



Crown Jewel

Megan Derr

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Lazzaro has a talent for catching criminals, a talent that has gained him as much trouble as it has acclaim in the years since he arrived at the royal palace to attend his mother, infamous concubine to the King.

Increasingly frustrated that the man who murdered his mother continues to elude him, Lazzaro takes the advice of his half-brother and goes to obtain information from the notorious Crown Jewel--the most successful courtesan in the city.

But the man he encounters is nothing like what he expected, and Lazzaro finds himself coveting a Jewel that vows never to belong to just one man.

Crown Jewel Details

Date : Published June 8th 2011 by Less Than Three Press

ISBN :

Author : Megan Derr

Format : ebook 65 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Fantasy, M M Fantasy, Historical

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From Reader Review Crown Jewel for online ebook

Emmie says

You know, not my favorite Megan Derr story. I just wish that some issue had been taken, no jealousy whatsoever?! Eh, I'm not buying' that. And to say that the jewel had been with your brother... Nope, some issues would arise. Lazzarro, I'm not sure you're being a realistic character. Especially for someone raised in an ascetic life. There were some character inconsistencies that took me out of the story. And I wish there was a little more of a time lag between Celeste's encounters. From Marco to Lazzarro and back again. Its not my thing, even if it his job.

TS says

Good story. I really liked it.

L-D says

I am a huge fan of Megan Derr's full length books. I enjoyed this one quite a lot. Lazzarro is the crown Prince's half-brother and even though he is a bastard, he is raised with his brother from the age of 13 and eventually appointed Duke by his father, the King. I really liked both Lazzarro and Prince Benito's characters and their closeness. Lazzarro's shrewdness assists Prince Beni with investigations and Lazzarro's current investigation is close to home as he's investigating the murder of some poisoned nobles, his mother included. When his efforts bring up no new clues, Beni suggests that Lazzarro question the Jewels (or courtesans) of the pleasure district. In particular, he recommends approaching Celeste, a crown jewel and a courtesan of the highest order, commanding several sovereigns a night for his services.

I really liked Celeste's character as well. He is a survivor and never makes excuses for his chosen profession. I also liked that this book lacked the "jealous lover" or overly possessive aspect that you sometimes find when your love interest sells himself or herself. This book centered more on the mystery than any relationship angst. I thought it was a sweet story and I enjoyed reading it.

orannia says

Four and a half stars. I adore Megan Derr's world-building and I really need to read some of her novel-length books to see what she can do with more space...

Marc Hampton says

More Like This

This was a lovely addition to Ms. Derr's collection. I especially liked this one due to the lack of expletives and passion without smut. My type of novel. I would love more like this or more adventures of these two

primary characters. Great work!

JC says

I enjoyed this but probably not as much as if it had been longer since I felt like more time was needed to build the relationship between Celeste and Lazzaro.

It's a testament to how much I liked the characters and the world they live in that I want to spend more time with them. Celeste was an intriguing character. I always like it when practical characters get swept up in an impractical romance. Lazzaro was equally likable. I liked his mixture of mature and bratty traits endearing.

One thing this needs apart from making it longer is a good Beta to spot some of the more glaring typos, grammar errors, missing texts and I think there were times when Celeste was referred to as Lazzaro during scenes when they were together.

Overall this was an enjoyable read.

Calathea says

Lazzaro is a duke and bastard son of the king. Celeste is a highly paid prostitute (so called Crown Jewel). They meet when Lazzaro tries to retrieve information about the man who killed his mother.

It's love at first sight. They just have to struggle a bit to recognise it. ;-)

This is a wonderful story about two lovable characters with an interesting fantasy background. Like always with Megan Derr's stories there's so much hinted upon in the background that you want to come back and explore some more.

Lynn M. says

There are three things I will note before I proceed with my review. First, I am a Megan Derr fan in general so this may be a little bit biased. Secondly, I will try to keep this review as spoiler free as possible. Lastly, to clarify my rating scale; 5 is excellent, 4 is good, three is average, two is poor, one is could not finish.

Now on to the review:

Strengths

- World building. All of the details Megan uses to build the world Crown Jewel takes place in create a vivid and rather concrete vision for me as I read the book. From physical descriptions of the way the city is laid out, to bedrooms, to businesses, to the palace, Megan creates a world that has a sense of lushness as well as grittiness. Another aspect of her world building is the way Megan describes the culture/political system such as background on the crown prince and the royal family, the depiction of the structure and attributes of the various social groups, to the festivals, to clothing, all helped to give me as a reader another layer to the sense of place for Crown Jewel. A last bit of world building that Megan does well is the way the characters/culture of the book use language; from the terms social groups are called (jewels and cut flowers for example), to character names and nicknames, to curses all add the feel of culture and place.
- Characterization. Particularly for her protagonists Megan does an excellent job creating fully realized

characters that I as a reader invest in. She gives ample backstory for both Celeste and Lazzaro to give an understanding of where both characters come from and how that impacts the way they view the world around them, influences the way they interact with others, and motivates their actions. Another aspect of character development that Megan does well is giving each of the protagonists clear motivations and ways of thinking and staying relatively consistent to them. Furthermore Megan gives each of the protagonists their own flaws, but in such a way that as a reader I still rooted for them to achieve their goals. Lastly, she did a good job developing some of the secondary characters such as Benito and his Fiance by showing their personalities through description, action, and dialogue.

