



The Bull of Min

Libbie Hawker , L.M. Ironside

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“I know,” Satiah called. Her voice was musical, light, confident as a king's. “It's the Bull of Min you remember, Thutmose. You remember, and you fear.”

Conspiracy and treason simmer in the northern reaches of the Two Lands. Thutmose is crippled by guilt over past wrongs. Hatshepsut is subdued by the grief of betrayal and loss. Meryet, the new Great Royal Wife, is the sole force holding the royal family – and Egypt – together.

When an unexpected challenger to the succession arises, all three are faced with impossible choices. To protect what she most loves, Meryet will match wits against a demon from the past. Hatshepsut stands on the brink of the ultimate sacrifice. And Thutmose, torn between throne and family, must commit an unthinkable act against Hatshepsut...or allow Egypt to fall into the hands of an unpredictable killer.

This novella (about 130 pages) is the final volume of The She-King, L.M. Ironside's saga of the Thutmosides of ancient Egypt.

The Bull of Min Details

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From Reader Review The Bull of Min for online ebook

Lisa says

The Bull of Min is the fourth and final instalment in L. M. Ironside's haunting saga of Hatshepsut and the Thutmosides. In this novella, Ironside explores the end of Hatshepsut's life and reign and the repercussions of her unorthodox rule has not only on Egypt, but on her family: her daughter, Neferure, her successor and nephew, Thutmose III, and his wife, Meryet-Hatshepsut and son, Amunhotep.

It's hard to know what to say about *The Bull of Min*, because a) I risk repeating my previous reviews for the earlier installments of *The She-King*, and b) it's just that good.

Well, to start: I feel utterly ridiculous that it took me so long to read it. I just didn't have the reading time, even after thinking, "oh, 130 pages, it'll be a one-day-read". Even when I had enough time just to dip into it and was completely and utterly amazed by the prologue and later first chapter, every time I thought to sit down with *The Bull of Min*, I got distracted by something else.

Yet again, Ironside creates an Ancient Egypt that feels staggeringly authentic. The people are driven by the same human needs that drive people today, yet their personalities and actions feel realistic for the time and place they inhabit. They are not alien creatures nor startlingly modern. In addition, Ironside's brilliant skill lets the landscape of Egypt come alive before your eyes, at times making you feel like you are right there, feeling the heat of the sun or the weight of an oppressive cloud of dust.

I'm very tempted to liken the plot of *The Bull of Min* to a rollercoaster ride, but in all honesty, I've never been on one (yeah, my life is boring). Every time I sat down to read this book, though, I was dragged along by the great tumult of events and emotions. Yet when I did stop to smell the flowers, so to speak, there was beautiful, incredible prose and enough depth to keep me happy. Hurrah.

The Bull of Min explores the fate of Neferure, picking up from where *Sovereign of Stars* left off with her, and this – and the threat she poses to Thutmose and the line of succession – is the main thrust of the book. Ironside sketches out possible answers to the riddle of Neferure's fate and the question of what caused Thutmose III to begin the destruction of Hatshepsut's memory.

These answers may play hard and fast with history – it's not an area of Ancient Egyptian history I'm very familiar with to be able to judge clearly. I'm not going to go into detail because I don't want to spoil anyone. That said, it was a truly fascinating "what if" scenario to play around with and perhaps not impossible. Personally, it was something I could fully accept within the story and there no niggling voice hissing "but *history!*" in my ear.

I really enjoyed the chapters of Thutmose at Megiddo being juxtaposed against the chapters of Meryet-Hatshepsut ('Meryet') dealing with more quiet but still dangerous courtly intrigues in the aftermath of Hatshepsut's death. Hell, I really loved the character of Meryet, full stop.

And then there was Hatshepsut's death – an incredibly moving, heartbreaking scene in which the sorrow of the present characters was palpable. If there's a critique to be found of this novel, it's that I would have liked a little time exploring the immediate aftermath and reactions to Hatshepsut's death, particularly Thutmose's.

