



Baker Thief

Claudie Arseneault

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Adèle has only one goal: catch the purple-haired thief who broke into her home and stole her exocore, thus proving herself to her new police team. Little does she know, her thief is also the local baker.

Claire owns the Croissant-toi, but while her days are filled with pastries and customers, her nights are dedicated to stealing exocores. These new red gems are heralded as the energy of the future, but she knows the truth: they are made of witches' souls.

When her twin—a powerful witch and prime exocore material—disappears, Claire redoubles in her efforts to investigate. She keeps running into Adèle, however, and whether or not she can save her sister might depend on their conflicted, unstable, but deepening relationship.

BAKER THIEF is the first in a fantasy series meant to reframe romance tropes within non-romantic relationship and centering aromantic characters. Those who love enemies-to-lovers and superheroes should enjoy the story!

Baker Thief Details

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Download and Read Free Online Baker Thief Claudie Arseneault

From Reader Review Baker Thief for online ebook

Chasia Lloyd says

Heck yeah, always here for a fat, bigender aromantic lead. Baker Thief is a fabulously-written fantasy with a compelling mystery, a deep love for bread and French puns, and some pretty great cats. The author has included a detailed list of content warnings at the beginning of the book--always appreciated!

Shira Glassman says

...starring a baker who turns thief in order to help tear apart a brutal system, and the detective assigned to catch that thief – but for an arrest or smooches, we're not sure yet!

When I tell people the elevator pitch for *Baker Thief* is that a quiet, cuddly baker finds out that the city's utility company is trapping any residents that happen to have magical abilities and using them as a municipal power source against their will, I've had people say, "Oh, so it's like *The Matrix* plus *Soylent Green*! So yes, it's that, and more -- it's science fiction with a non Anglo setting (Fictionalized Quebec, with a cast that speaks French), and it's science fiction dominated entirely by a cast of many types of queer and specifically ace/aro-spectrum representation, plus a fat title character, and disability rep (the detective heroine is asthmatic and there is also prosthetic rep.)

Claude, who has magical powers, would have been content just to bake croissants all day (in magical Québec, basically). But then he finds out that the shiny new power source that the utility company is so excited about, involves rounding up other magical people, trapping them, and sucking out their magical life force to keep the lights on across the city. We can't have that, right?? So, being bigender, she takes to the rooftops as the purple-haired, saucy-tongued Claire, stealing back the little gems in which her fellow mages are trapped. This is the aromantic allosexual character. (I've seen this character referred to as aro ace in some people's recs posts, which is incorrect.)

Enter Adele, a police detective who just transferred in. She wants to catch the mysterious Claire, at first, but as she learns more about the conspiracy of course she's on her side. She just doesn't realize the masked vigilante is the same person as the cheerful, nurturing man who sells her that fresh pastry every morning. But she likes them both. The author's twitter describes her as biromantic demisexual.

Baker Thief includes a lot of cinematic moments like a rescue from a warehouse fire in the dead of night, the inevitable sneaking into the lab of the villain, and a demonic Bridge of Light that, when illuminated, is going to use people up entirely. There are also lots of cozy moments that'll make you feel like you're curled up in a Quebecois café eating a croissant yourself, sharing time with these characters and their friends.

The cast represents various marginalizations, but not in a slapped on "roll call" kind of way because it's being written from the inside using themes that are deeply important to the author. While the main conflict of the story is clearly the battle with the utility company to rescue all the people trapped in the power source and stop them before they hurt anyone else, there's a realistic and sympathetic portrayals of a demisexual woman and the aro allo person with whom she's fallen in love trying to figure out how they're going to construct a relationship that works for their specific needs, preferences, and comfort levels, for example. (A quote about this: "Perhaps that had been wrong. Perhaps they had needed the layers, like how flaky dough required being folded over and over in order to rise. Would their bond be as strong without Claire's stealing and the shroud of mystery that had kept Adele from perceiving all of him? He liked to think every one of their interactions,

even the rocky ones, had contributed to the final result, and they had now reached the last step: baking. He couldn't wait to see what would come out of the oven.")

Also, Claude isn't the only nonbinary character; I remember at least one other who uses clearly French-inspired neopronouns. That took me a minute chiefly because my French is so abysmal (I'm an American-born Yekke), so don't be thrown at pronouns that don't rhyme with "free" (like xie and nie do) -- they exist, too, and it's good for those of us reading comfortably from a position in Anglo-land to have this reminder.

So, in short, an adventure story that combines elements of fantasy and science fiction while centering ace and aro spectrum characters completely, set against a visually appealing backdrop (I've been to Quebec City and it's gorgeous.) And yes, the author is the same Claudie who organizes the Aro and Ace Rep in SFF database.

