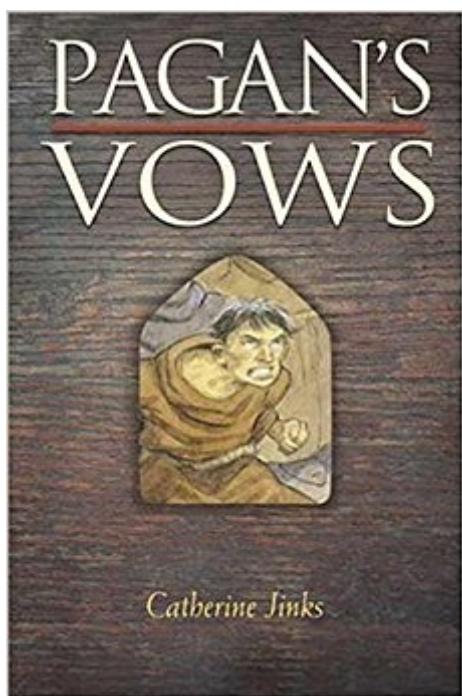


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Pagan's Vows: Book Three Of The Pagan Chronicles



Synopsis

The third of four books featuring Pagan's adventures, PAGAN'S VOWS is a medieval thriller that leads the reader through a web of mystery and intrigue — in the most unlikely of places. Having renounced the sword, Pagan and Lord Roland arrive at the Abbey of St. Martin to devote their lives to God. But no sooner are they outfitted in their novices' habits than Pagan suspects that something mysterious is going on. While the emotionally wrecked Roland tries to find peace in monastic life, the humility and blind obedience required of all novices do not come easily to the worldly Pagan — especially when he learns that the monastery is riddled with deceit and corruption. Someone is stealing alms, and Pagan is determined to find out who. But the truth may come at a price, one that could force him to reconsider his pious role — and his dedication to Roland.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 7-9
Life in a medieval monastery is rife with venomous characters and underhanded dealings in this unfocused series offering set in 1188. Squire Pagan Kidrouk and his master, Lord Roland, have entered the Abbey of St. Martin to train as monks. Life consists of memorizing Latin passages, praying, and staying out of trouble. Pagan begins to hear whispers of a bribery scheme involving the cover-up of a church official's pedophilia, and when he begins to unravel the threads of the scandal, he changes the course of not only his own life, but also the lives of several others. It's important to have read the two earlier books in order to put these characters

into context and understand their actions. The story rambles for quite awhile until it becomes more cohesive and eventful. The prose is somewhat choppy due to the use of short fragments rather than complete sentences. Also, Pagan's sarcastic thoughts are often placed in parentheses within these fragments, further interrupting the flow. The characters sometimes change their behaviors without explanation and some loose ends remain unresolved. Avi's *Crispin* (Hyperion, 2002) or Nancy Springer's *I Am Mordred* (Philomel, 1998) are better choices. ©Kristen Oravec, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Strongsville, OH Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 8-10. Two twelfth-century crusaders from the Holy Land, Lord Roland and his 17-year-old squire, Pagan, become novices at the Abbey of St. Martin in France. With his ready tongue, quick wits, and earthy vocabulary, the irrepressible Pagan seems an unlikely candidate for monastic life. Out of devotion to his master, he tries to conform to the order's many rules, but when he uncovers a deception in the monastery, he cannot ignore it. Before the end, his investigation has uncovered blackmail, led to a murder, and revealed that one of the monks has sexually abused children at the monastery. Pagan makes a lively protagonist--ill suited to his new role, yet bound by love, loyalty, and determination to stay with Roland. Jinks succeeds in creating a medieval setting that feels distinctly different from the modern world in spirit as well as in period details. This quirky, witty medieval novel, originally published in Australia, is the third in a series of four, but it stands on its own. Carolyn PhelanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Quite brilliant

Once again, Jinks opens a new world of medieval with her 3rd book in the series, *Pagan's Vows*. She so nicely inserts knowledge and information of the time period as she continues to engage the reader with an exciting, fast-paced plot line and lovable characters. I felt like I was learning stuff while I read for fun. What I really enjoyed was her vast knowledge of the religion practices of that time. It comes out a lot in this book, but she doesn't make it boring. On the contrary, Jinks manages to make the history pretty interesting and surprisingly relatable, to a point that I felt like I could understand the religious figures of that time. Most importantly, though, I loved Pagan's character. As always, Pagan's voice is strong, realistic, and wonderfully sarcastic. If you liked the first two books of the series, you'll enjoy this one as well, especially the growing relationship between Pagan and Roland. Even if you haven't read the others, it's still good to read on its own.

