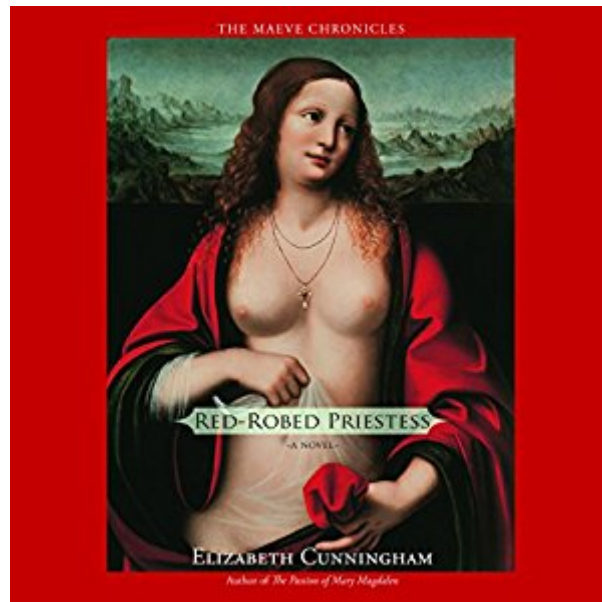


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Red-Robed Priestess: A Novel



Synopsis

After a life of passion and adventure that has brought her through slavery to the Resurrection garden, through the controversies of the early Church to a hermit cave in southern Gaul, Maeve, the Celtic Mary Magdalen, returns to the Holy Isles accompanied by Sarah, her daughter with Jesus. Their mission: to find Maeve's firstborn child, stolen from her by the druids more than 40 years ago. Since then Maeve's homeland has suffered its own trials - Roman invasion and occupation. The Celtic tribes to the east and south are under direct rule, and the Romans are determined to rout the resistance of the western tribes, resistance fueled by the druids of Mona. Just before she crosses the channel from Gaul to Britain, Maeve encounters a man she mistakes for Jesus' ghost. This familiar stranger is equally haunted, and the two are drawn into a moonstruck liaison that will entwine their lives in "an impossible Celtic knot". For, unbeknownst to Maeve at the time, he is none other than General Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, the newly appointed Roman governor of Britain. Maeve keeps this troubling tryst a secret even after she finds her long-lost daughter, Boudica, the fierce and charismatic queen of the Iceni tribe. Druid-trained in her youth, Boudica married the Iceni king, hoping to rally him to a rebellion for which he has no stomach. Now estranged from her husband, Boudica keeps the old ways, sustained by her pride in her descent from her father (and Maeve's!): the late, great druid Lovernios. Seeking to circumvent disaster, Maeve travels back and forth from Iceni country to Mona, from the heart of native resistance to a Roman fort on the western front, steadfast in her conviction: "Love is as strong as death".

Book Information

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Stories

Customer Reviews

Red-Robed Priestess is Maeve Rhuad's last adventure. And oh, what an adventure it is! As I'm sure you know, I've been a fan of Maeve Rhuad for a long, long time. For those of you who don't know, Maeve Rhuad is Elizabeth Cunningham's delightfully irreverent holy whore, the Celtic Mary Magdalene. This book is the fourth in a tetralogy that takes the reader from Tir na mBan where Maeve is raised by eight warrior-witch mothers to Mona (Anglesey) where she is banished beyond the Ninth Wave to meeting with her Beloved Esus to the daughter Sarah they have together and, of course (because this is how all Celtic stories are), back to Mona. In the time it has taken Elizabeth Cunningham to be the vessel for this outrageous Maeve, I have both met Elizabeth and come to know her a bit. She is every bit as outrageous as Maeve if slightly quieter about it. This is the story of Maeve's coming full circle; she returns to Britain to find the daughter the Druids ripped from her arms decades earlier. With her, among others, is her daughter with Esus, Sarah. On the eve of her return, connection/soul/karma makes Maeve risk an assignation with a Roman general, an enemy. That linking is the scaffolding of the story. The two revolve around one another much like two suns. The morning after ... he captures Maeve and her party, and he asks her, his enemy, to see for him. What she sees would freeze champagne. They both go forward in their destinies; Maeve, to Avalon; the general to create the infrastructure that will let him win the dreadful battle Maeve has foreseen. Maeve's welcome at Avalon is far from guaranteed. In fact, there is some question as to whether she will be allowed to return or be jailed for her ancient infraction. Rather than tell you how it goes down, I will leave that to Maeve herself. What I can say is that Maeve and her daughter have work to do on Avalon, and they, despite any discomfort, remain to do it. They find Maeve's long-lost daughter, and through that tenuous reunion, Maeve acquires the acquaintance of the next generation--two granddaughters. And then comes their father's death, the enforcement of a contract, and ... Many years ago on Beliefnet.com, I wrote that if I were going to write a book on Mary Mags, as we call her in my house, I would want to have written these books. As a fan, and later friend, I have taken this journey whole-heartedly with this author. That's how all readers feel about authors who write series that we love. Elizabeth Cunningham is a masterful storyteller. I christen her a National Treasure, just as elders are so named in the East. Her spin on Mary Magdalene over twenty years' time is a low rumble of truly amused laughter, a hot cup of cocoa on a cold day, a series of books to read again and again. I knew when I started this book that I wouldn't want it to end, and I was right. I let myself have one or two chapters a day to make it last longer. Elizabeth wrote in Red-Robed Priestess, "It is strange to know when a goodbye is final. It is a gift." This is a final goodbye to Maeve Rhuad, and oh what a gift to know that I can go to my shelves any time I like

