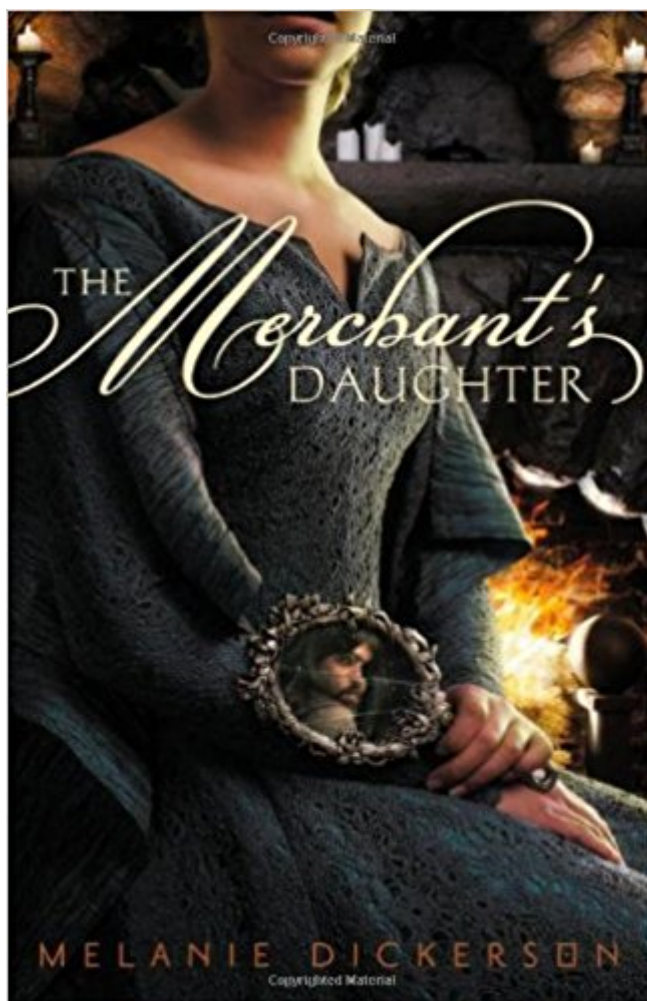


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The Merchant's Daughter (Fairy Tale Romance Series)



Synopsis

An unthinkable danger. An unexpected choice. Annabel, once the daughter of a wealthy merchant, is trapped in indentured servitude to Lord Ranulf, a recluse who is rumored to be both terrifying and beastly. Her circumstances are made even worse by the proximity of Lord Ranulf's bailiff—a revolting man who has made unwelcome advances on Annabel in the past. Believing that life in a nunnery is the best way to escape the escalation of the bailiff's vile behavior and to preserve the faith that sustains her, Annabel is surprised to discover a sense of security and joy in her encounters with Lord Ranulf. As Annabel struggles to confront her feelings, she is involved in a situation that could place Ranulf in grave danger. Ranulf's future, and possibly his heart, may rest in her hands, and Annabel must decide whether to follow the plans she has cherished or the calling God has placed on her heart.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'A virtuous romance with characters who all fall in love with each other's inner beauty in spite of outward appearance.' - Kirkus Review (Kirkus Review) 'True, readers will peg the happy ending at the start, but the progression of Annabel's honorable love affair will have the rapt attention of Christian-fiction fans.' - Courtney Jones, Booklist Review (Booklist Review)

Melanie Dickerson is a New York Times bestselling author and two-time Christy Award finalist. Her first book *The Healer's Apprentice* won the National Readers' Choice Award for Best First

Book in 2010, and *The Merchant's Daughter* won the 2012 Carol Award. Melanie spends her time writing stories at her home near Huntsville, Alabama, where she lives with her husband and two daughters.

When the new lord, Ranulf, comes to the demesne, Annabel is made his indentured servant to pay for her family's laziness; their complex relationship is further complicated when troublesome Bailiff Tom is injured. (Though reviews are inherently subjective, I prefer to provide some organization to my opinions through the use of a personal rubric. The following notes may contain spoilers.)

Plot and Setting: 5 -- Plot has many unique elements, no major holes, and a sense of focus. This is a beautiful, believable retelling of the 'Beauty and the Beast' story, with the added wonder of someone who seeks God experiencing the joy of reading the Bible for the first time. Suspenseful, romantic, and thoroughly enjoyable. Setting is clear, believable, and consistent. The timeline is easy to follow, and I enjoyed the interesting details about what life and law and justice were like in 1300's England.

