



Liars and Thieves

Karen Maitland

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Overview:

Liars and Thieves is an exclusive novella featuring characters from Karen Maitland's much-loved Company of Liars, set against the backdrop of the plague outbreak of 1348. Also included are the opening chapters from The Vanishing Witch, Karen's thrilling new novel, which is published in August. 'Combines the storytelling traditions of The Canterbury Tales with the supernatural suspense of Mosse's Sepulchre in this atmospheric tale of treachery and magic' Marie Claire on Company of Liars Camelot and Narigorm the rune reader return to delight fans of Karen Maitland's classic novel as the company - in their desperate bid to outrun the plague - encounter a band of outlaws, who are making the most of the breakdown in law and order to steal from the weak ... and kill at leisure. But in the child Narigorm they might just have met their match - for plague is the lesser of those two evils.

Liars and Thieves Details

Date : Published June 5th 2014 by Headline

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Author : Karen Maitland

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Short Stories, Fiction, Medieval

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From Reader Review Liars and Thieves for online ebook

Kathy says

Liars and Thieves
By Karen Maitland
Nook edition

Liars and Thieves is not a novel, but somewhere between a short story and novella. It also has allowed me to sample Karen Maitland's work, with this story set in England in the year 1348. The main characters are a troupe of players and performers who are waylaid by a brutal band of outlaws, and the ensuing story tells a tale of survival. As a short story, there is not a lot of time to develop characters, but Ms. Maitland does a good job of doing just this in a minimal amount of space, and I have definitely put her on my list of authors to get better acquainted with.

Anton says

A grimdark his-fic novella set during the times of Black Death in England. Features characters from The Company of Liars and pitches them against a band of robbers.

Atmospheric, dark, historically honest. Works well as a taster if you (like me) are trying to decide whether to pick up one of the author's lengthier novels.

Overall very curious short read. But I am still a bit 'on a fence' if i want more now or not. 3.5 ??

HBalikov says

I have heard from my GR friends that Maitland has a special talent in conveying the time and place of the Middle Ages...particularly her ability to portray the lives of ordinary people. So I decided to dip my toe in her waters with a shorter piece, today. Wow! If this start is any indication of her storytelling ability, I am going to enjoy much more of her catalogue.

"There are many tales told about the year the Great Pestilence first swept across our land, of rivers turned to blood, fire falling from the sky, earthquakes swallowing churches and dragons fighting in the clouds. But the tales I know were of a strange, ragged company of travellers who together wandered the desolate roads, trying to stay one pace ahead of death...But there is much truth spoken in lies, for there was a monster that was coming for them, a monster without a face or form that crept silently through the streets, devouring animals in their byres, children in their cots and parents in the taverns, and no one, neither noble knight nor holy bishop, could vanquish that dragon which would lay waste to all England. It was the winter of 1348..."

Thomas Hobbes could have used his famous phrase in describing this period in English life: "No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death: and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

This short piece concerns itself with a small slice of a longer journey by this group of “companions by necessity.” Our narrator is “a camelot, a pedlar of relics and amulets.” In addition, there is “Zophiel, a magician who performed conjuring tricks; Rodrigo and his apprentice, Jofre, musicians from Venice; Cygnus, a storyteller, who’d been born with only one arm; Osmond, an artist travelling with his gentle wife, Adela; and Narigorm, a white-haired child who told fortunes with her runes.”

The story begins with the companions short on food and wary of a cold welcome at any village. The wooded countryside is rife with teams of highwaymen who tend to kill first and then search the bodies for money and treasure. When the group splits into some setting up a camp and others going to see if the nearest village has some food to spare, the action begins. Our narrator heads toward the village along with Zophiel and the pregnant Adela in order to gather as much sympathy as possible for their mission. It isn’t very long until they are waylaid, bound and about to be tortured.

‘Don’t you mind them monks. There’s a gullet over yonder. Deep it is, would swallow a church. Men dug it years back when they was mining the ironstone. Fair drop of water there is at the bottom now. Lads’ll throw the monks down there when they’ve had their supper.’

