



The Call of Zulina

Kay Marshall Strom

Abingdon

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This action-driven novel will appeal to those who like highly dramatic romance in a historical setting.

Set on Africa's west coast in the late eighteenth century, Kay Marshall Strom's *The Call of Zulina* is the first in a series of fast-moving historical romances in which Grace Winslow, daughter of a slave trader and an African princess, struggles to survive as a free woman.

Grace's English sea captain father settled ashore as a slave trader, prospering in the ugly practice at his Fortress of Zulina. Seeking more riches, he demands that Grace marry a boorish Englishman. Instead, she slips from the family compound only to be captured. She's taken to Zulina, where rebellious slaves are gathering. The latter half of the narrative focuses on the violent rebellion, a period when Grace turns from bystander to sympathizer to activist.

There's a Cinderella aspect to the story, but Grace is a modern heroine: a strong woman not in need of rescue. With an African setting coming to light through references to local crops, baobab trees, and harmattan winds, the narrative speeds through chapters of conflict and violence, all rendered with florid, old-fashioned dialogue.

A woman with an English accent narrates, her voice offering solid inflection and natural pauses, and becoming passionate where appropriate. Oddly, the father's voice is near Cockney, with an abundance of "methinks." When it comes to rendering men's voices and the voices of Africans, the narrator sometimes strains beyond naturalness.

This is an action-driven novel, one that can be quickly consumed. In audio, it unfolds at the narrator's pace—more than nine hours here—and the format becomes a choice of convenience. Strom's *The Call of Zulina* will appeal to those who like highly dramatic romance in a historical setting.

GARY PRESLEY (Audio 2017)

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