Characters: 4.5 -- Relatable, realistic, interesting, dynamic characters. A lot of wonderful depth and realism to both Ranulf and Annabel, in their pain and joy and confusion. Some minor characters have depth, while others may be slightly stereotyped or simplified. Villainous characters (Tom, Maud, Annabel's family) are fairly one-note, while we get more complex and interesting looks at others, like the coroner. Definite strong points in the relationships between characters. I especially enjoyed how the coroner slyly collected clues about the relationship between Annabel and Ranulf, and Stephen.

Mechanics and Writing: 5 -- Few, if any, typos or word errors. One typo (in the very first line!), and 3 spots where paragraph breaks aren't quite right. That's all! Intelligent use of POV (Annabel and Ranulf). Skillful writing that adds to the story. Not to mention obviously well-researched.

Redeeming Value: 5 -- Well-developed, central, uplifting themes. Annabel learns that the local priest doesn't even own a Bible, but her deep desire to read God's word is met through Ranulf--and she takes joy in learning a true picture of God through the Word. She also overcomes her fear, through faith and love. Ranulf and the coroner learn that mercy and love can sometimes supercede justice, and Ranulf releases some long-held bitterness and lets himself feel loved by God and Annabel. Sex, alcohol, violence, etc, are not glorified at all, though present: both Annabel and Ranulf are faced with violent attacks and unwanted sexual advances and/or accusations of sexual impropriety, though it avoids becoming graphic or crude.

Personal Enjoyment: 5 -- I loved it. It made me feel in all the best ways, and leaves me content and satisfied. One I'll definitely read again.

The Merchant's Daughter by Melanie Dickerson is a compelling retelling of the beloved Beauty and

the Beast tale. I have read three of the author's books in just as many days, and I can't wait to read another! I didn't read them in order because I didn't realize they use the same characters throughout three of the stories. It didn't ruin anything for me since I accidentally read a couple of them in order. haha But *The Merchant's Daughter* is a stand alone novel and is a great one to check out first. :-) I was pleasantly surprised with how the story was written in a realistic way. The Beast is a lord of a manor and because of that he rules over the town. The Beauty is the daughter of a merchant who died three years ago leaving them destitute. Required to work at the lord's house, Annabel begins to like and respect the scarred, hurting man. Ranulf meanwhile wonders if Annabel's pretty face hides a deceitful side. He soon finds out how different she really is from his deceased wife. One of the best parts of the story was how excited Annabel was about holding and reading a Bible. Her joy and amazement was convicting and uplifting. For some reason it seems easy to lose the wonder of the Word, but we should still react like Annabel did in the story. Plus, I loved how the truths from the Bible were woven throughout the story in such a seamless way. This fairy tale was such a great mix of the traditional story and of the Disney cartoon, too. If you have always enjoyed fairy tales, you should definitely read this book and this series! You won't regret it. :-)

Young Annabel Chapman's family owes a debt to the lord of their demesne, and they believe corrupt Bailiff Tom will help them pay it in exchange for Annabel's hand in marriage. Annabel, however, desires to become a nun and live her life studying the Bible, so she takes matters into her own hands and agrees to three years of indentured service to Lord le Wyse in order to pay her family's debt and also escape the unwanted advances of the bailiff. She hopes that after her time of service she will be able to take her vows and enter a convent. Having just moved to the remote hamlet of Glynval in order to build a new manor house, Ranulf le Wyse is on a quest to hide from the world and recover from his past. He once saved a servant from a wolf's attack, and for his trouble he lost one of his eyes and use of his arm. Other life traumas have left him abrupt and easily angered, and the combination of physical and emotional scars give him a beastly bearing. He wants privacy and peace, but that is threatened when Bailiff Tom meets with a mysterious injury. His servant Annabel, whose reading of the Bible has often soothed his evenings, is one of the main suspects and he is sure she knows more than she is saying. It was very easy to get caught up in this story! There was an element of danger which kept me turning the pages. I didn't find Annabel to be the most compelling character, as she seemed to have few faults besides a penchant for tears, and she fit one of my literary pet peeves in that nearly every man who met her wanted to marry her. But the story itself definitely fit with its "Beauty and the Beast" origins and was enjoyable overall. If you

enjoy fairy tale retellings, be sure to check out this and other works by Melanie Dickerson!

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