

Friedrichstrasse Central

Geoff Logan

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In the clever and complicated mystery novel Friedrichstrasse Central, historical conspiracies converge for three adventurers.

Geoff Logan's *Friedrichstrasse Central* is a labyrinthine historical mystery involving the Knights Templar, Nazis, and the Vatican.

Australian geologist Iva Davies hopes to make a name for himself. For now, he works for an iron ore company in Singapore. On a night out in the glamorous city, he spots a beautiful European woman whom he follows across the club. She drops a ring with an unusual five-pointed star on its face. With this ring as his clue, Iva tracks her down and learns that she, Arabella, is the daughter of the infamous Peter Maueraberger, a close associate of Joseph Goebbels.

Iva, Peter, and Arabella are adventurers after the same sense of glory. They meet danger with great vigor, engaging in brave actions that warrant admiration, even if none of them are wholly good. The relationships that develop between the three unlock a veritable treasure trove of historical conspiracies: Iva finds treasure from the Knights Templar, a copper scroll in Jerusalem, and secret information about the so-called last Imam of Islam. Iva's discoveries are joined by information about Peter's past, which includes dalliances with anti-Soviet resistance movements and the search for the Third Temple of Jerusalem.

This plot is complicated and convoluted because of its excess of historical and conspiratorial elements. Further, knowledge about earlier entries in this series title is presumed, making this volume more difficult to follow. Its story unfolds at a glacial pace, with ample page space dedicated to historical arcana, so that the three leads, and their intrigues, are often lost amid the details. Long descriptions of the Black Madonna figure in medieval art, and descriptions of the dark byways of Dresden, Edinburgh, and the Greek island of Kastellorizo, are included but not necessary. Each chapter is overly lengthy, compounding reading complications.

The meat of the action comes in the novel's short final stretch, and its conclusions are outlined in the form of extended exposition from intelligence agents, who spill everything they know about the interrelated deaths of Roberto Calvi, an Italian banker with close ties to the Vatican who died mysteriously in London in 1982, the existence of Cathar heretics in the modern world, and other additional plot points. Rather than resolving the mysteries of the text, though, these additions amplify them.

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BENJAMIN WELTON (June 30, 2020)

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