

## The Book of Whispers

**Kimberley Starr**

Text Publishing (Feb 13, 2018)

Softcover \$11.99 (400pp)

978-1-925355-51-2

*Both fantastical and concrete, this historical tale offers an introspective glance at human nature.*

An intriguing mix of history and fantasy, Kimberley Starr's *The Book of Whispers* unabashedly interprets the Crusades through a supernatural lens.

When Christendom is roused to pilgrimage to Jerusalem and reclaim it from the Saracens, Luca de Falconi, a young Tuscan *conte-to-be*, finds himself embroiled in a conflict where earthly and diabolic kingdoms collide. A mysterious tome, the Book of Whispers, aids him in navigating the treacherous relationships between demons and humans.

With the help of Suzan, an enigmatic girl escaped from the cloistered life of a convent, Luca must grapple with human hypocrisy in the form of corrupted priests and bloodthirsty knights, as well as with demonic horror, to prevent apocalyptic disaster.

The underlying concept is an ambitious one, and the research conducted is evident. Aside from the incorporation of demons, details ring true and anchor the story. Though the supernatural elements and the rules they follow aren't always consistent, they supplement the narrative and provide a vehicle for intriguing historical, political, and religious commentary.

Luca's characterization and personal inner journey are captured well, and Suzan is also ably portrayed. Their love-at-first-sight romance strains credulity somewhat, but its presence in the story never overshadows the larger plot. Myriad villains remain hazy, even as threats, and the tension that arises because of them is often easily resolved. The climactic moments fizzle out as a result.

Thematically, the ethics and brutality of the Crusades are explored, and though demons permeate every corner of the narrative, they are by no means scapegoats for the human characters' horrific actions. Told from the perspective of the Christians, the focus is naturally on their personal and corporate sins, but the Saracens are not painted as entirely innocent, resulting in refreshing gray areas in a plot that might have instead been starkly black-and-white.

*The Book of Whispers* embraces its fantastical aspects without sacrificing the concrete, and offers an introspective glance into human nature.

MEAGAN LOGSDON (Children's SIP 2017)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*