



The Rose Crown

Catharine Glen

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Elite soldier Marian serves and protects the royal family—a responsibility she does not take lightly. But when she thwarts an assassination attempt on the king, she unwittingly becomes a prime suspect. Worse, she is left with a terrible, pulsing wound and vile, intrusive thoughts that are not her own. Now, the mysterious cult behind the attack has targeted her, and Marian soon learns of their goal to restore a devastating relic: the legendary Rose Crown.

Former mercenary Henryk has vowed to prevent the restoration of the Rose Crown at any cost. When he encounters Marian, he discovers the terrifying truth of her involvement—and the mortal danger they both face. Drawn together by the very thing that could destroy them, Henryk and Marian must forge a bond of trust—before it's too late.

Can Marian battle against the ancient darkness consuming her soul, or will it utterly destroy them both?

The Rose Crown Details

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From Reader Review The Rose Crown for online ebook

Kyra Halland says

Gripping fantasy with great characters and a tantalizing start to a romance.

Esmerelda Weatherwax says

Plot:

Marian is the only woman in the army, and she fought hard to get there, but she gets a lot of flack from the men around her. She's made it into the Rose Guard, which are the elite guardsmen who take care of the royal family.

Early in the book she attempts to stop an assassination attempt on the Kings life but was overcome by the assailant who has strange powers she's never seen before. He implants something into her arm and tells her she now serves the Amarys, a strange cult not many people know about.

Henryk used to be a mercenary until he got roped into dealings with the Amarys. He's stolen some pieces of The Rose Crown, an ancient crown of power used by a King in the past to rule over people via slaughter. If the pieces of the crown are put back together, they could be used again by someone who wants to rise to power, so he's trying to keep the pieces secret.

The thing implanted in Marian was a piece of the Rose Crown and attempts to remove it have failed. She's now connected to Henryk since he can feel where the other pieces of the crown are – they can sense each other's feelings in a way. Henryk can tell that Marian isn't lying when she said she doesn't know what's going on, because of their connection through the pieces.

Characters:

Marian – She's pretty willful and resilient which lead to what she accomplished in her life. She's close with her commander, Bennet, and people spread rumors that their relationship is more than it appears. She tries to do what's right even if it's going against her Kings wishes. She's good friends with the Princess, who wants to learn how to use a sword and defend herself. The King has explicitly forbidden this, but she does it anyway because she doesn't want to see the Princess get hurt.

Henryk – He's kind of surly and serious, but given what his life is like it's not surprising. He spared Marian's life in the beginning of the book. He sensed the Rose Crown piece implanted in her arm, and thought she was working for the Amarys, but went on a gut instinct to trust her.

Anselm Vieth – this guy is foul, he uses people and has a huge ego. He's definitely a narcissist. Reading his chapters makes me cringe sometimes, but, it is interesting to see things from the villain POV. He's got his own motives, and you don't know what they are for a bit. AT one point he tries to blackmail Marian into betraying Henryk.

World Building:

King Francis Giehl, Queen Asa and their daughter, Princess Franziska rule over the island of Eiles. Overall he's a decent King who has provided peace for his land for a long time. Princess Frankziska is rather down to earth and a decent person, being friends with her handmaiden and her fathers' guardswoman.

The assassin has the ability to use magic, he turned the floor under him into a fire so hot that Marian couldn't approach him during the assassination

The Rose Crown allowed King Araes to ascend to power, but he was eventually defeated by Prince Everard. The crown was broken and both men disappeared from history. Most people don't think the Rose Crown actually exists. The pieces Henryk carries are almost alive in a way, sending him impressions of feelings like yearning or pleading.

The Amarys perform dark experiments on people, using them until death. Henryk was the only one in his group to survive.

People all over the city are disappearing, and no one knows why.

The Amary's have the ability to control peoples minds and make them do things they don't want to do

Marian is having visions, but she doesn't know what about

Pacing/Prose/Tone:

This was a pretty quick book, it was medium length, 330 pages or so. There was a lot going on with the plot so things went smoothly and I didn't feel any lag, and there def wasn't any info dumps – the world was revealed slowly so it wasn't overwhelming.

It was a lighter book, def not all doom and gloom and misery, which was a nice change of pace because I've read a lot of darker books recently.

Audience:

For people who like multi POV

For people who like female solider POV

For people who like traditional fantasy

For people who like lots of magic and mystery

For people who like stories about ancient relics of power

Volpot says

2 stars. Simplistic tripe

Rebekah says

The Rose Crown follows the story of Marian, the only female royal guard, as she uncovers secret plots behind an assassination attempt. With a main character named Marian, I kept looking for this to be a flip on Robin Hood, but it really is its own story. The writing is well-done, and had me emotionally invested in the characters. The setting is tight in scale. Most of it takes place within one castle, but it feels authentic. Such is the life of a king's guard.

This starts out as a low-fantasy story, and then Marian is unexpectedly attacked with magic, something no one believes is real anymore. An interesting aspect of this book is that the main characters keep most of their discoveries secret from others out of fear they won't be taken seriously, pretending that old myths are real.

I liked Marian a lot, and her interactions with Henryk gradually progressed in a natural way through most of the book.

This is a YA book, perhaps even middle grade. Sexuality is hinted at or skipped around, and Marian and Henryk both seem plagued with self-doubt, thinking similar questions about their actions and their futures repeatedly. The characters ask questions the author wants the readers to answer, so it's a pretty straight forward way of foreshadowing.

Several obstacles were thrown in at the final hour that made the ending feel too drawn out for me. I had hoped everything Marian went through would resolve her self-doubt and by the end of the book she would proceed in her words and actions with confidence, but the story lacked that transformation. There was an opportunity to empower a secondary female character, which was completely subverted, and felt disjointed from the book's theme of women's capabilities.

