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Steel



Synopsis

It was a slender length of rusted steel, tapered to a point at one end and jagged at the other, as if it had broken. A thousand people would step over it and think it trash, but not her. This was the tip of a rapier. Sixteen-year-old Jill has fought in dozens of fencing tournaments, but she has never held a sharpened blade. When she finds a corroded sword piece on a Caribbean beach, she is instantly intrigued and pockets it as her own personal treasure. The broken tip holds secrets, though, and it transports Jill through time to the deck of a pirate ship. Stranded in the past and surrounded by strangers, she is forced to sign on as crew. But a pirate's life is bloody and brief, and as Jill learns about the dark magic that brought her there, she forms a desperate scheme to get home—one that risks everything in a duel to the death with a villainous pirate captain. Time travel, swordplay, and romance combine in an original high-seas adventure from New York Times bestseller Carrie Vaughn.

Book Information

File Size: 599 KB

Print Length: 309 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins; Reprint edition (March 15, 2011)

Publication Date: March 15, 2011

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0045U9WK0

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #224,690 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #29

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Customer Reviews

Because I had known who the author was due to her Kitty Norville series, I decided to take a chance

on another book she wrote. Steel, however, was nothing like her other series. I found that the overall plot of the story was very simplistic, but well thought out. The main character was annoying at times, always complaining to go home, back in the future, and I felt that the only times that I was really into her as a character was when she was in a duel or fighting with a sword. The relationship between her and other characters was lacking in development as well. I thought that the mother figure/ daughter figure aspect between her and Captain Marjory Cooper should have been developed more and that Vaughn could have done a lot more with it. This mother/daughter figure aspect was only mentioned briefly in certain aspects throughout the story. In addition, I would have loved to see the romantic relationship between her and Henry develop more. Especially in the end of the story. I felt that there was one major instance in the relationship (if you'd call it 'major') and one brief mention of it after word and, poof, that's it. As a minor note, I wish we would have gotten more of a story about the surgeon (prisoner) on board. A back story of why he is a prisoner or how he became one. What happened to him afterward... something. Honestly, the only reason I can imagine Vaughn writing him in was to conveniently hack off limbs and stitch up wounds of injured crew members without a story of his own. I briefly thought that maybe he and Jill were going to escape together or something would have happened on that dynamic after Vaughn wrote some dialogue steering me toward it, but, nope, nada, nothing. He is only mentioned twice when he isn't conveniently fixing somebody up: his introduction and when he is trying to signal a ship to escape. Lastly, the ending. I felt that the ending was a major disappointment and hugely anticlimactic. She comes back to the future where she left, being pulled out of the water, no time lost, carrying the sword and a scar to prove that everything she went through wasn't just a dream or hallucination. That was basically it. That was the end. The epilogue was ridiculous and I found that it gave me no closer to the story. The ending felt very abrupt and fast paced to me. Now, I've said what I found lacking in the story in great detail, but don't let me misguide you. The fight scenes were well written and frequent and the plot of the story, while simple, was well put together. It is a short and simple read and something that I would read while waiting in line for opening night of a popular movie or on a decently long car ride. Overall, the book only took me a little under three hours to read. If you like pirates and fencing and time travel, this is a book to try out. Hey, maybe you'll like it more than I did! I'd rate the book a 5/10, but I didn't think that book was worth the \$7 I spent on it. I have read \$0.99 books on that were better.

(Review originally published at ReadBreatheRelax.com) When I first read the description and saw the word "pirates," I was all in. I was really looking forward to reading Steel because I haven't read a

really great and fully satisfying pirate fantasy book since Misty Massey's *Mad Kestrel*. For some reason, sailing + pirates + magic = a rarity. Other than Robin Hobb's *Liveship Trader* series (*Ship of Magic* (The *Liveship Traders*, Book 1), I haven't seen many books that really fit this description. My elevated expectations may be the reason why I ended up feeling a little disappointed with *Steel*. The book starts off with Jill vacationing with her family in Jamaica. She's just lost a fencing tournament and is pretty bummed about life. She's annoyed with her family and hung up about losing the fencing match by mere seconds. After being bucked off a rocking boat (with a broken rapier that she found on the beach in tow), she's transported 300 years back in time when pirates dominated the open water. This is where the story gets a little dicey. Jill gets picked up by Marjory Cooper, a legendary pirate queen, and is forced to become a deckhand on her ship. Jill's experiences on the ship are recounted in such a dry, clinical way- bare descriptions about the ship, the crew and how hard life has become for her. I didn't get any feel for who Jill was as a person. There was almost no characterization, which left me with zero emotional connection to Jill or her adventures as a new pirate. To me, the story read like a string of action sequences, shifting from cannons blasting to slashing swords to pirate brawls. Just like bam bam bam. The end. Speaking of the ending, I have to say that I was fairly unhappy with it. There was no closure and no explanation. Not to mention that the book description clearly mentions that there's "romance," which it must define as one kiss and a little hand-holding. This book wasn't all bad, I promise. These are some of my favorite moments:-

- The REAL LIFE female pirates mentioned in the book, including Anne Bonny and Mary Read-
- Jill's transformation from a sulky teenager to a mature adult (complete with scars to show for it)-
- The extremely short-lived romantic-ish relationship between Jill and Henry-
- The seemingly-accurate descriptions of life on a ship and the duties of a deckhand

OVERALL Between being billed as a romance when it clearly was not and lacking three-dimensional characters, I have to confess that *Steel* let me down. In general, it was flat and underdeveloped. Although I think fans of strictly action-based stories might enjoy this novel, the "pros" I listed above are the book's only redeeming qualities in my opinion. I really, really wanted to like *Steel*, but this book just wasn't for me.

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