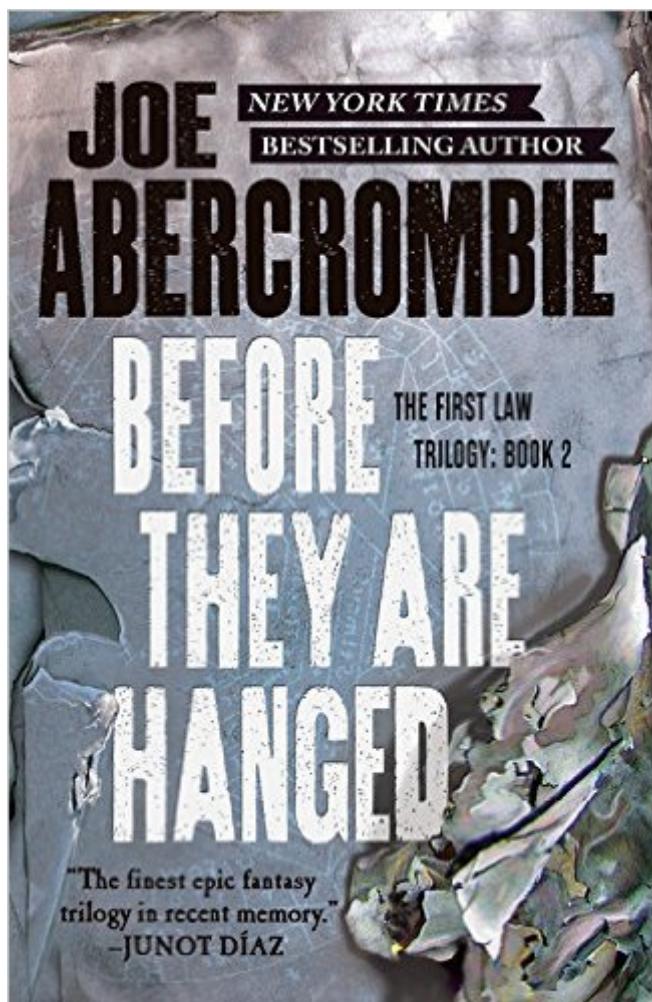


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# Before They Are Hanged (The First Law)



## Synopsis

The second novel in the wildly popular First Law Trilogy from New York Times bestseller Joe Abercrombie. Superior Glokta has a problem. How do you defend a city surrounded by enemies and riddled with traitors, when your allies can by no means be trusted, and your predecessor vanished without a trace? It's enough to make a torturer want to run -- if he could even walk without a stick. Northmen have spilled over the border of Angland and are spreading fire and death across the frozen country. Crown Prince Ladisla is poised to drive them back and win undying glory. There is only one problem -- he commands the worst-armed, worst-trained, worst-led army in the world. And Bayaz, the First of the Magi, is leading a party of bold adventurers on a perilous mission through the ruins of the past. The most hated woman in the South, the most feared man in the North, and the most selfish boy in the Union make a strange alliance, but a deadly one. They might even stand a chance of saving mankind from the Eaters -- if they didn't hate each other quite so much. Ancient secrets will be uncovered. Bloody battles will be won and lost. Bitter enemies will be forgiven -- but not before they are hanged. First Law TrilogyThe Blade ItselfBefore They Are HangedLast Argument of KingsFor more from Joe Abercrombie, check out:Novels in the First Law worldBest Served ColdThe HeroesRed Country

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm an avid reader - in fiction, specializing in science fiction and fantasy. However, while I tend to try to find the more cerebral, cutting-edge or challenging SF, I've often treated fantasy as a guilty

pleasure. Not so with *Before They Are Hanged* or its predecessor, *The Blade Itself*. There is no escapism here, no dialog that would be found only at the Elizabethan court. This is rough-and-tumble fantasy, only earning the label because there are swords and sorcery. And this sequel is not fluff or a fond return. Abercrombie, if anything, has fit 1000 pages of story into one-half of that, as the architect of an amazing tale that builds on the solid foundation of the first novel. The story is tight, exceedingly well-written, and has one of the most realistic and believable (if dark) worlds I've ever seen created. The same goes for the characters. There are no knights-in-shining armor. If you prefer flawless heroes and damsels in distress, this book is not for you. However, if you want a well-written story full of insights into human nature, the world at large, and the art of storytelling, I can think of few other books that deliver like this one has. These books have the capacity to redefine and revolutionize the fantasy genre. Abercrombie, while young, is an amazing and innovative writer that I look forward to reading more of in the future.

