



Kingdom of Shadows

Barbara Erskine

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Barbara Erskine's classic bestseller, the successor to *Lady of Hay*, at last available as a HarperCollins paperback.

In a childless and unhappy marriage, Clare Royland is rich and beautiful – but lonely. And fueling her feelings of isolation is a strange, growing fascination with an ancestress from the distant past. Troubled by haunting inexplicable dreams that terrify – but also powerfully compel – her, Clare is forced to look back through the centuries for answers.

In 1306, Scotland is at war. Isobel, Countess of Buchan, faces fear and the prospect of untimely death as the fighting surrounds her. But passionate and headstrong, her trials escalate when she is persecuted for her part in crowning Robert the Bruce, her lover.

Duncairn, Isobel's home and Clare's beloved heritage, becomes a battleground for passions that span the centuries. As husband Paul's recklessness threatens their security, Clare must fight to save Duncairn, and to save herself from the powers of Isobel...

Kingdom of Shadows Details

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Author : Barbara Erskine

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From Reader Review Kingdom of Shadows for online ebook

Kingfan30 says

I'm pretty sure I've read this one before, and must have enjoyed it to have kept in on my shelves. It is quite a gripping storyline but on a second read I found Clare particularly frustrating, why on earth would you stay with a man like that! An entertaining enough read but think its time for this one to move on and find new readers.

Dawn says

This book is extremely well written and made me fall in love with the history of Scotland. Barbara Erskine's classic bestseller, the successor to Lady of Hay, at last available as a HarperCollins paperback.

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Jo Barton says

Last week saw commemorations in Scotland for the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, which witnessed the defeat of the forces of the English King, Edward II by the army of the Scottish King, Robert the Bruce, in 1314. This battle for Scottish independence was the culmination of a long fight which had started during the reign of Edward I, who ever after is known by the sobriquet the 'Hammer of the Scots' and made infamous for his brutal execution of the noble warrior, William Wallace.

Kingdom of Shadows takes the story of the tragic Isobel of Buchan whose support of Robert the Bruce put her in defiance of both her husband and the English King. The disaster of her life is well documented, although perhaps the reason behind her actions is less known. What Barbara Erskine has done is to add flesh to the story and has produced an unforgettable heroine and a tragedy of epic proportions.

The time slip story, which uses as its focus the C20 story of Claire Royland and her fiercely ambitious husband, mirrors that of Isobel, who trapped in the C13 uses Claire as the medium through which her story is told. The transition between time frames is seamless and whilst for me the C13 story became more compelling, there is no doubt that the situation which develops between Claire and her husband, is no less

forceful as the conflict between Isobel and her husband.

The novel was originally published in 1988, and I remember reading Kingdom of Shadows for the first time in the early 1990s. The story is beautifully told, rich in historic detail and alive with mystery and intrigue. Isobel's final punishment by a malicious and ill favoured King is stark and brutal, and yet in the hands of this talented writer, Isobel's human fragility, combined with her strength of spirit truly comes alive.

And as the final tragedy of the story is revealed, the mists of time shimmer and the hairs on the back of your neck stand up as Isobel's ghostly figure tells you that for her the story is never finished and that as long as Kingdom of Shadows remains in print she will be heard time and time again.

Hannah says

I literally only read half the book ("half" being the storyline from the past). The present-day storyline bored me to tears the last time I read it years ago, and I had no intention of slogging through *that* again.

Northern Light says

I really enjoyed this book not least as I live in the area the book concentrates on and have many of the names featured in my own family so maybe its my own family history!!

It switches between 14C Scotland and the wars between England and Scotland and contemporary Scotland where an ancestor of Countess Isobel relives her life through dreams and meditations. Although fictionalised the account of ancient Scotland reads well and is very believable. The modern day Clare can be very annoying at times and comes across as a spoilt little rich girl but its hard not to get involved in her story and will her to succeed.

I wasn't comfortable with her use of yoga and medication techniques to 'summon' Isobel but this story does show how dangerous they can be.