Sinead (Huntress of Diverse Books) says

Check out my book blog for more book reviews and other bookish posts!

I received a copy of Baker Thief from the author. As most of you know, by now, I am a huge fan of Claudie Arseneault's writing. There's something so welcoming about her writing style and it just makes me feel happy. When I was given the chance to read her newest book, I knew that I just had to say yes!

This book is #ownvoices for aromantic and asexual representation.

—

Filled with baked good mentions that will make your mouth water, Baker Thief focuses on Claire/Claude, the bigender town baker and thief at night, and, and Adèle, the new policewoman in town. I adored the baking puns, give me more!

If there's one thing I'd like to see more of in the fantasy genre, it's slice-of-life scenes, and as always, Claudie Arseneault delivers them. There's something so heartwarming about reading familiar everyday scenes in a fantasy context.

As always, I'm so happy when I read books that have a character that has trouble breathing. Adèle has asthma and she needs to use vivifiant chamber to help her breathing. At first, I thought this was going to be mentioned only once, however, that's not the case. Throughout the book, Adèle always has trouble breathing.

Another part that really spoke to me was that Claire/Claude did not drink alcohol. I loved that the community was so accepting about this!

The world building is wonderful. I was able to grasp the world almost immediately and I was intrigued by it. The exocores and how they are created was chilling to read about.

What made me really emotional was the queer platonic relationship. Do you know the feeling of not realising that you know that something is possible, until you realise that it is possible? That's how I felt and it made me so happy. I loved how they accepted each other and didn't expect the other to change for them.

—

If you like the enemies-to-lovers trope, try this non-romantic spin on it. Baker Thief is a humorous solarpunk novel with a huge focus on sibling relationships and friendships, and it has wonderful slice-of-life scenes in it!

You can get the book on Gumroad*. If you pre-order it, you will also receive Claude's Croissant-toi Cookbook, which has 5 recipes in it!

*affiliate link

Trigger warnings: breaking and entering, genocide, gunshots, food, alcohol, mob violence, human experimentation, human trafficking, accidental misgendering, burns, breathing difficulties due to asthma, and police violence.

Abi (The Knights Who Say Book) says

I received an advance reader copy of this book in exchange for an honest review

This is hard to review because I liked it in theory but in practice reading it felt a little like it was weighing me down. Like it was a bit of a slog because it was too slow, even with the tense mystery and action scenes. I think it could have been trimmed a little.

But maybe part of the problem just comes from the format. You're getting a mystery story from the perspective of two different main characters at the same time, so sometimes you learn information from one character and then have to sit through the other character figuring the same thing out, and I personally get frustrated with those kind of books.

But I don't want to let my frustration overwhelm the things I liked, like having multiple nonbinary characters in one book (main character and side characters! A variety of pronouns!) and having the main couple work out what a relationship between a demisexual and aromantic person would look like. Also, studies suggest straight&cis people just straight up don't exist in Val-de-Mer... iconic. And, speaking of iconic, Capitaine Koyani is my fave. There was humor, there was action, there was baking!

The worldbuilding is French-based which is different for me and I liked it, though I wonder if the French words sprinkled throughout would have frustrated me if I hadn't (badly) studied French in school.

So it was pretty good, but it just dragged too much.

Jess Crafts says

I picked this one up for two reasons, the aromantic rep and because it said thief in the title. Anyone who follows my reviews should probably know by now I have a weak spot for thieves. Going in I did think it might be light on the plot as sometimes character based indies that centre queer characters sometimes are but this book is equal parts adorable characters and action packed plot. I raced through it and not only the main characters but all of the supporting characters were brilliant, the action and intrigue kept me turning pages and needing to find out what happened next. The world created is inventive, and mixes science with magic, it has witches and a French inspired setting that felt real and vivid. But, just to warn you, one of the characters

is a bigender (and aromantic) baker and he/she WILL make you crave croissants. I loved this book, I have a couple of other books by this author that I haven't got around to reading yet but they've just moved up the pile if this is the kind of story I can expect.

evelyn hugo's #1 fan says

This sounds really fucking cute and right up my alley? My library's ordering in a copy and I am!!! Excite to read!!! Also nbd but that cover is gORGEOUS

Jessie says

I love so many things about this book. The use of French and the occasional French-grammar-in-English. How very deeply queer it is, and in particular how aro it is (even though one of the two MCs is alloro). The value it places on people and truth together, in balance, and on many different kinds of relationships. All the tension and moments of action along with the slice-of-life moments.

One of the MCs is bigender; this character sometimes uses the name Claude and he/him pronouns and sometimes uses the name Claire and she/her pronouns, whichever fits his/her current gender presentation. I'm referring to the character as Claude/Claire throughout the review.

