



Kingstone

by Katherine Hetzel

ISBN 978-1-945805-24-0

Temple novice Katia wants nothing more than to become a priest in the Temple of the Triple Gods. She tries hard to do the right thing, but she's on her last chance to convince Elder Sevanya, the King's Priest, that she can do the job. While she's belatedly setting up the incense to prove she's a competent acolyte, Katia overhears the king's brother plotting to kill the king. She steals the Kingstone to protect it and to deliver it to the true heir with a message: the killer is after him too.

Not knowing who to trust, Katia keeps her mission secret. Her theft of the precious stone puts a price on her head and she disguises herself as a boy to undertake the dangerous journey across sea and land to the true heir's palace. Doing the right thing just got a lot harder. Will the Triple Gods forgive her?

From the author

Katia's story in Kingstone is, I think, something everyone can relate to. We have all, I'm sure, found ourselves in situations where we might have had to tell a little white lie, or do something we're not entirely happy about, to keep the status quo.

I wanted to play with that idea, see what happened when a character was forced into doing something totally wrong according to what they believed, in order to make things right. Can that kind of behaviour ever be justified if it achieves something good? Like in the legend of Robin Hood, who took money from the rich to give to the poor; was he a thief or a good Samaritan?

A lot of the story relies on the faith system in Katia's world. I used a lot of what I believe in my own faith to give Katia her views on how she can best serve the triple gods and the temple she so longs to be a part of—though first and foremost this is an adventure story, not a commentary on faith!

Discussion Questions

1. In Katia's world, all the overlords have a coat-of-arms which tells people something about them. 1. Katia worships the triple gods of Sun, Moon and Mountain. The triple gods could as easily have been water, fire and ice or bear, wolf, and moose. Which three gods would you have chosen and can you design a simple symbol to incorporate all three?
2. Lying, stealing, fighting . . . Katia does all of these to protect the Kingstone. Have you ever been in a situation where you've had to do something 'wrong' but for 'good' reasons? Only share with others if you feel comfortable doing so—it's perfectly OK simply to think about the situation but keep the details to yourself..
3. Being a temple novice is hard, and Katia comes close to failing. Is it OK to 'fail' or should we try to always succeed in what we do? Are there times when failure might actually be better than succeeding?
4. Fugu is a real fish—and deadly poisonous, just like in the story! There is no antidote, but what do you think the antidote would it be made from if there was? Have fun making up an antidote.



5. Katia has to pretend to be someone else – do you ever find yourself in a situation where you are afraid to be who you really are? Why do you think that is? Is there anything that can be changed – in you or the situation – to help you show the real you?

About the author

Katherine Hetzel has always loved the written word, but only started writing “properly” after giving up her job as a pharmaceutical microbiologist to be a stay-at-home mum. The silly songs and daft poems she wrote for her children grew into longer stories. A member of the on-line writing community The Word Cloud, Katherine operates under the name of Squidge and blogs at Squidge’s Scribbles. She lives in the heart of the UK with Mr Squidge and two teenaged children.