



Daughters of Fire

Barbara Erskine

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The sweeping new novel from the bestselling author of LADY OF HAY switches between Roman Britain and the present day where history dramatically impacts on the lives of three women. Two thousand years ago, as the Romans invade Britannia, the princess who will become the powerful queen of the great tribe of the Brigantes, watches the enemies of her people come ever closer. Cartimandua's world is, from the start, a maelstrom of love and conflict; revenge and retribution. In the present day, Edinburgh-based historian, Viv Lloyd Rees, has immersed herself in the legends surrounding the Celtic queen. She has written a book and is working on a dramatisation of the young queen's life with the help of actress, Pat Hebden. Cartimandua's life takes one unexpected turn after another as tragedy changes the course of her future. But the young queen has formidable enemies - among them Venutios, her childhood sparring partner, and Medb, a woman whose jealousy threatens not only her happiness but her life. Viv's Head of Department, Hugh Graham, hounds her as she struggles to hide her visions of Cartimandua and her conviction that they are real. Her obsession grows ever more persistent and threatening as she takes possession of an ancient brooch that carries a curse. Both Pat and Hugh are drawn into this dual existence of bitter rivalry and overwhelming love as past envelopes present and the trio find themselves facing the greatest danger of their lives.

Daughters of Fire Details

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From Reader Review Daughters of Fire for online ebook

Sotiris Karaiskos says

Τελευτα?α δι?βασα πολλ? πρ?γματα για τη βασ?λισσα Cartimandua ?τσι ?μαθα για την ?παρξη αυτο? του βιβλ?ου. Διαβ?ζοντας την περιγραφ?, β?βαια, κατ?λαβα ?τι δεν πρ?κειται ακριβ?ς για ιστορικ? μυθιστ?ρημα αλλ? η κεντρικ? ιδ?α που ε?ναι η μεταφυσικ? σ?νδεση της ιστορ?ας της με μ?α ιστορ?α που διαδραματ?ζεται στο σ?μερα μου κ?νησε αρκετ? την περι?ργεια ?στε να το διαβ?σω. Τελικ? ?μως αυτ?ς ο συνδυασμ?ς υπερβολικ? μεταφυσικο? μυστηρ?ου και αφελο?ς χρ?σης της ιστορ?ας δεν μπ?ρεσε να με κερδ?σει σε καν?να σημε?ο και μοιρα?α δεν ?ντεξα να φτ?σω στο τ?λος.

Michelle says

As always Ms. Erskine captures the reader's imagination and scares the peanuts out of you. I don't recommend reading her books alone late at night. The details (imagined and documented) drag you into the book, you can smell the earth and feel the fear and anger of her characters. She creates a descriptions that surround you as you read.

Ksenia says

I took this book with me to Texas last month since it was a big book that I knew would keep me company on the flights and in the airport. I have no idea how I came across this author but this was one of two books by her that I really wanted to read. Her books are not available here in the States, but I managed to get my copy via PBS last year.

I loved the story of Cartimandua. I never heard of her, probably because all of the focus has always been on Boudica, who was her contemporary. But here is the difference: Boudica was never officially a queen, but Cartimandua was a queen. A queen who was loyal to the Romans...

So this book let's us see a possible reason why Cartimandua was loyal to the Romans: she just wanted peace for her people. Ultimately, she was loyal to her people, even if some didn't see it that way, like her own husband. For me, she sort of reminded me of a northern Cleopatra.

The only thing that bugged me about her character was when she divorced Venutios and married his arms-bearer. She acted so selfishly around this new husband. It wasn't the same type of love that she had with her first husband, not with Venutios. Still, I enjoyed learning about this woman and all these new historical figures. And I wish this book was only that...

The modern-day parts really kept frustrating me, because they kept getting in the way of the story! I didn't skim those parts because I was afraid of losing some bit of information. Granted, it made you feel like you were learning all this history along with the modern-day characters, which can be good, if employed properly. Sadly, I just wanted Viv, and Pat, and Hugh and all of them to disappear. It actually got a bit confusing, reading the parts of the modern-day characters, because the historical characters would actually

take over in order to tell their stories.

I had originally wanted to read another book by this author but it seems as though her books follow this same sort of modern-day and past formula, so I don't think I'll be looking out for it.

Graham says

DAUGHTERS OF FIRE is another engaging, atmospheric and utterly spooky story from Barbara Erskine, who has cornered the market in supernatural time-slip fiction. It's a bit of a companion piece to THE WARRIOR'S PRINCESS, once again with modern-day characters investigating a Celtic past.

The book follows a set formula with half the story playing out in history and another part playing out in our contemporary world. As usual for this author, the historical part of the story is truly engaging and often times un-putdownable. The contemporary scenes, on the other hand, are slightly tedious and repetitive, and it's fair to say that nothing really happens in the contemporary story. I was often rushing through those paragraphs in order to get back to finding out about Cartimandua and her kin.

In the end, though, the quality of both writing and storytelling negate any flaws that Erskine may have when it comes to her contemporary narrative. The story brims with atmosphere and suspense and the ghost scenes are well handled and subtle, containing a realistic slant that's miles away from the traditional clanking chains or demonic possession type stories. The author's research is, as ever, exemplary, and overall this is nothing less than a good read.

Melisende d'Outremer says

Bought it on the basis that it was - sort of - about Cartimandua, Queen of the Brigantes. And on the strength of three other Erskine books that I had.

Lisbeth says

This is a book in one of my 'Connected Reading' threads. The first book was A Brief History of the Celts by Peter Berresford Ellis (review [here](#)). The book mentioned two of the very few Celtic queens; Cartimandua and Boudica. This book is about Cartimandua. As Peter Berresford Ellis mentions, we don't know so much about these queens, or the early Celtic tribes since there are no written sources to be found. Archeological finds, and mostly, references from the Romans are the base of what we know today.

