



Book of the Week

***The Evening and the Morning* by Ken Follett**

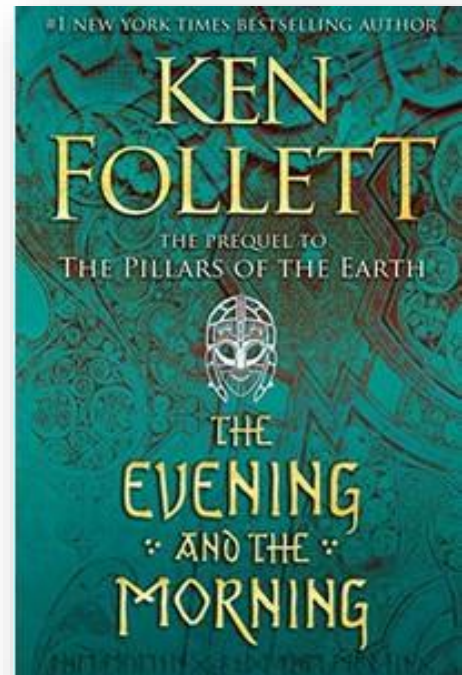
Book Review by Joy Odom

If, like me, you devoured Ken Follett's Kingsbridge series (*Pillars of the Earth*, *World Without End*, *A Column of Fire*), you are in for a major treat. Last year, Follett released a prequel to the series called *The Evening and the Morning*.

It begins in the year 997 with the main character, Edgar of Combe, sneaking away from his family home to run away with his married lover, Sunni. While he's waiting for her to arrive, he sees a Viking ship approaching the village. He hurries to the church to ring the bell and warn the villagers. Sunni and Edgar's father are both murdered in the raid and the village is burned, but many lives are saved thanks to Edgar's brave actions. Edgar's family's boatbuilding business is burned, but due to his heroic actions, he and his mother and two brothers are awarded a farm grant by their Ealdorman Wilwulf of Shiring in nearby Dreng's Crossing. Edgar has no desire to be a farmer but has no choice other than selling himself into slavery.

Meanwhile, Ealdorman Wilwulf is interested in making a deal with Count Hubert of Cherbourg in Normandy where the Vikings seem to be launching their raiding parties from. He sails there and attracts the romantic interest of the Count's beautiful daughter, Ragna. They become lovers and Ragna assumes he will ask for her hand in marriage, but he sails back to England without proposing. He later sends his brother, Bishop Wynstan of Shiring, back to Cherbourg to negotiate a marriage treaty. Ragna is delighted, but her parents are opposed. In the end, they give in and Ragna sails for England. Due to storms, she ends up landing at Dreng's Crossing where she meets Edgar and they become friends.

While Ragna travels on to Shiring and marriage to Wilwulf, which is initially very successful in spite of the scheming of her step-mother-in-law, Gytha, and her very evil step brothers-in-law, Bishop Wynstan and



Wigelm, Edgar and his family struggle to survive on the poor land they were granted. Dreng (after whom Dreng's Crossing is named) is cousin to Bishop Wynstan and is as evil and scheming as he is.

This sets the scene for Follett's classic theme of good versus evil, and no one does it better. Bishop Wynstan, Wigelm and Gytha do everything in their power, some of it unimaginably evil, to undermine Ragna and the possibility of her children following Wilwulf as Ealdorman. Ragna, Edgar and a monk named Aldred fight valiantly to expose their corruption.

The book is quite long and involved and, in an effort not to spoil any of the action for you, I will simply implore you to get it immediately and get started. You'll be glad you did.

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