**Clarion Review**

Historical

**Brenin's Crown: A Celtic Romance**
Janet Ruth
BookSurge
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Four Stars (out of Five)

In fifth-century Britain, the Kingdom of Dumnonia is in a state of limbo. The king and queen are dead, and their only child vanished on the night of the king's murder. For the people of Dumnonia, left with no leadership or protection, their lost princess becomes a legend upon which they pin their hopes for the future. Janet Ruth tells her story in the engaging *Brenin's Crown*.

When her father is betrayed and murdered, young princess Addien escapes into a new life and finds emotional refuge by burying her memories and taking on a new persona. But when circumstances draw her out of hiding a decade later, she soon regains her memory of the life into which she was born and the knowledge that she holds the key to the survival of her people. She alone knows the whereabouts of her father's crown, and of the power it holds for its wearer: "It's a matter of finding the right person to wear it, someone who will be able to control the power without being controlled by it," she says.

Addien's struggle to do what is right leads her to an uncomfortable and complex alliance with Lord Balchder, the man responsible for her father's death. In her attempt to bring Dumnonia back to what it once was, she sets aside her love for Michael, the leader of the resistance against Balchder.

While Addien's romance with Michael has its sweet moments, it is her relationship with Lord Balchder which is most compelling and richly drawn. Balchder is a complicated man whose motivations are not nearly as simple to define as they first appear. His relationship with Addien ultimately proves enlightening and empowering to them both, in ways neither expect, and Balchder strives to reach a point where "Â…the unforgivable has been forgiven."

Part romantic fairy tale, part historical adventure, *Brenin's Crown* enthralls from the very first page. Addien's journey from traumatized child to strong, compassionate young

woman is skillfully portrayed. Ruth crafts an absorbing tale filled with vivid description and well-developed characters. She demonstrates careful attention to historical detail and manages to thread themes of Christian faith and hope throughout the story with effective subtlety.

Both magic and faith are given a place in advancing the story. While the introduction of the more fanciful elements of the tale, particularly a pixie named Trevilian and his convenient talents, may seem a bit of a *deus ex machine* to some readers, somehow the author makes it work.

Perfectly paced and never dull, *Brenin's Crown: A Celtic Romance* is an entertaining read by a truly talented storyteller. Janet Ruth is a writer to watch.