Relationships I really enjoyed seeing:

*Sibling relationships are *vital* to the book. Both MCs are incredibly close to at least one sibling, and those siblings are also very major characters. (Emmanuelle might be my favorite character, except I have a lot of maybe-favorites.) (view spoiler)

*Friendship! Claude/Claire and Zita. <3 Zita is such a delight, and both the book and Claude/Claire are much better for her.

*The QPR between Adèle and Claude/Claire and the way they navigate what they want their relationship to look like is one of my favorite things. (I highlighted ...most of their final conversation, if I'm honest.) They're both clear with each other about what they want and what they can and can't give. Their relationship is deeply rooted in trust and faith in each other.

*Team relationships. Adèle joins a new police team at the beginning of the book and is nervous because she's had bad past experiences. Reading good and bad team dynamics here was pretty cool.

*Mentor-ish relationships. Claude/Claire isn't the only aromantic character. Claude/Claire talks about growing up around Denise Jalbert (the current mairesse of the city), who is aroace, and how she helped him/her figure out his aromanticism.

I enjoyed the worldbuilding, and there's so much more I want to know about all the quartiers and the history of this place and the places around it. There are different languages/dialects and groups of people. I want to spend so much time with Emmanuelle learning about science in this world. We get glimpses of so much richness.

There's so much queerness here. The two MCs are a bigender aromantic character and a biromantic demisexual character. There are multiple other trans and/or nonbinary characters (including characters who use they/them, ol/ol, and ne/nir pronouns), someone who is sapphic and polyamorous, the aroace mairesse, and another questioning arospec character. (I probably missed some. Also, I know there's more word-of-God aromanticism and asexuality that will become canon in future books.) There's other rep here too, not just queer rep -- a variety of skin colors, multiple disabled characters with different kinds of disabilities, multiple

fat characters (including Claire/Claude).

Adèle is demisexual and sex-favorable, which isn't uncommon in books with demisexual characters, but what *is* uncommon -- what I appreciated a great deal -- is that she talks about her sex-favorability. In Adèle's case, isn't limited to times when she's sexually attracted to someone. ("Since I enjoy the occasional sexual encounter I usually don't wait on [sexual attraction].") This isn't how it works for every sex-favorable demi person, but it's much like how I felt a couple of years ago, and it meant a lot to see that. I also liked that Adèle's feelings about sex are different in different media. She "prefer[s] stories with less sex" *and* "enjoy[s] the occasional sexual encounter." These aren't contradictory, and sometimes our language around favorability/repulsion flattens that.

CW: implied colonialism, genocide, police brutality and other state violence, kidnapping and human trafficking, gun violence, mob violence, human experimentation, accidental misgendering. (Note: Claudie included a content warning list with associated chapters at the beginning of the book.)

RoAnna Sylver says

“They didn’t need more precise rules any more than they needed romantic love. They had faith—the kind that destroyed industries and changed the cityscape forever. All they needed was to keep communicating, and they would get through it fine.”

* * *

UGH I LOVED THIS SO MUCH. An adventurous half-detective story, half-heist, all wrapped up in magic and soul-powered industry, cover-ups and machinations, actually good government employees with the peoples’ best interests in mind (HOW REFRESHING) and an incredible non-romantic relationship at the center. It felt so good to watch this form, watch 2 people with different orientations negotiate and find common ground as they become so important to one another, and know that at no point would they be invalidated or made to do anything they didn’t 100% want (perks of trusting the author~). So important.

And super fun, with found family feels, and amazing positive fat rep. (One of my favorite parts is when Adele sees her sister again after a long time away and sees she’s gained a lot of weight—and it’s a GOOD THING, she’s relieved, and thinks Emm will be so much healthier and safer, and just holy crap, we never GET THIS. I’m so glad we get this.)

Acqua says

3.5 stars.

I liked *Baker Thief* a lot more than I expected - I struggled to get into it for the first 25%, and I was then surprised by how much I liked the rest.

The beginning wasn't my favorite. Not only it was slow, which can happen and usually doesn't bother me, I also really didn't like the writing. It didn't flow well, at least at first, and **it employed a lot of telling instead of showing, which isn't my favorite style:** it keeps me at arm's length from the characters. I don't know what happened later - if the writing got better or if I just got used to it - but in the second half I didn't have any problems with it.

The worldbuilding was really interesting, and I would love to know more about it. *Baker Thief* is set in what I think is a Canada-inspired fantasy city, and the main characters' language is French. There were a lot of French words, and as someone whose first language is not English, **I always love when writers incorporate other languages into the story in a way that isn't awkward** (monolingual English writers are usually really bad at it). Also, so many plot-relevant croissant puns, I loved them.

