punching his rival square in the nose. Edric is an Anglo-Saxon, and Osbern FitzRichard is a hated Norman, living in Edric's land because Edward, the King of Engla-Lond, likes the Normans. But that does not mean Edric and his neighbors welcome the intrusion, and Edric hopes his small act of rebellion will serve to send a message.

Unfortunately for Edric, Osbern is far from mentally stable. He hears the voices of Ezekiel the Prophet and nefarious angels and is powerless to resist their instructions, no matter how vile, and the boyhood fight transforms to murder charges when one of Osbern's knights is found dead. Edric must defend himself at his trial before the shire reeve, with the likely outcome being his death, unless he can uncover convincing proof of his innocence. His investigation leads him to encounter a band of youthful outlaws, led by an unkempt young woman who intrigues him with her bravado. They all despise the Normans, and Edric is destined to become the leader of a doomed Anglo-Saxon rebellion once William-the-Bastard seizes the throne. But Edric's fate is also inexorably tied to the mad Osbern, with tragic results that lead Edric to destroy all he loves. Neither he nor his war-torn land will find peace lest he yields to King William, but that seems impossible for Edric the Wild, no matter the cost.

Jayden Woods has crafted an elaborate and compelling tale of the historical Edric and the England of a thousand years past, replete with a host of characters and the intricate politics of the day. She is a skilled writer, as when she describes Edric's estimation of Osbern as having "big, droopy lips and cruel, gleaming eyes. Most offensively, he was now making a clumsy attempt to dance to the beat of the harpist's jig." A young man sizing up his rival could very well have such feelings of contempt.

The book is part of the author's *Sons of Mercia* series, and *Edric the Wild* continues her intricate adventure stories of conflict both great and small, of love gained and lost, and of people with complex motives and fractured souls.

This novel will appeal to those readers who enjoy Robin Hood-type stories or historical

fiction in general, as well as those who like epic adventure tales.

Alan Couture