



The Sacred Flame

Nanette Littlestone

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It is the year 216 BC. Livia is a Vestal Virgin, a priestess of the goddess Vesta sworn to keep Rome safe through the obligations of duty, dedication, and chastity. In just a few months she will end her vows and marry her childhood companion. But the High Priestess's collapse extends Livia's duties and thrusts her into the unwanted role of leadership. As summer heat and the threat of Hannibal descend on Rome, Livia dares to fall for Gaius, a married man and equestrian commander, who has loved her secretly for many years. When his wife Justina refuses to surrender the security of her privileged life, Gaius and Livia are caught in a sticky web of deceit and forbidden love that threatens both their worlds.

The Sacred Flame Details

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Author : Nanette Littlestone

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From Reader Review The Sacred Flame for online ebook

Michelle Mechem says

The Sacred Flame is a tragic story of forbidden love. Nanette has a masterful ability to weave historical detail with entertaining storytelling. Her tasteful love scenes lend an air of class to the “romance” category. She is a skillful wordsmith taking you on a journey to the past. The Sacred Flame is a beautiful read.

Kim says

I was presented the opportunity to read and give an honest review by the author through email. I really liked the cover when I opened the package. The thumbnail used in promotions didn't do the actual cover justice. It was another reason I was intrigued enough to read a story that wasn't my usual genre. Add to that my fascination with history and ancient cultures, I couldn't wait to start reading it. The author opened the book with a casual party setting where I found the characters were at ease with their places in the world. By end of the first chapter, that world was turned upside down in more ways than one.

Livia became the focus, not only of the book, but within the scope of Rome as the High Priestess of the Vestal Virgins. These women played an important role in making the citizens of the city and empire feel safe as they tended to an everlasting fire. It was up to them to also take part in various festivities and rituals during the year to ensure order within the city was maintained. The many castes of people were also explored in the book as well. From wealthy politicians to the lower classes which only carried one name, the author created a character from all walks of life that showed how divided that world was at the time and how people from so long ago weren't so different from us today. They squabbled over petty things, got jealous, and tried so hard to obtain the one thing they desired most. It was easy to put myself into those places throughout the story, especially through Livia.

While much of the book centered around Livia and her struggles, the author also included a bit of Roman history as well as their names for items or places. I loved learning the Roman names for things like the carriages or the different Roman baths that were available. The author slipped these in without making the reader aware that they learned something new. With a great pace set in the beginning of the novel, the characters became embroiled in the consequences of their actions or decisions quickly. Those consequences weren't always nice to endure, but I felt that some were necessary in order for the story to be told in a way that would have been true at the time. Humanity in all its forms, both good and bad, were put on display within the pages.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. To be honest, I didn't expect the ending at all. While I do think the ending served a greater purpose, I was definitely surprised at how everything played out. The story had so many layers, bits of action, and moments of romance that it was difficult to put it down. The ending did leave me with questions about the secondary characters, so I'm secretly hoping to hear that more will be coming down the line. If you enjoy historical romances or love exploring other cultures brought to life by a writer's hand, then definitely pick up a copy of this book!

Krissys says

It is the year 216 BC. Livia is a Vestal Virgin, a priestess of the goddess Vesta sworn to keep Rome safe

through the obligations of duty, dedication, and chastity.

In just a few months she will end her vows and marry her childhood companion. But the High Priestess's collapse extends Livia's duties and thrusts her into the unwanted role of leadership.

As summer heat and the threat of Hannibal descend on Rome, Livia dares to fall for Gaius, a married man and equestrian commander, who has loved her secretly for many years.

When his wife Justina refuses to surrender the security of her privileged life, Gaius and Livia are caught in a sticky web of deceit and forbidden love that threatens both their worlds.

The Sacred Flame captures a lesson in self discovery and finding your own in a place you never planned to go. I am quite impressed by the journey of self acceptance and maturity.

I wished there had been more emotional exploration and emotional depth but I did like that Livia had enough bravery to face what was put upon her once she found a way to accept what had become of her life. I also really enjoyed her journey as a woman trying to cope with female needs as a lover and a leader. We need more female heroes like this.

I really enjoyed The Sacred Flame and was happy that the author asked me to review her book. I look forward to discovering more of her works in the very near future.

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Krissy's Bookshelf Reviews received a digital copy in exchange for an honest review from the Author.

If any of Krissy's Bookshelf Reviews has been helpful please stop by to like or let me know what you think! I love hearing from followers! Thank you!