where all four books sit just waiting for me to start life with Maeve and her Esus all over again. For spiritual nourishment, please visit [...]

The Maeve Chronicles has been a long journey I'm happy to have been on. The last book, *Red-Robed Priestess*, is mercifully short (I lived in dread of dropping *The Passion of Mary Magdalene* on my foot). It covers one last year of Mary/Maeve's life, carrying us up to and through Boudica's Rebellion. There are some strange elements in it, such as the love affair with Suetonius (who is, by the way, the OTHER Suetonius, I learned, not the writer) and the peculiar notion that (1) he was the father of the Roman Procurator who precipitated Boudica's war with an act of soulless barbarism and (2) he was the half-brother of Jesus (their common ancestor being, presumably, the centurion Pantera, but that's another story). And the New Age elements have jostled their way into the foreground. Cunningham's New Age Gnosticism I'm sympathetic to but it does nothing for me emotionally or intellectually. Cunningham suggests that the book can stand alone, and I'll have to take her word for it. It certainly is not the place to begin the series; I don't think people reading it "cold" would be tempted to get the other books, whereas one I read *Magdalen Rising* (the first book, and also not voluminous), I was hooked. For me, the foundation in the other books is essential to enjoying this one. The central figures -- Maeve, Sarah, even Jesus and the witches -- need their backstory to be fully imagined. The Druid thread is not very compelling unless you compare it to the material in the first novel. Boudica and Suetonius are new, interesting, and effectively used, but they are very much in the background of the story. Cunningham's take on the rebellion is itself a good piece of speculative historical fiction; it drove me to Antonia Fraser's *Boadicea's Chariot*, an account of the history of the idea of the Warrior Queen that actually takes care of the Boudica Rebellion in three quick chapters. There is, of course, vastly less known about Boudica than you will find in *Red-Robed Priestess* but, as I said, she is not really the point. The point is where Maeve ends up, and that is a very satisfying place. *Red-Robed Priestess* is like the last mile of a long, arduous but interesting journey, brief and, in the good sense, downhill.

I thoroughly enjoyed it, tied the loose ends of the previous 3 books with a very satisfying ending. A great series of books. This is a series of books so different from most fiction, taking the story of Jesus and Maeve at times what could be called irreverent yet a story so human, so intense, with such depth of love in relationships you love all the characters and their flaws and eccentricities. Her other books do not compare to this series.

Cunningham's Mary Magdalen series is outstanding in every way. Her first person narrative and concept of the character with Celtic roots is original and will completely capture the reader's imagination. These are big books to make a banquet of! I am anxiously waiting for another offering from this very talented writer.

The entire Series took me through this past Winter in a marvelous manner....Thoughtful fiction with a good bit of historic relevance to the series. Elizabeth imagine some pretty spectacular scenes - I'll give her that...Has changed my take on Mary Magdalen and Christ as The New Age couple of their time...for certain.

During the last two weeks I have devoured the books of the Maeve Chronicles. Not only is the author a gifted storyteller, she manages to weave seamlessly mythological, "his"torical as well as speculative "her"storical themes during the time of Mary Magdalene, Jesus and his followers. For the first time we are able to see Mary as a human being who perhaps had capabilities beyond our current understanding of her. Anyone who is interested in "her"story or the Divine Feminine will enjoy this fictional rollercoaster ride.

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