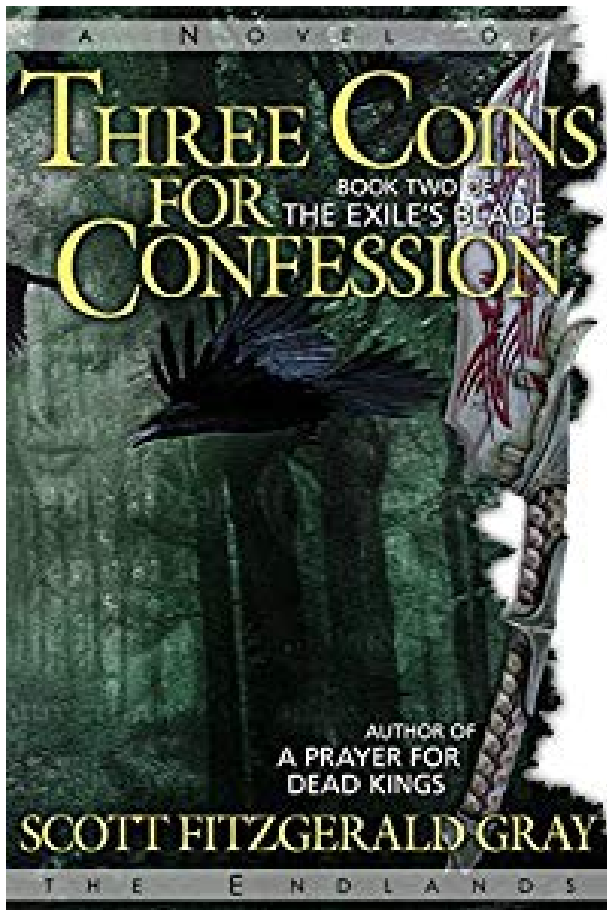


Three Coins for Confession (The Exile's Blade Book 2)



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A year and a half has passed since the dark road that took Chriani across the Clearwater Way and back, at the side of the princess he once loved. Despite the anger and ambivalence to duty that once held him back, rank and commission have taken him to the frontier of the Greatwood and riding with the rangers, Kathlan at his side to help him focus on the challenges of a soldier's life. But when Chriani finds himself targeted by Ilvani hunters tied to an ancient prophecy that might upset the balance of power in the Ilmar, it forces him back to the unresolved pact that binds him to the Prince High Chanist — and down a new road whose secrets might destroy the life Chriani and Kathlan hope to build. ••• From behind him came a low hiss. A sharp exhalation, a sound of fury and frustration that carried even over the thud of hoofbeats and the horses' rasping breath. "Laóith irnash!" The hissing turned to words that rang out behind him. One of the Ilvani, his voice twisted by rage as he screamed an oath. We hunt the vile, we hunt the hateful. We hunt the Ilmari. The Valnirata's hatred of the Ilmari and their homelands ran deep, and gave their epithet laóith a dozen subtle meanings. Chriani didn't understand the warrior as he shouted again, though. "Lóech arnala irch niir! Lóech niir!" He risked a look behind him. The Ilvani warriors always fought in silence. No battle cries, no orders ever heard.

He saw the rider three lengths back, snaking through the thinning screen of trees. His hair was long streaks of grey and gold, tied tight and flowing fast behind him, his eyes flashing molten gold in the half-light. His

leather was cut away at the shoulder for ease of shooting, his bow up and a black arrow at the string, set dead on Chriani. On the wrist of the Ilvani's bow arm, a blood-red light was flaring. "Chriani irnash! Lóech arnala irch niir!" It happened slowly, as it always did. Chriani heard his name hang across the gulf of shadow and the screen of leaves that wrapped them both.

His name, shouted by an Ilvani warrior he'd never seen before. He felt his reflexes slow, felt a chill twist through him as the black arrow snapped from the bow...