



The Flower Reader

Elizabeth Loupas

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Rinette Leslie of Granmuir has the ancient gift of divining the future in flowers, but her gift cannot prepare her for the turmoil that comes when the dying queen regent entrusts her with a casket full of Scotland's darkest secrets. On the very day she means to deliver it to newly crowned Mary, Queen of Scots, Rinette's husband is brutally assassinated. Devastated, Rinette demands justice before she will surrender the casket, but she is surrounded by ruthless men who will do anything to possess it. In the end, the flowers are all she can trust-and only the flowers will lead her safely home to Granmuir.

The Flower Reader Details

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From Reader Review The Flower Reader for online ebook

Kate Quinn says

There are not many authors who could convincingly tie together such diverse things as flower magic, Highland politics, and a hero who wears eyeliner - but Elizabeth Loupas is such an author. Her debut novel "The Second Duchess" was one of my favorite reads last year, and "The Flower Reader" proves that Loupas has successfully dodged the Sophomore Slump. As with "Second Duchess," "Flower Reader" revolves around the heroine's unraveling of a mystery - but the mystery here is rougher, the danger greater, and the heroine not so sheltered from harm. The result is a complex, gripping, sobering thriller with plenty of swordplay and politics for good measure.

Scotland is the setting this time around, and refreshingly, Loupas uses a rarely-explored period of Mary Queen of Scots's reign as backdrop: the years when she had just returned home from France as a teenage widow, before the mess of Darnley and Rizzio and Bothwell reared its ugly head. Queen Mary is not the heroine here, however: that role belongs to Rinette, a young lady-in-waiting entrusted with a casket of letters and prophecies intended to guide the new queen. But Rinette's adored young husband is murdered in a mysterious assassination, and Rinette demands his killer be found before she hands over the casket. It's a decision she'll have ample time to rue.

I like a heroine who is motivated by something other than love, and Rinette is an arrow bent on revenge, on protecting her children, and on saving her beloved home by the sea from rapacious lords. The man she should be with will be quickly evident to a sharp-eyed reader, and he's even evident to Rinette - but this girl is too focused, too careful, too busy, and too battered to make time for love. Her quest for her first husband's killer will lead her to heartbreak, imprisonment, a forced second marriage at swordpoint, and possibly death. Her one consolation is her gift of floromancy: the ability to read people and situations in the flowers she sees around them. This could have been a sentimental gimmick but it is subtle and lovely, woven into the story with grace and never used as a *deus ex machina*.

A tender, touching, sometimes brutal, always absorbing read. I wanted to hug Rinette for being so brave, and I wanted to choke Mary Queen of Scots for being such a callous mercurial cow. And thank goodness (for those like me who can't stand to read about animal deaths) that Elizabeth Loupas can be counted on never to kill the dogs in her books!

Note - I was lucky enough to meet Elizabeth in person at the Historical Novel Society Conference last year. A lovely lady, and I wish her all success with her second book. More, please!

Rio (Lynne) says

Kate Quinn's review took the words out of my mouth. First of all, I am not a mystery story fan. I loved Loupas' *The Second Duchess*, so how could I pass this one up...heavy mystery or not? Loupas bravely took on the subject of Floromancy. It was never hokey or cheesy. Just the right amount was added to the story and it was very believable. The descriptions were fabulous. I will never look at flowers the same again. I also love how Loupas takes on unique characters and doesn't jump on current Historical Fiction themes. Overall, this was a unique read. Full of mystery, court politics, intrigue, violence and love. As a side note, I knew when the cute beagle puppy came into the story, he'd have a happy ending, because I know of Loupas' love of

dogs. Now we get to wait for her next one The Alchemist Prince.

Misfit says

"It was not easy to search for a murderer when one was a queen's lady"

The Flower Reader is one of those books where the less you know about the story the better, so I'm keeping the plot description very brief and just will just tease instead with a few favorite quotes. Rinette Leslie of Granmuir is a very minor member of Mary of Guise's household, and as such she's the perfect choice when the dying regent needs someone to slip a casket of secret letters and other juicy stuff out of the castle and into its super-secret hiding place until it can be turned over to Scotland's new queen, Mary Stuart.

