



Healer

Linda Windsor

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Sixth-century Scotland—in the time of Arthur....

“The Gowrys’ seed shall divide your mighty house and bring a peace beyond the ken of your wicked soul.”

Her mother’s dying prophecy to the chieftain Tarlach O’Byrne sentenced Brenna of Gowrys to twenty years of hiding. Twenty years of being hunted—by the O’Byrnes, who fear the prophecy, and by her kinsmen, who expect her to lead them against their oppressors. But Brenna is a trained and gifted healer, not a warrior queen. So she lives alone in the wilderness with only her pet wolf for company. When she rescues a man badly wounded from an ambush, she believes he may be the answer to her deep loneliness. Healing him comes as easy as loving him. But can their love overcome years of bitterness and greed...and bring peace and renewed faith to the shattered kingdom?

Healer Details

Date : Published June 1st 2010 by David C. Cook (first published 2010)

ISBN : 9781434764782

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Format : Paperback 351 pages

Genre : Christian Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Christian, Fantasy, Romance, Fiction

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Jackie says

This was an interesting book. I have enjoyed some christian fiction in the past so I was excited when my friend picked this for book club. The prologue pulls you right in to the story and the characters. And as I continued to read, I really couldn't put it down. I was up late many times reading this book.

The reason it is not 4 stars is because I had a hard time following it at times because of the writing. The narration was in modern English but when characters were speaking it was back to Olden English which was jarring at times.

Jennifer says

I don't even know where to start. I read this book within 24 hours of starting it, unable to tear myself from it. The combination of so many of my favourite things made it impossible to resist: the setting, the scattered Celtic words throughout, the vivid characters.. But there is one detail that stood above the rest.

I have always had a hard time with the idea of promoting Christian media, because I have often seen it done without excellence. Well, this book knocks that stereotype to the ground. *This* is excellence embodied. Never have I seen a Christian research so deeply into this time period, without making assumptions, and bring an entirely different perspective than what we are used to reading or seeing in the movies about Arthur and company. It also draws attention to the reality (for it is a reality) that there is more to the world than meets the eye — a spiritual realm beneath the skin of the physical. There is also the distinction that there are two sides that are constantly warring in the spirit realm — those of heaven and hell. Linda does not water this down, though she does subtly introduce it (at least, *I* think it's subtle).

Oddly, I feel I must also mention how I obtained this book. A friend of mine recommended it to me via Goodreads, so I added it to my to-read list. My mom, knowing nothing of the recommendation, bought it on Amazon and mailed it to me. Mind you, I had searched for it in my library's system and found that only an interlibrary loan would bring it to me, as I do not visit bookstores all that often (I know, for shame! A booklover who doesn't visit the bookstore!) — all this without telling my mom. So imagine my surprise when it appeared on my doorstep! This book and I were surely destined to meet...

Jeni Enjaian says

I have always enjoyed historical fiction, especially that set in ancient Scotland or Ireland. This book however, indulged way too much on the romance and mysticism front. The root mechanics of Windsor's storytelling withstood the test. In fact, that's the only reason that I rated this book two stars instead of one. Any time an author of Christian historical fiction manages to avoid all the trite clichés and plot devices, I think that should be acknowledge. That, however, is the best thing that I can say about this book.

The things I disliked about the book are a bit more numerous. First, the connection (good or bad) between the characters happens far too quickly. This stretches the suspension of disbelief almost a bit too far. Second, the sensual descriptions Windsor employs for most of the interactions between Brenna and Ronan are

sensual in a chaste, Christian way which makes them entirely too awkward and frankly unnecessary. If you're going to describe sex or sexual intimacy, don't try to put a Christian spin on it. Just don't. Third, Windsor's use of the prophetic gifts for Joanna and Brenna (and other similar aspects) made it hard to distinguish how the Celtic Christians differentiated themselves from the pagans of the day. I can't quite put my finger on it but something about Windsor's "historiography" feels off.

