



Paradise Red

Books Reviewed:

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

In this the third book of her 'Perfect Fire' trilogy, K M Grant has written a much deeper and more powerful conclusion to her story of the fight of the Occitain people for their independence from France. Raimon and Yolanda have been forced apart and she has married Sir Hugh, who fights for the King, and Raimon believing her lost to him determines to recapture the Blue Flame which is the symbol of the Occitain people. He uses a Cathar refugee girl, Metta, to gain entrance to the castle at Montsegur where the White Wolf and the Cathars with the Blue Flame are awaiting the French army, together with Yolanda's brother whom he does not trust. The Blue Flame is rescued but meanwhile Yolanda who has been raped by her husband Hugh while drugged, bears him a son. Raimon vows to kill Hugh but in a tragic scene at the end of the story while two hundred Cathars burn in a square pyre built by the Inquisitors of the Catholic Church, the two men rescue Metta at the cost of Hugh's life. Raimon and Yolanda start their lives together with Hugh's son, with the Flame keeping the Occitain people together.

The book starts with a recap of what has gone before which is in fact quite confusing. I do not think many readers would come to this book without having read the other two. The unfamiliar historical background with its fight within the Catholic Church and the mystical nature of the Blue Flame and the people of the Occitain (around Carcassone) did not seem strange to me having read the other two books, both of which I reviewed in 2008.

This however is a darker tale altogether and will require some maturity to read and understand, particularly Yolanda's refusal to consummate her marriage to Hugh which is spelled out quite clearly. The rape scene although not graphically described at all, is not hidden from the reader, with its consequence for her and her relationship with Raimon, and Yolanda's attempt to abort the baby at six months is painful to read. The burning of the two hundred Cathars who had refused to take the way out given them by Sir Hugh is difficult to read. But this is a powerful and fitting conclusion to a story which was bound to end messily given what had gone before.

Minor points to raise, but an historical note telling the reader what did happen to the Occitain would have perhaps been comforting. A map would also have been useful.

Running Order:

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