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Sophie has long wished to get away from her stepmother's jealous anger, and believes escape is her only chance to be happy. Then a young man named Gabe arrives from Hagenheim Castle, claiming she is betrothed to his older brother, and everything twists upside down. This could be her chance at freedom - but can she trust another person to keep her safe?

Gabe knows he defied his parents Rose and Wilhelm by going to find Sophie, and now he believes they had a right to worry: the orphan girl has stolen his heart. Though romance is impossible - she is his brother's future wife, and Gabe himself is betrothed to someone else - he promises to himself he will keep her safe, no matter what.

When the pair are forced to run to the Cottage of the Seven, they find help - but also find their feelings for each other have grown. Can they find a way to protect Sophie while also safeguarding their hearts?

The Fairest Beauty Details

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From Reader Review The Fairest Beauty for online ebook

Jessica Wheaton says

This is the 2nd book I have read by Melanie Dickerson (yes, I've been reading them out of order). I didn't enjoy it quite as much as "The Princess Spy", but it was still such a sweet retelling! I absolutely LOVED her retelling of the seven dwarfs! They were all so sweet! and that ending! Wow, I had no idea how she would wrap that up!

Some things I didn't exactly care for was the fact that both of them were engaged, yet they were very attracted to each other. It sorta bothered me, even though it did turn out all right. I'm also not a huge fan of love triangles, and this book did seem to have one of those.

However, all things considered, I thoroughly enjoyed it and I can't to read the next book! :)

Anne says

DNF at 39%

Warning: This is Christian Fiction

Not that there's anything wrong with that...

I reallyreallyreally would have appreciated knowing that, though, *before* I invested my mother-#@!ing reading time in this sucker!

There is no way I would have picked this thing up, if I'd known what I was getting into.

Where is Tipper Gore with her little *Advisory* stickers when you need her?!

I kept wondering why the hero and heroine kept saying things like, "God help me escape", or "God, help me to be strong."

And I also wondered why Snow White (or Sophie) was such a freakin' goody-goody.

I must be kind, I must forgive, I must follow my Savior's example.

Ok, admittedly, that last one should have clued me in.

But it wasn't that they prayed to God that got under my skin.

Oh no.

I started getting annoyed when Gabe (hero) was soooooo impressed by Sophie's chaste ways.

"She truly was a virtuous maiden, nor flirtatious like some, nor selfish, nor anxious to put herself forward.

She would make a wonderful wife for Valten."

M'kay. I was just about ready to vomit and put the book down at that point.

Then a few pages later, it became crystal clear that this wasn't just any old *fairytale retelling* of Snow White.

Because...

"I have most of the book of Saint Luke memorized. Would you like me to recite it to you?"

"Of course," he said. "That would be good."

Sophie began reciting Jesus's parable:

"A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited..."

Yeah. Um.

cough

No.

No, thank you, but this is not for me.

However, if anyone out there is looking for Christian Fiction, then you might appreciate this story more than I did.

Brandi says

4.5 Stars

So... before I go into how excellent this novel was... I just have to say...

Yes, I read this partly because I love the TV series "Once Upon a Time."

So there you go. :)

I promise I won't make too many OUAT references in this review, though. ;)

The Fairest Beauty is yet another enchanting novel from Melanie Dickerson.

When I saw that Melanie Dickerson was coming out with a new fairytale retelling, I knew it was going to be good. After reading both of Melanie's other books, I also knew that it would contain a mixture of:

- ordinary characters who do extraordinary things
- light romance that leaves you on the edge of your seat, and
- a gripping hint of dark magic

And of course, this book met (and in many ways, *exceeded*) all of these expectations.

Goodreads Summary

A daring rescue. A difficult choice. Sophie desperately wants to get away from her stepmother's jealousy, and believes escape is her only chance to be happy.

Then a young man named Gabe arrives from Hagenheim Castle, claiming she is betrothed to his older brother, and everything twists upside down. This could be Sophie's one chance at freedom---but can she trust another person to keep her safe?

Gabe defied his parents Rose and Wilhelm by going to find Sophie, and now he believes they had a right to worry: the girl's inner and outer beauty has enchanted him. Though romance is impossible---she is his brother's future wife, and Gabe himself is betrothed to someone else---he promises himself he will see the mission through, no matter what.

When the pair flee to the Cottage of the Seven, they find help---but also find their feelings for each other have grown. Now both must not only protect each other from the dangers around them---they must also protect their hearts.