Jennifer says

The Sacred Flame is unlike anything I've read before, while breathing life to a moment in history I vaguely knew of. Rome is still in its early days as a Republic and not yet at the height of its power. The Vestal Virgins are charged with keeping the spirit of Rome safe. But new and often bumbling High Priestess, Livia, seems to make one mistake after another. She is close to retirement, after a lifetime of servitude, ready to settle down with the man she loves. Livia is soon wooed by a man from her past and torn between two types of love. This alone is enough conflict to typically keep a modern romance novel on its head. But Hannibal the Barbarian is on the march against the city, and the people are fueled by their fear. Fear plays a major role into the novel and its characters. Each one fears the loss of something, and in Livia's case, losing the chance to experience what she never has before. The stakes are raised and I was glued to Littlestone's carefully woven historical epic, one misunderstanding and wrong choice at a time. Very much in the same spirit as Francine River's brilliant Mark of the Lion trilogy, The Sacred Flame keeps you hoping against all hope. I found myself rooting for both hero and villain, as Littlestone reminds us these aren't evil or good people necessarily. Like us, the characters are revealed to be just people, albeit largely selfish people seeking their

own happiness no matter the cost. The author proves her strength for painting rich setting, depth of emotion and the constant threat of tragedy that will reel you in and leave you breathless in the end. A must read for fans of historical romance and mythology and for anyone who just wanted to experience that all-encompassing epic love. This is a novel for the realists and the dreamers, a sweeping, engrossing romance for the ages.

Heather Osborne says

Reviewed on behalf of Readers' Favorite

The Sacred Flame by Nanette Littlestone is a historical fiction novel chronicling the story of Livia, a Vestal Virgin, in Rome during 216 B.C. Livia longs to leave the service of the temple, having given her entire life in the service of Vesta, and live out her life in peace and happiness with her fiancé, Kaeso. Yet, things are not to go as plan as the High Priestess falls ill, and Livia is thrust into the role with much reluctance. Yet, when Gaius, a man from her youth returns to Rome, he captures her heart once again. However, all around her, people seek to manipulate and accuse the couple. Livia must make a desperate choice between her service to Rome and the man she loves.

An unexpected type of romance blooms in The Sacred Flame by Nanette Littlestone. I immediately felt for Livia's choices as a Vestal Virgin, and her desire to be free of the confines of service. I felt great empathy for Gaius's wife. Despite Justina's flaws, she desperately sought to be loved and cherished by her husband. The villain of the piece is despicable, a true villainess, I despised her power-grabbing ways, and how she sought to destroy the happiness of two people. I also enjoyed the side plot between Sexus, the young messenger boy taken in by Livia, and Kaeso. Not my typical era of choice for historical romance/fiction, but I nevertheless immensely enjoyed The Sacred Flame, and I would definitely look out for other novels by Nanette Littlestone.

Leonide Martin says

Given during childhood to the Vestal Virgins of Rome, Livia looks forward to ending her 30 years of service as a priestess, marrying her childhood friend, having a family and living a simple farming life. The serious illness of the Chief Priestess thrusts Livia into leadership and prevents her leaving. Complications enter when Centurion Gaius reappears and pursues his love for Livia, who violates her vows when she falls for him. Further plots from his jealous wife and Livia's competitor for Vestal leadership set in motion a net of intrigue that gradually closes around both Livia and Gaius.

This sensitively told story plumbs depths of sacred obligation, honor, friendship, duty, and love as the vivid characters contend with their emotions and choices. Logic and prudence clash against passion, choices are made that lead to dire consequences, yet kindness and compassion flows from many hearts. The villains are complex characters with mixed motives, giving richness to the story conflict. The story rapidly unravels leading to startling conclusions which Livia's naivety could not foresee. A good read for fans of historical fiction set in ancient times.

I received a free copy of this book, and this is my honest review.

Marissa says

Goodreads Signed Copy Win

It is 216 B.C., where the Gods and Goddesses still rule Rome and Greece. We meet Livia is a Vestal Virgin, a priestess of the goddess Vesta who is sworn to keep Rome safe through the obligations of duty, dedication, and chastity.

She is months away from marrying her childhood companion and ending her vow. But then the head priestess suddenly collapsed Livia finds herself the new head priestess. She hopes the role is temporary as she finds herself in a role that she does not want.

While Rome is getting ready for the invasion by Hannibal, Livia finds herself falling in love with Gaius a equestrian commander. The problem he is married but has loved her for years and his wife Justina will not divorce him due to his status.

Sneaking off for moments together, they find themselves in deceit and betrayal. Will they love survive or will they have to sacrifice more than they could imagine as people strive for power? An interesting read about the struggle for power and the people who end up being scapegoats along the way.
