



The Widow of Jerusalem

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1204 A.D. The Fools' Guild is on the run from an increasingly intolerant Church. Arriving too late at the Guildhall to join them, the jester couple Theophilos and Claudia and their newborn daughter Portia must now flee the Papal army, having first risked their lives to steal, of all things, a tavern sign. As they journey across the Alps, Theophilos recounts to his wife a story from the Third Crusade, of the most beautiful woman in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and her dwarf jester, Scarlet.

In 1191, as Richard the Lionhearted leads his forces in an attempt to recapture Jerusalem from the army of Saladin, Theophilos and Scarlet are quietly manipulating events to bring about an end to the bloodshed. Their mission leads them to Tyre, the only city in the Kingdom of Jerusalem to withstand Saladin. Governed by a rogue general, the city is aswarm with refugees, spies, and splintered factions vying for power and position, and even success may only prove fatal. The key chesspiece amidst the swirling intrigues remains Isabelle, the Queen of Jerusalem, desired by many but married against her will to a man decades her senior. But there are forces at work that will stop at nothing, and it is up to Scarlet to protect the interests of the Guild, the lives of the people, and the future of Isabelle.

Drawn from actual events, *The Widow of Jerusalem* is a tale of intrigue and ambition, love fulfilled and love unrequited, and a trio of historical deaths that have never been fully explained. Until now.

The Widow of Jerusalem Details

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From Reader Review The Widow of Jerusalem for online ebook

Audrey says

This was the first Alan Gordon book I read. It was so good, I now own them all. The Widow of Jerusalem setting is fascinating, dealing with the Crusade. The women characters are interesting, which is a big plus for me. There is mystery and intrigue, but not at the expense of character development. Give this book a try. It's unusual, in a good way.

Cal says

The fourth book in Gordon's Medieval Jester murder mystery series. I'm liking these books even more than Lindsey Davis' Didius Falco series. Unfortunately, my library doesn't have a copy of the next book so I've requested it via inter-library loan.

Caidyn (SEMI-HIATUS; BW Reviews; he/him/his) says

Yes, even with my disappointment for a plot point, I will rate this four stars. What can I say? I'm a sucker for humor and historical intrigue.

As usual, this was woven very well around a specific point in time and the people in that time. I'm not familiar with the 1100s or 1200s, so it's always fun for me because I don't get pissed off over historical inaccuracies that might be there. Aka, I'm happier and everyone else who has to read my status updates is happier as well. Theo is great. Claudia is great. What made this one unique was the way this story was told.

This is literally a story. The whole mystery is set in the past, and Theo is sitting there telling the story. It was a lot of fun with random interjections from Claudia. The mystery itself was good and had a lot of build up to it. With this series, I don't bother trying to solve it because it's not until the last minute that you get important information.

However -- and this is a big however for me -- there was a large portion of the story that left a bad taste in my mouth. Actually, it was just a few pages, but it left an impact that made me question if I would actually enjoy it. For the first time in this series (at least that I remember, and I tend to remember these things) there was rape. Not graphic or really spoken about. But, it happened and it wasn't difficult to infer. I just personally prefer rape out of the story unless it's very important to a character. Like, it happened in the past or a book is literally focused around the rape, like in Speak or All the Rage or What We Saw.

So, a good book, but it was sad to see that brought into the story with no real reason behind it.

Reinhold says

Der Narr Theophilus, mit seiner Frau Claudia und ihrer neugeborenen Tochter unterwegs nach Innsbruck, erzählt ihr seine Erlebnisse rund um den Dritten Kreuzzug. Er beginnt dabei nach der Rückeroberung Akkons durch die Truppen Richards I. und Philipps II. Letzterer ist bereits abgerückt und Richard ließ gerade mehrere tausend Gefangene hinrichten. Noch in der nächsten Nacht beginnen die Narren ihren Plan umzusetzen und borgen Richards Siegel, um eine Nachschublieferung für Richards Feldzug zu Gunsten Konrad von Montferrat abzuzweigen. Der Roman spielt zum größten Teil in Tyrus, wo sich Konrad und seine Frau Isabella (die dem Roman den Titel gab) aufzuhalten. Er berichtet von den Zuständen in dieser Stadt und dem politischen Intrigenspiel, das auch nach dem Ende des Kreuzzuges kein Ende fand. So erlebt der Narr die Ermordung Konrads ebenso wie Isabellas Heirat mit Heinrich von der Champagne mit.

Man spürt sehr deutlich, dass sich der Autor die Quellenlage zu Outremer im ausklingenden 12. und beginnenden 13. Jahrhundert aber auch die Lebensumstände der damaligen Zeit genau angesehen hat, teilweise aber bewusst eine vereinfachte Darstellung wählt. Diese Vereinfachung ist in perfekter Übereinstimmung mit der Tatsache, dass die Geschichte ja in der Ich-Erzählperspektive wiedergegeben wird und nicht von einem allwissenden Erzähler, der natürlich mehr Einblick in die historische Forschung hätte.

