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Susan Fraser King

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Lady Gruadh, called Rue, is the last female descendant of Scotland's most royal line. Married to a powerful northern lord, she is widowed while still carrying his child and forced to marry her husband's murderer: a rising war-lord named Macbeth. Encountering danger from Vikings, Saxons, and treacherous Scottish lords, Rue begins to respect the man she once despised—and then realizes that Macbeth's complex ambitions extend beyond the borders of the vast northern region. Among the powerful warlords and their steel-games, only Macbeth can unite Scotland—and his wife's royal blood is the key to his ultimate success.

Determined to protect her small son and a proud legacy of warrior kings and strong women, Rue invokes the ancient wisdom and secret practices of her female ancestors as she strives to hold her own in a warrior society. Finally, side by side as the last Celtic king and queen of Scotland, she and Macbeth must face the gathering storm brought on by their combined destiny.

Lady Macbeth Details

Date : Published February 12th 2008 by Crown (first published January 1st 2008)

ISBN :

Author : Susan Fraser King

Format : Kindle Edition 370 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Cultural, Scotland, Literature, 11th Century

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From Reader Review Lady Macbeth for online ebook

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

Audio #136

Kerrie says

It seems that I've gotten in the habit of comparing every fiction book with a historical 1st-person POV female narrator to Philippa Gregory's books. And why not, since she's written so many. Now some snarky people out there would say that *anything* would stack up favorably to those books, and to that I say, you're just a hater. I've enjoyed a few of her books that I've read - The Queen's Fool being the outstanding exception - so it's a fair way of evaluating for me.

I loved this book - toss out everything you know of Macbeth from William Shakespeare, The Defamer of the Dead. Lady Gruadh's story of her life and the rise and fall of Macbeth is much more interesting. She's not a shrinking violet, but she is kinder than the power-mad villainess we're all used to. She makes a colossal error for sentimental reasons and ends up paying for it, but would do the same thing all over again. She's strong and determined - the old Celtic ways will not die with the influence of the Saxons and Rome. She wants to maintain Scotland's proud past, complete with the spells and faerie beliefs that are part of Scottish lore.

Similar to another recent read of mine, Caleb's Crossing, the historical detail was never clunky. The ambiance of 11th century Scotland was vivid - the feasting halls filled with Scottish and Viking warriors, the cold and misty highlands. It really put the reader in that era and I must say that it sounds like a dreary place that only the strongest people could survive.

Now my interest in early Scottish/Viking history from this era has been piqued!

I listened to the audio, and Wanda McCaddon's narration was excellent. Her rough tone and Scottish accent was easy on the ear. She's now on my list of Good Narrators.

Elle says

I came to this more or less neutrally, with neither low nor high expectations. Thus, I wouldn't say I was disappointed. Here's the thing: King is attempting something admirable here, but it fell desperately short of a great novel. She attempts a high degree of historical accuracy, but it lacks the marvelous insight and perspective of Hillary Mantel or Maurice Druon. She attempts magic of the Old World, and lacks the poignant lyricism of Juliet Marillier or Patricia McKillip. The result is somewhere in the middle.

Another large problem is that this book needed a very good editor, and much earlier in the process. There is far too much explanation and repetition of details which should have been hinted at or appended, particularly the politics of eleventh century Scotland. The book should also have included much more material tying the reader to its characters. We are often told Gruadh is fiery and independent, and there are a few example episodes to that effect, but had it been carried out better, it would have held the reader in fondness and affection, rather than deep-mired in apathy, as I and many below readers were.

Furthermore, in novels of such particular place, as in this case Scotland, the landscape itself should come to bear as a character in itself. Frankly, allusions to Gaelic culture and language, also heavy-handed, aside, this could have occurred anywhere in the eleventh century. It is clear the King did a good deal of excellent research, but she fell in love with the facts, not the place, which those of us who already love Scotland deeply would see. Native Scots would no doubt feel this even more keenly than myself. This writer could do well by paying attention to writers who imbue the poeticism of place, culture, and love of the homeland so well into their work, and I'll be at hand with a list if she ever does.

All this said, I still recommend the book to fans of the genre. She doesn't insult you with fake magic, and she has tried very hard to put forth a theory of legendary figures who still loom large in our collective conscious today. The book was readable, and I moved through it very quickly out of desire to see what comes next. This isn't a particularly emotional novel, but it is a fun one.

Stacey says

This isn't something I would normally pick up on my own. But I really enjoyed it.