What I Loved

First, Sophie herself is a great protagonist. She's honest and sweet, but also strong-willed and brave in the

face of trouble. I've always thought of Snow White as an *impossibly* kind character, but I felt that Sophie was believable.

Gabe is also has a believable personality. He's capable, resilient, and courageous - but also extremely impulsive. He's driven by the desire to exceed his brother's reputation.

(*Prince Charming, anyone? :D*)

[image error]

And finally, I fell in love with the Seven instantly. I thought that I wouldn't be able to distinguish one man (not "dwarf") from the others, but Melanie gave them all their own unique personalities. They gave the story more flair.

What I Wasn't So Happy With

The Fairest Beauty was a little **too** similar to its predecessors, especially *The Healer's Apprentice*. Like Rose in *THA*, Sophie finds herself tangled within the advances of three men:

- her true love
- her true love's brother
- and an evil guy who wishes her harm

After reading *THA*, *The Fairest Beauty* was more predictable.

(The plot was also predictable because some of the events were just too coincidental, especially toward the end. But don't worry, they didn't take away from the story's effect at all.)

Finally, I felt that Sophie's personality could have been tweaked a little. I've always thought of Snow White as an admirer of nature and animals. But apart from saving puppies from drowning in the first chapter, Sophie doesn't seem entranced with nature at all. I felt like she could've been more appreciative of it.

Conclusion

Despite the few details I pointed out, I enjoyed *The Fairest Beauty*. And I definitely recommend it to any reader who likes reading about romance, fairytales, and how truth prevails over the darkest of magics.

I can't wait to read what Melanie comes out with next!

Shantelle says

An utterly beautiful retelling of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Fairest Beauty* captivated me. It was sweet and enchanting ... dramatic and suspenseful ... and of course, filled with romance.

I loved the characters, they were fresh and alive. Sophie was perfect in the role of Snow White, even better than I could have imagined. I liked that she struggled over the love triangle going on, knowing she was promised to Gabe's brother, knowing she should be honorable, trying to convince herself she thought of Gabe as just a brother. She was innocent and feminine, and it was so refreshing.

Gabe and Sophie's escaping journey was both daring and "hold-your-breath", and also sweet and fun. The Seven were endearing. The queen was indeed an evil queen. The new characters put into the classic tale added fresh meanings and fullness to this retelling of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

And of course, it made it ever so much better that it was a Christian rewrite of the classic fairy tale. That just makes it all the more happy for me. ^_^

It took a while for the end to progress, but all in all, *The Fairest Beauty* was well worth waiting for. –A beautiful story to match a stunningly gorgeous cover. I have never enjoyed the fairy tale of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* so much!

Elaina says

~4.5 stars~

Michelle says

I just read the third book in the series, with no idea I was doing so. Without reading the first or second book.?

Anne says

2.5

Snow White has been one of my favourite fairy tales ever since I was a little girl. It was one of the few Disney VHS we had in the house, and I watched it often. I always found the story thrilling and exciting, and was hoping that *The Fairest Beauty* would convey the same feels. But careless-impulsive-book-hoarding me bought it a long time ago without realizing it was a YA novel. I do not like YA novels. Mainly because I prefer to read romance between adults and not teenagers, but also because they are an odd mix of far-fetchedness and good plot, with too many implausible actions to take the story seriously, but enough adventure to keep you interested, and the long and short of it is that I never know what to make of them. I know that this book is a fairy-tale retelling, and is therefore meant to be light and for enjoyment purposes only, but I couldn't help wishing, as I read along, that the author had taken more time to develop the characters and work on the plot. I saw so much potential for an amazing story, filled with lavish period details of the 15th century (which were *seriously* lacking here!) and a great re-working of the original *Snow White* plot, that the mish-mash presented here left me really disappointed. The general idea is really good, I grant you, but that is just the problem; it reads more like an outline than a novel.

Snow White, aka Sophie, is a scullery maid at Hohendorf Castle where the mistress of the house, the redoubtable Duchess Ermengard, loves to torment and bully her. She locks her up in the dudgeon for trifles, makes her work hard and insults her all day long. Sophie nevertheless remains a good, humble and charitable girl, always ready to forgive her enemies. She displayed very good examples of Christian virtues throughout the story, and even though she was a bit too "bland" and lacked personality, I really liked her. She truly was Snow White personified, with her immeasurable goodness and incredible beauty, and I found her very loveable.

