



# The Temptress

*Claire Delacroix*

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Esmeraude of Ceinn-beithe knows that she alone can name the winner of her heart. To the knights gallant who ride from afar to do her bidding, she issues a challenge: a riddle that is both quest and test. And then she flees, daring her suitor to follow. Thus begins the Bride Quest of Bayard of Villonne, to compete for the hand of a woman he has never seen...

Newly returned from the Crusades, Bayard has warned his family of a pending attack upon their estate. When they pay no heed to his message, he swears to protect the family holding himself...even if its price is a marriage of convenience. It seems a simple matter to win the hand of a rural maid in a barbarian contest—until the chase begins. Esmeraude's challenge makes her far more intriguing than Bayard had dared to hope.

But when he follows her across the waters and rescues a tattered, ravishing damsel in disguise, he knows he has found her. Recklessly, she offers herself to the handsome stranger. But not even a passion that touches both their souls can win her hand. For Esmeraude will settle for nothing less than total surrender of the crusader's worn and weary heart...a treasure Bayard is determined to keep shielded forever.

"A magical tale...brims with rich, historical detail, entertaining banter and romantic tension!"—Publishers' Weekly

## The Temptress Details

Date :

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Author : Claire Delacroix

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## **From Reader Review The Temptress for online ebook**

### **Marty Tool says**

Book 3 of the Bride Quest I I, it could be a stand alone, but do yourself a favor and read the previous 2 books for a full appreciation of this story. Esmerauade is all grown up and it's time for her to make a match. Her mother, a true believer of marrying for love, and father have invited many eligible men to their remote area to try for her hand, make no mistake it is HER choice of men. We have wealth of different men to choose from, however Esmerauade has her own hair brained ideas and manages to get into quite a mess. This story is of adventure, intrigue, truth and lies, good men and bad men. Sometimes we aren't quite sure who to trust fully.

We get a couple of love stories within this tale. We also get a good catching up of characters from the first 2 books. Very enjoyable adventure and final of this series.

A copy of this book was provided to me with no requirements for a review. I voluntarily read this book and my comments here are my honest opinion.

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### **Chris Coulson says**

A thrilling tale of chivalry and a quest by many knights for the hand of an adventure-loving bride. Ah, true love; it's pure magic.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest, unbiased review.

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### **Denise says**

Fictional "love romance" story set during the time of the Crusades. Very light reading (for me) as it didn't have the historical "depth" that I prefer in such books. If you're into tales where the girl gets the boy after much virginal "angst", then read this.

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### **Robin says**

This was a well-written, enjoyable book. Set during the Crusades, Esmerauade of Ceinn-beithe wants to select her own groom. Bayard of Villonne joins the Bride Quest, expecting to quickly win the quest and earn an estate as the prize. Esmerauade sets tests and riddles, then flees, so that her potential suitors have to solve the riddles, pass the tests and find her. Esmerauade wants love and Bayard only trusts in logic. Their journey together was so much fun to read! This book can be read as a standalone story, though is the third in a trilogy with related characters. I loved it! Copy gifted by the Publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Debbie Glenn Brown says**

The Temptress has us following Esmaurade of Ceinn-beithe who has decided to wed for nothing less than true love. Esmaurade parents hold a contest inviting knights to compete for her heart and her hand. While she devises a quest in which she leaves riddles to challenge the suitors and then flees. Bayard of Villonne is a battle hardened Crusader who wants to protect his home, Montvieux from a pending attack against his family's estate and in order to that he decides to win the hand of the innocent maid Esmaurade. Baynard is so confident he knows he can easily win this contest without losing his heart that is until arrives and find's Esmeraude has fled and left a riddle behind for her would be suitors to solve. Esmeraude's challenge makes her far more intriguing than Bayard had dared to hope. Bayard does follow on his bride quest across the waters. He rescues a tattered, ravishing damsel in disguise and he knows he has found his prize. Esmaurade and offers herself to the handsome perfect stranger. Baynard and Esmaurade experience sizzling passion that touches their souls and Baynard still does not win her hand, only true love will win her hand. I loved the quest to win the fair maiden's hand, lots of adventure, humor, passion and an evil villain to overcome before Baynard and Esmaurade can find their HEA.

Copy gifted from the publisher in exchange for an honest review

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### **marcia coe says**

#### **Writer has the ability to embark one on a fabulous tale**

Enjoyed this continuous tale of Evangeline's daughters; loved being taken back in the time of knights and their adventures of finding a suitable bride: especially these women.

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### **Jessica Woods says**

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This book is the best of the Bride Quest. I loved Esmeraude, she's full of spunk and adventure and not content to settle for less than love in marriage. Bayard is a knight estranged from his family looking to claim his rightful heritage to protect it from his King and believes love is a weakness. The story was full of humor and adventure with just a touch of magic and a really nice HEA.

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### **Rita says**

True love is never easy as this novel attests to. Really liked how hard he had to work to claim his bride.

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### **Heather says**

I had difficulty getting into this story at first. I did not like Esmeraude. She was naïve and silly and her schemes were not well thought out and she found herself in trouble. Her idea that if she lost her virginity her appeal to the men who simply wanted her for her land would go away was naïve. How she thought that her

husband wouldn't mind that she wasn't chaste was silly for that era. She came across as sometimes spoiled, over indulged and sheltered.