"No one paid any more attention to me. I walked out of the room with the silver casket and the masses of flowers in my arms."

Well, let's just say things don't exactly go according to Hoyle, and Rinette's life is about to take some seriously unexpected twists and turns. Just about everyone is hot to get their hands on the casket and the secrets it contains (loved the Nostradamus twist!), and will go to any lengths to get their hands on them. No surprise, but Rinette finds herself right in the middle of it all dodging unknown assassins in darkened corridors.

"You have made an enemy, Mistress Rinette."

And that is all I'm going to tell you - read it for yourself. I was hooked by the first chapter and loved every minute of it. I adored Rinette's voice, especially her *asides* on the young queen and her court, and the mystery kept me guessing until the end (it will keep you turning the pages). The floromancy twist was unique and a lot of fun (especially the flower she thought of when looking at Darnley :D). I'm one reader who is about as tired of Mary Queen of Scots as I am of the Tudors, but this was a refreshing look at her, and set during her first years as queen before all that Darnley/Bothwell melodrama. My copy came with maps, genealogical charts and a cast of characters (very much appreciated). 5/5 stars. Run, don't walk, to your nearest bookstore on April 3rd to get your hands on a copy.

Many thanks to the folks at NAL for an early copy, and a finished one at that. I love to quote so that was doubly appreciated.

Aoi says

I have been wanting to read this book for the longest time; and I felt all my waiting was not in vain.

"The Flower Reader" is a book to savor; it keeps you to the edge of the seat. The floromancy adds another angle to what is already a suspenseful and dark tale. The romance is wonderfully woven into the suspense, and while it is not the focus; it is intense and touching when it needs to be.

This book automatically puts Ms. Loupas on my auto-buy list. I am eagerly looking forward to more books

from her.

Victoria says

Yet another gorgeous novel from Elizabeth Loupas. Having finished *The Second Duchess* last week and loving it, I knew I had to get my teeth stuck into her next. So, I already had this on my bookcase. Having re-read the back cover, I wasn't expecting it to be as good as the first book. Firstly, *The Second Duchess* was so good, was it a fluke? Secondly, I wasn't sure about the plot. A fictional character who can "read flowers"? I'm not a lover of fantasy at all. Anyway, I got myself settled and began.

Well, what can I say? Yes, it was as good as Loupas' first book. Yes I loved every single page. No, the book didn't read as a fantasy novel, just a cracking mystery. I don't want to spoil to plot for anyone. All I can say is I was on the edge of my seat for the whole book. Marina is a great leading lady. She seems very real, even with the flower reading thing. You can see how much research went into every single detail, every single page. There is so much information, both historical and botanical.

I eagerly await this author's next piece of work. I hope I don't have to wait too long.

Maer says

This is my first time reading a Loupas novel and it won't be my last. I won't go into the story, but leave it to other readers to discover that joy on their own. Instead, I want to talk about Loupas and her incredible style. She has a unique voice that drew me in immediately.

Her heroine, Rinette, is strong, independent and charming. Rinette's ability to read people and the future is a fascinating addition that completely pulled me in. The cast of characters is as entertaining as they are diverse - both the historical and the fictional ones. The setting in the court of Mary, Queen of Scots, is realistic, but easy to relate to by a modern audience. She balances the book's time and events with our modern language perfectly.

Loupas's writing style is clear, crisp and beautifully engaging. She paints pictures with words that I could easily see and felt were real.

I look forward to reading her other novel and waiting for her next one. I highly recommend *THE FLOWER READER* to anyone who loves historical novels.

Jemidar says

I'm so happy because I just won a signed copy of this along with a gorgeous pressed flower bookmark over at Elizabeth Loupas' blog. Wow!! Thank you Elizabeth :-).

Jenny Q says

After loving the author's debut, *The Second Duchess*, I was less than impressed with the first thirty pages of *The Flower Reader*, which I thought were full of over-dramatic moments and sappy dialogue. I'd really been looking forward to this one and all my friends were raving, so I hung in there, and I'm glad I did because it wasn't long before the story began to show the strength and depth I knew this author was capable of.