Her "prince" however, the hero, Gabe, was another story. Okay, I admit he was cute, in a very immature and boyish way, wanting to play the hero and rescue the fair maiden and all, and his intentions were good all along, but let's face it, the poor guy was an idiot. He just *leaves* his castle to go find Sophie after Pinnosa told his family that she was in danger, and not only does he have NO plan at all on how to rescue Sophie, prove

that she is the daughter of a long-lost Duke, defeat the evil Duchess, run away, and bring her back to safety at his own castle, but he EXPECTS THAT EVERYTHING WILL GO WELL. I kid you not. He arrives in Hohendorf pretending to be a poor pilgrim or something, but doesn't remove his jewelry or his fashionable boots that clearly proclaim his nobility, and then wonders idly why everyone is staring at him, and why no one believes his story. Then, when he finds Sophie and blurts out the truth about her birth, he expects her to swoon in his arms and fall on her knees in a fit of gratefulness, before hopping on his horse with him to ride back to Hagenheim.

I swear I almost DNFed. Almost. I was close, sooo close!

But I chose to read on only to be more disconcerted by what happens next. In order to "charm" the Duchess to...we're not sure what because poor Gabe doesn't have a plan, he decides that he will sing to her and play his lute, and maybe...what? What is he hoping for? That she will just let him and Sophie go?!?!?! Is he daft or what?!

But, brace yourselves, it works. It *works*. I couldn't believe it. I wasn't sure if it was all a ruse on the Duchess' part, or if she was as imbecilic as she was vain, but it was definitely the latter. Why Duchess Ermengard, who kills anyone she pleases and doesn't let strangers come to the castle suddenly lets herself be charmed by Gabe's playing, I have no idea, but it made NO SENSE. I'm serious, the first part of this book, with Gabe's rescuing at the castle, was horrible. It was *so* bad.

I should have DNFed right there. Everyone knows what happens in *Snow White* anyways.

Except about the super fun twist about Gabe actually being engaged to another chick, and Sophie being engaged to Gabe's elder brother!!! Isn't this exciting!! Things get complicated though, because even though they are trying so hard to deny their attraction to each other, Gabe and Sophie **fall in love!** Who would have thought?! They aren't supposed to be in love! **THEY ARE BOTH BETROTHED TO SOMEONE ELSE!** Oh, the horror. What are they going to do?! This is an insurmountable obstacle! Duchess Ermengard and her killing potions and mad guards in pursuit to kill you both, you can handle, but the forbidden love! Oh! Too much!

Have I mentioned that Gabe hasn't seen his "fiancée" in over a year and that Valten (Gabe's older brother) has never even *seen* Sophie?!?! And that Sophie doesn't have any parents (so far) that could interfere, and that Gabe's parents are very kind and understanding?! Had I mentioned it?

Yet there they are, lamenting over the fact that they can't be together and trying to either fight their love (Sophie) or determinedly stating that they will find a way to defy conventions and be together (Gabe). He keeps saying that he will "find a way" for them to be able to marry, yet he does nothing.

Anne exploded at this point

DUDE, YOU HAVEN'T SEEN YOUR FIANCEE IN OVER A YEAR, MAYBE SHE DOESNT EVEN WANT TO MARRY YOU ANYMORE!!!! WHY DON'T YOU WRITE HER A LETTEEEERRRRRR AND AAAAAAASSSSSSKKKKK!?!?!?

This is the 15th Century for heaven's sake, it's not like there wasn't any paper and quills!

I don't how I did it, but I managed to finish the book. I must admit that the parts with the Seven were good and kept me interested, and I liked to meet Gabe's brother Valten. I happen to own *The Captive Maiden*, the next book in the series and Valten's story, and I must say that I had enough interest in him to make me want to read his book. I'm just crossing my fingers it won't be as stupid as this one.

Fairy tale all the way or fairy tale not at all, but please, *no in between!!* If you're going to make this a complete fairytale-esque piece of fluff, then go all the way and at least have Gabe resurrect Sophie with a kiss when she eats the apple, but if it was supposed to be a reasonable and plausible story, I don't know what to say. Paper and quill, man. Communication.

Someone went a little crazy with Snow White gifs, I apologize ;)

Amy says

I want.

I want I want I want I want I want.

BUT MY LIBRARIES DON'T HAVE ANY COPIES AND I'M BROKE.

