

The Green Lady

Sue Lawrence

Saraband (Nov 8, 2022)

Softcover \$16.95 (320pp)

978-1-913393-32-8

Sue Lawrence's *The Green Lady* is a historical novel about the women surrounding a lesser-known Scottish historical figure.

Near the end of the sixteenth century, Alexander Seton—the godson of Mary, Queen of Scots—became the first earl of Dunfermline. He was married three times. It was rumored that he starved his first wife to death when she failed to produce a male heir.

The Green Lady concerns the lives of the women who surrounded this potentially nefarious figure, starting with Seton's aunt, Marie, who was a lady in waiting to Mary, and adding the perspectives of each of his wives: Liliás, Grisel, and Margaret. It also includes the perspective of Maggie, a college student in 1980 who travels to Fyvie Castle, the earl's primary residence, to study Alexander Seton's story for her thesis, while also getting away from reminders of a toxic relationship. Intriguing subplots—one concerning a missing, valuable set of jewels given to Liliás by Marie; and another surrounding the possibility that Liliás may have returned to Fyvie Castle as a ghost—arise.

The women narrate, reflecting on the demands that they've faced as noble women with few personal choices. Their insights into their hopes and hardships are illuminating. Their families force them to marry much older men, and they bear the blame for the genders of their children. And Scotland's historical cuisine, landscapes, architecture, and clothing are detailed to flesh out what life was like for these women.

Filling in the blanks of the historical record, the compelling historical novel *The Green Lady* follows as women in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scotland try to survive the boundaries of their roles.

CATHERINE THURESON (November / December 2022)

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