As usual in Barbara Erskine's books we travel through time. It is not, like in the Outlander series, that you stay on in the past. Here you are going back and forth during small intervals. That is why it becomes so thrilling, because you just get a small piece of the story at a time. However, the story of the present time is also interwoven with the past. I remember reading Lady of Hay many, many years ago and absolutely loved it. This book reminds me how much I love her tales, and I wonder why I have not read more of them.

The reason for the time travelling in her books are related to a place, a token, an artefact or similar things. In this one a pin found while excavating a Celtic sight is the trigger. It affects everyone who touches it. In this

story there are three of them. Viv, a historian, who has written a book about Cartimandua, Hugh, her professor and boss and Peggy, an actress who is making Viv's book into a radio play. They are all 'haunted' by different persons; Viv by Cartimandua, Hugh by Venturios (Cartimandua's husband and king) and Peggy by Mebd, a young second wife to a king, who is revengeful and her whole life's mission is to hurt Cartimandua.

Cartimandua became the queen of the Brigantes, a tribe in northern England, and ruled ca 43-69 AD. This was at a time when the Romans tried to conquer England. Instead of fighting Cartimandua made a deal with the Romans, she received wealth and protection from the Romans. However, this also made her vulnerable towards other tribes who did not give in to the Romans, but fought them, and became more or less slaves under the Roman yoke.

From the few things we know of Cartimandua, Barbara Erskine has woven a fantastic tale of love, betrayal, revenge and loyalty. It makes perfect sense, although we can not know how she was, how she felt and what she did. We follow her from a young age, how she marries and matures, how she becomes queen and the problems that come with this post. We also get glimpses of her thoughts, her loves and her sorrows. It is all very touching, wonderfully written and above all exciting and thrilling. We can only imagine how it was to live in those days when every day was a fight for survival.

An extract from 'Postscript Two' of the book, which is an address given by Mervyn Jones, who in the book, is a person who believes there is something more in the world, something between life and death, something not everyone can see.

Like Hamlet, I believe there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophies. Like many religions of the world, I believe the soul goes on many journeys through many lifetimes, in many forms. It is given choices and it makes them. And it never dies. The ideal destination of the Celtic soul is of course Tir n'an Og, the land of the Ever Young. The Isle of the Blessed. But, like the Celts, I also believe in a form of reincarnation. Some believe, and I agree with them, that the soul, on occasions splits into three parts on death, one part to reincarnate, one to go to the Blessed Isle and one part to enter another life form - perhaps a bird or a shooting star. Others believe, and I agree with them, that sometimes the entire soul returns to this Earth in a new body. Others again believe, and I agree with them also, that the soul can choose to return to this Earth as a spirit. As a ghost. Indeed sometimes this occurs inadvertently and the soul finds itself trapped on this Earth.

This makes me think of Her Fearful Symmetry by Audrey Niffenegger which I read recently (review [here](#)). It has the same theme. Is there something more between life and death? A very big question.

I must admit that this is one of the books where I have problems coming back to my own time. The time of the Celts lingers in the back of my head when I go about my daily life.

Angel says

Read this last year and I honestly screamed, cried, screamed, laughed and then cried again:)))

Katherine Hill says

Well written just not what I was expecting.

Val Casey says

In true Barbera Erskine style this book is just brilliant !!!

Rachael Hewison says

My mother and I have slightly different tastes in genres. She prefers the historical fiction/sagas whilst I prefer a bit more variety. She's currently going through a Roman Britain/Celt phase and has been reading a lot about Boudicca. She came across this book and really liked that it covered a different Celt Queen who dealt with the Roman invasion in a very different way to Boudicca. She lent it to me under the guise of it being 'interesting'. I decided to trust my mum on this one and give it ago. Two weeks (some very slow reading for me) later and I wish she hadn't recommended it.

Had the book just solely concentrated on Carta and what was going on with her and Venutios and the Romans I could've liked it. It was interesting and I really like Carta as a strong-willed, passionate character. However most of the book is made up of an agonisingly bad modern storyline. These characters are each linked to one of the Celt characters and hear their stories and then it all just gets ridiculously bizarre. I think had I even vaguely liked any of the modern day characters I would have maybe been more interested but I just found all of their interactions with each other so stiff and unrealistic and felt like a lot of the scenes were just repeats of each other.

The fact that I just couldn't enjoy a whole half of the book means it gets a very poor star rating from me.

Gina says

Yet another great read from Erskine, could not put this book down towards the end! Its also interesting as it ties in with her other book 'The Warrior's Princess', looking forward to the next book of hers I have waiting to be read!

Lyndsey says

So much potential but so messy. Like real real messy.

Morag McDougall says

Slow to get in to, but once I did I couldn't put it down! I was a bit disappointed in some parts though, but overall it had me on the edge of my seat once I got in to it.

Becky says

Part historical fiction, part ghost story. I really enjoyed both parts. The history is really well written, as is the ghost story.... The one issue I did have with the book, is that towards the end the switching between the two became a little laboured.... It felt as though the story was being dragged out somewhat, which is a shame. Overall though a very enjoyable and tense read.

Kathy says

If you're looking for a Diane Gabaldon or Frank Delaney Fix, this book isn't it.

The characters are exasperating. I kept feeling like I was watching an overly anxious person trying to decide if he should step off a precipice - turning back, wringing hands, muttering to himself for HOURS about the big decision. Then I notice that the "precipice" is just inches from the bottom. Tedious!

Some of the Celtic lore is interesting but the author makes the reader work for it. She hides interesting story lines behind tons of junk mail