Be warned: the back cover gives too much away, the above version from Goodreads is abbreviated. I wish I hadn't read the back cover of my paperback version so that at least one of the plot points could have been a surprise to me. I will try not to divulge too much of the plot for you! The story revolves around the contents of a silver casket that Mary of Guise gives to Rinette on her deathbed to keep safe until her daughter, Mary Stuart, can return to Scotland and claim her throne. Unable to resist, Rinette and her new husband take a peek inside and discover it's full of secrets Mary of Guise had been collecting to help her daughter rule Scotland. But that sneak peek proves deadly, and Rinette's husband is murdered over the contents of that casket. Riddled with grief and guilt and burning for revenge, Rinette sets her feet on the path to retribution, taking a place at court in an effort to determine who killed her husband. The only person she can truly confide in is handsome Nicolas de Clerac, one of the queen's most favored advisers, who has offered to help Rinette uncover the truth. But does he have motives of his own for revealing the murderer and discovering the hidden casket? Rinette plays a dangerous game as she tries to use the casket as leverage against a queen and all of the other players who'd like to get their hands on it. As her quest for vengeance turns deadly, and her plans begin to fall apart, everyone Rinette loves is placed in danger, and Rinette will have to decide if her mission is worth the cost.

Entwined throughout Rinette's story is her gift of floromancy. Flowers and plants "speak" to Rinette, giving her glimpses of the future and insights into the people she meets. I really enjoyed this aspect of the story. It adds a nice touch of softness and mysticism and true beauty, and provides some much-needed hope in a story that is often hard and brutal. I loved that this book takes place in the early days of Mary Queen of Scots' reign, before all of the scandals and betrayals that would ultimately lead to her execution. The Scottish court is not often written about in fiction and I loved getting a glimpse inside it and seeing how it compared to its English counterpart. In Loupas' hands it's a fun court, full of everything an eighteen-year-old queen loves: music, plays, pageants, sumptuous food, beautiful clothes, beautiful courtiers . . . but it's also full of intrigue and suspicion, as Mary's half-brother James seeks more power, and as the Catholics seek to subvert the Protestants. It's the perfect setting for an adventurous, murderous plot, and as the story twisted and turned and raced along to its very satisfying conclusion, I could not put it down.

Amanda says

First, an admission: I was in love with Elizabeth Loupas' first novel, *The Second Duchess*. It was one of the best books I read last year—even better than many of the offerings from more established historical fiction authors. I raved about the book to anyone who would listen and found virtually any excuse to recommend it to others. Needless to say, I was incredibly excited about Loupas' follow-up novel, *The Flower Reader*.

Marina, known as Rinette, is the heir to a great Scottish estate, a relation to the French crown, and a close friend to Mary of Guise, the French-born Scottish queen. She also has the unique ability to divine the future from flowers, an ability that makes her an asset to the crown as well as a danger. When Mary of Guise trusts a casket filled with the secrets of the Scottish nobles and predictions from Nostradamus to Rinette, her life is

changed forever. Rinette promises to protect the casket until it can reach the hands of Mary's daughter, but soon finds the deadly consequence of that promise. Her beloved husband is killed, she becomes the target of numerous court schemes, and is forced to marry a man she hates.

The Flower Reader takes a more unique approach to historical fiction than just about everything else on the shelf right now. Rather than being primarily biographical, Flower Reader is a historical mystery surrounding the perilous court of Mary, Queen of Scots, but explored through the eyes of a purely fictional character. In fact, many of the characters in this book are fictional (more than the average historical fiction novel, I'd say), as is the plot. And honestly, I thought this was incredibly refreshing for the genre, especially since Loupas made the characters feel so real. They absolutely came alive on every page, and I got completely engrossed in Rinette's story and struggles. I was cheering for her the entire time, even when it seemed like all was lost.

Would I say that The Flower Reader is as good as The Second Duchess? That's a tough one. Both novels are very different and follow very different subjects with unique approaches, but Flower Reader is a worthwhile follow up that is easily one of the best book I've read so far this year. I'd recommend it to any fellow historical fiction reader.