I don't recommend this book and I actually took the other two books in the series off my "to-read" list. There are too many good books out there for me to waste my time reading mediocrity.

Kali says

Wow! I absolutely fell in love with this book and the characters! Brenna is a prime example of how everyone should be towards each other. She's so loving and kind regardless of their nature. This book made an impression on me and once I picked it up, I couldn't put it down. I would recommend this book to anyone who's looking for a great read.

Michelle Griep says

I've read lots of Linda Windsor's books—she's got twenty-nine published—but this one is my favorite by a long shot. *Healer* is historical fiction at its finest, incorporating fast-paced action, steamy romance, and spiritual warfare.

When thinking of the Dark Ages, certain words come to mind...mystical, superstitious, even downright demonic. Windsor pulls these elements into the story while managing to bring all the glory to God.

I really liked the herbal remedies that were used and explained throughout the tale. Much of the mystery during this time period (think King Arthur and Merlin) can be demystified when applying the science of nature—which is exactly what Windsor does.

But aside from the apparent research, medical and historical, Windsor writes a love story that sizzles. Hero Ronan O'Byrne is one serious hunk of man with a noble heart and muscles to match. Heroine Brenna of Gowrys is a woman who knows her own mind and is not afraid to act on her convictions, yet she displays a sincere humility and desire to please God. After only a chapter or two, I was seriously invested in these characters.

Healer is one of the top three books I've read so far this year, and I read a lot. This is definitely one I'll keep on my shelf and re-visit in the years to come.

Liana says

This was an interesting book, I really liked the medieval feel to it and especially, how the story started. :)

I'm sad that it wasn't quite for me though, and I was a little disappointed in a few things, mainly the romance! *laughs* See, I picked this book up hoping to read a really sweet Christian romance set in this time period. True romantic love to me is when a couple deeply cares and supports one another no matter what. (The obvious) Or quote, 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. ...But reading this romance kinda felt like I was reading a Christian erotica. O____O; Brenna and Rory's relationship was very lusty to me. Not once do I recall any of their point of views NOT being... sexual? Rory kept thinking about what it'd be like to kiss her instead of wondering

what she's like as a person, and Brenna was really no different. She cared more about wanting to have babies with him rather than accepting him for who he is, or what his feelings are. They never improved either as the story progress on with their lives. ...and that I had a real problem with, because this is a Christian book and I didn't see any elements of real love in it as I had expected, only lust. ...and we all know how God feels about lust. *laughs* Brenna claims that her relationship with Rory was build and supported on God (or something like that - it was along those lines anyway) but I disagree, it was built and supported on sex if anything... God was probably only 20% glued onto their relationship.

Anyway, I didn't write this to be mean or disrespectful, I just thought I'd give a warning to those who like their romances clean and lust free, as this book may not be for them. (This book is kinda like a censored erotica.) There are still sex scenes, but they aren't very descriptive. ...I wish that Rory and Brenna could have learnt that sex does not = love, hahaha... x'D

Debbie says

"Healer" is a historical romance set in 6th-century Scotland in the time of Arthur. The world-building was good, and the historical detail was woven into the story. The focus was mainly on the political and religious structure of the time period, though, rather than the day-to-day details of living. The romance was a pretty typical romance novel set-up. The falling-in-love felt a bit rushed to me, but I found it believable. The pacing was very good, and the characters were interesting and likable.

The novel explored the religions in Scotland during this time period, especially the difference between between pagan witches and Christian-trained healers in how knowledge was used and who it was used for. This played a very strong role in the novel.

Several of the characters had a strong Christian faith (which was tested). Others grew up with a general understanding of Christianity but never quite decided what to believe about God. Others tried to mix worship of God in with worshipping the pagan gods. And yet others just believed in pagan gods. The Christian elements were worked into the story naturally, but it was a main focus of the story. A non-Christian might feel it was too heavy an emphasis. On the other hand, people interested in Wicca might be interested in seeing the roots of where that religion came from.

