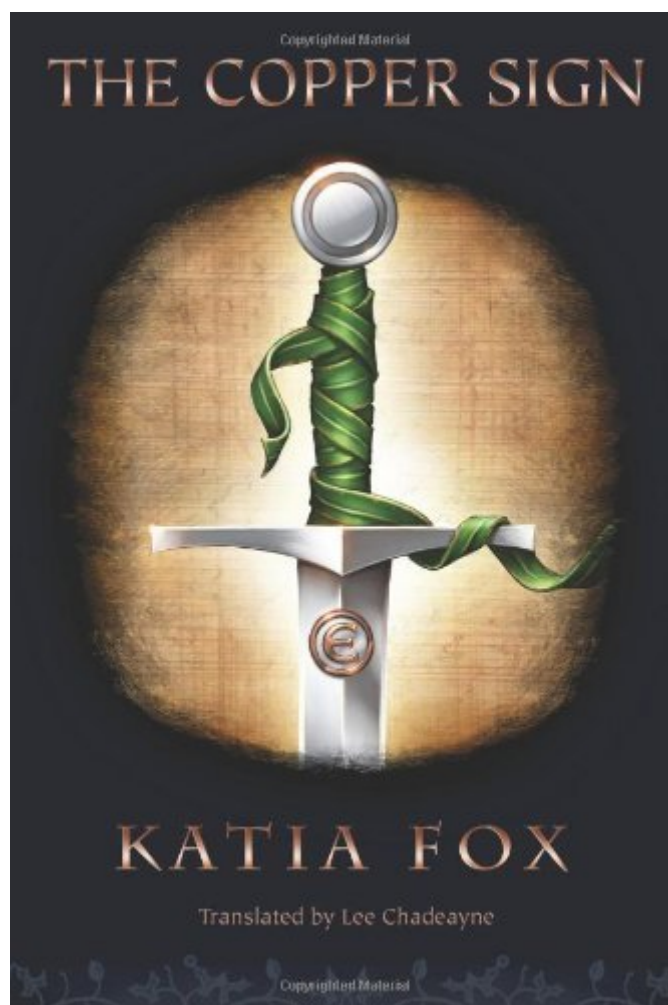


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The Copper Sign



Synopsis

A vital, evocative novel with a female protagonist who not only forges swords but also our vision of the middle ages. “ Javier Sierra, author of *The Secret Supper* and *The Lost Angel* England 1161: Ellen, a blacksmith’s daughter, wants to become a swordsmith, but for a girl this male profession is unimaginable. Forced to run away from home, she disguises herself as a boy and has the opportunity to accompany a famous swordsmith to Normandy, where the sons of the greatest barons are trained to be knights. Under the assumed identity of Alan she learns the trade and becomes familiar with court life. When she falls in love with Guillaume, a young noble man, she can’t divulge her secret for fear it will endanger her dream of fame and recognition. Across countries and time, Ellen struggles to achieve her dream and find her place, always in fear that Thibault, an evil knight who tracks her every move, waits around the corner. Full of tension, intrigue, and treachery, *The Copper Sign* is a passionate tour de force that will leave you breathlessly awaiting book two.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Research - 5 stars (at least as far as blacksmithing goes)Execution - 1 starWriting ability - 2

starsTotal - 2.5 starsOriginally published in Germany in 2006, *The Copper Sign* was picked up and translated by .com's Crossing publishing imprint. Now, I don't know if it's the fault of the translator or if it's the fault of the original prose, but despite the book's history, it still reads as a self-published work. There's a good book in here and a competent editor would've brought it out. As it stands, though, one has to wade through a lot of chaff to get to the few kernels of a good story. First off, there's the length: over 600 pages. And this is just the first novel of a trilogy. This book could've been cut down into a trilogy all by itself. That said, most of those 600 pages are devoted to a whole lotta nothing. I give credit to the author: It's obvious she loves the art of blacksmithing and it's just as obvious she's studied it in a great deal of depth. However, like many authors, it's just as obvious she had a hard time deciding what research to cut from her story and so decided just to put all of it in. As a result, we get many passages detailing (and I do mean detailing) the work put into creating a medieval sword and other ironworking skills. After a while, the book begins to read as a treatise on medieval metallurgy, which, in context, would be fascinating, I'm sure. But not in the middle of a fiction novel. A few brief passages here and there, highlighting specific points of the process would've given the reader plenty of insight into how medieval craftspeople worked without bogging the narrative down. Speaking of the narrative, to be honest, there really wasn't one.

This was a pretty interesting book. For some reason I had it in my mind as a fantasy, but I'd actually probably consider it historical fiction. Regardless, it had a strong main character and a compelling storyline. Ellenweore is a young girl who often works in the blacksmith shop with her father. Her mother is cruel to her and when Ellen catches her dallying with a local knight, she has to run for safety as she knows she'll be killed for the knowledge. Dressed as a boy she finds work in a blacksmith's shop who does a lot of sword smithing and apprentices herself on. She still remains as a boy though as women are not allowed to enter that field. But something happens there as well and through her life, despite being talented in smithing, Ellen doesn't seem to be able to stay in one place as long. Add to that a half brother who doesn't realize they're related and who wants Ellen all to himself, and things are surely complicated for her. All she dreams about is forging a sword for the King, but it seems unlikely that she will ever have a chance to do so with so many things going against her. Ellen is an interesting character. Sometimes I liked her, sometimes I didn't. She had a tendency to be harsh for no particularly good reason (or at least a reason that wasn't explained fully) and at other times she could be extremely understanding. She also had some weaknesses despite being a strong female character so that made her realistic as well. The men in the novel varied, I liked Isaac despite his foolishness but the rest of the men seemed to undergo drastic personality

changes and become something completely unlike what they had started out as. True this can happen in real life, but not to the extent it does in this book.

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