Misfit says

(3.5) Basic Erskine regression story. Kingdom of Shadows is a parallel tale of Clare Royland in the 1980's and Isobel Buchan in Scotland at the time of Robert The Bruce in the latter 13th and early 14th century. Clare is married to stock broker Paul Royland who gambled with insider trading and lost and needs to sell Clare's Scottish Castle Duncairn to raise desperately needed funds. Unhappy in her marriage, Clare turns to yoga and meditation and she begins to see visions of the past as Isobel Buchan of Scotland relives her past through Clare.

The retelling of Isobel's life in Scotland, an unhappy marriage and her ultimate affair with Robert the Bruce

and capture by Edward I and imprisonment in one of those infamous cages on the castle wall is interwoven with that of the present day Clare whose husband intrigues to have her proven insane so that he can lay claim to her property. Erskine does point out in her notes at the end of the book that Isobel, her crowning of Robert at Scone and captivity are historical fact, but the affair with Robert is merely supposition by the author.

I did find the story entertaining enough and it kept me reading, but this is definitely not one of Erskine's best -- that would be *Child of the Phoenix* or *Hiding from the Light*. While I enjoyed the story set in the 13/14C, I really didn't particularly care for Isobel, she was a little too self centered for me and as for Clare -- likeable enough but bordering on TSTL for putting up with that pompous pig of a husband and not seeing him for what he really was. If you're an Erskine fan and can get your hands on a copy somewhat cheaply go for it, but don't go out of your way either. 3.5 stars.

Sarah says

Female freedom fighters:

This is a typical Barbara Erskine novel which follows two female protagonists – one in modern England and the second a character from the past. ‘Kingdom of Shadows’ is a historic, romantic thriller that shifts from rich Clare Royland, to her Scottish roots and her 14th century ancestor, Isobel, the fiery and independent Countess of Buchanan. The journey of the two characters is thrilling and claustrophobic as each woman seeks freedom from their husbands, and, in Clare’s case, the nightmares.

The disintegration of Clare’s marriage and the distrust her friends and family show towards her makes the reader feel desperate towards her plight. The change that her husband undergoes and the irrational thinking is shocking and at every turn that Clare tries to escape, he has blocked her way. The reader knows the truth of what is happening and at times I felt like screaming at the characters and how they have all been beguiled by Paul Royland’s web of lies.

The parallels that emerge between Clare and Isobel as two women fighting for independence are fully solidified at the end of the novel. Whilst the central setting of Duncairn Castle brings the two women together and sets off the chain of events for Clare over inheritance and ownership, I found myself only truly exploring the connections between Clare and Isobel once I had finished the novel. I think this is an interesting way of taking the reader through the story and it is great that the story still plays on your mind once you have finished it

Whilst Erskine typically centralises her story on two women, I still found myself wondering what was happening to other important male characters. This was a little frustrating but readers have to place their trust in Erskine in the faith that they will find out the movements of Paul, Robert the Bruce and Isobel’s husband. This did not ruin my enjoyment of the story and, having read so many of Barbara Erskine’s novels, I knew that her central protagonists would reveal the subplots in their own time.

I really enjoyed reading this novel. Yes, there are quite a few characters in 1306 Scotland and there is a lot of Scottish history running throughout, but this did not ruin my enjoyment. Do not feel you have to know your history in advance of reading this book and don’t be surprised if you find yourself looking up the stories once you have finished! I would recommend this if you do enjoy historical novels; it is such a thrilling read that even though it is nearly 800 pages long, the pace never slows for a moment.

Lizzie Koch says

I loved it. . . .up until three quarters of the way through and then the main protagonist just annoyed me! It seemed to be quite repetitive at this point. I wished it had ended 300 pages sooner as same mistakes were being made, silly mistakes and it became a farce. However, saying that, I loved the historical story and how it weaved into the present day. I loved the description and how it made me feel; it is a page turner. So based on that, I have given it 4 stars as it is worth a read and is a lovely piece of escapism and, if you can get by her annoying decision making, then you'll love it. I am now going to attempt another one by this author and see if the heroine isn't so flim-flammy as this one. x

Deanna says

Full Review:

<http://ibeeeg.blogspot.com/2009/07/ki...>

Kingdom of Shadows captured my attention right from the start. The concept of two women's lives being intermingled even while one lives in present time and the other lives in the late 1200's - early 1300's was very intriguing.