Pagan cannot believe that he is actually agreeing to devote his life to God, to accept life in a monastery. This is a lifestyle that he despises, possibly fears, and also one that he fled from when he was a boy. Though Pagan is often rude, disrespectful, impatient and irreverent, he is also loyal, and it is this loyalty that has made him decide to follow his master, Lord Roland, into a new life in the Abbey of St. Martin. After his experiences in a monastery school as a child, Pagan never dreamed that he would find himself pursuing the life of a monk, but he cannot bear to be separated from his distraught and emotionally lost master. Thus it is that Pagan has to subject himself to blind obedience, rules that he thinks are ludicrous, and a life full of discomfort and unpleasantness. Needless to say, Pagan is not a good fit for the monastic life and it is a struggle for him to keep his temper, to stay out of trouble, and to try to adjust. Pagan does try his best, for Roland's sake, but all his efforts seem to be for naught when he starts looking into a little mystery that is floating about the Abbey. Pagan discovers that beneath the veneer of respectability, piety and humility lies a complex tangle made up of lies, deceit and greed. Pagan may not be the most honest person in the world, but this kind of dirty hypocrisy upsets him enough that he will not stop seeking out the truth even when his very life is threatened. It would seem that someone very high up in the monastic hierarchy guides the conspiracy, and Pagan needs to be wary of what he says and does. One cannot help but have a strong feeling of pity for Pagan. Here is a young man who could never be a monk, but for the love of a friend, he will put himself through a great ordeal --- accepting punishments, bullying, strenuous work, isolation and much more --- all for the sake of someone else. It is shocking to discover how difficult monastic life could be and how appalling the conditions often were. Certainly Pagan's experience puts a new light on the religious life in the times of the Crusades. Entertaining, moving, skillfully researched, shocking at times, and very gripping, this third book in the Pagan Chronicles series is sure to delight readers who enjoy historical fiction. --- Reviewed by Marya Jansen-Gruber, editor of Through The Looking Glass Children's Book Review [...]

(This review is for the paperback version)"Monks, monk, monks. Monks everywhere, as far as the eye can see. Rows and rows of them, crammed together on their chapter-house seats like bats in a cave. Like crows around a corpse. The rustle of their black woollen sleeves, as they point and nudge and whisper. The coughing and gurgling of old men with clogged lungs."Lord Roland and his squire Pagan, fresh from battle in the Crusades, have renounced the sword and are seeking to become novice monks at the Abbey of St Martin. Pagan isn't sure he wants to be a monk and soon finds that neither humility nor blind obedience comes easily to him, but he is equally sure he doesn't

want to leave his beloved master. He also discovers that even a supposedly holy place can swarm with danger and corruption. Pagan himself tells the story, writing in the present tense, which usually gives me trouble. I normally find it both stilted and unnatural. However, for this story it feels absolutely right. Although I can imagine that many young readers might take a while to become accustomed to Catherine Jinks's spare, distinctive style, I took to it (and her warm, wry humour) straight away. As can be seen from the above quote (the book's first paragraph) her writing abounds in unfinished sentences, which most writers normally use sparingly. But here the oft-used effect serves to underline Pagan's irreverence, which is my only quibble. While I personally found this trait highly entertaining (indeed, almost endearing) I have difficulty believing that someone raised in a monastery in those days would be quite so irreverent, especially at only 17 years of age. One of his favourite expletives is "Christ in a cream cheese sauce", which would certainly be accounted as blasphemous in those days. But what does it matter when Jinks provides such an entertaining, "unputdownable" read? I'm very pleased to learn that the Pagan books are to be republished, though 5 January 2004 (the projected date for the first book, Pagan's Crusade) seems rather a long wait.

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