Being a hopeless romantic, I kept wanting the romance storyline to take center-stage at some point, as the tension built and the stakes became higher. But I know a lot of readers want the mission at hand to remain the priority, and if you're in that camp, rest assured, the story remains focused on the mission.

This is an entertaining read for those who like classic sword and sorcery based in a European Middle Ages setting.

Jane Jago says

A good solid fantasy, and an enjoyable read. There were moments when I found the portents of the future slightly over-egged, but all in all I would have little hesitation in recommending this book.

Beverly says

Loved it! The storyline was great and I loved the characters. A lot of twists and turns, couldn't wait to get to the end to find out who was the bad guy. Can't wait to read the next book!

Happy Booker says

The Rose Crown is a dark fantasy novel written about a soldier named Marian who is trying to stop a mysterious cult from restoring a relic of legend. Marian is an Elite soldier and her job is to protect the royal family, however, when an attempt on the king's life takes place, she is considered to be a suspect. Things are worsened when her injury creates thoughts that are not her own and she realizes that the cult is after her. She isn't alone though as Henryk, the former mercenary is also making sure the Rose Crown is not to be restored. He and Marian have to face mortal danger in order to prevent devastation from occurring. Darkness is taking over her soul and Marian has to fight from within if she is to survive.

I found the story to be fascinating. The plot was superbly thought out. The two characters had such different personalities and each to its own was delightfully designed to grasp the reader's interest. The descriptive lyrical writing was in high quality for a dark fantasy novel. The story was smooth and the pace was easy to move with.

I believe the most intriguing part about the whole book was Marian's loyalty, personality and the fact that she was fighting from her inner self in order to survive. I also enjoyed the subtle romance between the two. The story also consists of twists and turns have you doubt how everything is going to end. This factor created a slight edge to the plot which made the book even more interesting.

I recommend this book to dark fantasy fans.

Richard Nell says

A fast, pleasant read, which I think improved as I detected a distinct Musketeers vibe.

Instead of d'Artagnan, though, the country rube from the provinces, we have Marian - the only woman in a unit of elite kings guard. She brings an ancient, familial sword and a lot of pluck, and does her best to defend a useless king and his family from his predatory advisor.

Rather than the musketeer brotherhood we have a budding love story with self-declared destroyer of the Rose Crown - Henryk, a big, strapping mercenary who becomes captain of the guard through his friendship with The Enemy - nobleman and advisor Anselm.

Marian and Henryk are really the only characters who matter, and certainly the only ones I cared about. I actually wanted to know more about them and their past and motivations, but alas this was not to be.

Essentially The Rose Crown is a fantasy adventure story. If you go in expecting complex world-building,

character development, or trope-twisting cleverness, you will be disappointed. However you are certainly going to get action, magic, a little romance, a clear struggle against villainy, and ultimately, triumph.

There's a bit too much naval-gazing for my tastes, but many readers enjoy this, and the writing definitely does its job. Ultimately I recommend not asking too many questions as you go. Just sit back, get a glass of wine, and enjoy the ride.

For any readers who like fast-paced adventure stories with a female protagonist, this is an easy recommend.

Mike says

Never quite caught fire for me, and I'm not entirely sure why.

It's probably not just the many homonym errors and the multiple dangling modifiers, though one of the latter gives us blue eyes that are more than five and a half feet tall, and the prose also includes such gems as an empty chair which sat empty; red-hot heat; and an item worn from years of wear. This despite an editor being credited. Even the several instances of present-tense verbs in past-tense narration - not just the very common "may" instead of "might", but "will" instead of "would", and another I don't recall just now - shouldn't have been distracting enough to keep me from investing in the characters, but I never did. I didn't believe their incipient romance, I didn't feel the tension about whether they would succeed in saving the kingdom, and I yawned when they won.

I didn't believe in the female soldier, either. It was clear she faced prejudice, yes, but there didn't seem to be enough backstory to account for her being permitted to enter the army and become part of the elite guard. She was good, but not amazingly good. (view spoiler)

The main group of villains, the original historical villain, and the heroine's sword had names that were far too similar to each other.

Those villains consisted of a bunch of nameless mooks and a moustache twirler; the McGuffin was your standard bit of evil jewelry; and in general it felt like a grab bag of unexamined tropes.

Despite the almost-cliffhanging mysteries raised at the very end, I have no interest in reading a sequel.

Ian says

INITIAL THOUGHTS

The Rose Crown is a pleasant break from the Grimdark trend that has been overwhelming the fantasy landscape in recent years. It's certainly a more traditional heroic fantasy tale with obvious "good guys" struggling to thwart the machinations of the even more obvious "bad guys." I enjoyed the lore and world building and the characterisation was for the most part good; I particularly liked the female protagonist, Marian. I felt really engaged by the story for most of its duration, even when certain narrative choices either didn't work for me, didn't make sense or I outright disliked.

It's only during the final act when the story approaches its climax that things start to falter, and I found myself being pulled out of the story for brief spells. Although there is no mystery as to who the antagonist is, once he is "officially" revealed to be the bad guy, he becomes even more of a caricature villain than he was previously; this makes it even harder to take him seriously as a true threat because he's like a James Bond villain (a major bugbear of mine). It also didn't make sense to me that Marian and her male counterpart Henryk were oblivious to the role played by this character given that he was in possession of an item that should have exposed him to them both.

In addition to this, the resolution of the conflict at the centre of the story feels needlessly drawn out, with one extra obstacle after another being introduced to prolong proceedings. Nonetheless, *The Rose Crown* finishes on a high note so I didn't feel at all disappointed.

FULL REVIEW PENDING!!!
