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The Beggar King (US Edition) (A Hangman's Daughter Tale Book 3)



Synopsis

The Beggar King is the third book in Hangman's Daughter, the million-copy bestselling series. The year is 1662. Alpine village hangman Jakob Kuisl receives a letter from his sister calling him to the imperial city of Regensburg, where a gruesome sight awaits him: her throat has been slit. Arrested and framed for the murder, Kuisl faces firsthand the torture he's administered himself for years. Jakob's daughter, Magdalena, and a young medicus named Simon hasten to his aid. With the help of an underground network of beggars, a beer-brewing monk, and an Italian playboy, they discover that behind the false accusation is a plan that will endanger the entire German Empire. Chock-full of historical detail, The Beggar King brings to vibrant life another tale of the unlikely hangman and his tough-as-nails daughter, confirming Páfitzsch's mettle as a writer to watch.

Book Information

File Size: 2031 KB

Print Length: 514 pages

Publisher: Crossing; 1 edition (January 8, 2013)

Publication Date: January 8, 2013

Language: English

ASIN: B008O5O8GU

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #2,447 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #5 in Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > European > German #5 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > German #9 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > German

Customer Reviews

The hangman gets a letter from his sister, asking him to come to her aid as she is gravely ill. A few days later, his daughter and her boyfriend, Simon the doctor, leave town to start a fresh life where no one knows them. Unknown to each other, the hangman and his daughter are both headed to the

same town, where intrigue awaits them. Upon arrival, the hangman is immediately accused of a crime, and his daughter sets out to try and help him. Alone in a strange city, they all must try and figure out who their friends and allies are, why the hangman was framed, and how to unravel the multiple layers of conspiracy, stretching back a quarter century. Along the way, we learn much about the hangman's back story, and about the complex class structure that constituted a European city on the 1600's--beggars, outcasts, peasants, tradesmen, priests, and the aristocracy. The complicated relationships between them provides the back drop for this story, and lends it much of its richness of character. Highly recommended.

This is an epic tale centering around Regensburg, Bavaria. The hangman receives a letter from his sister in Regensburg, who is quite ill, requesting that he come to her. He travels to Regensburg. He is promptly detained. When he is released the next day, he goes to his sister and brother-in-law's bathhouse where he finds their bodies, both with slit throats. He, of course, is immediately arrested and accused of murder. A summary trial and conviction follow. Unfortunately, he immediately becomes acquainted with the hangman of Regensburg who tries to torture a confession from him. In the meantime, Magdalene and Simon travel to Regensburg together to start a new life. They meet a funny little man who is the Venetian ambassador. The Venetian ambassador is smitten with Magdalene and pursues her throughout the book. Once they learn of the hangman's conviction they immediately try to free him. To do this, they enlist the aid of the beggar king, Nathan. He is ruler of the underworld of beggars and has immense power. Throughout the novel, in an attempt to free the hangman, several other threads of the plot come to light and it soon appears that the murders of the hangman's sister and her husband were an attempt to hide a monstrous plot which, if successful, has implications for all Europe. Of course, all the various subplots come together and the hangman, Magdalene and Simon manage to defeat all evildoers. This is an absorbing book, and the author's love of Regensburg is evident through many descriptive scenes. This is an excellent historical mystery, and one I highly recommend. This is by far the best book in the series.

There are elements of the plot of the Beggar King that are imaginative but some of the author's recurring conventions are growing thin with the third book in the series (i.e. the silly jealousy bits particularly when the characters are in danger; how the characters are supposed to be clever and yet incredibly naive/blind at the same time; characters not sharing vital information when it would make sense just to drag on the plot, etc).

Well, all good things have to come to... a tapering off, if not an end. Oliver Potzsch's 2013 book, "The Beggar King," is the third in his mystery series starting with the "The Hangman's Daughter" (2008) and followed by "The Dark Monk" (2009). The first two have been both interesting and entertaining romps around Bavaria during the mid-17th century (see my reviews: "Twisty Tale of Bavarian Dark Deeds" on 3/14/2014 and "Tempting Templar Treasure" on 12/22/2014). "The Beggar King" shows signs of the characters and storyline getting a little tired. Once again, Jacob Kuisl, the hangman of Schongau in Bavaria, his fetching daughter, Magdalena, and her earnest lover and would-be doctor, Simon Fronweiser, are caught up in mysterious events. This time the dark deeds are in neighboring Regensburg, the free town and assembly place for the soon-to-be Reichstag of the German Empire rulers. In quick order the Schongau hangman is imprisoned for being implicated in a killing of his own sister and her husband, bathhouse operators and would-be alchemists. The Regensburg Inner Council takes a dim view of this type of family affairs and does to the hangman what he has done to others. But there seems to be room for suspecting ulterior motives for at least one of the judges. Meanwhile, Magdalena and Simon rush into the situation trying to save Jacob but get sidetracked into some bewildering distractions: upscale balls with Magdalena doing an Eliza Doolittle; Simon sharing a round with the bishop's brew master; much pondering about a mysterious blue-white powder with strange properties; traipsing around with Nathan The Wise, head of the Regensburg beggars. While some of the details are historically accurate - the unrealized impact of moldy bread on the senses and return of the plague (Daniel Defoe wrote about the plague outbreak in London about this time) - many of the other details about medical practices, living conditions and diet, lack of cleanliness have been covered again and again in the first two books so the novelty is wearing thin. Additionally, the antics of the three principles seem over the top and, at times, silly. The arguments between Magdalena and Simon are distracting and seem out-of-focus given the enormity of the situation they are facing. Jacob, who is "not dead yet" from the detailed torture administered to him, somehow revives in time to save situations like a silent film hero. And, of course, much of the action takes place underground in claustrophobic murky conditions - a device Potzsch has used frequently in his prior two books of this series. You have the feeling of living in a not-so-delightful Hieronymus Bosch painting. All said, the first two Hangman's Daughter Tales were great but the third one is starting to grate.

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