There was non-explicit (married) sex. The minor amount of bad language was in the "he cussed" style. Overall, I'd recommend this novel as well-written, clean reading.

This book was an Advanced Reader Copy provided by The B&B Media Group for review.

Ruth says

Joanna, a trained healer, chose to marry for love – and her fateful decision drives a wedge between two once-close foster brothers, leaders of the neighboring Gowrys and O'Byrne clans. When Tarlach O'Byrne's obsession with Joanna turns violent, his bloody act sets in motion twenty years of bitter clan feuding, fed by Joanna's dying promise – that her infant daughter would divide Tarlach's house and usher in a peace beyond his comprehension. In the ensuing decades, Ronan, the O'Byrne heir, has grown weary of the self-destructive

nature of his father's obsession to kill the Gowrys heiress. When Ronan is attacked by a would-be assassin, the one woman he's been reared to fear and hate nurses him back from the brink of death. Forced into a life of isolation, Joanna's daughter Brenna carries the knowledge of her mother's final words heavily on her shoulders – she's a healer, not the savior the Gowrys clan desires or the wolf-woman monster the O'Byrnes fear. She longs to practice the healing arts and live her faith openly, and hopes the stranger she saves could be the answer to her heartfelt prayers. Bound by decades of fear, guilt, and bloody feuding, both Ronan and Brenna will find their faith and love tested as never before if they are to be the long-promised catalysts for peace between their warring families.

With *Healer*, Linda Windsor returns to what she does best in my eyes – shining a light into the Dark Ages and illuminating a fascinating period in time, the rich history and traditions of the early church. Windsor deftly weaves a vibrant tapestry of family jealousy, vengeance, forgiveness, and love during a turbulent time when pagan beliefs vied for prominence with the rise of the early church. In my view no one can spin a meaty, substantial tale set during the Dark Ages and fill it with enough passion and danger to keep you turning pages quite like Windsor. What makes Brenna and Ronan's story even more compelling is that this time, Windsor crafts her story against the backdrop of the only historically documented Arthur, prince of Dalraida in sixth-century Scotland. I've always loved the stories and films of King Arthur and his knights, everything from the unabashed romanticism of *Knights of the Round Table*, to the gritty realism of *King Arthur*, to the magic and humor of *Merlin*. Reading about the historical Arthur and his attempts to unite the chieftains under his rule, his wise warrior-queen bride Gwenhyfar, and his advisor Merlin Emrys, a Christian druid and bishop in the Celtic Church, made for utterly absorbing reading. These characters, so familiar to fans of the legends, spring to life in a new and authentic way in the pages of *Healer*. I loved the authenticity, historical context, and epic feel these figures – the roots of many a beloved legend – lend to the storyline.

In addition to a liberal dose of history – including fascinating information regarding the fate of the Davidic line after the Jewish diaspora at the end of 2nd Kings – I also adore the love story Windsor spins within the pages of *Healer*. She excels at bringing passionate, wounded characters in search of healing to vibrant life. Brenna, and especially Ronan, are so fully realized so true to the time period, that I found it impossible not to be wholly immersed in their world. Windsor deftly illustrates the delicate push-and-pull between the Christian Celtic Church and the deeply entrenched pagan beliefs still so prevalent during this time period. When it was so easy for superstition to rule the day, the Christian practice of “nature magic” (i.e., the use of herbs and natural remedies to facilitate healing) to be misconstrued, feared, or in conflict with those who practiced spiritually dark arts. *Healer* is an epic tale of tragedy, love, and redemption set against the unforgettable, turbulent backdrop of early church history. This is Windsor doing what she does best, shedding light into some of history's darkest eras, and illustrating with an unwavering confidence the transformative, life-changing capability of wild, sold-out faith. I can not wait to read Caden's story in volume two – *Thief* releases Summer 2011.

