



The Devil to Pay: The Story of Alice and Petronilla

Hugh Ryan

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Kilkenny, 1324. Alice Kyteler, outspoken daughter of a wealthy Flemish banker, has survived four husbands and is beset by the gossip and rivalry of a medieval Anglo-Norman town. Her beautiful maid is Petronilla, child of an itinerant shoemaker, her lover Sir Arnaud le Poer is seneschal and lord of south Leinster. Her nemesis is Richard de Ledrede, English Franciscan, scholar, poet and now bishop of Ossory, determined to reassert clerical power and restore the dilapidated cathedral. To him Alice embodies the moral laxity of the age, her irreverence and knowledge of healing feeding his anger and obsession with witchcraft. Outside the city walls the native Irish are resurgent after 150 years of dispossession. In the streets of Kilkenny, crowds gather around the stake. In *The Devil to Pay*, Hugh Ryan tells the true story of Alice and Petronilla -- portrayed against a backdrop of the struggles between Norman and Gael -- bringing to life a remarkable tapestry of this pivotal era in Irish history.

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