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The Cry of the Icemark

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Rosemary Stones](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

~~New Talent~~

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

When King Redrought Strong-in-the-Arm Lindenshield, Bear of the North, dies defending his kingdom, the Icemark, against the first wave of the Polypontian Empire's invasion, his 14-year-old daughter Princess Thirrin becomes queen, responsible for leading her troops into battle and saving her country from subjugation to imperial power. At her side are her advisors, the scholar Maggiore Totus and Oskan, the son of a white witch, and it is clear that diplomatic as well as fighting skills will be needed to save the tiny kingdom. Thirrin's epic quest to forge alliances with the Icemark's former enemies (were-wolves and vampires) and neighbouring nations (snow leopards and peoples of the forest) before the snows melt enabling the forces of the Empire to attack once more is dramatically told and richly inventive with comic as well as tragic moments. Hill creates a most coherently imagined world reminiscent of the time of imperial Rome's battles against the Gauls -- the rational Polypontians versus the barbarian queen -- yet deeply based within the traditions of epic sagas and folklore. His battle scenes will have you on the edge of your seat.

Hill's style, for all the formal flurries of diction demanded on Thirrin's diplomatic mission when greeting fellow monarchs, remains conversational and colloquial. There are a few 'bloodys' and 'arses' which may trouble some adult readers.

The epic scale of Hill's sometimes rather anthropological endeavour as Thirrin encounters cultures quite unlike her own, enables him to engage with deeper issues such as the nature of poer and male and female roles in different societies. The neighbouring matriarchy with its marginalised men provides an interesting contrast to the Icemark where male and female soldiers fight alongside each other. While his characterisation is not particularly deep, Hill nonetheless provides a convincing portrait of Thirrin, the uncertain teenager who grows in confidence not only as ruler and warrior but as a young woman. Fans of Meg Cabot will love this book but, in accordance with the times, this princess not only lands the nice young man (Oskan), she also wields a mean sword on the battlefield. A wonderful, swashbuckling read and an exceptional debut.

Running Order:

12

Links:

[1] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-cry-of-the-icemark>

[2] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/150>

[3] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/rosemary-stones>