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# Bracelet of Bones

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This is the first of a projected set of books about the adventures of young Solveig and her warrior father Halfdan, an officer of Harald Hardrada, the last great Viking king of Norway. The story opens in Harald's youth, when he has fled from defeat at the hands of the Swedes and joined the Byzantine Emperor's Varangian guard, far from home in Miklagard (Constantinople). Halfdan is summoned to join him, leaving Solveig in the cold hands of her embittered stepmother. When spring arrives, she determines to follow her father, embarking alone on a perilous and truly epic journey from Scandinavia, across the Baltic and along the great rivers of Central Europe to the Black Sea and the Orient. On the way she is befriended, or at least protected, by various nomadic merchants and adventurers, her safety constantly both threatened and preserved by her marketable nubility and skills as a carver. The vivid bringing to life of this great cast of major and minor characters is a great achievement.

Crossley-Holland's evocation of the period is detailed and fascinating. Food, clothing, religion, art, song and skill are depicted convincingly, as is the sheer toil, danger and stoically-born hardships of that age of heroism and villainy. The author's language is rich with unforced metaphor, the use of subtle alliteration and caesura reminiscent of the rhythms of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and seeming almost to echo the movement of the waters and the shapes of the landscapes that Solveig travels through. Superb storytelling is enriched by Hemesh Alles' informative map and chapter-heading miniatures, and by the author's notes

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