Terri Harr says

"The Healer" by Linda Windsor is a wonderful book of faith and healing, both physically and spiritually. In this book, Linda takes you back to 6th century Scotland. She had done a huge amount of research for this book. The details are done in such a way it takes you back to that time as if you were living it with them.

Brenna has lived her life in hiding, learning the art of healing. She has only one companion, a white wolf. She is being hunted by another clan. Her family was killed by that very clan when she was just an infant.

One day she watches as a young man is ambushed and left for dead. Being the healer that she is, she must risk her own life to get him to safety. She tends to his wounds and falls in love. But what will happen when they find out the truth?

Ronan is a brave and strong character who has been through much in his life at an early age. Things a young boy should never have to witness. His father is a man who sought revenge and has passed that along to his sons. Can Ronan and Brenna break that chain in his family? Read and find out.

You will love this book as much as I have if you enjoy going into the past and living life in a different time. I recommend it to everyone. And I can't wait to read the other two in the series.

Anita Mae says

I absolutely loved this book. Linda Windsor has just become one of those auto-buy authors for me. That means I'll buy her books just because she's the author regardless of the story line, because I know I'm going to be highly entertained with her stories. That's the impression I got from reading Healer. Although she's multi-published, Healer is the first time I've been exposed to Linda's writing. It certainly won't be the last.

In Healer, Linda has seamlessly woven historical fact and fiction together with fantasy to create an unforgettable story. The heroine's gift of vision reminded me of my grandmother. To some, the gift of visions is unnatural or ungodly, but I believe God grants miracles and visions to aid His children today just as he did 2000 years ago and earlier. And yes, even in the 6th century. My grandmother experienced visions when a loved one was in danger so I'm very comfortable with this scenario. I also believe in the healing power of herbs and would rather take a herb than a capsule of modern medicine. I was thoroughly at ease with these 2 aspects of the story. Wonderful imagery. Highly entertaining.

Healer is set in 6th century Scotland in the days of King Arthur and Merlin. It's the classic theme of good vs evil in a highly entertaining scenario.

Brenna of Gowrys is a hunted woman. She lives in a cave far from anyone – not because she's done wrong – but because a madman has sworn to kill the progeny of the woman who scorned him. Alone, save for the occasional visit by a priest, Brenna has learned to survive by her own skills. Trained as a healer, first by mother, then by her nurse, she has an intimate knowledge of the properties of plants.

Brenna is a follower of Christ and gives Him all the glory for her visions, which include tingling and warnings of impending danger. She has no hope of a normal life as long as the madman and his sons live. Part of the problem is because she never gets out in public to meet someone, and part is because she knows no one will want to live the rest of their days with her and her wolf in a cave.

Then one day, Brenna sees a man being attacked. Before she can stop him, her wolf charges into the melee and chases away the attacker. Arrow wounds have almost ended the man's life. Brenna drags him back to her cave by his cloak and proceeds to use her herbs to heal him. She doesn't know who he is, but he's hurt and needs care so she gives it.

As a child, Ronan O'Byrne witnessed his father's madness. Now an adult, the images are a constant

reminder of Ronan's lost childhood. He's sick of the hunts for the missing woman but as the heir to the O'Byrne kingdom, doesn't know how to stop his father.

Ronan doesn't remember the attack. He wakes in a cave tended by a young woman who's the exact likeness of his childhood nightmares – the woman murdered by his father. He'd finally found the daughter yet he is too weak to do anything but watch her minister to him. His main concern is if she'll continue her treatment when she finds out who he is. But does she really need to know?

Healer is a romance with the same problems young people face today when it comes to in-laws and conventions. Brenna loves God and Ronan doesn't know Him. Her people starve while his have plenty. How will they ever overcome these challenges? And how will Brenna survive the loneliness once Ronan goes back to his people?

Joleen says

Years ago I read a book by Linda Windsor called *For Pete's Sake*. This book, *Healer*, was nothing like that. I mean how different can you get from 500s to present day?