Finished 07/2013

Thank you, Ginnie, for lending to me ^^

I will be honest, when I finished this book, I seriously lost my temper. My sister urged me to wait before writing a book review, and I am glad I did, if only because it gave me time to organize my thoughts better. It wasn't a bad...well, it was fairly lousy book. I despised the romance. I will be upfront from the first, this one isn't going on my favorites *or* to re-read shelf any time soon.

Plot

Gabe is the second son of Lord Hamlin and Rose (y'know, from *The Healer's Apprentice?*) Well, anyway, that's not important. What *is* important is that he has an older brother, Valten, who is the future Duke and good at everything and he is betrothed to this girl, who everyone thinks is dead.

Except she is not dead.

Sophie is a lowly maid to the Duchess Ermangard

Word arrives at the castle that Sophie might be alive but unfortunately Valten (conveniently) broke his leg and can't go rescue her for a few weeks. Gabe (who is like Jacob of Jacob and Esau) decides 'hey, I should go fetch her....wouldn't that stick it to my brother! mwahahaha!' (pretty much just like that too) and so he goes off on his merry little way to save the potential fiancee.

And he finds her and they run away and come to the cottage of the seven Not-Dwarfs.
But oh! Gabe and Sophie have fallen in love! What will they do? She is betrothed to his brother....and he engaged to another!

Thoughts

Let's start with a general commentary on the characters.

Sophie

No worries fairy tale lovers! Whether you who adore Disney's rendition of this sweet, charming, utterly clueless young woman or prefer the relatively nameless young woman of the Grimm rendition, your heroine is safe here. Sophie is sweet, kind, considerate, loves everyone, does her best not to hate people, wants to learn, only longs for a family and protection, and *despite having been a drudge since age 2*, is virtuous and good and reads Latin and...um...is about as dimensional as the above picture. Oh, and she's the most beautiful woman in all the land, cooks amazingly, sews complicated gowns without a pattern, sings charmingly....is there anything she can't do? Yeah, be believable. As if attempting to give her character a "human side", Sophie attempts to swallow her anger against her step-mother (succeeds immediately), is "hostile" and "suspicious of men" (lasts about...oh, a chapter), struggles to consider herself beautiful or useful when she has been told she is ugly since a baby (that takes about...well, a compliment from Gabe to dispel), and tries to stop herself from feeling anything but sisterly emotions towards Gabe (which...well, she never really succeeds at that but it's okay! GRRR. WAIT till I get to that part of my review....)

So there is Sophie for you. I present to you, world, a gag-perfect woman who doesn't care a thing for title, power, wealth because she only wants *luvvvvv*.

She I can excuse at least. She I can indulge and be amused by. It's *Gabe* I lost my tempter with....

Gabe

Gabe is pretty much as deep as Sophie. But more annoying. He's a healer, excellent marksman, brave, popular with the ladies, enjoys flirting and flattering and writing songs (this is where you are supposed to pick up he is a bit of a lady's man....and like him for it? Zzzzzzz) Oh! And let's not forget, he's *round*. At least, he has "issues".

Firstly, he's the poor younger son who shames his mother and never wants to study! But no worries! The simple act of falling in love will utterly transform all his habits, his nature, and his general personality. He will go from a pansy to a prince! He will think nothing of land or title, but merely want to make a place for his family as...an architect or builder or something. *blink*

But oh! Don't forget! He has malicious intentions in rescuing Sophie! He wants to steal her from his brother! Well, that motivation lasts...maybe-not-even for about ten minutes after he meets her.

Unbelievable. I will give credit that there is an *attempt* to make him realistic, believable, round. It just doesn't come across as believable. And he ended up ticking me off excessively. I'll address that in my rant about the romance.

Ermangard

Who pretty much looks just like that too.

Unbelievable villain. Really? She becomes a horrible witch (of which there is not only no proof, not even the supposed murders she committed. So she's not really that evil? Or she is? Huh?) because her husband didn't have a *pet name for her*? Geesh woman! Counseling! Get some! Her character was inconsistent and weird. She's totally evil...wait! she didn't really kill that guy! or...that one...or hey, that guy over there. And she's...well, totally vain! And disillusioned. But she hates music! Unless...Gabe is playing it apparently. I just didn't get her. I didn't get why *any* of the guards would stick around and be her little minion.

[image error]

Does she like, pay really well or something?