"*Before They Are Hanged*" is the second volume in the First Law Series by promising young British writer Joe Abercrombie. The first novel, the wonderful "*The Blade Itself*" was a fantastic introduction to a series featuring brutal, hard-boiled characters, excessive profane language and copious amounts of violence. It was dark fantasy at its best--nasty and brutish. Well I am here to say that "*Before They Are Hanged*" is an even bigger, meaner and better story as things get kicked up here to another gear. Inquisitor Glokta and the barbarian, Logen "*The Bloody Nine*" Ninefingers are anti-heroes for the ages. Abercrombie turns all of his characters, who are filled with violence, maliciousness and machinations, into guilty pleasures. You know you should feel shocked and offended at some of the things the characters say or do, but it is just too damn hard not to enjoy it. While it may be good to be the King, it is also good to be bad. As the novel begins, the Union finds itself at war on its Northern front against Bethod and his massive horde of battle-tested barbarians. Impending war with the Gurkish also threatens the southern city of Dagoska. Inquisitor Glokta has been dispatched to Dagoska to solve the mysterious disappearance of the previous Inquisitor of Dagoska. He finds he must overcome the corrupt and incompetent leadership of the city in order to achieve his objective, and defend the city from the impending Gurkish attack. Deadly backroom political intrigue ensues as forces within and without battle for their own agendas, causing Glokta to use his wits in order to keep control. Meanwhile operating under his own agenda, the wizard, Bayaz, has gathered a party of his own, the mindless and arrogant Union officer, Jezal dan Luthar, the mysterious hate-filled Ferro Maljinn, and Logen. They have set out to recover an apocalyptic artifact from the past which Bayaz covets, the Seed. This device supposedly contains a destructive force so

powerful and otherworldly that it will be able to save the Union from the invasions of both the Gurkish and the North. But will Bayaz' group be able to recover the Seed and harness its power in time to save the Union? Like "The Blade Itself", Abercrombie's writing here is hard-edged and relentless. Like a nail-chewing, steroid-popping beast of a fantasy novel, the story's pace flies at breakneck speeds, flexing its considerable muscles during well-conceived battle sequences. The action pounds, the dialogue cracks, and the humor oozes through, combining into one of the most enjoyable reading experiences of the year. I find that I cannot wait for the conclusion. Last Word: Better than the first novel, "Before They Are Hanged" is a fast-paced, gritty bit of brutality and fantasy that grabs you and doesn't let go. Dark, well-conceived and enjoyable, this is one not to be missed.

Before They Are Hanged by Joe Abercrombie is the second book in the First Law trilogy, the first being *The Blade Itself* (The First Law: Book One). The third, and final book, *Last Argument of Kings* is scheduled for release in the United States in September, 2008. The First Law Trilogy is not your run of the mill, cliché-ridden fantasy series. It is dark, twisted, and unlike most of the 'traditional' fantasy books being published. The plot, or should I say plots, of this book pick up right after *The Blade Itself*. There are three separate plots, that center on separate characters or a group of characters. There is the plotline of a character trying to hold a city under siege and the measures he undertakes to keep the city from falling. There is a plot revolving around a group of characters seeking an artifact to aid them in a greater task, I won't say anymore about that because of spoilers. Lastly, there is a plot about the pending invasion by the Northmen and how the Union soldiers can combat the attack. These are the three plot lines that essentially tie the book together, however, there are countless subplots woven into the book as well. There is a great deal of political underpinnings in two of the three plot lines as well as betrayal and other manners of one-up man ship between a couple characters. The characters in this novel are essentially the same characters that were present in the first novel. Some of the returning characters are Glokta, Logen Ninefingers, Bayaz, Ferro, Jezal, and Colonel West among others. They are all complex characters and most, if not all, go through a great deal of character development in this novel. One of my complaints of the previous novel was that a couple characters came across as forced or contrived. That notion never crossed my mind with this novel. Rather, a couple of the characters go through quite an overall transformation due to their ordeals, such as West and Jezal. The characters in this book are top notch, they are gritty, rough, crass and real. If you are looking for light, happy characters that you can laugh with, look at a different book. I was rather impressed by the amount of character

development in this book. Granted, some characters do not get a lot of character progression, but they all grow in some way or another. Whether it is a character realizing something about themselves due to an injury the incur or a character growing a backbone, to a character beginning to show a softer side of themselves to a select few people. In *The Blade Itself*, it seemed Mr. Abercrombie had a few, shall we say growing pains. However, in this novel, there seems to be an exponential growth in both his writing and his overall story. If this type of growth continues with the next novel (and any future stories after that) I think readers will be more than pleased. The only criticism I have of this novel is there is one particular character, Glotka, who has a great deal of what can only be described as internal dialogue. This holds true to the first book as well, but when I read the internal dialogue it just doesn't work very well for me. This may be a personal bias of mine, since I do not care for first person books. Some of the internal dialogue is fine, but there are points in the novel where it seems over used. Where *The Blade Itself* seemed like a setup for future events, in *Before They Are Hanged* events occur at almost a frenetic pace leaving the reader little time to stop and catch their breath. Mr. Abercrombie seems to almost dare the reader to try and put down the book. The prose in this novel seems more refined and polished. The flow and pacing seem more natural and, at least to me, seemed easier to grasp and understand. This could very well be due to having the first novel under my belt already. The First Law trilogy seems to be taking on the mantel of a fine painting. Taken piece by piece each book is solid. However, taken as a whole, as the entire trilogy, the true beauty of this work begins to stand out. Overall, I think this is a marked improvement over the first novel's minor flaws. If you are a fan of the fantasy genre and are seeking a solid adult fantasy novel, then by all means look no further than this trilogy. Although, you really need to start with the first book if you are to understand the events in this book. With *Before They Are Hanged*, Mr. Abercrombie has established himself as one of the new voices of the fantasy genre that will be around for many years to come. I can easily see myself recommending this trilogy to many people in the future.

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