I can't believe I haven't even mentioned the Hatshepsut-Thutmose relationship yet. It is a thing of incredible beauty, more historically accurate than "he hated her and saw her as a throne-stealing harpy" crap seen so often and an utterly perfect recreation of their relationship. This is, for me, the best depiction of their

relationship I've seen in fiction.

Finally, there was poor Neferure – a figure I loathed, pitied and was disturbed by. I found myself sometimes questioning whether she was mad, not least because at the very beginning of the saga we spent a whole book in the head of another god-chosen character, Ahmose, believing in the reality of her world. That said, I definitely preferred to think of her as mad than believing the gods would be so twisted.

I could go on. There's a lot to love about *The Bull of Min* and I could spend all night fangirling over the little and big details. But I won't. But seriously: **read this book**. Read the entire saga. I've been emotionally compromised.

(also: hai, I'm the Egypt nut from Down Under.)

Lorraine Rankin says

Loved the whole series of the She King. Fascinating stories. I read all four books in one week. Couldn't put them down. I must confess I am a fast reader. Definitely recommend if you are a lover of Egyptian historical fiction as I am.

The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

L.M. Ironside reminds me a lot of Pauline Gedge, who is, in my mind the QUEEN of Egyptian historical fiction.

Hatshepsut has always fascinated me (far more so than Cleopatra ever did). She was obviously a woman of strength, intelligence and determination. And yet, Ironside has taken a different path in telling her tale. This Hatshepsut is all too flawed and very human. She gave Egypt and its gods her blood, sweat and tears. Ironically, Egypt gave her immortality. She may have loved perhaps not wisely, but wholeheartedly and to see her slowly feel the price of the crown without diminishing her power was a very fine line which Ironside walks effortlessly. And keeping with what modern Egyptologists now know, the attempted erasure of her name had less to do with hatred and more to do with securing the dynasty for future generations. In short, pragmatism.

This was a story about women. Three women in particular: Hatshepset in the waning years of her reign and questioning all she has done for the sake of empire. Satiah, her biggest hope and eventually her greatest fear, and Meryet, a Great Royal Wife forged in the fire of Hatshepsut's flame.

The Bull of Min was one of those wonderful tales that I hated to see end. There's just not enough novels about Ancient Egypt to sate my appetite. And to bring to vivid life the tumultuous and vibrant world to life.

Su says

I thoroughly enjoyed all four books in the series. Having being to Egypt many times I could visualise many of the places mentioned in the books, they were evocative of how I think of those times as having been. Wonderful and I would recommend them to anyone who enjoys historical fiction.

Emily says

I mean, it was good, but Neferure/Satiah going off the deep end and trying to murder an innocent child...Idk. It was...kinda boring, and honestly, to me religious fanaticism is a very off putting thing.

That being said, same thing with the last book, I LOVED every other character. Thutmose and Meryet were awesome, and good and dutiful people who did the best with what they had, and I can respect that. An excellent end, all complaints aside.

Chris says

In this conclusion to the She King Series, Ironside cements her place alongside Pauline Gedge as a great writer of historical fiction set in ancient Egypt.

Hot damn this was a riveting conclusion.

It should be noted that you need to read the other books in the series before this one. This ties nicely into the historical record in a very plausible way.

Please, please write more historical ancient Egypt fiction Ms Ironside/Hawker!

Leah says

I have been entrenched in ancient Egypt for weeks reading the She-King saga. What an amazing and excellent and utterly readable depiction of the Thutmoses era. So involved have I been with Ahmose, Hatshepsut, Neferure, and Thutmose I, II, and III, that I'm not sure how I'll start another book! I looked forward to continuing my reading every day and I'm a little sad that it's over.

Iset says

I can understand why Libbie Hawker was tempted to write this novella to close off her *She-King* series. At the end of the last book, Hatshepsut was still alive and had some years left to go in her reign, and who could resist Thutmose III's famous skills as a general and his most renowned battle at Megiddo? But I really don't think it brought anything to the table, and the series would've been better off ending with the third book.

