



# The Tournament of Blood

*Michael Jecks*

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## **The Tournament of Blood** Michael Jecks

It is 1322, and Lord Hugh de Courtenay's plan to host a tournament is a fantastic opportunity for the money-lenders of Oakhampton. When the defeated knights find themselves unable to pay the traditional ransoms to their captors, they will have only one course open to them—accruing interest by the hour. But when the most prominent money-lender, Benjamin Dudenay, is found brutally murdered a month before the festivities, Sir Baldwin Furnshill and Bailiff Simon Puttock find themselves on the trail of a most sinister killer. *The Tournament of Blood* is the eleventh tale in this superbly plotted medieval mystery series.

## **The Tournament of Blood Details**

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Author : Michael Jecks

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## Joan says

Jecks' writing continues to improve. Baldwin and Simon do much more detective work now instead of just wandering back and forth between suspects asking stupid questions. He also weaves a more complex story. I did take issue, however, with the idea that Lady Helen enjoyed the abuse she received from her violent husband. I hope he becomes more sensitive as the series develops.

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## A says

Tournament of blood is a mystery with no real mystery. The plot and characters are so muddled that it is impossible to find just one suspect. The inept bailiff Simon accuses everyone and only at the very end mostly through some blind twists is the murder revealed. Maybe if you have read other books in this series then this book might have some meaning, but as the first of these books I have read it will be the last. I slogged through to the end but wish this book would have never found its way to me.

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## Cindy says

Setting: England 1322

If you've ever seen a movie with two knights jousting in single combat, you might think you know all about medieval tournaments. You'd be wrong. That was just one event of the whole contest, and the contest itself was only a part of a huge series of events that took place. This book, which cites references for the curious, describes in detail everything that went into the pageantry of a real tournament. Our main character, Sir Baldwin, is a former Knight Templar. By this time in history, though, that order has been declared outlaw and excommunicate, which means that Sir Baldwin is living incognito in rural England, serving as a Keeper of the Peace. (Which is apparently like a sheriff, but not quite.)

Sir Baldwin and his wife are awaiting the birth of their first child, so talk of a tournament doesn't really interest them. Once the baby girl safely arrives, Baldwin is happy to escape for a few days and join friends. But almost as soon as he gets there, his friend the bailiff Simon Puttock gets into a quarrel with a builder about the stands for the event. Then the builder is found dead. And that's just the beginning.

Other bodies follow – the builder's partner, a squire or two. The event was supposed to be a chance for knights to improve their combat skills, for squires to impress and maybe earn a knighthood of their own, for merchants to make some money and for the common people to have a little hard-earned fun. Instead, it's turning into chaos.

I really enjoy this series. It's really long and very popular among historical mysteries. This one was bloodier than usual. By the end of the book (slight spoiler) I was surprised by the way justice was administered. It's a little different from the previous books I've read.

If you're interested in this author, I would recommend starting with the first one, *The Last Templar*. Some fascinating stuff about the religious order, about the whole issue of holy wars and politics. There's a lot of religion and politics in these books, so if you like your mysteries to have plenty of meaty historical details, you'd eat these up. I'd give this one 3.9 stars

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### **Carmen says**

This book was the most personal of the whole series. Simon and Sir Baldwin are actually threatened with death in this one. Simon is accused of murder, and Sir Baldwin defends him in mortal combat. Their friendship is sealed forever. And Hugh, the servant, kills for his master's daughter's honor. It really brings to life how you were considered guilty or innocent with no proof, only a battle of arms. How times have changed.

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### **Nancy Ellis says**

I enjoy this series so much! The books are not just entertaining, as well as educational regarding life in 14th Century England, but they are so full of delightful characters, "good" ones and "bad" ones, and situations that draw you in and make you feel as if you're there. This particular book is so full of both murderers and suspects, it's almost confusing trying to keep them all straight! A most enjoyable read!

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### **LJ says**

THE TOURNAMENT OF BLOOD (Hist Mys-Sir Baldwin Furnhill/Bailiff Simon Puttock-England-1322)

– G+

Jecks, Michael – 11th in series

Headline, 2001, UK Hardcover – ISBN: 0747272484

First Sentence: Benjamin Dudenay, known to most people as “Ben the moneylender”, was not popular, so his murder caused no distress except to his three outstanding creditors, whose demands for compensation were stolidly rejected by his widow, Maud.

Lord Hugh de Courtenay is hosting a tournament and Bailiff Simon Puttock has been tasked with organizing it. He is there at Oakhampton with his wife, Margaret, new baby, and rebellious daughter, Edith. Simon's friend, Sir Baldwin Furnhill, is also in attendance. They have more than the tournament to occupy them.

First there is the murder of Benjamin Dudenay, money-lender to many of the participants. Shortly thereafter, Wymond, the carpenter preparing the grounds for the tournament, is murdered. When Simon is accused, his and Baldwin must find who is behind the killings.

Jecks is such a wonderfully visual, descriptive writer. His sense of time and place add so much to the reading of his books. I also appreciate that Jecks, rather than present the fairy-tale version of the middle ages, provides a very realistic view of the life and people of the time. While chivalry and honor may have been the aspiration for knights, the reality was a far cry from it.