Weaknesses

- Pacing. If I have one major criticism of Crown Jewel it is the pacing. The speed at which the protagonists develop their relationship seems to happen a little too quickly for me to suspend disbelief, and in-fact the protagonists even question how quickly things develop between them and why. Furthermore the resolution of the main mystery seemed a little too rapid for my preference. In a way I felt as though I had missed some piece of information or some vital clue for mystery to feel complete.

- Characterization for the antagonists. To a lesser degree I found that the antagonists of Crown Jewel could have been more fully developed. While the protagonists and even some of the secondary characters are fully realized by comparison the antagonists of the story seem more two dimensional to me. They do not have the level of backstory, care of description, or fully fleshed out motivations. Even the antagonist who has the more characterization (the owner of the house of peace) he still comes across to me as a sort of "stock antagonist".

Overall: The world building and characterization of the protagonists in Crown Jewel outweigh its weaknesses of pacing and lack of development of the antagonists. Crown Jewel is a fun and interesting work that I would readily recommend to fans of the author.

Arthur says

Derr is one of my favorite authors, so I was pleasantly surprised to see a new book from her available at Amazon this morning.

The book is about Duke Lazzaro, a bastard son of the king, who tries to find his mother's killer. The killer has also killed several other people, so he really wants to solve the mystery. The Crown Prince Benito, his half brother, suggests him to get information from Crown Jewel, a high-class prostitute, because there he may find information about the killer. Celeste, the Crown Jewel (Jewel is the way they call 'prostitute'), is very handsome man. Being raised by the monks in the monastery, however, Lazzaro manages to control his lust and didn't respond to Celeste's advances. That any man can manage to refuse him disturbed and annoyed Celeste. Likewise, that Lazzaro cannot forget the courtesan leaves the Duke restless. The rest of the book is on how their lives intertwined and how together they try to find the mysterious killer.

One of the characteristics of Derr's books is being romantic without having much of sex scenes. In many of her books, in fact, there are no sex scene at all. In this book, however, the sex scenes are quite graphic for her standard. The relationships between the two MCs in this book is not as romantic as in her other works (my favorite is between Epee and Sharp in the Rapier Brothers). Another characteristics of her writings that I like is her ability to create an unique universe. Fortunately, I found it well preserved here.

In all, I liked reading this book, and am looking forward to reading other books by her.

Amber says

This was a fairly solid story with a some very nice world building and characters. Celeste and Lazzaro made a fairly predictable couple with the rent boy that doesn't want to be beholden to his client yet at the same is drawn to his gentlemanly behavior and unwillingness to just bend him over. Yet for all their predictable patterns of behavior I still felt drawn to them and felt they were well fleshed out and believable. They were also surrounded by some strong supporting characters that I enjoyed. I enjoyed watching Benito poke his brother to get him to enjoy life a little more and support his brother. I do wish the bad guys had been fleshed out a little bit more but with the length of the story it wasn't to be.

Ami says

I am going to be lazy this time around and point out to Arthur's review. He said everything that I wanted to say. It *was* a unique quissential Megan Derr's world build but I felt the romance was rather lacking. Felt that Celeste spent less time with Lazarro to make me believe in them. Even if I enjoyed both Lazarro and Celeste being 'confused' for their attraction to one another, since both men were used to be in control.

For my additional thoughts: it was weird that Lazarro didn't even feel jealous when knowing his half-brother was with Celeste previously; he didn't even raise an issue but he was jealous of Marco? Who was Celeste's previous friend? Oh, and also the villain was somebody out of the left field. Never been a fan of that kind of trope.

Deeze says

An interesting little story. **3.5**

It's so easy to get lost in Miss Derrs worlds. This one while short was most satisfying.

Ideal when in need of a quick fix.

Lillian Francis says

Great world building and engaging characters. Loved both MCs.

Sarah says

A very interesting, compelling read. Crown Jewel isn't quite like anything I've seen the author tackle before, namely, the pairing of a prostitute and a nobleman. Or at least, nothing I've seen her write on that subject, of this length. There might have been a shorter story somewhere in my memory that eludes me. I wasn't quite satisfied by the ending, since Lazzaro buying the House of Peace doesn't really sit right with me as a decent

way for a prostitute to gain independence, and the plot seems to conclude a little too quickly. However, the story was novel and gained my interest. Other than that, Lazzaro's parental... situation is incredibly confusing. He's a peasant... but his mother is a lady... and his father is a king... admittedly, he's illegitimate... and he was raised by monks? Confusion abounds! Still, definitely a good alternate world m/m romance, and though Lazzaro's character is a little... confused, Celeste's shines through like the crown jewel that he is; he's definitely the more admirable character of the two.

Mandi says

4 stars. Megan Derr's books are an auto-buy for me. She writes the most amazing worlds and characters you just fall in love with. This one was no exception. :)