Well, anyway, like the plot we shall breeze on

The Seven Dwarfs

Starring.....

Grumpy

Dopey

And five....other....guys.

Of which one of them is actually a dwarf!

A very wise dwarf....so like a short Gandalf....or Yoda!

And he has a weird connection with the cook that is never fully explained? I thought they were married but obviously THAT wasn't true.

Then there is a giant....but he might be Dopey. Or the mute is Dopey? Unless the mute is the giant?

I DUNNO. THE CHARACTERS WERE SO BLANDLY THE SAME I COULDN'T TELL THEM APART. AND THEY HAD WEIRD NAMES. Like....Siggy. I think I know a dog named Siggy.

No matter, they aren't really that important anyway.

We have....The Huntsman

Whose role is....well, to be that creepy guy, y'know? The one who is pervy and distresses the girl for a while? Except he conveniently isn't all bad.

I think.

He sort of runs off the pages and become unimportant.

That sort of happens to most of the characters. They are dragged in or dismissed with little ceremony and often they seem to be there because the original fairy tale calls for them, not because a huntsman would actually smooch up to the Duchess.

In fact, everything revolves around that oh-so-important plot element....the romance.

I hated it. I hated it because it had no business being. Sophie has lived in relative seclusion knowing no man except possibly the creepy Huntsman. Of COURSE she is going to fall for the first guy who shows up, be he

Valten or Gabe. Her love was entirely non-unique. She was desperate to belong, desperate for family, and Gabe totally played on that. He manipulated her longings and justified it...how? Because he was physically attracted to her? He had no right to seduce his brother's betrothal, and seduce is exactly what he does. Even saying they both had a mutual attraction, he presses on farther than he ever should have. He tells her he loves her, kisses her. Tells himself that he might have put her virtue at risk because they stayed the night together. Sophie has no reason to dislike Valten. Valten is a good guy. They might have been quite happy together. He certainly seemed like her and he wanted to get know her. But no....she's cold to him. She doesn't even give him the time of day. And why? because his little brother snuck in and "won" her heart first. It wasn't even a competition. She "chose" between the brothers before she even met Valten. There was no competition. There was no rush. Gabe, with a fiance of his own, claimed her love by pushing his own when she would have happily become Valten's wife none the wiser.

I don't care what the two of them moaned about viewing the other as a "sister" or "brother".

WAAAAYYYYYYYYYYY to much good paper space full of their protestations and a lot of good it did them. Disgusting. Despicable. I was left furious with their romance. It isn't that I don't buy it. Oh, I buy it, and I think less of Gabe for it.

Spoiler - I found how things tied up with Gabe's betrothal dreadful. It was so rushed, so entirely ridiculously convenient. REALLY? She just went off and got married? REALLY? THAT isn't entirely well-timed. That was the ONLY MILDLY INTERESTING PLOT POINT LEFT and that is totally SMASHED INTO CONVENIENT TIMING.

Ugh. I'm getting angry again. What nonsense. What utterly ridiculous nonsense that romance is. Gabe is not a character to be admired, swooned over, idolized. His behavior is never reproached. It's all, after all, for "love". A love he should not have pursued! You cannot tell me he is such an "honorable man" and "entirely changed" because he decided to go after his brother's hot betrothed.

I shall continue reading Melanie Dickerson from loyalty, the same reason I finished this one. However, my expectations for her Cinderella re-telling are rapidly sinking.

Sarah says

Seventeen-year-old Sophie is a scullery maid for the cruel, vain Duchess of Hohendorf. The Duchess enjoys sadistically punishing everyone who crosses her path, but saves a special hatred for Sophie, for the girl is strikingly pretty and the Duchess envies her.

Meanwhile, in the nearby fiefdom of Hagenheim, the Duke's family has taken in an elderly woman on Death's door. The old servant, Pinnosa, tells the Duke and his two sons, with her dying breath, that Sophie, daughter of the late Duke of Hohendorf, still lives.

Sophie matters to the Hagenheim family because she was the betrothed of Valten, Hagenheim's heir. The betrothal took place when she was an infant and he was five. Two years later, Sophie was apparently dead of one of the many fatal illnesses that cycled through medieval Europe.

Valten isn't sure whether to believe Pinnosa's story. He's vaguely curious, but can't go to Hohendorf anyway because he just broke his leg in a jousting accident. His younger brother Gabe, who's something of a wild child, thinks that this lead is too interesting to delay investigating. He defies his parents and rides to Hohendorf, (badly) disguised as a pilgrim, to search for his brother's betrothed.