This book was interesting as you knew the motive from the beginning, but not the identity of the killer. There were multiple threads and characters under threat for various reasons. An interesting element was dealing with homosexuality in that Baldwin, a knight, former Templar and widely traveled, was much more tolerant than his friend Simon.

There were a lot of characters in this story and it would have been confusing if not for the Cast of Characters in the beginning of the book. The primary characters of Simon and Baldwin are ones I very much enjoy, particularly the banter between them. Jecks has done an excellent job of giving life progression and growth to both characters through the series.

The plot was interesting, the dialogue always well done, and the ending unexpected but appropriate for the period. I often think of Christie when I finish a book by Jecks in that both end of with a lot of bodies.

My one critical point is that there seemed to be a fair amount of redundancy. I assume this was done to make a point, but it did become tiresome. This was another solid book in a very well-done series.

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### **Michael Jecks says**

For me, this is a special book for me. I'd always wanted to show what knights were really like. They were not gentle, kindly souls who sought to do the decent thing. By and large they were avaricious, for money, but for women and power too, and much of the average knight's life was spent in training for battles, and many probably longed to put their training into force. This is the story of some authentic knights, all set about the glorious, exciting stage of a tournament at one of my favourite castles, Okehampton in Devon.

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### **Cece says**

What a dreadful title! Not a vampire book at all-a historical mystery.

It felt a little modern, with a teenage rebellion understory, but I suppose even then adolescent boys tried their lines out on girls and girls "fell in love" at the drop of a hat. Or lance. Excellent battle scenes, though. Certainly not all neat and tidy and Renaissance-Faire.

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### **Jim Corbiere says**

Finished reading " The tournament of Blood ". A Knights Templar mystery. I enjoyed it like the rest of the series. I learned quite a bit about what tournaments and jousts and the like were really like back then, not how they are portrayed in the media.

Lord Hugh de Courtenay was setting up a tournament for the knights under his command. He had commissioned Simon Puttock to work the details and make sure everything was done correctly and on time. A money-lender was murdered! Then two of the men who are well known for building the setups needed for the tournaments. Accusations fly because there are many suspects. Simon himself has been accused and must clear his name or be hanged himself. It is up to Simon and his friend Baldwin to once again solve murders by using their wits, piecing together stories and seeing the evidence.

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## Helle says

It's no secret that I like The Knights Templar series very much. The Tournament of Blood is no exception, it may even be one of the best. It provides a nice insight in the world of medieval tournaments, and the rules and organization surrounding them. The only disappointment was the end, which was a bit too soft for my liking.

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## Pedro Pascoe says

I'm going to admit right off the bat, I'm not a big fan of mysteries, historical or otherwise. I don't mind dipping my toe into the occasional historical mystery, and this was one of those indulgences. I recall reading an Ellis Peters medieval mystery ages ago and remembering it as being average. I quite enjoyed the two Stephen Saylor Roman mysteries that I'd read awhile back, and I'm actually quite fond of the Robert Van Gulik Judge Dee series. I picked up The Tournament of Blood a few months back, along with another in the series, more so for the medieval angle, particularly the insight into everyday life around tournaments I'd hoped to glean, than for the murder mystery. I tend to glaze over the clues and characters, and trust that the author will bring it home for me, so I'm quite a lazy mystery reader when it comes to it.

At first, possibly more so for this being my first Jecks book, I didn't feel it read as a particularly good immersive medieval read, but that did get better for me as I got further into the book. It chugged along ok without being an amazing read. It did strike me as a well researched topic jumping on an average tale with a bare-bones minimum mystery that seemed to have named the murderer right from the start. Characterisation was adequate enough to be able to distinguish characters without any compelling stand-outs or particularly memorable characters. Which, as stated, was probably fine for my immediate purposes of getting a bit of a feel about medieval English tournaments. I must admit to having been grateful for the suggested few books on the topic in the author's intro.

I must admit Jeck's description of the initial joust was probably the most immersive part of the book, giving you a knight's eye view on proceedings. But on the whole I don't think I'd be able to recommend this book to anyone without any interest in medieval England, or the Middle Ages in general.

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## Tex says

Don't start this thinking that you are getting a sanitized, Disney version of knights and squires and ladies. This is raw life in 1322 England when revenge calls a man to make hideous choices during a hastilude event. There are almost too many people to easily keep track. In a way, that adds to the atmosphere of the throng of people who could be the killer and how difficult it is to find him out. 3 1/2 stars

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## Susan says

First time the author has used the `f' word, totally unnecessary, 1st, spoken by a women it was out of her character, the anger of the carpenter using it was perhaps understandable but still I don't think they would have used this word in the 14th century

Excellent suspense mystery, couldn't put it down

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### **Bill Meehan says**

Jecks throws a bit of a curve ball in this edition. The normally level headed Simon, under the stress of organizing a tournament, acts like quite an a\$\$, and brings about the ire and accusations from many around him as a result. Thankfully, Baldwin, though he gets quite rattled, literally, at one point, keeps the ship moving calmly through the stormy seas of murder, teen lust, cowardliness, revenge, and trial by battle.

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### **Lindsey says**

I love all of Michael Jecks' medieval mystery series-they don't give anything away until the very end and provide a good insight into a particular aspect of medieval life (the jousting tournaments/history/terminology).

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