



Kingston by Starlight

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Irish-born Anne Bonny is only a teenager when she is left destitute by her mother's death. Abandoned by her father, she seems destined to be forgotten by the world. But Anne chooses to seek her fortune in the lush tropics of the colonial West Indies, where she passes herself off as a young man named Bonn. She finds work as a ship's hand, sailing under the command of Calico Jack Rackam, a notorious and charismatic pirate with a bounty on his head. Calico Jack has his heart set on raiding the Madrid Galleon, the richest ship in the Caribbean, which sails from Kingston laden with Cuban gold and Jamaican rum.

Bonn is entranced by the sea and by the ship's violent crew, which includes a mysterious swordfighter named Read, who, it turns out, has a secret life of his own. Calico Jack soon discovers Bonn's and Read's true identities, but it is only when the three pirates are captured that their darkest secrets begin to surface. In the shadow of the gallows, a strange twist of fate reveals a shocking betrayal that may save Bonn from death, while permanently changing everything she has known about her past and the world around her.

Gorgeously written and full of mystery, intrigue, and startling revelations about gender, race, history, and the human heart, *Kingston by Starlight* is a once-in-a-lifetime read.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Kingston by Starlight Details

Date : Published June 28th 2005 by Three Rivers Press (first published 2005)

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Author : Christopher John Farley

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From Reader Review Kingston by Starlight for online ebook

April Wadsworth says

This novel of historical fiction offers a peek into the world of the eighteenth century West Indies as viewed through the eyes of the legendary Ann Bonny, the infamous woman pirate.

The novel chronicles her life beginning in Ireland as a child and her many journeys.. there is action on the high seas and in exotic locales.

This was a fun and page turning read.

Katydid says

I had extremely mixed feelings about this book. I enjoyed the pirate adventures, the historical aspects of piracy and the sensual descriptions of West Indian ports of call, but I think the end really went off-course and, frankly, stank. The sexuality was rather banal, as though the author allowed himself to indulge in writing all of his adolescent fantasies. Finally, the involvement of the alpha female pirate (a lesbian) with the wimpy loser "Poop" (a barely pubescent male) because she can't have Anne Bonney demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of women and is an almost unforgiveable character inconsistency. I really enjoyed the first half of this book, but was greatly disappointed by its mangled conclusion.

Stacy says

Cliche after cliche. The thing that blows me away is that my copy was found in the English department at the University of Michigan, and someone has clearly been taking notes in the margin in preparation for writing a paper on this waste of shelf space. Not worth skimming, let alone close reading.

Lisa Cerqueira says

While I truly enjoyed this book, I'm torn about how to rate it. A swashbuckling tale of pirates in the Caribbean in the early 1700s, there's salt spray, sea chases and battles a'plenty — and then the action is stalled by extended descriptions and stories. And while I appreciate a well-chosen word, this book abounds in "oh, my goodness, hand-me-a-dictionary" words I've never encountered before. I mean, Procrustes, appetency, coruscating, anamnesis — really?

And then there are beautiful passages that have me scrambling to underline and dog-ear pages:

"We require small, quiet moments set aside in our days and nights to find the true meaning of what we see and experience. Most people, based on my private observations, do without the reflective moments, and so, without them, they simply follow the footsteps of their lives, never guessing that the path they follow is truly one of chaos, a road that leads in circles, or worse, over a precipice. I, however, safeguard my moments of introspection, checking the charts and maps of my soul, as it were, before continuing on the journey of my

life."

How can you resist that??

The main characters are based on historical figures and the narrator is female, written by a male author, which always makes me skeptical, though I think he renders her voice in an authentic manner.

Overall, a good read — just be sure to have a dictionary handy!

Lisa says

This is a great book if you like to read a semi-fiction with a few historical people and facts thrown in for good measure. The characters made me want to get to know them and root for the underdog. They are pirates after all, but you get to understand their motivation and hope that they will find happiness in the end and not get killed for their pirating ways.

Emily says

An amazing novel! One of the best I have read. Farley breathes life into an under documented Caribbean history, giving voice to Anne Bonney, a heroic woman who broke through the definitions of sex, gender, and power and becoming one of the most notable pirates of the Caribbean seas during the great age of piracy.

Determined to write a book about Bonney's life, Farley waited until he truly found Anne's voice before writing, and I am certainly glad he did. The vivid account coming in the first person from Anne's point of view in addition to prose-like descriptions of the Caribbean waters and life as a free sailor paints a vividly enjoyable portrait, and made me seriously consider land life all together.

Beautifully written, wonderfully composed, Farley creates a truly memorable novel.

Lisa Hoenig says

Historical fiction narrated by an elderly Anne Bonny. I was expecting gripping pirate adventure, lots of swashbuckling and gorgeous island settings. Instead the stilted language made the story drag, and the characters never came to life for me. Mary Read was the most fascinating character, but she was an enigma. Maybe I'd have better luck with "Pirates!" by Celia Rees.

Summer says

This book really swung on the pendulum of the rating scale for me. I started off loving it so much. I loved how the story was being told and I was invested in Bonn's early life and ready to see where she would go, but that excitement wore off in the second part. I wasn't expecting any kind of romance for this book and not only ended up with a romance, but with a weird kind of love triangle (which I hate). Nothing about any of

their time on the ship was particularly exciting, and that's what I expected and wanted from a pirate's tale. Then some things in the last 50 pages sparked my interest again. There was one twist near the end that I pretty much knew from the beginning, but then the author gave me a rather sad ending that I wasn't expecting at all.

