

WHERE HOPE DARES: Two young lovers' courage, faith and hope facing the turmoil between the Great Flood and the Second Coming: the eternal struggle for good over evil. PDF



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WHERE HOPE DARES: Two young lovers' courage, faith and hope facing the turmoil between the Great Flood and the Second Coming: the eternal struggle for good over evil. by Rebecca Bryn
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Dystopian- In a time of social, religious and political upheaval, two isolated cultures clash with devastating results. Kiya, a young healer, is kidnapped to fulfil the ancient prophecy of The Gift,

and is raped by her brutal captor, Alaric the Chosen, before being taken north across the High Atlas Mountains to the pagan High Priest of Okeanos, God of the Sea.

Raphel, Kiya's storyteller husband, sets out on a thousand-mile journey to rescue her from a warmongering regime, with only hope and a headful of stories to aid him. Their friend, Abe, to whom they both look for help, has his own secret agenda decreed by a long-dead pope. They find help where they least expect it, but who can they trust - friend or foe?

A short excerpt:

Abe stroked his mule's neck: the beast threw up his head, the white of his eye flashing, a sure sign something had spooked him. 'Hold up, Moses. Steady, boy.'

Moses's nostrils expanded and quivered, blowing soft, nervous breath across the silver hairs on his master's forearm: his long ears went back, flat to his mane.

'Yes, I smell it too.' He pushed the wide, floppy brim of his hat back from his eyes, with the back of the hand that held his staff, and hauled the reluctant mule forward. A damp smell of burning clung to the air.

The track wound along the bottom of the narrow gorge, among sparse trees at the river's edge. Where were the people of the village, the children? He rounded a bend in the trail and stopped, heart in mouth. The house before him lay in ruins, its walls blackened and crumbling, smoke still wisping from the windows. The body of a young woman lay at the foot of a tree. She lay curled on her side, the handle of a knife protruding from her belly. He drew closer, the breeze lifting the sickly-sweet smell of death into the air. She'd been dead a day, maybe more.

He tied Moses to a branch and bent to make the sign of the cross on her forehead. 'May God in his mercy forgive your sins.'

The mule let out a strangled squeal, wild eyed and terrified. Cold fingers crept up his spine, as his eyes were drawn inexorably where Moses looked, up into the tree to which he'd tethered the mule. Above them was a child, a small girl: her dress, once a pale blue, was dark with blood, her black curls framed her face in matted locks, her head hung forward on her chest and her thin arms were outstretched. Through her hands, wooden spikes pinned her to the tree's branches and through her heart was a wooden stake; a cruel parody of Christ's crucifixion

'Holy Mary...' His staff clattered to the stony ground and his fingers reached for the crucifix worn beneath his shirt. He swallowed bile and forced himself to look at her, to see the dark stain caking the insides of her legs, and the blood that had run from her wounds: she'd been raped, and had been alive when they'd hung her from this tree. His breath came in harsh sobs and he raised his eyes to the heavens, fists clenched. 'My God, why? Strike me! The fault is mine not theirs.'

Stumbling away, blind with tears, he puked his guts in the road. He wiped a sleeve across his eyes and mouth, untied Moses and hobbled him, letting him graze a short distance away, then he climbed the tree to take down the dead child. Cradling her in his arms, he laid the little girl by the woman. He remembered them from a previous visit, a year or more ago. They were mother and daughter, and it was clear from the woman's position, from the tracks of crusted tears across her cheeks, that she'd taken her own life.

He tore his hat from his head and dropped it beside him, bowing his head. God's reasons weren't for him to question. He'd been spared... God's will... these deaths were shown to him for a reason and all would be made clear with the coming of the Messiah.

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The Silence of the Stones

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