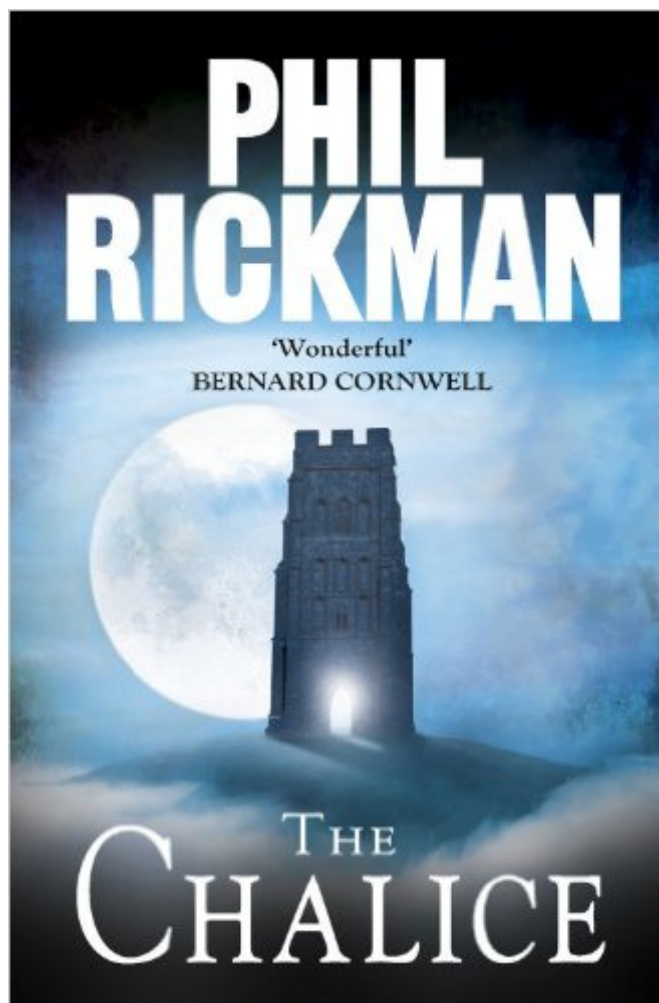


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The Chalice (Phil Rickman Standalone)



Synopsis

Glastonbury Tor is the legendary resting place of the Holy Grail, but something else also rests beneath the hill. Glastonbury, legendary resting place of the Holy Grail, is a mysterious and haunting town. But when plump, dizzy Diane Ffitch returns home, it's with a sense of deep unease—and not only about her aristocratic family's reaction to her broken engagement and her New Age companions. Plans for a new motorway have intensified the old bitterness between the local people and the "pilgrims," so already the sacred air is soured. And, as the town becomes increasingly split by violence and death, Diane, local bookseller Juanita Carey, and the writer Joe Powys must now face up to the worst of all possibilities: the existence of an anti-Grail—the dark chalice.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've read the five mysteries in Phil Rickman's Anglican priest/exorcist Merrily Watkins series and have been working my way through his earlier horror novels. "The Chalice" subtitled "A Glastonbury ghost story" is one of them, and is a sort of sequel to his 'Crybbe' novels--something I've noticed about this author is that when he develops a good character, he doesn't waste him or her on just one book. Joe Powys, Crybbe's occult author and his three-legged dog, Arnold play important roles in "The Chalice." Rickman's characters are so appealing that I got really, really angry when he pretended to kill off one of my favorites. His good guys are always laid-back, slightly cynical in spite of the supernatural fireworks going off around them, and they are unremittingly kind to animals and lost souls. They keep plugging away on the side of the angels, in spite of the most horrific

punishment, and Rickman doesn't let them escape from evil by trotting into a church or waving a cross. His bad guys are sadistic jerks, usually with a whole busload of power from beyond the grave. And speaking of buses, if a long black spray-painted vehicle with a rusty grill shows up in your vicinity, run like hell. Forget the Black Chalice. It was the Black Bus that frightened me the most in this story. The author weaves his legend of the Chalice from two separate strands: the legend of the Holy Grail that was brought by Joseph of Arimathea to the mystic Isle of Avalon (Glastonbury); and the Celtic tradition of a cup that was sacred to the gods of the underworld, or the Land Beneath the Waves. It's Christians - 10, Celts - 0 in this novel, although Rickman is kinder to pagans in his other stories. And come to think of it, the professed Christians (the ones who actually go to church) don't fare too well here, either. They are represented by a scatty, New Age bishop who is trying to reconcile his Church with the pagans, and a farmer who turns to Jesus when the Black Bus terrorizes his lower forty. The only really likeable Christian was hanged, drawn and quartered during the reign of Henry VIII, although he too has a role to play, along with the chalice that captured his last drops of blood. Glastonbury becomes a spiritual battlefield of Christians versus pagans, land-owners versus 'travellers,' old established hippies versus New Age mystics, a handful of animal rights activists to mix things up with everyone, and of course Good versus Evil. Rickman juggles his multiple themes in such a way that you'll want to keep on reading and rooting for the good guys. At least a few of them remain standing by novel's end.

I recently discovered Phil Rickman's adolescent books, 'Marco's Pendulum' and 'Marco and the Blade of Night', which had originally been published under a pseudonym. As I am a Rickman addict, of course I had to read them too. I discovered that they were sequels to 'The Chalice', which was the very first Rickman book that I had read nearly 20 years ago, so of course I had to re-read it, and was strongly reminded why I became a Rickman addict in the first place. I am now re-reading all of his backlist, and looking forward to the next Merrily Watkins book which is due in November. (Yes, I have pre-ordered it!) No-one does the mixture of myth, the supernatural, the fight between good and evil, and real suspense, the way Rickman does.

Diane Ffitch is being called back to the Glastonbury Tor. She sees it in visions, in objects transforming in front of her eyes into the Tor. The pull is strong enough that she quits her job, leaves her fianc  and tags along with a group of New Agers heading for Glastonbury -- but with a sense of dread. Joe Powys, an occult author, is having strange experiences of his own. Books are throwing themselves from a bookshelf, with one in particular seeming to be at the center: "A Glastonbury

Romance." Reluctantly, he travels to Glastonbury on the pretext of writing a book but soon finds out that dark forces are stirring in the town. He hears the tales of a dark chalice -- an anti-Holy Grail -- and begins to wonder just what role Diane has to play in this. Another fine work from Phil Rickman. The characters are all interesting and well-developed. Plus, he gives enough background information on the people and the area's history that I was enthralled with the story. A definite page-turner.

My all-time favorite Phil Rickman novel (due to the subject matter) is 'December' which predates this title. "The Chalice is up to Rickman's usual plot complexities and darkly creepy development and I recommend it to anyone who likes dark novels of suspense or gothic creepiness. For those who have not read any Rickman titles he is nowadays better known for a series of titles featuring "Merrily Watkins" and these are great books but his earlier titles are more supernatural, based in the country of the Welsh./English border-rich with Welsh myth based ideas and wonderfully modern takes on them as well. HE NEVER FAILS TO GIVE ME GOOSEBUMPS or send me around the house to turn on a light or two.

I love Phil Rickman! He writes about Pagans, Christians, and New Age people who all have to deal with the horror and hatred that goes with fascism. Power goes to those who desperately want it and are willing to pay, with their humanity and soul. This is Rickman's message: Never allow any one "group" to be in (close to) absolute power. D Trump, are you listening? Dion Fortune: I love you!

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