And he finds her—a pretty and genteel lass, who endures the obsessive sneering of the Duchess and the invasive advances of the fiefdom's huntsman, Lorencz. Sophie can also read, an extremely rare trait in

scullery maids but a common one in aristocrats. To the surprise of exactly no one (except Sophie, who has no self-esteem) Gabe starts falling for the girl himself.

The Duchess panics, realizing that the handsome and silly young man who just rode into her territory is probably a Hagenheim agent here to rescue Sophie. So she imprisons him in her dungeon while sending Lorencz to drag the girl into the forest and kill her. Gabe escapes, and Lorencz is unable to finish the dreadful deed demanded of him. Sophie and Gabe find each other, but now they're lost in the wilderness, with a murderous duchess sending agents to kill them, no food or medical supplies, and no quick, safe way to Hagenheim...

Content Advisory

Violence: Lorencz slams Sophie's head against a tree to knock her cold, and tries to stab her but decides against it. Gabe and Sophie both get wounded with arrows; his injury becomes infected and needs several weeks' tending. (view spoiler)

Sex: Lorencz hits on the naïve Sophie in a way that makes her decidedly uncomfortable, even forcing a kiss on her once. She's more amenable to the advances of Gabe, since he at least appears to be pious, and is certainly nicer than Lorencz. But Gabe also breaks the rules of polite behavior in those days, kissing his brother's fiancée a few times. Sophie immediately likes Gabe back, but feels uncomfortable about their relationship until the engagement to Valten is formally sundered. Another servant girl brags about having sex with Lorencz, and it's unclear to what degree she was exaggerating or making things up.

Language: Nothing.

Substance Abuse: Nothing.

Politics and Religion: There are a LOT of references to Jesus, using language that can't be traced further back than the American revival movements of the nineteenth century. That said, there are actual traces of medieval Catholicism in this story, making it a huge improvement on the first book in the series.

Conclusions

The Fairest Beauty is a sequel to *The Healer's Apprentice*, featuring the children of Wilhelm and Rose from that book in young adulthood, and it's a marked improvement on the earlier installment in the series.

Sophie, while still a bit overscrupulous and too quiet, is actually somewhat proactive. She takes measures (such as carrying a hidden dagger) to protect herself, and is capable of lying or misleading if she can save her friends or herself that way. The "I can't love him because he's betrothed to another" plot is repeated from *Healer's Apprentice*, but this actually works in Dickerson's favor, showing that she's rectified many of the initial flaws in the series. Sophie shares Rose's virtues but is actually portrayed as a human.

Gabe takes a lot more after his indolent uncle Rupert than his uptight father, and that's mostly a good thing. He's an attention-hungry rascal, but he admits this much about himself and asks Sophie (and by proxy, the reader) to be patient with him and love him in spite of that. Sometimes he overestimates his own charm, but plenty of lovable antiheroes before him have done the same.

Gabe's not as cool as Hawkeye Pierce, granted, but who is? I still like him very much.

The Duchess doesn't bring anything new to the table as far as "interpretations of the Evil Queen from Snow White" goes, and her motivation is never given the airtime it needs. But unlike Moncore from the first book,

she is true to her archetype, has a motive that at least sort-of makes sense, and is not prone to histrionics and demon-summoning. That's all win. I thought her death sequence was drawn out past the point of best dramatic effect, but that's a matter of subjective taste. She's a perfectly serviceable villain.

This time around, you can actually tell what fairytale the story is based on. Some of the symbols—especially the apple—are forced in way too hard, and it's unclear to me how the Duchess disguised herself as an old beggar since there's no magic in this universe. But I really did like the portrayal of the “Seven Dwarves” who in this version are a diverse crew of outcasts from medieval society. They were sweet guys, and I hope to see more of them in the series.

I'm also curious about the development of Valten and his sister Margaretha, who apparently get main character duties in *The Captive Maiden* and *The Princess Spy*.

So while I had a lot of problems with the first book in this series, it's improved a lot since then, and I'm glad I gave it another shot. My complete review of *The Healer's Apprentice* will be up soon. Looking forward to the rest of the books in this series.

