



Child of Flame

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Set in an alternate Europe where bloody conflicts rage, the fourth book of the Crown of Stars epic fantasy series continues the world-shaking conflict for the survival of humanity

Far beyond the borders of Wendar and Varre, Alain, Liath, Sanglant, and King Henry must make their separate journeys, following twisting roads which will nevertheless lead them all to one fated moment in time....

Lost and alone in an unknown country, Alain is caught in a desperate struggle for survival even as he finds himself unwittingly drawn into the heart of an ancient conflict between humankind and the Cursed Ones....

Torn away from Sanglant and their child by creatures not born of earth, Liath faces her most difficult trial in a land of exile. Only there can she hope to discover her true parentage and the nature and extent of her unique powers....

Still staggered by the loss of his wife, the bastard prince Sanglant is nevertheless determined to seek out his father, King Henry, and bring warning of the conspiracy of sorcerers who've sworn to put an end to the Aoi, the Lost Ones--no matter how much destruction may be unleashed by their workings of magic....

But King Henry's attention is not on his own troubled realm but rather on the throne of Aosta and the imperial crown, unclaimed for two generations. Even as a Quman army ravages the Wendish countryside, Henry marches south, ignoring the pleas of his beleaguered subjects....

And as the tides of war and magic wreak havoc across the lands, the great Cataclysm, long foretold in the stars, draws inexorably closer....

Child of Flame Details

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From Reader Review Child of Flame for online ebook

Clay Kallam says

(This review is of the Crown of Stars series, not the individual books, but is attached to each one so that potential readers know what they're getting into. It is imperative to begin with "King's Dragon," of course, and once involved, the difference in quality and focus of each of the seven volumes is far less important than the impact of the series as a whole.)

Crown of Stars is a sprawling, sometimes confusing, seven volumes of epic medieval fantasy that is worth the investment of time and energy to track its multitude of characters through complex plots and subplots as they battle their way through 4,000 pages of magic, catastrophe and of course, eventual redemption.

But first it has to be said that Kate Elliott doesn't bring every one of her characters all the way home, as more than a few are killed relatively early in the series, and some that seem destined for an early demise just keep hanging on. This kind of uncertainty, and some unexpected plot twists, keep the pages turning, and makes this long series an entertaining and worthwhile ride.

The setup is a thinly disguised medieval Europe (think 9th century) a few generations after the death of Charlemagne (called Taillefer in the book). The echoes of the Dariyan (read "Roman") Empire still linger, but the political side of the book is concerned with the dynastic maneuverings of Central European dukes and kings, which are complex to begin with and get even more so as the books roll on.

The fantasy aspect combines powerful magic wielded by a minority of humans, plus some non-human races (though the Eika are the Vikings) and cosmology that resembles the ancient Greek theories about the spheres of existence that surround Earth.

And then of course there are the human interactions, ranging from obsession (both love and hate), religious fervor, lust for power, and revenge, all played out through a cast of what seems like thousands. (Keeping track isn't all that easy, and when Elliott wraps everything up, it's not a simple task to sort everything, and everyone, out on just one reading.)

Though there are many point-of-view characters, probably the two most important are Liath, a young woman who has spent her life running away from something her father greatly fears, and Alain, a young farm boy who draws the attention of powerful humans and spirits.

But almost equally important are Sanglant, a bastard son of King Henry whose mother is a mysterious Aoi (perhaps human, perhaps just slightly different); Rosvita, a nun and advisor to King Henry; Ivar, a young nobleman; and Stronghand, a young Eika warrior.

There are plenty of villains, fully fleshed out minor characters, a magical catastrophe, and most important in works as long and complex as this one, a satisfying ending.

The Crown of Stars, all in all, is an excellent medieval fantasy, though not quite up to Miles Cameron's Traitor Son Cycle (which was written after this) and perhaps a little too complicated for its own good. And naturally, some of the seven volumes are better than others, but if "King's Dragon" grabs your interest, then go ahead and buy the other six – you'll have thousands of pages of enjoyment ahead, and the luxury of knowing that you have months of good reading on the way.

Allison says

A rich and vibrant world, fascinating peoples, creatures, histories, religions, magics, and wonderfully nuanced characters... I'm loving this series, even as I'm wishing for a faster pace. It's truly epic and detailed in its sprawl, which at times means it drags.

I'm realizing that I have to take breaks in my reading so I can continue to enjoy the world without growing too impatient. When I start willing it to go faster, I take a break and read something else. Then at other times, I fail to notice the hours flying by.

This is really a series to be savored. With its scope and the weight of each installment, it simply won't allow you to rush through. So far, the end of each book has been rewarding, and I miss the world and characters once I'm done. I guess I'm just going to be living there for a while.

