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The Scottish Prisoner



Synopsis

Winner of the Quill Award and the Corine International Book Prize, Diana Gabaldon is the #1 New York Times best-selling author of the Outlander series. This fourth novel featuring popular character Lord John Grey is told both from Lord Grey's perspective and from that of Jamie Fraser, the star of the Outlander series.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 15 hours 52 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: November 29, 2011

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B006FRMYQA

Best Sellers Rank: #92 in Books > Romance > Time Travel #131 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Historical Fiction #255 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Fantasy

Customer Reviews

Diana Gabaldon's THE SCOTTISH PRISONER is at least as much Jamie Fraser's story as Lord John Grey's. It takes place in 1760, during the time when Jamie was at Helwater, and it fills in many of the details of a time in Jamie's life that readers of the OUTLANDER series know very little about. THE SCOTTISH PRISONER is very much a character-focused, character-driven book, but there's plenty of action, and the story seems very well-paced. The structure of the book, with the alternating points of view between Jamie and Lord John, reminds me in some ways of Diana Gabaldon's novel Voyager (Outlander) (and I think it's effective for the same reason). Just as in the parts of VOYAGER that deal with the search for Jamie, and Claire's decision to go back, we as readers have some idea what's coming, we're rooting for it to happen, and when it finally does, it's enormously satisfying. As a reader, I want to see John and Jamie reconcile and resume their friendship, and although that's not the whole focus of the plot, it makes me hypersensitive to the smallest gesture that indicates progress is being made there. ("They're smiling at each other!" "He said, 'Call me John'! FINALLY!" etc.) There is a sense of the pieces of their relationship falling

into their rightful place, particularly in the last part of the book, and that's very satisfying to me as a reader. John and Jamie's adventure in Ireland was highly entertaining, and kept my attention throughout. I see now why it was necessary to take both of them out of their normal environment before they could begin to re-establish any sort of relationship. Clearly they couldn't do that at Helwater, let alone on Hal and John's turf in London. Ireland is neutral territory, so to speak; it gives them a way to begin to interact as equals, and once that happens, once Jamie starts to let go of the hostility, anger, and depression, and begins to relax a bit and let down his guard around Lord John, the chemistry between the two of them really starts to shine through, and that makes the story even more fun to read. The scenes with Jamie's young son Willie are terrific -- all of them. Diana Gabaldon has a real gift for writing about young children in a way that's quite natural and believable. We see Jamie's relationship with Willie evolve very gradually over the course of the book, and by the end of the story, it's hard to imagine how Jamie will ever be able to leave his son. Seeing them together in SCOTTISH PRISONER makes their eventual separation, in VOYAGER, even more heartbreaking. And speaking of separation.... The constant reminders of Claire's absence, the way she is never far away from Jamie's thoughts (or dreams), are just heartwrenching. I kept wanting to assure him, "Don't worry, she's fine, you'll see her in a few years." There's plenty for Lord John fans to enjoy in this book, too. Many of the major characters from the Lord John novels appear in THE SCOTTISH PRISONER, including Tom Byrd, who is one of my favorites. It's interesting to see how Jamie interacts with all these characters. His reactions to seeing John's brother Hal and Harry Quarry were particularly memorable. (Just as a side note: Diana Gabaldon has said that you don't need to have read any of the Lord John books and stories in order to enjoy THE SCOTTISH PRISONER, but I think the story will have a lot more depth if you've read *Lord John and the Brotherhood of the Blade*, at least.) I really wish I could think of a way to communicate to the fans at large, especially those who don't normally read the Lord John books, how much I think they're going to want to read this book. There's so much in this story that will appeal to even casual OUTLANDER fans. I think it would be a real shame for people to dismiss this book on the basis that they don't like Lord John, or don't want to read gay sex scenes, or whatever. In my opinion, Diana Gabaldon has done everything she possibly could in SCOTTISH PRISONER to make the point that a) This is all one immense, interrelated story. b) The boundary between "the OUTLANDER series" and "the Lord John books" is largely an artificial one, created by the publisher or the marketing people or whoever. c) People who choose not to read the Lord John books (for whatever reason) are missing important pieces of both the overall story, and the relationship between Jamie and Lord John in particular. I think it's going to be really interesting to see how readers react to this book, and I

honestly do think that readers who dismiss it because they think it's going to be "just another Lord John book" are going to be missing out, big time.

"The feelings that hurt most, the emotions that sting most, are those that are absurd - The longing for impossible things, precisely because they are impossible; nostalgia for what never was; the desire for what could have been; regret over not being someone else; dissatisfaction with the world's existence. All these half-tones of the soul's consciousness create in us a painful landscape, an eternal sunset of what we are." - Fernando Pessoa

I chose this book because I was finished with the last book currently available in the wonderful Outlander series, *Echo in the Bone* and I wasn't quite ready to put the series aside as I wait for the release of the 8th book in early June, 2014. I expected to feel somewhat deprived because this book focuses on Lord John Gray. I knew from the book description and reader reviews that Jamie would have considerable presence in the book, but never could have guessed how much I would learn about him as well. What I got in reading the book was a beautifully written novel that teaches us much about both men individually and collectively. Lord John's longing for a deep, personal, and romantic relationship with Jamie is a central theme in this book. In my view, the Pessoa quotation above encapsulates his private torture. Given the times, his family and position in society, his responsibilities as a British military officer, and Jamie's own preferences, John will never see his deepest desire come to fruition. He is left alone in that "painful sunset" in his role as only Jamie's friend. His internal musings are every bit as intense as you would read in any Jane Austen novel and the fact that he is a man longing for the love of another man makes no difference in the long run. Of course the internal struggles of both men is played out against the external intrigue of another attempted Jacobite uprising, thus bringing Jamie into the story and giving rise to his own set of problems in this book. I didn't think it would be possible to hurt for him any more than I have in the original series, but again I was proven wrong. His loneliness and longing for Claire is palpable and well established from the very beginning of the book in a most unusual way and runs as a continuous thread throughout the novel. The conflict between his certain knowledge of the outcome of the plans to effect another Jacobite uprising, his loyalties to his friends and the choices he must make are painful to read. Couple all that with his dawning awareness of his love for his son, William and the understanding that he will never have much of a role in his life gives you a much more intense understanding of Jamie that I found heartbreaking in the extreme. As to the writing, the cast of characters is much smaller, the story tighter, more narrowly focused and the action intense. The duel between Lord John and Edward Twelvetreves is tension-filled and thrilling. Initially, I figured I would be able to recommend this book

as a stop gap in the waiting for the next in the Outlander series. Instead, I recommend this book on its own merits. It is excellent.

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