

## The Archer Who Shot Himself in the Back: Murder Most Pious

Richard Burnett Carter



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The Archer Who Shot Himself in the Back: Murder Most Pious Richard Burnett Carter "The Archer Who Shot Himself in the Back," (69,408 words; 191pages). It begins with a random murder, ordered by an insane "Prophet," interrupting the honeymoon of a pair of newly retired Military Intelligence operatives, and ends with the "Prophet" being defeated in a polo match against the new bride. "The Archer" story concerns the events of the first three months after good guys John Horn and Francesca Flaminare are married. It opens on the (fictional) island of d'Oc located in the English Channel which, like the (really existent) island, Sark, is a left-over from the time when France claimed possession of England and the Channel islands. Francesca inherits a manor house through her father, and the couple moves there to enjoy life together. Like Sark, d'Oc is politically independent and is managed by members of the hereditary line reaching back to French times-presently knows as "The Dame of Sark." In this fictional case, the Dame of d'Oc is one Dame Primrose, and the action begins with a dispute over the ownership of a medieval castle on a small island just off the coast of d'Oc. The dispute concerns who is the proprietor of the castle? On the one hand, there is an insane cousin of Dame Primrose, one Giles Grimsby, who claims to be a descendent of Ishmael, one of the sons of the patriarch, Abraham. Giles claims that he is the lawful owner of the castle, and inhabits it with a band of followers who look to him as a prophet who is going to unite Christians and Muslims under his rule. In the course of his travels to collect money and disciples, he kills several orthodox Christians who loudly decry his mission as heretical madness. On the other hand, there exists, to this day, a band of Arabs (I have given them blue-eyes for effect) who are descended from a regiment of Crusaders whose lord went over to the side of the Arabs, and, as proof of his conversion, willed the castle to the descendents of his regiment. In this story, a Sheik of the tribe sends his son to infiltrate Giles' group to find out what is going on at the castle, and, when he falls under suspicion, Giles has him perform a feat of archery which the Crusaders learned from their foes-namely, to shoot an arrow into the air so that it lands within a few feet of the archer. (This permitted the archer to stand on one side of a wall and kill men on the immediate other side.) When the Sheik's son shoots the arrow into the air, Giles' men instantly drag him to a bale of hay just in front of him and he is killed by his own arrow as it returns. Since only members of that tribe still know how to do this, Giles knows who the young man was and why he was there. The Sheik learns of the murder and comes to the island to avenge it.

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