Mei-Lu says

Child of Flame? is the fourth in a seven volume series called *?Crown of Stars?*. I quit reading the series two thirds of the way through book five. Book four was when I hit the wall. Books one through three I tolerated, but in book four reading this series actually started to cause me physical pain. It's weird because I was so annoyed with the characters for being such callow teenagers. In book four, things get a little bit more real. Liath and Sanglant are separated with no way to contact one another and they discover what the reader knew all along - when you marry someone you don't know, you're marrying a stranger. Doesn't matter if you love each other. The fact that Liath and Sanglant have nothing in common and never really had much in the way of conversations (despite having ample opportunity in book three) really bites them in the ass. Both characters make choices and assumptions about each other that really makes one question how they're going to come together after all this time apart. Concurrently, Alain stumbles from one doomed love affair to another (though, to be fair, this second girl is at least healthy and positive and not batsh*t crazy).

?Child of Flame? is 850 pages long. If it had managed to tell the same story in four or five hundred pages, I would have found it much more tolerable. But spending SO MUCH time with these characters and in this world just put me over my tolerance level for pain.

Gilda Felt says

Well, this is more like it! The pace picks up as all the characters are set in place for the coming battle. Much is resolved, though there is still much to get through for many of the characters. Liath and Sanglant's stories are both in the forefront, and I love that both have had their eyes opened and, hopefully, will now find their way back to each other. Equally fascinating was Alain's story, as, thrust into the past, he, and we, learn, at least in part, how things came to be, and why the different peoples hate each other so much.

The added revelation at the end, when long-forgotten characters are brought to the fore, only adds to the anticipation.

Morgan says

Possibly my favorite of this series so far, though that probably means little since each one I read becomes my new favorite...

What made this book so great was the fact that SO many major plot points and details of the entire series were revealed bit by bit. Child of Flame was packed with "Oh!" moments, and all the best aspects of a book that make you verbalize your feelings no matter where you are. When I finished this one, despite the horrid pain in my neck and shoulders (and eyes) from reading non-stop, I really REALLY wanted to pick up the next book immediately.

This book was also super fascinating, for anyone who has knowledge (or wishes to have knowledge) of the Tree of Life. The account of one character's walk through the spheres seemed to match very well with notes I'd taken from Dion Fortune's "Mystical Qabalah" (published 1935). It also stirred my curiosity and interest in the Qabalah once again, and I believe that any book (especially fantasy!) that encourages you to read and learn even more... is... well, the best book!

Dave says

Another fine book in the continuing story.

Many of the events that take place in the past help explain some of the underlying conflicts in the present day.

The cataclysm decimated more than one race and I think this is conveyed very well by the end of the book.

Veronica says

3.75 stars

Leseparatist says

[Usually I really hate those women holy suicides, but the way Elliott wrote it rea

Rindis says

Book four of Crown of Stars follows the usual practice of giving time to four major plot threads. The new major character this time is Adica, the Hollowed One of a tribe that is part of an effort to cast a truly earth-shattering spell.

Instead of this being a completely separate plot with no real tie in to the regular major cast, it is tied directly to Alain, who has been thrown 2,700 years into the past, and finds peace in a troubled little paradise. This is a big case of *showing* exactly what we were *told* about in the big reveal of the previous volume, and gives a preview of the calamity that is yet to come.

Liath meanwhile has her own separate arc that also takes her out of the main action for the entire book. This is in essence the personal journey that she turned down at the beginning of book three, and she finally gets the space and time to go through the growth that she has needed, and ends with the answers about what she is that have only been getting bigger as the series progresses.

The final two major plots are back on earth. The main focus is decidedly still in Wendar, with a lot of action and a good chunk of the secondary cast revolving around the Quman invasion. South in Aosta, King Henry starts the process of adding a third kingdom to his crown as all the more dangerous antagonists gather around.

I find it very interesting that much of this volume mirrors some of what had gone immediately previous, and while the main plot definitely moves forward, the secondaries take center stage. This continues to be a very good epic fantasy series, and overall very well paced, mostly because it never loses sight of what its own main plot is.

Emma Deplores Goodreads Censorship says

For the most part, I continue to enjoy these books. But every fantasy series longer than a trilogy seems to experience a slump by book four or five – the books grow longer, yet move more slowly – and Crown of Stars is not proving an exception to that rule.

There's a lot going on here, and the plotlines dealing with the Quman invaders and King Henry's foray into Aosta to claim the imperial crown are enjoyable. Elliott continues to resolve plotlines and take them in new directions, and the end of this book has me looking forward to the next one. This book's weakness is that it removes both of its protagonists from the main action, spinning them off into tangential subplots. Liath spends the entire book on a spirit quest, which at least doesn't take up many pages, but I'm not convinced its ramifications for her character are worth more or less removing her from the entire novel. Meanwhile, Alain spends this book thousands of years in the past, at the time the Aoi were exiled from the earth. This is a creative way to give the world's backstory, and at first I was entertained by the depiction of a Stone Age society, which appears well-researched. But this subplot gets a lot of page time without Alain's ever figuring out what's going on, and it turns into a travelogue, that bane of fantasy literature. Then too, I never invested in the new cast, and Alain's innocence works better when contrasted with the intrigues of his medieval society than in the simplicity of a prehistoric setting.