Gabs {My Full Bookshelf Reviews} says

Read more of my reviews at [My Full Bookshelf](#)

I just realized what I didn't like about this story; THE CHARACTERS! Yes, I think that must be it, because I just read two different fairy tale retellings, each with protagonists that were strong, witty, and had so much more character development and I looooved them.

The rating for this book was originally three stars. However, I'm redoing my rating system, because I honestly was bored out of my mind while reading this whole story, and why the heck should it deserve three stars?

There. I blew off some pent up anger at having to read this, I suppose. Now for the real, rant-free review. (Hopefully)

I hate that I didn't like this, because I was really excited to find an author who wrote Christian retold fairy tales. Those are my two most read genres mashed together (and of course they're two of my favorite genres, otherwise I wouldn't read them so much). In theory, *The Fairest Beauty* should have been my dream book. Well, it wasn't.

Sophie, the main character, was a boring, hopelessly perfect in every way, main character. And she was weak! I know that all the original princesses were not exactly the epitome of 'strong women', but this is a retelling! Your opportunity to make Snow White more than just a damsel in distress! Also, there was nothing truly original about her character. I really didn't see Sophie as being very different than the Disney Snow White, except for the fact that she didn't burst out singing "Someday My Prince Will Come." Note: I know that at first she seems pretty strong. Wait a couple chapters. She gets progressively weaker, in my opinion.

Now we have Gabe. He actually wasn't too bad. At least he had some personality, unlike the pale Mary Sue mentioned in the above paragraph.

I remember that another thing that I knew from the start I didn't like about this book was the fact that everything works out so perfectly in the end. Even (view spoiler)

After much pondering, I have decided that Sophie was the weak link in this story. If she had been a better character, for lack of a better term, I would have really enjoyed this story.

I don't really know who I would recommend this to. I hesitate to say people who enjoy Christian fiction, because this is definitely not the best the genre has to offer. I think that fairy tale lovers might enjoy this story, but *this* fairy tale lover didn't.

Melanie Kilsby says

Oh, the feels!!

Yes, I cried, I laughed out loud and I even wanted to put the book down! *Gasp* It was such an intense scene at the end of the book and I was like... NOOOOOOoooooOOOOOooo!!!! I had to just get up, finish my coffee and then go back to reading, lol! I am so glad I did. Thank you for hard things like wood. *wipes sweat off brow*

So, for the actual review...

The book is larger than the rest in the Series and took a bit more to get through. Yet, it didn't feel like it was too long. It was perfect, I feel, for the story! I really thought this book did well in the whole "Snow White" feel. Melanie truly captures the original fairytales yet, bring you to a whole new level in History, while still having adventure and romance. I absolutely ADORED the Cottage of Seven when they finally arrived there. Just adored each one!!! I don't even know which one is my favourite yet.

Ahh, Sophie. Sweet, little Sophie and her carelessly brave rescuer! This book is a picture of redemption and coming into oneself, or taking responsibility. Too bad some chose the wrong path. But, true to Christianity itself, it was offered to all - but the choice is only in the person to accept it or not. That is their responsibility. What a great story. I kept singing the song Priceless by For King and Country through it. It is PRICELESS!

Melanie never fails us in another classic retelling!

Renee says

Okay so I bought this not realizing it was Christian fiction, when you look at it on amazon unless you read the author bio and the publisher info it does not say this is a Christian book. But it is, I mean really, really Christian. So I feel a little stupid, but hey shit happens.

I don't have an issue with Christian's and many people said this was a good retelling of snow white...So I decided, what the hell I will read it. Why not? I mean it got good reviews and most of the reviewers didn't mention the Christian aspect and some of my friends on good reads had it on their shelves.

I DNF around page 45 due to the fact that I just couldn't get passed the so many references to "our lord and savior" that just were not important to the plot. Also the villain... She was a horrible bitch who wouldn't let Sophie wear her cross, burned down a church and killed a priest. Basically telling all Christians that non Christian's hate your faith and want to destroy you...This just isn't true and made me sad the author couldn't think of anything better to do with an "evil queen."

I totally could have finished this if it didn't fall into so many Christian fiction tropes. The heroine is a Mary

sue, smart, beautiful, innocent and wonderful, everyone loves her. The villain is hard cold, evil evil evil!!! Without any real reason why she is that way... I guess it is just because she doesn't believe in God...Who knows? Either way after the billionth eye roll I couldn't handle it and returned it for a refund on amazon.com...Thank the Goddess for kindle.