Healer was set in the 6th century in what I believe was Scotland, in olden Briton. The history of this book is important as it relates to biblical Davidic bloodlines, but also brings in legends of Merlin, Arthur, and Guinevere. Characters are listed in both the front and back, plus a glossary and a forward and after words that help you understand the history and research as well as explanations of character names.. example... Arthur and Merlin are titles throughout fifth and sixth centuries, not just names.

Anyway...

The *Healer* is Brenna, daughter of another *Healer*, Joanna, who was a queen. Joanna died just after Brenna's birth and Brenna was whisked away by her nurse and mentor. For 20 years her life was in danger; labeled a witch and hunted by the demented chief of the O'Byrne clan who had always loved her mother but couldn't have her.

The O'Byrnes were on their yearly hunt for the "witch" when an attack is made against an important member of the clan and left for dead. Brenna and her white wolf see it all and take him into her hiding place to try to heal him, putting herself in possible danger. What if he gets away only to bring the clan to her hideaway and reveal her existence?

The rest of the story is of romance, prophecy, healing, forgiveness, salvation, "nature magic" (power of the Holy Spirit) and evil.
Fascinating.

This is one of those books I will remember if for no other reason than that it was so different, and because of all the history of a time in the dark ages I know little about.

Holly (2 Kids and Tired) says

Fascinating. Absolutely fascinating.

Brenna is an unlikely heroine and one who, at times, seems a little too good and perfect. Her history is marked by murder and she lives in hiding, but she is raised in the Christian faith and grows up strong and capable, with a heart full of love for all things and people. As she nurses Ronan O'Byrne, the last thing she imagines is falling in love with him. But, having inherited her mother's healing abilities as well as her ability to see into the future, Brenna also knows what is to come and that she and Ronan have the potential to unite their warring clans. Together they uncover mystery and intrigue as they attempt to persuade his father Tarlach to see reason.

I loved the interweaving of Arthurian legend with the early beginnings of the Christian church and pagan traditions in Celtic Scotland. The use of herbal healing or nature magic was interesting as it was used for both good and bad, often accompanying dark magic. Windsor's research is exhaustive and there is an extensive bibliography at the end of the book, as well as extensive notes.

A bit medieval and Lord of the Rings-ish, this was a compelling story and one I had hard time putting down. I thought that there might be too many characters to keep track of, but that wasn't the case. I am anxiously awaiting the next book in the series.

Thanks to First Wildcard and the B&B Media Group for the opportunity to review this novel.

Jenn Doyle says

I had received this as a freebie & was very excited to dive in, as the accolades included the book having a ton of historically accurate info. Then I read the author's intro. Oh. Good. Gods. This is all about Christian propaganda. The author took history and turned it into her version of what was Christian before Christianity. I tend to think of myself as a very culturally aware person, but I think in her zeal to make everything in history Christian, this author subverted the cultures of those she's writing about. I'm going to be archiving this one off of my Nook and staying well away from this author.

Hope says

I dunno. Not in the mood, I guess?

Sasha (whispersofthesilentwind) says

As always when reading Christian Fiction, I was a bit hesitant to see how I was going to feel towards this book. Keep in mind that I have enjoyed Linda Winsor's Fires of Glenmara Series immensely. However, I was hesitant to buy her Brides of Alba series because the descriptions are such a cardboard cutout, but once again Windsor did what she does best and weaved a beautiful story.

The plot started off dramatically, and I rode that wave throughout the rest of the book. Windsor's characters were well placed and decently complex. I would have liked to see more depth in Brenna; she was too kind and goodly two-shoes for me, we rarely see her show any serious 'bad' emotions. I felt like the rest of the cast were decent with showing both sides of emotion. I savored the liberties that Windsor took with history. I enjoy seeing other people's views on how historical things might have gone down. Overall this was an excellent Christian fiction book; it avoided the majority of the cliques that plague this genre.