I did enjoy that there were people from all walks of life aboard the ship Will. They were a ragtag group of men/women that were the rejects of society and found a place where they could truly be themselves. Although it may have been a little much to find representation for most every people group, this is one instance where, to me, it's a believable outcome of the situation.

Two themes that were acknowledged in the last part of the book (although I wish they would've been explored more) were corruption of power (how the government officials were pirates in their own way) and the mob mentality (which made me think of *The Crucible*, *Parade*, and Jesus' crucifixion), and those were the themes that grabbed my attention again.

I was really appreciating the feminist tones that the book was taking for a while, but then they started being about something else, and I'm not really sure what the author was trying to get at with some of the things that were said.

1st part - 4 stars

2nd part - 2 stars

3rd part - 3 stars

Overall - 3 stars

robyn says

pirates! Woman pirates.

When I was a kid, I read about Anne Bonny and Mary Read as a sort of freakish footnote in the story of the sea. This book puts them front and center. But besides that, it's set in a historical time and place that's very believable and paradisiacal in the same way that a children's historical story generally is; whatever the trials, tribulations, hardships, some part of you wishes you could actually experience it, if only for a day.

Ann felt real to me; the place felt real to me. The portrayals of the other pirates as well.

Emily Wright says

The story was pure swashbuckling action and adventure with quick and fluid transitions from one chapter to the next. The main character is a female but don't discount it! She evolves into a much more complex person by the end of the tale (which follows her throughout her whole life) With vividly set scenes that allow some insight into the times, there are some personal revelations between you and the characters... near death experiences and sometimes confusing sensual moments -tastefully written nothing smutty- It's never once boring and I'd read it again.

Adriana says

Poetry in novel form.

While the story is interesting enough to keep a reader entertained, it's the exquisite writing that makes this such an enjoyable read. Anne Bonny's adventure from Ireland to the Caribbean, from pirate to prisoner in the gallows, and everything that happens in between, is lushly told by an author that shows his love for the world he's building by immersing the reader in the world thru the use of beautiful writing.

Even if the writing weren't so great, the story certainly has enough twists and turns to keep one interested in seeing where it takes you. Each stage of Anne's journey is full of well-developed, engaging characters that give the story a solid foundation while inexorably driving the story to a wonderful climax.

Elizabeth Barter says

I read this book about thirteen years ago. I loved it, it was the type of novel you begin reading in the evening after supper, and then the next few days , you get lost in the pages. You're missing transit stops and attempting to avoid trees, while walking as you read. This novel is hard to put down .

Melissa says

disappointing

"Irish-born Anne Bonny is only a teenager when she is left destitute by her mother's death. Abandoned by her father, she seems destined to be forgotten by the world. But Anne chooses to seek her fortune in the lush tropics of the colonial West Indies, where she passes herself off as a young man named Bonn. She finds work as a ship's hand, sailing under the command of Calico Jack Rackam, a notorious and charismatic pirate with a bounty on his head. Calico Jack has his heart set on raiding the Madrid Galleon, the richest ship in the Caribbean, which sails from Kingston laden with Cuban gold and Jamaican rum. Bonn is entranced by the sea and by the ship's violent crew, which includes a mysterious swordfighter named Read, who, it turns out, has a secret life of his own. Calico Jack soon discovers Bonn's and Read's true identities, but it is only when the three pirates are captured that their darkest secrets begin to surface. In the shadow of the gallows, a strange twist of fate reveals a shocking betrayal that may save Bonn from death, while permanently changing everything she has known about her past and the world around her."

Leah Beecher says

I initially really liked this book because I loved the author's prose; beautiful writing. I always enjoy historical fictions with strong unique heroines. However, as the plot developed, it fell apart for me. The first being a matter of personal taste: I can't stand long nautical descriptions! I know it was a pirate tale and should of known. There are many more reason besides. The first being there were so many scenes that were far-fetched; simply did not make sense. For instance, when Read reveals herself by ripping her shirt off to

escape being killed by Bishop, no one else sees it, even though the whole crew was intently watching the duel and placing bets. And when she gets pregnant while waiting trial in jail by the prisoner next to her {as somehow the stone cell wall happened to fall down I guess} and then is already showing a few days or weeks later which keeps her from being hanged. Bonn's true love is supposed to be Read, but all she thinks about is John and how he is doing, hoping he finds a way to escape when they are awaiting their sentence, and does not even mention Read. It was very over-reaching in that aboard one ship are Native Americans, an African ex-slave Muslim, a Jew, an evil ex-priest, and a transgender.

Pick a cause or group please!

He was going on the historical fact that aboard pirate ships in the 18th century the ridged society lines of race, religion, social class, and sexuality become less important; a pirate republic, or sorts. This may have been true, but the author brought in every demographic possible, making it trite and obvious. The whole "Daddy issue" thing was thrown in too for good measure.

By the end even the prose and symbolism I enjoyed in the beginning of the story was dragged out and disjointed.

Bummer.

Amy Berti says

This author thinks like a man - his female lead character does not think like a woman and therefore is not a believable character. Write what you know, not what you wish you knew. I tore it up rather than donated it because I don't want anyone else to be influenced by his uninformed perspective. Keep dreaming, buddy; women don't think like men.
