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Heretic

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Not a Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

This is an infuriating book. At first sight, it is a well-researched historical novel exploring the plight of English Catholics during the reign of Elizabeth I ? except that the Protestant characters are, without exception, either ineffective ciphers or cruel villains. But then it rapidly turns into a fantasy loosely based on ancient British legends of faery folk, goblins and parallel kingdoms where time stands still ? and the reader is expected to accept each world with equal credulity.

Its main character is also called Elizabeth, the daughter of an absentee merchant, growing up in a Catholic household that is suffering deprivation because of a refusal to turn Protestant. In nearby woodland, she encounters a ?green girl? who has apparently been living wild not just for months or even years but centuries. When Elizabeth?s elder brother thoughtlessly delivers a Catholic priest in hiding to their home, it is the wild girl who uses her magic to help Elizabeth save her family from evil priest-hunters.

The novel has the merit of two feisty young female central characters ? but, given that there are no admirable or remotely likable male characters, some boys may be tempted to dismiss it as a ?girlie? book. A pity because, most infuriatingly of all, this is a real pager-turner: despite its contradictions and implausibilities, it keeps its reader hooked, keen to discover what will happen next. DS

Running Order:

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