



The Morning Gift

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In twelfth-century England, Matilda de Risle Dugesey, receives a gift from her new husband--a wartime hideaway in the Fens--from which she must fight for her land and her own life.

The Morning Gift Details

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From Reader Review The Morning Gift for online ebook

Corrina says

I have just discovered Diana Norman/Ariana Franklin, and was so sad to find out that she passed away recently. If you are a historical fiction reader, especially Medieval England, you will love her. Wonderful characters, brutally honest representation of what all people at that time had to endure in order to survive. Set near the time period of Pillars of the Earth, so very interesting to compare what the authors placed in their stories. Highly recommend her writing

Carol says

This is my favorite kind of historical fiction. It is densely researched, with such deep and specific references, that reading it is like submerging into the period. (Don't miss the Squeaking Toad!) And then, the story is wonderful.

Set against the background of the nearly farcical war between King Stephen and the Empress Maud over who will rule England after Henry I dies, the 14-year old heir Matilda is married off to one man after another, defending her property, her person, and her son by means of the morning gift given her by her first husband.

The description of the fens in all seasons, is memorable. The author's skill at drawing characters is also a joy. I found the story entertaining, interesting, and satisfying.

Decades ago, I found this author's book Fitzempres's Law in the public library in the neighborhood of NYC where I was staying while a show of mine was in pre-production, and then rehearsal. I read it a couple of times over the six months I was there, and though I never found it again, I've never forgotten it.

Once Amazon came into being, I looked for it. Someday perhaps the price will come down. After looking wistfully at the price again recently, I hunted it up in the library system and was delighted to find it there. And on Goodreads I was even more delighted to find that this author had written many more books, and still more under another name! Ecstasy!

The Morning Gift was the first one to arrive, and it is every bit as excellent as I remember Fitzempres's Law being. Can't wait for the next one!

Annie Leonard says

I read this years ago, and it has always stayed with me. Romantic, but unexpected. Probably hard to find by now, but well worth it!

Rachel says

The Morning Gift is a great look at life in twelfth-century England. It is the story of the Norman lady Matilda of Risle, who we meet living a life typical of noblewomen of her day. As England enters a period of war and turmoil, however, she goes through times of joy and ease as well as times of sorrow and strife as her life goes down paths she never could have imagined.

The characters are all very interesting, both alone and, particularly, in their interactions with one another, and they are also very real. The main character, for instance, is not always a very nice person, but she is so believable and her thoughts and feelings so human, that she is a likeable and sympathetic character who can make the reader want to continue the story.

This book shows us daily life in the 1100s, from what clothing nobles wore and what they ate to the chores of peasants and villeins to the technologies and rules of conduct of medieval warfare. It gives us details about life in the courts of King Stephen of England and of the Empress Matilda in Normandy and life in the fens of eastern England. It tells about the political scheming going on among the aspirants for the crown. And it shares with us the story of people trying to survive and perhaps find happiness and purpose for themselves.

Plus, the young Fitzempress, the future Henry II, was brilliant!

Kathy Sebesta says

Not as good as her first book (Fitzempress) but set in the same general time. The story didn't do much for me, but if you're at all interested in English history in the time of Stephen and Matilda (known as the time "When Christ and his saints slept" because of the essential decimation of the island and its people by rulers who should've just been taken out and shot), this is a pretty good rendition.

MB (What she read) says

A treat!

VMom says

This could be considered a prequel to the Mistress of the Art of Death (that she writes as Arianna Franklin).

Speaking of MotAoD, I only now realized that that series is lighthearted compared to her other books. So far all her other main characters undergo harrowing experiences. I am tempted to put up some sort of tortured-characters shelf for them.

Back to The Morning Gift, this is excellent. I love that Matilda is firmly a woman of her times, no anachronistic behavior, and yet her personality allows her to grow and change as she meets the challenges of surviving war-torn England.

Lucy Crowe says

Each time I think I have finished reading this incredible author's work, I find another novel, and I zip through it in days - completely enchanted, utterly enthralled, and saddened, all over again by her death. She should have lived forever; there exists no other writer quite like her. Norma/Franklin's stories are epic tales of war, sieges, kings and queens and common men and women in incredible circumstances. She penned huge adventures and the most exquisite, tender, unexpected romances.

"The Morning Gift" tells the tale of 12th century England and Matilda deRisle, a girl of considerable strengths and capabilities who inherits, from her first, short-lived marriage, a hideaway in the Fens. War is a constant backdrop to Matilda's life - while it rages, she is widowed, bears a son and learns to love her watery existence in her little-seen and barely-noted corner of the world. But being a landowner has its price, as Matilda is much sought-after - and, in the 12th century, she is seen as property. Political shifts land her in a nightmarish marriage to a brutal man, but her survival story is incredible. As is the ending of this novel. If you haven't read this author, start today!!

Susie says

Henry II is so charming, better than Peter O'Toole.

Rachel says

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Wanda says

A historical fiction set during the struggle for the English throne in the 12th century. It is told through the life of an English noble woman. The book is slow in some parts but a reliable account of life during this time.

She introduces Henry II as a young lad who is eager to assume the role of military leader as well as king. King Stephen's character is also developed and shows a compassionate side that ultimately becomes a weakness in the game of kingship. An enjoyable book especially for someone who is a fan of this time period.

Julia Hughes says

Set in the Stephen/Matilda civil war of the early middle ages, I've given this five stars simply because it's one of my favourite books of all time. Strange really, because the first time I read it I didn't like the heroine at all. She's full of her own self importance and views people in terms of how they can benefit her. I have to admit I abandoned it halfway through. Time passed, and I had nothing to read (pre kindle & pre internet m'dears - back in the dark ages myself) and I picked it up again out of boredom.

Perserving a little more I discovered that due to the malstrom raging around her, Matilda was being thrown back on her own resources, although she'd always been a strong character from somewhere she was forced to find an even stronger resolve in order to protect her son. As England sinks deeper into civil war life becomes even more perilous and Matilda discovers that those she's previously dismissed as low life peasants are capable of the same kind of courage she associates with nobility.

The author perfectly conjures up the harshness of England's darkest period, a time when 'Christ and all His Saints Slept' and takes us into the mindset of mediavel characters. I grew to admire and like Matilda, even more so for all her faults. She'd be a good friend to have at your back in bad times, as she eventually demonstrates in this novel.
