



Blood & Ink

Books Reviewed:

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Blood & Ink is set in a faraway place ? Timbuktu. Of all places Timbuktu is the one lodged in our psyche as the farthest away of all, somewhere so distant it?s virtually a myth. By the end of Stephen Davies? excellent book, readers will feel that they know the city very well indeed and its inhabitants will seem like friends.

It is set three years ago in 2012 when, following the military coup in Mali, the militant Islamic group Ansar Dine (Defender of Faith) saw a chance to establish the Islamic state they dreamed of and, with the help of local Tuareg rebels, captured Timbuktu. The story is told by two young people at the heart of the action. Ali is only sixteen but a mujahid, fighting under Redbeard, in real life Omar Ould Hamaha, the charismatic leader who is almost a father figure to the young fighters, able to fire them up with a love of god, and violence. In Davies?s story, Ali is the first of the Defender of Faith soldiers to scale the walls of the city. Inside is Kadija, fifteen years old, the daughter of one of Timbuktu?s oldest families and set to become a Guardian of the precious manuscripts that are stored in the city. What is written in these books? ?History so vivid you can taste the blood in your mouth. Love poems so passionate that your heart will beat out of your chest. God-talk so wild it will light up your face like the archangel Jibreel himself? says Kidija.

The two are fated to come up against one another. After all, the lonely, solemn boy with the Kalshnikov must declare forbidden everything Kadija holds precious ? music, dancing, her books. Davies weaves their story into events that really took place but succeeds in making them real people with individual lives and histories. And it?s not just Ali and Kadija who leap off the page but their friends, family and neighbours too. The story is gripping, full of excitement, romance and heart-stopping moments. Ali?s actions are shocking, yet we understand why he does what he does, appreciate his need to feel valued and wanted. Almost as shocking as the scenes of violence is the moment when it is revealed ? quite casually ? that he was pretty well sold to Redbeard by his family.

This is an important book, we need to know what happened in Timbuktu and to care about what is going on now in that part of Africa. Readers will read it though because they will be caught up in the story, taste the blood in their mouths.

Read [an introduction](#) [4]to **Blood & Ink** by Stephen Davies.

Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/blood-ink>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/213>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/andrea-reece>

[4] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/212/childrens-books/articles/an-introduction-to-blood-ink-by-stephen-davies>