

## Acts of Hope: Part 2 of The Inquisition Trilogy

**Martin Elsant**

G & M Publishers

(350pp)

979-868699097-5

*Acts of Hope is an ambitious, adventurous story of love and religious dedication set during the Inquisition.*

In Martin Elsant's historical romance novel *Acts of Hope*, the fight against the Inquisition threatens the future of religious freedom.

Though they were in love, Maria and Ari said goodbye over religious differences while fleeing the Inquisition. Though still reeling from her losses, Maria finds new love and hope with Will, a Jewish doctor who shares her religion and respects her independence. The powerful couple gets involved in an enterprising plan to save Jewish victims of the Inquisition and move them to a safe haven, the in-construction city of Tiberias. Their journey winds Maria back to Ari, who has been collecting stories of Inquisition abuses with the hopes of convincing the pope to shut it down. The future of both Jewish and Christian people may depend on Maria and Ari's spiritual missions.

Maria is a strong, smart woman who struggles with her belief in God; reclaiming her Jewish heritage is almost an act to spite the Inquisition, instead of a matter of following her faith. Still, she is a proud and avid student. Her wealth affords her privileges: luxurious descriptions of her home, and the warm Jewish traditions celebrated there, arise. Maria's business savvy and sharp mind are highlighted through her innovative problem solving as she enhances the plans to the establishment of Tiberias.

Maria and Will create a solid foundation for their relationship with patience and kindness. Will enjoys the challenge of Maria's questions; their exchanges help to explain Jewish practices and stories, as well as how they are interpreted and applied. The potential for conflict is tantalizing as Ari and Maria's stories meet. But instead of predictable drama, Ari and Will's dynamic complements the novel's exploration of harmony between Christian and Jewish beliefs, and Ari's family background is used to question the role of ancestry in religion.

The book's exciting secondary characters include Ya'akov, a Jewish pirate who sails with Hebrew letters on his sails in defiance of the Inquisition; Esther, a beautiful bar owner capable of breaking both hearts and heads; and Aisha, a woman who was exiled from the outskirts of Tiberias by her own clan. Aisha's story, in particular, is developed in gripping terms: she trains to become a warrior and exact her vengeance. Love stories emerge, and though some of them manifest with speed, they are undeniable in their chemistry.

Jewish and Christian history is covered in dense, thorough passages that come between changes in location and perspective, while ample action helps to balance the casts' heavy and frequent philosophical discourses. The story begins with Maria in England, but also stops in Jerusalem and Tiberias; an introductory note explains which elements are borrowed from history.

Featuring surprises, disappointments, and geopolitical hostilities, *Acts of Hope* is an ambitious, adventurous story of love and religious dedication set during the Inquisition.

DELIA STANLEY (February 15, 2021)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*