So, while our protagonists are off in other worlds, the actual plot rests on the shoulders of the secondary cast. Who are not up to the standard of the secondary POVs in Elliott's later series. Sanglant is a good character, but many of his scenes are seen through the eyes of Zacharias and the returned Anna, neither of whom has much to add to this story. (Has Anna's ethnicity been changed, or has she just spent a lot of time in the sun? People are constantly noting her "nut-brown" complexion, which I don't recall ever being referenced in book two.) Most of the rest of the story is told through the POVs of Hanna and Rosvita. These two are always in the thick of things and, yes, they are strong women, but they just aren't very interesting. I've criticized their selection as POVs before for their lack of personal stakes in the outcome of the plot, but it's more than that:

they don't have significant personal struggles at all, or flaws or weaknesses. It feels to me like Elliott went too far in making Hanna and Rosvita foils for Liath, who has issues in abundance, to the point that it's hard to relate to them.

All that said, while I stalled on some of the Alain chapters, I did mostly enjoy reading this book and do intend to continue the series; the tangential subplots wrap up at the end of this book and I'm hopeful that the next will be a return to form.

EDIT: Crown of Stars ratings:

King's Dragon: 4

Prince of Dogs: 3.5

The Burning Stone: 4

Child of Flame: 3

The Gathering Storm: 2.5

In the Ruins: 3

Crown of Stars: 3

Cheryl says

Better than book 3 but continues on with lots of fluff. Not sure I will continue with this series.

Mayim de Vries says

"I see your crown, brighter than the stars. You have wandered off the path meant for you, and you must return."

Third book is normally where most of the series end or at least slow down in a preparation for a grand finale. In the Crown of Stars the mere warmup had finished and now we are down to business.

This time we are taken beyond the borders of the war-torn kingdom of Wendar. **War and magic separated our heroes and pushed them onto various paths.** Generally, war is everywhere: mainly in the south and east, but something is also brewing in the west and **the whole world is in danger** because of old magical feuds.

Of the two main arcs, **Liath is losing her appeal while Alain's adventures are the highlight of the book.**

It sort of makes sense that **Sanglant became one of the key figures**; not because of his connection to Liath but because of his blood. He is no longer the free and unbound man he was before. I like the fact that he is on a steep learning curve and his character development is one of the most interesting ones. But there are also **several other POVs that carry individual arcs, sometimes connected, sometimes tangled with one another and sometimes remaining separated from the main story.**

The pace is dizzying dizzying at times (don't let the page count fool you!), and there are **many original**

themes that have been executed with finesse. History merges with fantasy, and this mixture creates a rich world and an irresistible tale full of intrigues. This is an unbelievable treat for fantasy lovers as well as those who enjoy historical novels. The diversity of this series has dazzled and absorbed me.

The Author has planned a series for many volumes, so I am looking forward to a lot of exciting reading ahead. And oh, just in case you missed it before: **Hugh must die.**

Note on the rating: 3.5 rounded up to four because of the excellent vibe from my reading cabal. I don't think I'd enjoy the book as much without them.

Also in the series:

1. King's Dragon ★★★★★
2. Prince of Dogs ★★★★?
3. The Burning Stone ★★★★?
5. The Gathering Strom ★★???
6. In the Ruins
7. Crown of Stars

Kristi-anne says

I read these a while ago and was one of best sets I read so far, so anticipating all the way through all 7 books omg such good set I wished they never end, one of those where you finish and think "NOW WHAT?! :(" AWESOME!

Lindsay says

I really, really enjoyed this book.

I had been frustrated with Liath's character trajectory in the previous book, but I knew that any flaws written were deliberate. Liath had yet to be in a situation where she was allowed to grow. In this book, she gets that opportunity and seizes it.

Alain's story is more of an interlude. He finally has an opportunity to live the life he wants. Unfortunately, the reader knows from the get-go that it cannot last.

Hanna and Rosvita continue to be wonderful POVs.

Honestly, the plot is so intricate that it's almost overwhelming. I cannot fathom any storyteller creating a tale on such a scale (although Elliott is not the only author to have done so).

Why this series isn't more popular, I will never know. It is well written and Elliott is putting on a clinic for character development.

Jasmine says

But seriously, WHY is this not a GOT-type miniseries. For that matter, how did that get picked up and not this. This series has everything. Everything! Evil elves! Technologically-advanced gremlins! The music of the spheres! Heresy! Dragon-Vikings! Betrayal by the gods! Fake miracles! Real miracles! Insta-love! Books! Sieges! Time travel! Griffons! AWESOME BATTLES! Magic hounds! Weaponized gossip! Really good-looking bad guys! Torture! Escapes! Betrayal by your friends! Matriarchy! Fresos! Blood sacrifice! Learning! Angels! Weather! The importance of weaving! Heroic sacrifice by dozens of people to get children to safety! The plague! Feminine whiles! Arranged marriages! Centaurs! Dragons! The place of coils! Translators! Metal forging! Religious reform! AHHHHHH.
