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The Captive Maiden (Fairy Tale Romance Series)



Synopsis

Happily Ever After Or Happily Nevermore? Gisela's childhood was filled with laughter and visits from nobles such as the duke and his young son. But since her father's death, each day has been filled with nothing but servitude to her stepmother. So when Gisela learns the duke's son, Valten, the boy she has daydreamed about for years is throwing a ball in hopes of finding a wife, she vows to find a way to attend, even if it's only for a taste of a life she'll never have. To her surprise, she catches Valten's eye. Though he is rough around the edges, Gisela finds Valten has completely captured her heart. But other forces are bent on keeping the two from falling further in love, putting Gisela in more danger than she ever imagined.

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Customer Reviews

Gr 6-10 • Without magic dust or musical interludes, Dickerson delivers a wonderful spin on "Cinderella" that is full of engaging, thoughtful characters amid lively medieval pageantry. Gisela, 17, works as a servant for her wicked stepmother and stepsisters. When the Duke announces a grand tournament to celebrate the return of his oldest son, Valten, she risks everything to attend. A chance encounter with Valten changes their lives and sets off a dramatic chain of events. The measured pace incorporates suspenseful plot twists, keeping readers wondering if there will be a happily-ever-after ending. Readers of Dickerson's "Snow White"-inspired *The Fairest*

Beauty (Zondervan, 2013) will recognize Gabe, Valten's younger brother, and Sophie, Valten's former betrothed. The character-driven story line focuses on Gisela's and Valten's individual growth as well as on their budding relationship. Detailed descriptions create a strong sense of a 1400s' medieval town, from the vibrant marketplace to the cold castles, to knights battling in front of a gallery of beautiful maidens in their finery. The setting emphasizes the limited options available to Gisela as a young maiden with no money or family. The inspirational and reflective tone shows her to be kind and forgiving despite her hardships, and Valten, brave and chivalrous, no longer seeks fame and glory, but rather welcomes the "idea of God-given purpose." This novel has lots of appeal for fans of fairy tales and of chivalry and knights. —June Shimonishi, Torrance Public Library, CA

Never was a Cinderella tale so fraught with menacing forces! Not only does Gisela have to contend with an evil stepmother and stepsisters who would move heaven and earth to prevent the local duke's handsome son from pursuing her, but the evil knight Ruexner will stop at nothing to imprison the poor girl and force her into marriage. Ruexner is locked in a long-simmering grudge match against Valten, the duke's son, who is equally smitten with our girl. Will Valten's attractive, honorable, and gifted with legendary fighting skills overcome his nemesis to win his lady? How much luck can go Gisela and Valten's way as they try to escape one calamitous tight spot after another? Expect high romance, melodrama, and Christian inspiration in a vivid medieval setting. Even when she seems doomed, Gisela will swoon at the thought of her handsome rescuer's features: "How could he look so handsome with a bruised eye and dried blood at his temple?" Readers will appreciate Gisela's pluck as she participates in her rescue — make that rescues — from Ruexner. Grades 7-10. --Anne OMalley

It's the story of Cinderella as you've never seen before! Gisela is a strong, hard-working young woman who lives under the cruel hand of her stepmother and two stepsisters. She dreams about the day she'll be free from their oppression, but in the meanwhile she's finding ways to make the most of her situation. She also dreams about Valten, the eldest son of the duke of Hagenheim and champion of tournaments around the world, whom she met when she was a child and has admired from afar. When Hagenheim hosts its own tournament and Valten comes back home, Gisela hardly hopes to even catch sight of him. But when another competing knight named Reuxner accosts her in the marketplace, Valten interferes and makes sure Gisela gets safely away from him. Valten finds

the outspoken and quick-witted Gisela enchanting, and asks her to be sure to come to the tournament so he can see her again. As Valten and Gisela begin spending time together and forging a friendship, Reuxner sees this as the perfect opportunity to hurt his longtime rival. He approaches Gisela's stepmother and she agrees to sell Gisela to be Reuxner's bride. Knowing she won't marry him willingly, the two plot to kidnap Gisela and threaten Valten in order to force her acquiescence. The courageous Valten has a thing or two to say about this plan and sets off to find and rescue Gisela. I really liked the character of Valten. He's a man of strength and determination, but one of his weaknesses is relying too much on himself. The twists and turns of the story bring him to a place of humility and the realization that he needs to lean on the Lord and to accept the help of others if he ever hopes to free his captive maiden. As someone who is often stubborn enough to think I can handle things on my own, I could identify with Valten and I enjoyed his journey. There are no fairy godmothers in this version, just friends who are there to help Gisela and Valten become who they need to be. The idea of community is not always a popular one in this world that prizes fierce independence, but God desires that we walk in fellowship with others and help one another on life's path. In community is strength, and I am glad we get stories like this to come along and remind us of that every now and then.

While this is a handsome looking novel and is certainly a fairly decent enough read, I was a bit disappointed. I was expecting something more sinister- more lively to read. The story starts out decently enough, with Gisela living in the expected Cinderella squalor, hits a high note when Hamlin sees her for the first time, and then slows to a dull crawl with 1/4 of the book devoted to a jousting scene. It is far longer and far more drawn out than it needs to be. Despite that, I didn't have to struggle too much to work my way through it, since the book is written in a fairly easy, flowing style. Things pick up once the romance between Hamlin and Gisela picks up, but still, the book doesn't get that much more exciting. Nothing came easily to the protagonists, which started out as a nice change, but then became confusing. Hamlin has a broken hand throughout half the story, and yet in several instances, he's lifting Gisela up onto horses and all over the place with that same broken hand. Even though they struggled over and over again (seriously, if anything could go wrong in this book, you could be guaranteed that it would) it seemed that their struggles were somewhat easily overcome. Even the villain wasn't villainous enough to me. I was expecting a threat of ravishment or actual harm against Gisela from the villain, but he was actually insisting that he marry her first! The whole story was somewhat puritanical and completely genteel and polite. The deeper I got into it, the more it started reading like a Sunday school story, and as a religious person, even I was

struggling with it, rolling my eyes and wishing that the author hadn't decided to slip a miracle play into the story. It wasn't even subtle! It's a gentle fairytale retelling perhaps better suited to younger female audiences. While it was a simple enough read for an older teen audience, it didn't captivate me like other fairytale retellings. It was sweet and cute, but the chemistry in the romance dwindled throughout the story and the villain didn't seem like a legitimate threat. It was like the movie *Ever After*, but with long, drawn-out jousting. I wanted to like it more, but it just didn't live up to the high expectations that other excellent fairytale retellings have created for me.

This is the 4th book in Melanie Dickerson's Hagenheim series and they are all wonderful but I have to admit, this is my favorite one yet. This is a Cinderella story and I love it because you don't have to wait until the end to get the happiness you normally have to wait until the end to get. The entire story is packed with action, adventure, and romance. I wish all books were written like this. Again, if you enjoy escaping into Fairy Tales and a medieval setting, you will love this series and this story. The book stands alone, but you will be much happier if you read the series in order. Be happy, read them in order, and enjoy!

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