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His Fair Assassin # 1: Grave Mercy

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Book Review

Title: His Fair Assassin #1: Grave Mercy

Author: Robin LaFevers

Reviewer: Whitney Troxel

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin

Publication Year: 2012

ISBN: 9780547628349

Number of Pages: 549

Interest Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent



Review

After three years at the convent of St. Mortain—the god of death—Ismae is a highly skilled assassin, ready to serve her god and her country. Her assignment, however, is less than ideal. Ismae is to play the part of Gavriel Duval’s mistress. Duval is the Duchess of Brittany’s half-brother, and Ismae will need to be connected to him to gain access to the Duchess’s court. Ismae is meant to weed out traitors and dispose of them, including Duval should he step out of line. As Duval and Ismae work together to keep the Duchess safe, Ismae can find no evidence that Duval is a traitor. Against her will, she begins to fall in love with him. Duval and Ismae discover strong evidence that there is a traitor among the Duchess’s council, but they can’t figure out who. The convent is convinced Duval is the traitor and order Ismae to kill him. Ismae goes against the convent’s wishes, but she discovers Duval has already been poisoned. Using gifts given to her by Mortain himself, Ismae heals Duval and they apprehend the traitor together to save the Duchess.

Set in 1485 in Brittany (France), *Grave Mercy* is a historical fiction based on actual events and people. LaFevers does an excellent job making sure the characters’ thoughts and behaviors are as realistic as the setting. For example, Ismae comes from an abusive background. The emotional scars that come from that experience have a massive impact on how she views the world around her, just as it would in real life. The plot takes a while to develop and can be slow in places, but the well developed characters keep the story engaging with exceptional dialogue and banter. There is a strong theme of mortals’ relationship with deity throughout the book that allows for good discussion. *Grave Mercy* is an entertaining for a mature audience.

*Contains mild language and moderate violence and sexual content.