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The Princess Spy (Fairy Tale Romance Series)



Synopsis

Margaretha has always been a romantic, and hopes her newest suitor, Lord Claybrook, is destined to be her one true love. But then an injured man is brought to Hagenheim Castle, claiming to be an English lord who was attacked by Claybrook and left for dead. And only Margaretha – one of the few who speaks his language – understands the wild story. Margaretha finds herself unable to pass Colin's message along to her father, the duke, and convinces herself – "Lord Colin is just an addled stranger. Then Colin retrieves an heirloom she lost in a well, and asks her to spy on Claybrook as repayment. Margaretha knows she could never be a spy – not only is she unable to keep anything secret, she's sure Colin is completely wrong about her potential betrothed. Though when Margaretha overhears Claybrook one day, she discovers her romantic notions may have been clouding her judgment about not only Colin but Claybrook as well. It is up to her to save her father and Hagenheim itself from Claybrook's wicked plot.

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up – It's April 1413, and 18-year-old Margaretha, eldest daughter of Duke Wilhelm of Hagenheim, is reluctantly entertaining the pursuit of her latest suitor, Rowland Fortescue, Earl of Claybrook, when a handsome, severely injured stranger, Colin, arrives. The heroine is immediately drawn to the alluring young man and the daunting information he insists that he must share with her

father's information that could put her and her entire family at risk, but could also save their lives. Talkative, sheltered, and carefree, Margaretha must undertake the task of spying on Lord Claybrook and his men to learn for herself if what Colin has warned her of is true and if so, how she can save her family from certain death. Throughout the story there is an undertone of attraction between the protagonist and Colin that builds gradually, leaving readers yearning for the moment the two will finally express their love. The story and the characters are believable, and the author seamlessly weaves details about this Holy Roman Empire village and courtly life, while maintaining the narrative's even pace. References to God are made throughout the story: Margaretha and Colin's thoughts and prayers often address the deity, making this an appropriate title for teens who enjoy princess-themed Christian romance. — Susan Harris, Ridgeway High School, TN

Margaretha is the daughter of a fifteenth-century German duke, and her family and acquaintances have always noted not only her penchant for talking incessantly but also her deeply romantic nature. She is looking forward to finding her one true love, and she thinks it might be her latest suitor, Lord Claypool. In a chance meeting with Colin, an Englishman come to the continent claiming that Claypool has murdered good people and seeking justice, Margaretha learns not only that her suitor may not be as honorable as she thought but also that she can successfully pare down her chattiness, keep an important secret, and help take righteous action. She and Colin join forces in a well-paced adventure that pits good against evil, features a strong and credible young woman, and relies on accurate social history in its Christian orientation. Margaretha's sensations, expectations, and fears are all evoked realistically, making this a good choice for readers who loved Katherine Paterson's Lyddie (1991) or Karen Cushman's Catherine, Called Birdy (1994) and are now ready for more romance. --- Francisca Goldsmith (Booklist) Award-winning Melanie Dickerson pens her fourth young adult novel set in medieval Germany, loosely based on the story of The Frog Prince. In The Princess Spy, Margaretha of Hagenheim Castle is a talkative young woman whose latest suitor, Lord Claybrook, seems enamored of her despite her talkativeness. Could he be her true love? When an injured man is brought to the castle, Margaretha realizes he is speaking English and that she is the only one who understands him. As he recovers from his injuries and begins working in the stable, Colin confides he is searching for Claybrook, who may not be who he seems to be. Should she believe a foreigner? Should she spy on her suitor when Colin asks her to do so? Then, while her father is away from the castle, Margaretha overhears Claybrook talking to his men about his plans. Colin and Margaretha flee to reach her relatives in Marienberg. Pursued by enemies, will they reach Marienberg in time to get

reinforcements? As in her earlier books, the faith element is clearly evident yet not preachy. For example, Colin and Margaretha pray for God's guidance. Dickerson's tales feature wholesome relationships while still building a strong attraction between the main characters, making this a good choice for teen readers. Dickerson is a masterful storyteller with a carefully crafted plot, richly-drawn characters, and detailed setting. The reader is easily pulled into the story. All of her books are a delightful reimagining of a familiar tale – this one is her best so far! Recommended for young adults and adults who are young at heart. Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ (Christian Library Journal)