Baker Thief is set in a queer-normative society, has a mostly queer (if not all-queer) cast, and it's trans-, ace- and aro-inclusive, which is rare (so many queer books have no trans, aro and ace characters in the main cast, which... wasted potential). Also, there are characters who casually switch pronouns, use neopronouns or singular they, which is really nice to see.

But let's talk about the reason I read this book in the first place, which is the **allosexual aromantic representation** (the one thing I always look for in books and only found one other time).

The main characters of this book are Claire/Claude, a genderfluid aromantic baker who is a thief by night, and Adèle, a demisexual woman who is a police officer. Adèle has a crush on Claude-the-baker and is trying to catch Claire-the-thief, **which would be the perfect set up for a hate-to-love romance - except this isn't going to be a romance.**

Baker Thief **reframes common romance tropes for aromantic characters and non-romantic relationships.** It shows how non-romantic bonds and non-romantic love can be just as compelling if one takes the time to develop them. There's a focus on family and siblings as well, but what makes this book is Adèle's and Claire's story - it's **exactly the kind of trope subversion I was here for.** I liked how their relationship was developed and I liked them as characters, just as I really liked the portrayal of aromanticism in this story. The part in which Claire mentions how it felt to be in a romantic relationship when you do not feel romantic love, how it almost feels like a lie, like everyone is feeling in a way you never will? Never saw it in a book before.

While I did end up liking the protagonists after the beginning, the characterization of everyone else was lacking, and the main source of conflict - witch discrimination and literal witch hunts - wasn't always that interesting.

(The cats, however, were great. I ask for more cat scenes.)

But I have to say that this is not exactly my kind of fantasy either, I always prefer morally gray/dark stories to lighter fantasy. **If you're looking for a mostly light fantasy read with no romance and great queer rep, *Baker Thief* is perfect for you.**

Maraia says

This is my second book by Claudie Arseneault, and I'm officially a fan. Reading diverse fantasy makes me so happy, and this book is full of it. One of the main characters is aromantic and bigender, and the other is biromantic and demisexual. I learned a lot while watching two of them navigate a relationship together. My praise for *Baker Thief* doesn't stop at the great representation, though. It also has magic, an interesting mystery, a daring thief, a determined policewoman, lots of croissants, and a great cast of characters. What more could I ask for?

Ceillie Simkiss says

I LOVED THIS BOOK A LOT.
I WILL BE YELLING ABOUT IT
A LOT.

Read my full review here!

Alexa says

I received an ARC through from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

If I had to sum up my feelings in one sentence, it would be this: I loved most of it, except for one thing that really took me out of the story.

There is a certain feeling of acceptance, understanding, safety and validation that (so far) seems unique to the works of indie queer authors. A sense of understanding that can only be found in a book with an aromantic bigender protagonist, a biromantic demisexual protagonist, these two being in a unique relationship fitting both of their needs, and a cast of nonbinary, aromantic, transgender and otherwise queer side characters (as well as some casual references to polyamory, and SIX CATS). The fact that there is a list of trigger warnings at the beginning with chapter numbers already suggested that I was about to read a book that really cared about its marginalised reader.

... Which is why the one exception to this rule felt like a slap in the face. While there was a warning for accidental misgendering in chapter 14, it didn't quite prepare me. In this chapter, a new teenage character is introduced, and both Adèle and Claire initially refer to her as "she/her" and "girl" initially. Once they are told the correct pronouns, they both use those without a problem, but there were two reasons why this felt wrong and unnecessary to me.

Read all about what I liked and what I didn't in my full review.

Nicole Field says

The Baker Thief was a surprisingly standout read for me. I say surprising because I wasn't sure how I was going to take this one. I'd accepted it as an ARC, but all I knew about it was the name of the author, the fact that there was an aromantic protagonist and what I had gathered from the title itself.

What I hadn't heard was the gorgeous world building and word craft that Claudie Arseneault had under their belt. I was shocked to find how easily I fell into this world, how completely immersed I was, and how much I was rooting for all of the characters.

Well, all of the main characters. There are some people in this novel who are villains, but let it be clear that that is neither the thief or the policewoman who hunts her.

The characters themselves were full of various representations that don't often find themselves on the page, but most favourite of all for me was the fact that people in this world habitually introduce themselves with names and pronouns at once. It's wonderful and so seamlessly established that it makes you wonder why people make it so awkward here.

This is a world I want to live in, exocores and all.

Lia says

4.25 stars

SO PRECIOUS

Quartzen says

[the logistics of kidnapping that many people without an already threatened community noticing, why Clémence didn't seek help from the community straight off instead of cooperating (hide sp