Elevetha says

1.5 stars.(I wanted to give this 3 so I wouldn't feel like such a horrible person but I couldn't. I didn't hate the book by any means, it was better than the other two, but it just didn't have enough to make me want to read it again)

I'm gonna repeat what I said in my review of *The Merchant's Daughter* : But I'm seeing an annoying trend in this lady's books. Perfect main characters that have been wronged in some way, overly Christian main characters, weird creepy dude A) stalking the main girl or B) trying to take advantage of but then love interest that isn't a love interest yet saves the girl and she doesn't trust him but he's always good looking and he treats her with kindness and he's "gentle" and she starts falling for him against all the odds and they can't be together because of reasons and "God save me, I'm so attracted to him/her" and then they end up together because true love prevails.

This is actually more true now than it was then. Sophie is perfect. I mean that. Annoyingly perfect. And Gabe is stupid. Again, too perfect. No one likes perfect people and this rule applies to characters as well. I do like their story(and the story in general) better than *The Merchant's Daughter* or *The Healer's Apprentice*. It seems better written, though with many similar flaws, and it's still not that well plotted or written, esp. that horrendous romance.

"It was as if they were the only two people in the room, as if he was strumming her soul, seeing straight into her heart with his penetrating brown eyes."

Not only that, Amy, but "strumming my soul" is so sappy, it's giving me oogies. (If you've never seen *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, then I apologize)

"He wanted to argue that she belonged to him because he had risked his life for her, taken an arrow for her."

Now I'm not a feminist but this is taking it a bit far. "Belonged to him"? If it was "belonged *with* him", that'd be fine esp. considering the context of when he says this (Trust me, knowing the context doesn't make his statement any better) but's it not. And not even his reasoning makes sense. I'm sure Sophie appreciates that you saved her life, Gabe, but that doesn't make her yours. My brother saved my life but I am not now his servant and she sure as hell isn't something for you to own, like a parcel. I don't care if it's the 1300's, you don't say something like that. Esp. since that didn't seem like Gabe's personality. Like it was just thrown in for funsies or something.

Better than the first two books, but still not that great.

Karen says

Wow, another fantastic novel by this amazing author!

I love fairytale retellings, there is not a amount where I will give up not reading a fairytale Retelling. I just love how different author's write their own twist and perspective to these tales

And Melanie Dickerson is one of my favourites, because she combines historical fiction and Christian fiction in her tales!

Anyways, back to the review, this is the tale of young maid who is living in terror with her step mother. Sophie has endured much of her stepmothers punishment and cruelty even since she can remember. She is an orphaned child and was left in the care of her stepmother, who never loved her. But Sophie finds love and care in her fellow maids, such as the cook. And she finds hope in praying to God everyday that he will deliver her away from her stepmother

Gabe, is the second son to the Duke and Duchess of Hagenheim Castle, Wilhelm and Rose. The MC for the first book "The Healer's Apprentice". He is also betrothed to a woman that has been arranged by his parents. Gabe is not as serious or responsible as his older brother Valten is. And he isn't as strong or competitive as him. But when an old woman comes in to the palace claiming that the dead daughter of the Duke Baldwin is still alive but has been living as a servant in the household, she has to be rescued immediately since she is Valten's betrothed since they were children.

Except Valten cannot go since he is injured, so Gabe feels in his heart to find her and rescue her himself, defy his parents and be the hero and return her to her fiancé

But thrown together, they will face many challenges and encounters with many people. Will they survive these problems, and will they also protect their hearts from each other?

Such a beautiful tale, loved the style of writing and the development of the characters. We could see how far Gabe grows in this novel. Beautifully written, cannot wait to read the next book

Charity U says

This book was a lovely surprise! I was quite sure from reviews of Melanie's other books, and also from the back cover, that I would enjoy this book...I just didn't know how much! This is a delightful retelling of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. But it isn't really a fantasy book...everything that happens really could have happened! There isn't any "magic" like you usually see in these retellings. However, it is easy to see how in later retellings (I'm pretty sure this is the TRUE story) magic was worked in. The characters depended on God, making them clearly Christian. However, this didn't detract from the delightfulness of the story in the least! The dwarves were changed, but recognizable...and that's all I'm going to say about that here. Go buy a copy. :) Oh, also, if you've read The Healer's Apprentice, I'm pretty sure you're going to find a character or two to recognize! I haven't, but I caught the reference through pure luck. Definitely want to read more by Melanie!