Stephanie Dray says

The first chapter of *Lady MacBeth* should humble any historical fiction writer. With prose so lyrical that you'll want to re-read each sentence to enjoy its cadence and artistry, Susan Fraser King gives us a compelling introduction to a fascinating queen.

Lady MacBeth is a wonderful example of what historical fiction does best. It corrects the errors of Shakespearian tradition, creates a plausible narrative by filling in the gaps in the historical record, and teaches us something about a woman who left behind only fragmentary evidence of her intriguing life.

Lady MacBeth, also known as *Queen Rue*, has the blood of kings running through her veins, which make her an enticing prize for powerful men. When MacBeth makes her a widow and forces her to marry him, it saves her life, but Rue is the pawn of no man. She's not easily won. She loves fiercely, she hates fiercely, and she holds her head high through her journey from hunted last survivor of her noble line, to Queen of the Scots.

This is a novel on an epic scale. With a touch of magic, *Lady MacBeth* follows the whole life of a compelling woman with a voice so distinctive that the Scottish accent jumps off the page. The book is also a mature and understated exploration of a marriage which is sometimes adulterous, often troubled, but filled with a deep and abiding respect.

I loved this book and it will stay with me for a very long time.

Colleen Martin says

This was a real disappointment. In the hands of a better writer, this could have been an amazing story, but Susan Fraser King doesn't engage the reader at all. The main character, Gruadh (*Lady Macbeth*), is supposed to be a fierce warrior queen, so why does the author make her sound so sniveling, weak and, well, womanish? I didn't care a fig for the secondary characters either, and try keeping them all straight in your

head - they have no distinguishing characteristics whatsoever. Not recommended.

Bettie? says

CELEBRITY DEATH MATCH REVIEW ONLY

Macbeth v 1984

A dark Cave. In the middle, a teapot boiling. Thunder.

Enter Mona Ogg and her two accomplices.

1 WITCH. Thrice the branded wool has knotted.

2 WITCH. Thrice and once, the dropped stitch fled.

3 WITCH. Harpier cries:—'tis time! 'tis time!

1 WITCH. Round about the garter stitch go;

Knit Knit Purl then Bobble

No invoice, this is a hobble

W2 - What *are* you knitting Mistress Ogg?

W1 - I was making a sock puppet for a Hungarian client but she was banned from using one. New laws all the time, however that doesn't stop us does it 'ladies' *cackle cackle* So, as this is SOCTOBERFEST(TM) I'm making Nanny Ogg sockies.

W3 - I'm using my **craft** skills to make a jumper to fit a prophecy, do you like it?

Meanwhile #1 - Lady M is cleaning up the castle

Meanwhile #2 - ah but a minute or three away on the foggy, murky, darkling trail, two coconut-horse riders come across a sign

Glammy: Ay-up!

Winston (singing mournfully to himself): Under the spreading chestnut tree, I sold you and you sold me—

Glammy: You've lost your plot,

Winston: Buck Up and let's see what the crones have to say...

Meanwhile #3 - back in the cave

Clickerty Clackerty Cackle and Clack
We hear the boys have ridden back

[enter Glammy and an increasingly distraught Winston]

Glammy: How now, you secret, black and midnight hags!

The three ladies giggle

W3: He's learnt his lines well hasn't he! Well so have we

Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him.

Winston: Funny they mention that wood, I forgot to show you this, Glammy, a tray full of fir tree ornaments that I will take to Julia to appease; I made them in Birnam Wood; so pretty don't you think?

As the tray comes forward towards Glammy, it looks like a whole forest on the march to his tired, watery, smoke-filled eyes and he shouts BETRAYAL and sticks Winston with a grabbed knitting needle

::straight:through:the:heart::

WIN FOR MACBETH

Misfit says

A very different tale of Macbeth and his lady than Shakespeare's. Lady Gruadh (Rue) is descended from one of two branches of the ancient royal line of Celtic Kings. First married against her wishes to Gilcomgan of Moray, her husband is killed in battle with Macbeth, and the pregnant Rue is married to Macbeth, Rue's pure bloodline giving him a stronger claim to the throne of Scotland. Thus begins an uneasy truce between the two as they eventually make the marriage work and Macbeth schemes to take the reign of Scotland from

Catherine Amos says

If you plan on reading this, forget everything you know about the Scottish play. King (re)creates a story of Lady Macbeth based on historical record rather than the tale from the bard. This isn't just a tragedy with which we are familiar told from a different point of view, but a separate history that in many ways sets the record straight. I've known that Shakespeare "borrowed" much of the stories for his plays from tales and poems that his audience would easily recognize. What I didn't know was exactly how much liberty he took with historical fact when staging these stories.

