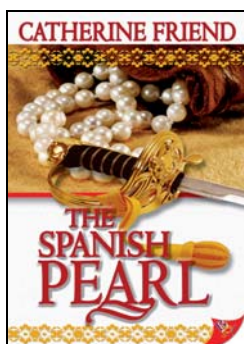


Book Review: June 2007

by Lori L. Lake (reviewer at [MBR](#))



The Spanish Pearl

Catherine Friend

ISBN: 978-1-933110-76-9

Trade paper, 336 pp, \$15.95

May, 2007

Lesbian Romantic Adventure

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

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Editor-in-Chief

THE SPANISH PEARL isn't quite like any time travel novel I've ever read before. For one thing, eleventh century Spain wasn't a historical period I felt knowledgeable about. But it doesn't matter!

For one thing, the history is dealt to the reader with a light hand. 1085 AD is a perfect backdrop for this wild romp. The observations Kate Vincent, our plucky heroine, makes about eleventh century Spain through her contemporary eyes are priceless. When she first encounters a band of what she thinks are guys doing an historical re-enactment, one of them asks her if she needs help. She says yes and then thinks: "What nimrod. I was out in the middle of nowhere by myself. What did he think I needed – a French vanilla latte?" (p. 29).

Kate simply cannot believe what's happened to her, and her slow realization of the truth is comical. "Another, less plausible, totally fantastical explanation kept creeping in, but I repeatedly pushed it away. Time travel was for rabid fans of Star Trek and Stargate, not for me" (p. 43). It's some time before Kate finally accepts that she's been transported back in time, and an immediate concern is that she must live without Diet Coke. But very quickly, she realizes that eleventh century Spain isn't going to be a good place for a twenty-first century American who has few useful skills. She can't throw a knife straight, much less wield a sword, isn't used to horses, doesn't know the culture, and can't fight worth beans. Luckily she does speak Spanish and know a bit of the history of the time, but if not for Luis Navarro, the leader of a band of mercenaries who puts her under his protection, Kate would be in a very bad place. Like dead.

Instead she's caught up in the politics and power struggle between the Christians and the Moors, and she has to risk everything to figure out how to get back to her own time. But first, she's going to make friends, fall in love, and get in and out of terrible predicaments. Her attempts to escape a harem, dungeons, and from various captors are often suspenseful and occasionally hilarious.

This is a rollicking good tale, full of adventure, humor, romance, and high stakes suspense, for Kate's friends and foes are not always who or what they seem. It will take all the smarts and patience of a severely decaffeinated woman to figure out what she wants, not to mention how to actually get home.

The author does a terrific job with characterization, lush setting, action scenes, and droll commentary. This is one of those well-paced, exciting books that you just can't quite put down. ("Just one more chapter... Uh oh, I need to find out what happens next... Can't stop now - just a little further!). If you're like me, soon enough you'll realize it's three a.m. and you can't stop devouring it until you get to the wonderful conclusion.

An excerpt from the sequel, THE CROWN OF VALENCIA, is included in the back of this book, and I would strongly suggest avoiding that. The sequel isn't out until November 2007, and it's killing me to wait to read it.

This is one of the very best books I've read in many months, so I give it my highest recommendation! Don't miss this one.

-Lori L. Lake, author of *Have Gun We'll Travel* & *Snow Moon Rising*

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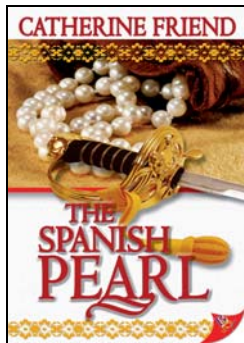
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Book Review: Summer 2007

by Cecelia Martin (reviewer at Lambda Book Report)



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Charles Flowers
Editor-in-Chief

Catherine Friend, a fresh new author out of Bold Strokes Books, has penned an exciting story set in 1085 Spain amidst the warring Christians and Moors. Exciting, thoughtful and told with the right amount of humor and romance, *The Spanish Pearl* is a hit...

...Friend has done a wonderful job at conveying Kate's (*the main character*) frustration and confusion and draws the reader in with Kate's humor, anger, and feistiness. The warring Moors and Christians are also used effectively to move the story along and Friend obviously took great care with the historical content. *The Crown of Valencia*, the sequel to *The Spanish Pearl*, comes out in November and I can't wait!

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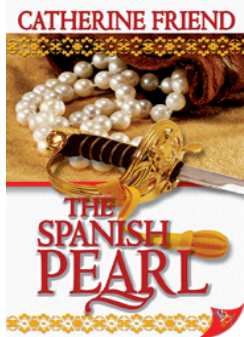
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Book Review: March 2008

by Bob Spear (reviewer at [Heartland Reviews](#))



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Kate Vincent and life partner Anna are on a trip to Spain when Kate literally stumbles into a time gate and is catapulted back to Spain of the year 1085. Captured by mercenary soldiers, she finds herself caught in a conflict between Catholic Kings and Islamic Moors. She eventually winds up in a Moorish harem, but discovers a luxurious environment can be even more dangerous than a battlefield. She finds herself embroiled with a leader who is destined to become “El Cid.”

This is a great time travel fantasy based on solid history. It is meant for a lesbian audience, and it is done tastefully. We rated it five hearts.

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