

Peril and romance in World War I

Fantasy tale sheds light on historical niche

Kate Breslin may live in the Puget Sound region, but the historical romance author uses European venues as the settings for her novels, many of which take place during World War I.

Her latest work, “As Dawn Breaks,” is set in the misty isles of Great Britain, where Rose Graham works at Chilwell, an English munitions factory, hoping to delay her marriage. It promises to be a loveless match, arranged by her guardian and uncle, a weapons manufacturer interested only in advancing his business by having his young charge marry into a family with important government connections.

Nevertheless, a wedding date has been set and as the day looms closer, Graham is resigned to her fate. But just as she takes off from her final day of work, an explosion at the factory rocks the entire community. When she realizes that the catastrophic blast has obliterated perhaps hundreds of work-

ers, she seizes the opportunity to escape to Scotland, the land of her birth, where she assumes the identity of a friend who had perished.

Under her new name, Tilly Lockhart, Rose begins work at a munitions factory in Gretna, Scotland, and finds lodging with the Bairds, a kind local family that has a spare bedroom to rent.

Meanwhile back in London, authorities determine that the explosion in Chilwell was not an accident, but sabotage, and fear that Gretna may be the next target. They send Capt. Alex Baird, a Gretna boy who has distinguished himself as a flying ace during World War I, on a secret mission to ferret out any malign activities at the Scottish factory.

Baird must pretend that he has retired from military service, but when he comes back home to stay with his family, he discovers that his room is occupied by Lockhart. This doesn’t sit well, but gradually the two find their feelings toward one another softening, that is until Baird hears from headquarters that Lockhart is believed to

have a family connection to an infamous saboteur. Now, he is charged with surveilling the woman he had been falling for.

Breslin’s incorporation of historical detail makes this an enjoyable, educational read. It’s interesting to learn more about the important role that women working in munitions factories, known as “munitionettes,” played in World War I, risking health and safety in their work.

The author does a good job of creating characters with back stories and complicated emotions during this time of upheaval. The romance in this story has a bit of heat, but does not stray beyond the expectations of this faith-based genre. Biblical references inform the story with a light touch.

Breslin’s development of an intricate plot line will keep readers turning each page, guessing and second-guessing who the villains might be. That said, it isn’t until the denouement that the reader may feel that the author’s use of perfidious characters perhaps strayed beyond the bounds of credibility.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column



This week’s book

‘As Dawn Breaks’ by Kate Breslin
Bethany House – 400 pp – \$15.99

focusing on books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at barbaralmcm@gmail.com.

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