Lady Macbeth chronicles the life of Gruadh, daughter of Bodhe, from childhood to her reign as Queen of Scots and beyond. This warrior queen is not the blood-thirsty opportunist that we know from the play, but instead is a savvy political asset for her husband and a fierce defender of her beliefs as a Scottish Celt. It would be hard to come away from this text without a modicum of respect for this lady who suffered much because of and for the men in her life.

Lydia Presley says

I love a good historic novel. Susan King delivered a solid story in *Lady Macbeth*. This is the story of Gruath, her journey toward becoming the wife of Macbeth and information through his battle to become the King of Scotland.

If you are wanting a Philippa Gregory-type historic novel, this is going to disappoint you. There are lots of names (many of them very difficult to pronounce), lots of facts and the characters are more dry than Gregory's. However, if you are like me, and enjoy Sharon Kay Penman's writing, then you will probably enjoy this book.

King had less to work with, from what I understand, than Penman did however. There is very little recorded about the wife of Macbeth, but King's story was based around the academic research done on her and King Macbeth. I read this book having little to no knowledge of that time period and place and was fascinated by what I learned. This was not your typical highland romance stuff. There was actual substance here!

Gruath was an educated, intelligent, strong woman. To those who complain that she was protected by the men too much to lay claim to those adjectives, I'd simply like to remind them that this was a book written about a woman living around 1025. For her to be educated, to be trained in combat and to live through what she did - in fact, just to live, proves how strong this woman was. Two husbands, numerous miscarriages, the deaths of at least two sons and countless battles witnessed (including some that killed her own family before her eyes). If that's not a strong woman, I'm not sure what is.

One of the most interesting things I took from this book was the tradition of the sticks. Before battle, King describes a scenario where Macbeth hands Lady Macbeth a stick and instructs her to use her knife to carve a symbol twice on it, once at the top and once at the bottom. The stick is then broken in half and one half placed in the field near them, bottom down. The other part of the stick is hidden somewhere on their person. After the battle has been completed, you are to go to the field of sticks, find your own and remove it. Those sticks remaining will tell, on their own accord, of who died in battle that day. Such a simple and effective method. I had no idea.

Anyways, a fascinating book about a time period not widely written or talked about (at least that I've heard). If you are needing a break from the Tudors or whatever portion of British history you are reading about, I'd

recommend this book.

Lori says

Interestingly enough, I bought this book without even really knowing what it was about at a book signing. I started reading it in the car ride home- and didn't put it down until I was finished! It is a great historical fiction with an amazing and strong woman as the main character. If you liked Mists of Avalon, you will LOVE Lady Macbeth. I actually enjoyed Lady Macbeth more because of the historical detail. You can tell the author did a lot of research to make this story seem very real.

Lynn says

4 1/2 stars. This is the story of Lady Gruadh who later becomes Lady Macbeth Queen of Scots. Set in 1025-1058 it tells the story of her life, her bloodline, her marriages, her stubbornness, beliefs and her losses and sorrows. King, the author, does a great job of using as much factual information as she can and weaves in fiction for the rest. I did think that this book could have been shorter since 3/4 of the way through it seemed the writing was mundane but I did learn quite a bit about not only Lady Gruadh and MacBeth but also some of their customs and beliefs during that time. Other than that, I wish the author would have put more feeling or emotion into her main characters, there was something missing that made it hard for me to connect and made this seem more of a telling of what happened instead of me feeling connection with the characters.

Amalia Gavea says

If you are looking for a novelized version of Shakespeare's extraordinary Scottish Play, this is not it. This is a novel about the actual king Macbeth and queen Rue. Based on the Annals of Ulster and other sources, we witness Gruadh's life from a young age to the age of forty. Through her, we experience the constant battles for the control over Scotland, and the importance of the brave warrior Macbeth, the man who has passed from history into legend.

Elements of folklore are blended into the story, casting an otherworldly light over the fates of the characters, and the sacred places of Iona and Scone become alive through King's pen. Having had the fortune to visit them some years ago during a trip to Scotland and Ireland, I can say that her prose does justice to the intense feeling that these two places provoke to the visitor.

Susan Fraser King shows, once again, that she is one of the best representatives of how powerful Historical fiction is, when done right.