We get to know each of the victimizers as the action advances at break-neck speed. Maitland shows her skill at keeping us readers off-balance by quick turns of events and revealed elements of relationships. And, it is true that she can transport us to this time and place with consummate skill.

Rhonda says

Very short but very good. Certainly worth the 99 cents I paid for the kindle edition

obs20 says

I enjoyed this story as I enjoyed the original novel some years back. What struck me as being refreshing was that the stories tend to be about common people. Nobility is not mentioned and for this episode they are of little importance. The plague did bring with it a breakdown of order but for commoners it did afford new liberties.

The authorities even before the plague provided little if any protection to the lowborn. The incident in this story involves "The Company" being accosted by robbers. They're on their own in this instance.

I would recommend reading "Company of Liars" first as the short story provides little background for insight into the characters. Yet, I see that it can be enjoyed on its own and as in many short stories one will have to imagine what the back story may be.

Julie Durovchic says

Was happy to read a little more about the Company of Liars.

Emma says

Company of Liars is still my favourite Karen Maitland novel and so I was thrilled to notice a short story set in that world that I hadn't read. If only it had been longer...

Martinus Elects says

Treacherous and dark.

catzkc says

I enjoyed spending time again with this motley company!

Blair says

I've read a few of these Kindle shorts, usually designed to act as a cheaper introduction to an existing or forthcoming novel - eg The Rose of Fire (The Prisoner of Heaven), Clara's Room (Reconstructing Amelia), Eve in Hollywood (Rules of Civility) - but I've usually found them far too slight, sometimes too short to even bother reviewing. This one actually has a bit of substance. It's a short story featuring the characters of Company of Liars, released to coincide with the publication of The Vanishing Witch. The story itself is an episode that could have been drawn from the pages of any one of Maitland's books - richly imagined medieval setting (with plenty of disgusting details), gruesome characters, peril and magic - and while it's not enormously memorable, it's as well-written and compelling in exactly the way I would expect from this author. Mostly I'm just in awe of how prolific she is - *The Vanishing Witch* came out this year, as did this story, and I already have an advance copy of her next book *The Raven's Head*, due out in March.

Wanda says

17 NOV 2014 - A short story featuring characters from The Company of Liars which includes an excerpt from The Vanishing Witch.

I am loving the short story and have added the other Maitland books to my TBR.

Terrific!

Diana says

A thrilling short story featuring the characters of "Company of Liars". I wish I could read more of them.

Nikki says

I might've benefitted from reading this closer to when I read *Company of Liars*, as it took me a while to remember who the characters were and what exactly was going on — and I still can't quite remember how it fits in. It's basically like a missing chapter from *Company of Liars*; nothing essential, but some characterisation stuff and a little bit more of the world, and the dangerous situations travellers faced.

It's not a great or vital addition to the world, but if you enjoy the characters and their interplay, you might want to pick it up. It's readable, just not special.

Originally posted here.

Sashko Liutyj says

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Susan says

Company of Liars is my favourite novel by Karen Maitland, so I was thrilled to see that she has written a short story featuring the characters from her debut novel. It is winter, 1348, and the travelling companions are trying to outrun the plague across a bitterly cold and unwelcoming country — strangers being viewed as possible harbingers of pestilence. Currently, the group are in Rockingham Forest, Northamptonshire, when the mare pulling their wagon loses a shoe. Three of the group; Camelot, the peddler of relics, Zophiel the magician and Adele, the pregnant wife of artist Osmond, set off leading the lame animal to try to find a village. Staying behind are Osmond, the musicians Rodrigo and Jofre, the storyteller Cygnus and the child rune teller, Narigorm.

When Camelot and companions are captured by outlaws, hoping they carry more wealth than their few paltry coins, it looks like they are in danger. However, first they have to pit their wits against the sharp Zophiel and the truly eerie Narigorm. It was delightful to become reacquainted with these characters — I would absolutely love to see a sequel of *Company of Liars*. However, this short story is a good start and there is also a preview of Maitland's new novel, "The Vanishing Witch." A great read and longer than most short stories available on kindle.
