Normandy 1067---William may have conquered England, but it is a conquest of a different kind that one English earl has in mind.

Fresh from his defeat of King Harold at the Battle of Hastings, William of Normandy has returned home in triumph, accompanied by the English nobles he cannot trust to leave behind. For Waltheof of Huntington, however, rebellion is not at the forefront of his thoughts. From the moment he catches sight of Judith, daughter of the King’s formidable sister, he knows he has found his future wife.

When Waltheof saves Judith’s life, it is clear that the attraction is mutual. But marriage has little to do with love in medieval Europe. When William refuses to let the couple wed, Waltheof joins forces with his fellow rebels in an uprising against the King. William brutally crushes the rebellion, but realizes that Waltheof cannot be ignored. Marrying him to his niece, he decides, is the perfect way to keep him in check.

But is the match between the Saxon earl and Norman lady made in heaven or hell? As their children grow, Waltheof and Judith must choose between their feelings for each other and older loyalties. At the same time, the reputation of Waltheof’s Norman acquaintance Simon de Senlis continues to flourish. The son of William’s chamberlain, he shares a special bond with Waltheof, who rescued him from being trampled by a horse when he was a squire. Now Simon enjoys the confidence of both the King and the rebel earl. And when tension between the two ignites once more, it is Simon who is set to reap the reward.
Based on an astonishing true story of honor, treachery, and love, The Winter Mantle is historical fiction at its very best, reaching from the turbulent reign of William the conqueror to the high drama of the Crusades.

My Personal Review:
England, 1067, not long after the Norman Conquest. The Saxons are in France, and King William plans to go to war against them. The Earl of Waltheof, a giant of a man with Viking looks, falls for Judith, King William’s niece. William, of course, is opposed to this union, but that doesn’t stop the earl from desiring Judith as his wife. But then things change. William thinks it over and comes to the conclusion that an alliance with Waltheof would be beneficial for him. A political alliance through marriage would come in handy for him. And so, a deal is made. And that is just the beginning for Waltheof and Judith. The hardships they go through, mixed in with some tragedies and struggles, really make them test their feelings. What’s worse is that they have different beliefs, different views, which makes their union all the harder to take. Each person has a preference for his upbringing and cultural/political views, which is understandable, but spells trouble to an otherwise passionate couple. Does love conquer all in a time when war and politics rule since William conquered England?

Elizabeth Chadwick wowed me with The Conquest, which also takes place during the Norman Conquest. Once again she has captured me with this beautiful and at times sad tale of love and war during the medieval times. Chadwick uses modern language for her narrative and at times with the dialogue as well. I like the fact that she does this without throwing the reader with a wording that may sound too modern for the times. She has explained in her author notes that she rather use modern terminology at times so as not to confuse the reader. I for one appreciate this. Though I like my historical novels to have a convincing language that captures the times, I also understand that authors mustn’t go too far and try too hard to sound like they’re from another time -- thus sounding fake and pretentious in the process. This is far from the truth with Chadwick. The Winter Mantle, like The Conquest, is wonderfully researched, and you are transported to a time when men wore armor and tunics and the women covered their long hair with pieces of cloth that looked not unlike a nun’s headdress. Waltheof and Lady Judith moved me, and the secondary characters are also very compelling. I couldn’t put this wonderful effort down. I recommend The Winter Mantle and Elizabeth Chadwick. I already have The Marsh Kings Daughter and The Scarlet Lion in my possession, and I look forward to reading them. But first I will take a break and absorb this wonderful effort for a while longer. This author is not published in the US (at least, not that I know of), and I won’t be able to order her UK books for a while.
For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
The Winter Mantle - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!