**Assassin's Quest**

Final installment--each entry independently intelligible--of Hobb's stunning fantasy trilogy (Royal Assassin, 1996; Assassin's Apprentice, 1995) about the beleaguered Six Duchies and their Farseer kings. Months ago, King Verity vanished into the far mountains in search of the semi-mythical Elderlings, whose help he must have in order to defeat the rampaging Red Ship Raiders, leaving his murderous, venal, and insanely ambitious brother, Prince Regal, to dispose of Verity's last few loyalists at his leisure--including narrator, spy, and assassin FitzChivalry. Poor Fitz, unable to contact his beloved Molly (she thinks he's dead) and daughter (by Molly) for fear of exposing them to Regal's attentions, uses his magic Skill to locate Verity and receives an imperious summons: ``COME TO ME!'' So, abandoning his plan to assassinate Regal, Fitz enters the mountains with a small band of helpers. Eventually, having evaded Regal's minions, Fitz comes upon Verity Skill-carving a huge dragon out of black rock; nearby stand other lifelike dragon-sculptures that, to Fitz's animal-magic Wit, seem somehow alive. Are these eerie sculptures what remain of the Elderlings? Yet, for all his Skill, Verity cannot bring the dragons to life; and soon Regal will arrive with his armies and his Skilled coterie. An enthralling conclusion to this superb trilogy, displaying an exceptional combination of originality, magic, adventure, character, and drama. -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*