Clare is our modern-day heroine. She has a family connection with Isobel. Through this connection, Clare can visualize, experience Isobel's life.

Isobel is a woman of importance. She is Lady Buchan and is said that she was the mistress of Robert the Bruce. History does tell that Isobel of Fife did go against her husband, she did crown Robert Bruce as King and she was captured. History also tells of how Isobel was imprisoned. What history is unclear about is the love affair between Isobel and Robert Bruce. From what I have read via the internet and the book, A History of Scotland, I have decided that there probably was not a love affair between the two. However, Kingdom of Shadows was written from the perspective that there was a love between Isobel and Robert Bruce. This story is told through the "real" dreams that Clare has. It is told through Clare's connection with Isobel.

While we read the story of Isobel we are also reading the life struggle of Clare as she tries to gain a solid base in her life. She was married young and has not had to ever rely on herself alone. Clare is very much manipulated by her husband. When, finally, Clare does take a stand against her husband, Paul then turns dirty, mean and malicious towards his wife.

Overall, Kingdom of Shadows is a good historical fiction read as the other historical aspects, from what I can gather, are correct. This time in Scotland was very much laden with turmoil.

Rating: 3.5/5 stars

Jacqui says

I beyond loved this book. It was my first official grown up book that I ever read, so it will always have a place in my heart. I lost my original copy and have been looking to replace it, but it is not in print in the US or available in kindle edition.....yet! This is a must read for those that love Scottish history and time travel books.

Booknblues says

Barbara Erskine never fails to deliver an exciting historical fiction even though she uses a set formula of a modern day woman who connects with a woman in the past who is caught in a dangerous web.

In this one modern day Clare connects with Scottish Isobel Buchan who has raised the ire of Edward I by participating in the crowning of Robert Bruce.

I really regret that I didn't keep all my copies of Erskine's books. Who would have thought that such brilliant books would be impossible to find.

That is a review from when I read it in 1990. I'm not sure what I would feel like reading it now.

Christine says

This is my favorite Barbara Erskine novel.

"Lady of Hay" continues in "Child of the Phoenix". "Child of the Phoenix" goes on in "Kingdom of Shadows". But each book is independent. If people liked the first two books, they will want to read this one as well, but I think this third part is a lot better than the first two.

Sharon Reeves says

I am such an absolute fan of all Barbara Erskine's books. I have read all of them and am always waiting for her to release the new one!

I read this quite some time ago, and I can still remember that I loved it, she researches her settings & history so well, and has all the things I love in a book, History, Romance, and the all important spooky element. I will probably read it again at some point.

Highly recommended.

Sophiene says

This was one of my favorite books many, many years ago. Now I have reread it and just got plane frustrated with the main character. I sincerely hope women don't act or think like that anymore! But the historic story is great!

AndreaH says

I found this similar to the author's "lady of Hay" story. The past, in this case, the story of Robert the Bruce and his lover Isobel, is juxtaposed against Clare Royland and her disintegrating marriage. The tie that binds the two women is Duncairn, which played a role in Bruce's fight to become king of Scotland, and which Clare's husband wants to sell to reap money lost in the stock market.

I found the historical characters more interesting and believable than Clare and her husband, and cranked through these parts of the book.

Clare and her husband are at odds, and she takes up meditation to relax, and encounters Isobel who tries to warn her about Paul's machinations by showing her the men her life, Edward of England and the Bruce, who both use her in a chessgame of power.

Isobel is strong, decisive and passionate.

Clare is a trophy wife without a clue. And husband Paul starts out desperate but becomes a caricature of evil by the end. I found it hard getting through the modern sections.

It all tied up in the end, but I just couldn't warm up to Clare.