The Princess Spy is a retelling of The Frog Prince. Margaretha is being pursued by Lord Claybrook, a dashing English nobleman. He seems like a good man and it appears that Margaretha has found her true love at last. However, an injured man named Colin ends up at Hagenheim and warns Margaretha that Lord Claybrook is not who he seems to be. Because of Colin's warning about Lord Claybrook, she overhears Claybrook's plans to kill her father and brother, and plots to take over Hagenheim. Can Margaretha save her family before it is too late? I didn't really like Margaretha in The Captive Maiden. She seemed to be a bit of an airhead. However, in The Princess Spy, she really grew on me and became a likeable character. She is very energetic and has a bubbly personality. She is also mature and clever. I love that she is very stubborn and is willing to do anything to rescue her family. I also love how strong she is and that she can fight and take care of herself. I also like that her love interest is Colin, who is the descendant of Annabel and Ranulf in The Merchant's Daughter. I liked the interactions between Colin and Margaretha, for it is very amusing because they are very alike. Both of them are very strong-willed and have their own ideas about how they should solve the situation. Yet, they are a good pair because they have to make hard choices and must rely on each other to solve them. Overall, this story is about friendship, family, courage, love, trust, hope, and choices. The message of the book is to trust in God. I liked how this book was connected to all of the other books in the series. All the characters were really fun, and the villain was very interesting. This story was very fast-paced and action-packed. This book also had a lot of intrigue. In fact, I was hooked from the very first page because it opens with a murder and the hero seeking revenge. All of Mrs. Dickerson's books are standalones, and it is not necessary to have read other books in the series. However, I find it is helpful to begin with the oldest novel, The Healer's Apprentice, and read them chronologically. Many characters reoccur in other stories, and when they do show up, one is more familiar with them and how they affect the

overall world in her novels. It is fun to see the threads come together over time and follow the storylines of some characters across several years. I recommend this book to lovers of fairy tales, their retellings, and anybody who wishes to read a fun fantasy series that is Christian-based.

If you are a fan of Melanie Dickerson at all, then you have been able to watch the saga of Haggenheim from the beginning. You have been able to follow the family of Rose and Wilhelm Hamlin whom we first met in *The Healer's Apprentice*. Since then we have seen the romance and adventure of their two sons, Gabe in *The Fairest Beauty* and Valten in *The Captive Maiden*. *The Princess Spy* is a continuation of the story except this time the story is focused on their eldest daughter, Margaretha. From the beginning, you see that Margaretha is a headstrong and independent young woman. She is witness to a potter bringing a wounded stranger to the healer and while it is not ideal that she be there, Margaretha enters the healer's home and helps out with the handsome stranger. The stranger she meets is connected to another family that we are familiar with from Melanie's stories, but I won't spoil it for you by telling you where he comes from. Margaretha is intrigued by this stranger, especially when she figures out that he is not German, but from another country and speaks another language. From this point on the adventure begins when it is discovered that an evil man is attempting to take over Haggenheim and kill Lord Hamlin and his son Valten. Margaretha and the stranger, who is named Colin, go searching for help and encounter many obstacles along the way. I loved this book. I had a hard time at first figuring out what fairy tale it was linked to. I eventually saw some faint ties to *The Frog Prince* although Colin is in no way a frog. I loved the action and I loved the way Margaretha jumped in on the adventure even when Colin practically begs and pleads her to stay where it is safe. Margaretha is determined that she will be the one to save her family and no one is going to stop her. I appreciate her fierce loyalty to her family and wanting to stand up for what is right. She has lived a sheltered life but she does not shirk what she feels is her responsibility, even in the face of hardships. I love the fact that Melanie has managed to find a way to connect people and families that you wouldn't expect to have a connection. It almost makes me giddy when I see reference to beloved characters from other stories that you have wondered how life went after the story was over. I believe Melanie did an excellent job of tying these characters in without it seeming too farfetched and unbelievable. It just made sense. Another part of the story that I loved was her use of Psalm 1 as a lifeline for Margaretha. I have a personal attachment to Psalm 1 and so to see it used as a help and encouragement to her when she was struggling made me appreciate her even more as a character. Margaretha showed a rock solid faith

that God was going to take care of it, even when it seemed like things couldn't get any worse. She was also able to help Colin come to a realization that he needed to let go of the guilt of things that were out of his control. Overall, this story was entertaining, but also an encouragement to me. Even when times are tough and it seems like the bad guys are going to win, God's got things under control and His way will come through in the end.

SEX: none
PROFANITY: none
VIOLENCE: some
WRITING QUALITY: poor to fair, target age maybe tweens?
This is a sweet story with very loose allusions to "the frog prince". A young Englishman, Colin, bent on revenge, finds himself being nursed back to health by a beautiful German girl. The two have to overcome language barriers, trust issues, conflicting interests and a brutal villain. I don't have an issue with the story, nor did I find any blatant grammar or spelling errors but it was a tedious read. It was as if I were listening to someone tell a story. Everything was spelled out for me and repeated twice in case I didn't get it the first time. Although it was written in an active voice it wasn't compelling. For example, this author's writing style might read: The boy threw the ball at the wall. It bounced off and then landed in a ditch full of water. Water splashed everywhere. (Telling) A more visual and interesting way to say it might be: The red ball hit the wall like a missile, ricocheted off and landed in the ditch with a splash that shot water into the air like shrapnel. (Telling, but far less boring to read.) It's hard to read an entire book in the former voice. Even though I liked the story it dragged. I tried reading another of the author's books once, with the same conclusion. Perhaps some of her later books are better but I don't think I'll try and find out. Maybe I'm not the target audience, I imagine younger readers wouldn't find fault with it.

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