Sprachlich ist das Werk leider sehr schwach, da haben andere Autoren schon wesentlich Besseres geschaffen. Als besonders schwach muss auch der Übersetzer bezeichnet werden, der doch tatsächlich "There we learned that" mit "Dort lernten wir, dass" statt mit "Dort erfuhren wir, dass" übersetzt.

Demgegenüber ist der Aufbau des Romans sehr gut gelungen, vor allem die Unterbrechungen der Erzählung durch Claudia sind das Salz in der Suppe. Die Figuren folgen nicht einfachen Klischees, was den Roman ebenfalls aufwertet. Insgesamt also ein durchaus lesenswertes Buch.

Leslie says

Excellent historical fiction set at the end of the Third Crusade, with some murder thrown in! However, this is less mystery than historical fiction, so if you are expecting something like Lindsey Davis' Falco you might be disappointed.

Dayna Smith says

The fourth book in the Fools' Guild Mystery series. As Theo and his wife flee the Papal army which has just run all the fools from their Guildhall, he tells Claudia the story of his time in the Holy Land with Richard the Lionhearted. It is 1191 and the Third Crusade is well underway and Theo finds himself in Tyre with the most beautiful woman in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and a dwarf named Scarlet. Another enchanting piece of historical fiction. Lovers of the Middle Ages and the Crusades will thoroughly enjoy this tale, although it is not as enchanting as the previous three books.

Katherine says

Thoroughly enjoy the setting--12th C Mediterranean area during and after Richard the Lionhearted's visit--and the concept--fools, court jesters as spies and political forces--doing the work of the Fools' Guild to ensure peace and manipulate which rulers and factions can best achieve it. Only problem--trying to find

copies of these books at reasonable prices.

Tim Hicks says

What kind of scam is this? I just read a history book and enjoyed it!
OK, it isn't that rare. I read a lot of SF, and there are some excellent stories
that use time travel as an excuse to put a modern character in a past setting.
But these use fictional historical characters as our point of view among real characters.

We see the details that aren't in the history books, and we see them by following
fascinating characters who are, perhaps, ninja clowns, James Bond with a red nose,
or what have you.

As others have noted, there are some moral issues raised, and there is a mystery - although it's not a big deal.

I was born in England and read a lot of English history, and I'm old enough that I read it when Richard the Lionheart was considered one of England's great heroes, the shining contrast to his ratbag brother John. With this story, and other things I've seen recently, we are shown that John may have been the good guy.
OK, OK, Richard was just part of a society that thought it was noble and honourable to slaughter the Other Guys in any way possible, and we can't really judge him by modern standards, but still ...

Anyway, this is another very entertaining read, and I will be looking for the rest of the series. So far, after two books, I'm not feeling a great need to read them in order.

Fred Rauch says

Alan Gordon has done it again. This time Theo relates the story of how he and Scarlet the Dwarf saved the Queen of Jerusalem. The story is told in the past tense as Theo is telling the story to his wife. A easy, quick read and well worth the time.

Mike says

I think that Gordon has gotten even better, this time giving us a flashback to the end of the 1100s and the city of Tyre during the Crusades as the curious death of an anonymous woman catches the interest of our protagonist in the midst of war and intrigue.

The books aren't masterpieces of literature, but they are heartfelt, charming, interesting, and very well-crafted. Good read.

Hadi says

The voices of the characters - especially the fools - aren't very distinct but it's all done with such charm and

such a sense of joy that it would be churlish to not enjoy this. The plot involves the Crusades, Richard the Lionheart and a dwarf named Scarlet... all utterly delightful

Pat says

Best in the series thus far, and a good picture of a period of time and people not often highlighted.

Lindsey says

I am enjoying this medieval mystery series. The idea of traveling jesters/fools forming an international medieval spy ring trying to keep the peace is fascinating. In this story, Theo recounts his adventures in Acre and Tyre working with another fool, Scarlet, during the Crusades. Scarlet has been assigned to Isabelle, the Queen of Jerusalem. Theo and Scarlet together do what they can to shorten the crusades and save lives, encountering the Arabian sect of Assassins, the mystery of the Marquis of Monserrat's murder and King Richard's fool Blondel along the way.

Joyce says

This was not a book that I would normally have chosen to read, but my choices were limited at the time. Still, it was an enjoyable read -- a mix of fiction, mystery, ambition, love & history written from the perspective of a fool/court jester. Very different. It was like a story within a story and it came together very well.

Sarah Brooks says

Good novel about the conflict of Isabelle d'Anjou, Queen of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem during the 3rd Crusade. Mr. Gordon provides a great narrative through the main character, Theo, a jester or Fool, who can access places most others cannot. Highly recommended.
