



Jiddy Vardy

Books Reviewed:

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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The story opens with a fairly horrific account of a birth on a ship in 1779. The ship is under attack from pirates and the new born baby girl is hidden away as her parents and her father's friend are dropped overboard. The story then moves forward where the reader meets Jiddy Vardy, living in Robin Hood Bay's Bay in a village dominated by smuggling.

The whole village from the squire down is involved and soon Jiddy is too. But she is different, not having been born in the village, although she does not know her origins. When Thomas, husband of Mary, the couple who took her in, dies, Jiddy is given a job as seamstress to the squire's wife and finds herself being made over in modern parlance, learning to dance and dress as a lady. The reason for this is revealed after a smuggling trip that went wrong, and Jiddy is taken to London to meet her real mother.

Up to here the reader is carried along by the strength of the writing, the lilt of the Yorkshire dialect, well heard in the speech of the characters, but suddenly as she is taken to London by the mysterious Captain Ryethorpe the plot descends into a predictable pattern, where Jiddy decides that life in London is not for her and returns to Jason's arms.

Jiddy is a strong character, grounded in love for the women who care for her, and by her attachment to the community, even though some do not think she belongs. The development of the love between her and Jason is told slowly, as it would happen, but the reader can see the outcome well before the end of the story, which does make it lose its depth. This is a picture of a community rooted in smuggling, although the reasons for this are not clearly explained, who are bound to each other by this nocturnal activity and their hatred of the 'preventive' soldiers. There is the added menace of the arrival of the Dragoons under the command of Captain Ryethorpe, who also turns up in Mrs. Farsyde's drawing room to teach Jiddy to dance.

This is a very readable story but could have been so much better with some strong editing so that the signposts as to what will happen to Jiddy are not so clear to the reader, and which would have lifted it to a very good novel.

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