The book felt rushed – that is, even beyond the breakneck pacing issues which have marred the previous three books. I say that because I spotted typos that I didn't in any of the previous books (“*wiled away*” for ‘*whiled away*’, for example), and inconsistencies in the lore. At one point Thutmose calls Neferure his half-sister. Whilst this is true historically, in this book series Neferure is actually the daughter of Senenmut, and not Thutmose's half-sister at all, a fact which Thutmose knows full well.

The Battle of Megiddo wasn't as good as it should have been because the book kept cutting away to what was happening back home, missing out some of that story, whilst the manner in which Hatshepsut died really

hacked me off and seemed completely out of character. Meanwhile, in order to give the book an overarching plot that goes beyond those two disconnected events, and in order to tie up the one last loose end from the Hatshepsut story that everyone knows about – that her name was erased – the author decided to let Neferure go full on crazy in this book. My irritation with the plot line was not just that it feels a little unfair to the real Neferure, but that it was so darned clichéd and cheesy. We're talking moustache-twirling levels of villainy here. And the worst part was that the protagonists were far too passive in the face of such nonsense, their agency taken away from them, making the whole episode seem absurd and laughable.

““We've been so foolish,” Meryet said close to his ear, her voice pitched low. “We should have killed her long ago.””

The Bull of Min suffers from the failings of the previous three books, but amplified because it is afforded only a novella length, and so even less page space to try to convey transporting settings and subtle, complex characterisations.

I still hold out hope that Hawker's later books will be an improvement, and I'll be trying out her other series since I already own them.

3 out of 10

Rebecca says

An excellent and evocative finish to one of the best series I have ever read. As usual, Hawker captured my imagination and my attention. She took me into the world of Ancient Egypt, where I smelled the incense, closed my eyes against the hot wind, burned the offerings at the god's feet, tasted the figs and honey cakes, waded among the lotus blossoms in turquoise pools, and suffocated along with Neferure as she made her escape. This author is a master of description.

I very much liked how Hawker went directly into this story without a lot of hashing over of the previous books, which always kind of annoys me and removes me from the setting, and, as with all the books I've read by this author, I loved the character development. Neferure is not sympathetic, at least she wasn't to me: I muttered “Kill her,” or something to that effect a few times as I read, but due to the great character development, I could see her point of view, even if it was grudging.

Wholly satisfying, and I say goodbye to all the wonderful characters I grew to love (and hate) with regret.

Debra Giuffrida says

Awesome! Best of the series! Love the treatments of ALL the main characters. Won't say anymore just the anyone who loves AE just HAS to read this series! Thanks LM for your research and your wonderful prose!

Richard Coady says

This the fourth book in the She King saga so you shouldn't buy it unless you've already read the first three.

(And if you haven't read the first three then you really should.)

I was sorry to finish this book, not only because it's one of the best depictions of ancient Egypt around, but because throughout this series, Ironside has drawn a wholly believable and absorbing set of characters. By the end of the fourth book I felt as though I knew them, and by its end I was sorry to have to say goodbye.

While the plot has never been lacking I feel that characterisation is Ironside's strongpoint. Each character is different; they have their own nuances and peccadilloes. Too many books leave their characters undeveloped, as though the story hasn't touched them. Not so here. Ironside's characters have grown and developed throughout the series so that you feel as though you are reading about real people.

LM Ironside is a self-published writer, but you would never know it if it wasn't pointed out to you. It's refreshing to read a self-published book as professional as this one - not only in its writing, but in its production as well.

In short I can recommend this book - and in fact the whole She King series - without reservation.

Stacey says

Loved this book!

Laura Gill says

I devoured this in two days and am now suffering withdrawals because the series is over. This version of the Hatshepsut story features the best handling of the defacement of her monuments that I've read in fiction. Thutmose is as dynamic a character as Hatshepsut, and I loved Meryet.

Megan says

A great conclusion to the series! This book resolves the shocking and tumultuous ending to Sovereign of Stars in a satisfying way.

Cross-posted on Gemna's Book Gems.

Sarah Doherty says

Bad end to series

Very disappointing end to a series that, up until now, I enjoyed. Unrealistic, bad flow and sooo many historical inaccuracies.
