
Review of The Eternal Rose

Review of The Eternal Rose by Gail Dayton

Do yourself a favour and don't pick up *The Eternal Rose* if you want to get the best out of this story, because it happens to be Book Three of *The Compass Rose* trilogy. First, get hold of the two previous books, *The Compass Rose* and *The Barbed Rose*. Because if you enjoy your fantasy adventure laced with a dose of fairly steamy sex, then this trilogy is for you.

As this is the third book in the series, it's difficult to give more than the merest hint of the plot without committing the reviewer's cardinal sin of spoiling the story. Kallista Varyl was a lightning magic-worker in the army, before becoming overwhelmed with a completely new and lethally different form of magic, which changes her life and the lives of everyone around her. Because the One has chosen Kallista as the ultimate champion, she has to learn to harness her skills and form a working team around her, in order to face some really unpleasant demons.

In this volume, Kallista travels to a foreign country to rescue a stranded child – and is confronted with the ultimate disaster, the sudden death of one of her husbands. And as if dealing with this crippling blow a long way from home amidst some very hostile natives wasn't bad enough, the demon they've been stalking for the last six years suddenly surfaces...

I found this a highly enjoyable series. Dayton's skill in keeping the pace scurrying along, while producing a well-rounded, rather flawed heroine in Kallista had me turning the pages turning long into the night. The world is also pleasingly depicted, with the idea of magic falling into categories based around the cardinal points of a compass. The fault lines within this world are well developed – and ably exploited by Dayton, both on a personal and political level.

And we come onto the aspect of this series that makes it stand out from most of its contemporaries. The sex in this series is every bit as graphic and detailed as you'd expect from the current crop of urban fantasy stories – and quite a bit more than is usual for a 'classic' magical fantasy adventure. Whether this is to the reader's taste is obviously highly personal. What I can report, is that it is generally well done with none of the crude language that usually accompanies the urban fantasy and cyberpunk genres – and even where multiple partners are involved, the emphasis is very much on long-term commitment and love.

Because a large chunk of the story is bound up with the difficulties of keeping everyone secure and happy in a multiple marriage, there is large emphasis on the interpersonal relationships of the main protagonists. I didn't find this a problem – but after reading the first book, my husband did. He felt that the narrative drive suffered as a result. However, I am now a solid fan of Dayton's work and will be looking out for her next offering with interest.

8/10