On the other hand, Bayard carries the story well. He is a strong character, stubborn, passionate, and when needed, fierce. I enjoyed watching Bayard court Esmerauade and their interactions do strengthen and the plot grows into an enjoyable story once they reunite after the Isle of Mull. She is definitely headstrong and Bayard has his work cut out for him. Their story really picks up once at Airdfinnan and I like how she made him work for it. They ended up being equally matched in the end. The conflicts were good, the villain dastardly, and the conclusion perfect. It wasn't my favorite in the series (I think book 2, *The Beauty*, stands out more for me), but once I got used to Esmerauade it became enjoyable.

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### **Rachel Thompson says**

Esmaurade of Ceinn-beithe has decided to wed for nothing less than true love and she has a plan to ensure she does so. Her parents have launched a bride quest, inviting knights to compete for her heart and her hand.

Bayard of Villone has learned of a pending attack against his family's estate. In order to protect the family holding when they refuse to pay heed to his message, he vows to find a way to protect it himself, even if he has to make a marriage of convenience to achieve that end. He thinks it will be easy to win Esmaurade's hand, until the test begins.

This is my least favorite book of the *Bride Quest* series. It didn't hold my attention as well as the others. Esmaurade is a difficult character for me to like and she behaves in a way that I don't really think any noblewoman would behave in the 1100's. Bayard is a likable character, determined to do the right thing, but Esmaurade provides him with a constant challenge, behaving more like a willful child than a respectable woman.

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### **Maria Dariotis says**

I received a free copy of this book from the author in exchange for my honest review.

That being said, I totally enjoyed this tale of adventure and romance, Esmerauade's character was spunky and defied all the rules for women at the time, she wouldn't marry unless her heart was involved. Bayard was a loyal crusader to the king Richard who risked all for his love to Esmerauade. Lots of adventure and intrigue

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### **An Odd1 says**

*The Temptress* (*Bride Quest* 6) by Claire Delacroix. With quasi-archaic ye know naught the knots of yearning plots that perplex and beset, overly feminist inclinations, family from the series, another shrew-taming variation unfolds. More light than serious, much introspection, magic extraneous. Leisurely rhythm soothes, homage to traditional tales.

"Esmerauade knew that she would have need of naught for all her days and nights than this knight" Bayard, loyal Crusader for King Richard. "Will would find the way". "She was unpredictable", foolish, selfish. She runs off with just an old maid, leaves riddles for suitors to follow, risks rape, sleeps with (to her, not him) a stranger, "shooting star blazing" on p66/376.

Despite good advice, "You cannot tell which man will hold your heart with so little as a glance, regardless of what the old tales say", she flirts and more, learning another's "kiss made her think of the lips of fishes". Stubborn, "her heart had known Bayard from the first ... she would force Bayard to confess". Deeds are not enough, she insists on the L-word. She starts to take on responsibility, gives "counsel for those hens disinclined to surrender their eggs". But the goddess Fortuna decides to trip up her formerly favored hero. A strong silvery vine flourishes in time with his wooing ballad of Tristan, that engages her attention like Scheherazade.

(Spoiler:

He throws away his heritage for her view of honor (love achieves no property), and only his brother's love and courage provides for the newlyweds. The saints and vine are diverting, but could be made use of more to advance the story.)

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## **Kathy says**

Just like Esmerauade, I love stories! This one has a little whimsy thrown in in the form of ancient gods. I first thought it was weird, but ended up loving it! This is a story of a girl who believes in true love and wants adventure in her life. So she leaves home to find both. Told in great style by Claire Delacroix. I was given an ARC for an honest review.

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## **Diana says**

Bayard seeks Esmerauade's hand so that he can reclaim the family holding given to his uncle and cousin.

Great heroine and charming hero. Very evil villain though.

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## **Kate says**

Bayard de Villone is forced, through political and familial manoeuvring, to enter a contest to win a particular woman, Esmerauade of Ceinn-beithe, as his bride. Esmerauade is attracted to Bayard from the beginning, but refuses to marry without a declaration of love. Bayard, for his part, sees love as a weakness he will never succumb to. Or at least never admit to. Hijinks and flirtation ensue as Esmerauade tries to coax a declaration out of her stubborn knight.

I've read a fair amount of historical fiction and this stands out as much less frustrating than most. There are a few things that I really enjoyed:

1) The hero has a sense of humour about his heroine's adventures, and admits early on that he would not like her if she were typical. I hate heroes who cling to a feeble belief that a meek and obedient woman is what they want and need.

2) My other pet peeve with romance novels generally is that authors often create conflict by making characters behave in unrealistic or uncharacteristic ways, which is easily enough to ruin a book for me. I like that both Esmerauade and Bayard have reasons to behave the way they do, and their behavior almost never goes beyond what their histories would justify. The only time I felt a bit disappointed was when Bayard

changed his opinion so drastically just because Esmerauade was in danger. The author didn't sell that shift for me.

3) The book isn't solely focused on the two main characters. It also deals with their families, with all the love and dysfunction that families can bring. I enjoyed these parts for the secondary characters themselves and also for the insight they bring to Bayard and Esmerauade's motivations.

I have a few minor complaints, as well:

1) The bits with Lady Fortuna and the saints seemed totally out of place to me, not adding anything particularly and just taking up space.

2) The whole magical vine thing just seemed so out of place in a book that otherwise stuck fairly closely to historical fact. Why bother? It doesn't particularly drive the plot, and again just seems to be taking up space. The author seems to be trying to straddle fantasy and historical fiction without completely committing to either.

Overall, though, I really enjoyed the book. It made a nice light read for a spring day.

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