Suze says

I absolutely love this author! As in her first book, The Second Duchess, she writes about her characters as if she has lived alongside them for years. With all the research that goes into her historical novels, in a way she has.

I couldn't put this book down! The storyline weaves history with romance and thrilling mystery, revealing Queen Mary of Scots as an 18 year old....spoiled, yet intelligent...and a legendary beauty. The lead character, Rinette, is easy to love as she copes with life at court, murder, and tragedy.

I wish Elizabeth Loupas had already written many books before I discovered her, so I could immediately dive into another wonderful story!

Highly recommended!

Iset says

I have to admit I was a little sceptical about the premise of *The Flower Reader* before reading it. A fictional character with magical flower-reading powers in possession of the infamous casket? It all sounded too far-fetched to be pulled off, too much of a Mary Sue insert. What a surprise, Elizabeth Loupas has created a wonderful, delightful tale in *The Flower Reader*.

It's written in first person present tense, which in my experience tends to be hit and miss, but it works better for stories like this, the personal tale of a fictional character in a historical setting. The success of this approach also depends on a well written fictional character who is both compelling in their own right and does not become a Mary Sue who warps the history. Rinette Leslie, I must concede, does warp history a little, but for me it was so slight that it didn't notice at all.

As a character Rinette was interesting, but I admit I didn't find her compelling since her naivety wasn't something I really identified with. I applaud Loupas for making her so flawed and human, however, and resisting the urge to give Rinette a bigger role in historical events, or more power over her fate than she in fact has.

The compelling motivation that kept me turning the pages was who were the forces that wanted the casket, who was the murderer, and how would the casket end up in the hands of Mary Queen of Scots. I do have to admit that I guessed straight away who Rinette would end up with by the end of the novel, and who took the casket from the original hiding place. I do like that the floromancy was not specifically magical, and could be interpreted as simply Rinette's beliefs and feelings and character, and for that reason I haven't filed this under my historical fantasy shelf.

Bit of a short review, but the book's main strengths are the characters and the mystery plot, and to be honest I didn't have any criticisms.

7 out of 10

Monica says

This novel started out a little slow for me as I was frustrated with some of the main character's choices. However the novel did get much better. Rinette turned out to be an extremely strong woman who had to go through things that no woman should ever have to endure. The author also did an excellent job transporting the reader back to the 1500s in Scotland. I also learned more about Mary Queen of Scots. Overall not a bad read.

Nicole says

I really liked this book, it was a nice quick read and had a lot of great aspects to it. This is the time period that I usually read, but I seldom read after Mary, Queen of Scots because I've always been such an Elizabeth fan and Mary tried to usurp her. I picked sides in this matter and I picked Elizabeth. Getting to read about Mary was exciting and fun.

I really liked Rinette, our heroine. She was flawed as a person which everyone is so she felt like a real person. I felt for her as she discovered the truth about her life and how wrong she was about things. I felt for her as her quest to find her husband's murderer, her determination was inspiring. There were so many unsavory characters around her that it was hard to see how she could navigate it all.

I really liked how she did floromancy even if that made Rinette out to be a "witch". The idea of reading flowers and that they would speak to Rinette was really awesome and I think an original idea. If only she knew how much trouble her gift would get her into in the long run.

I will admit that there were moments that were predictable, but those didn't hinder my reading because I felt

just a teensie-bit smarter for having figured it out. That being said, there were still a lot of twists and turns that I didn't see coming that ended with plenty of "Oh no they didn't's" (If you couldn't tell i'm a vocal reader). I had some trouble with the names since they were Scottish, and I could never be sure if I was pronouncing them right. (Like Mairi and Kitte I would pronounce Mary and Kit.)

My lastly biggest problem was the French, nothing irritates me more than when a book makes me work to understand what they are saying. I wish I spoke French, but I don't so the inclusion of these words once in a while didn't hinder my understanding or anything, it was just frustrating.

Like any good royal, the queen was so mercurial, that it was aggravating and there were moments where you just hated her for her actions. Of course, she would never apologize for what she had done to Rinette. I wish I could go into more detail, but I really don't want to spoil you because these twists and turns are what made me love this book.

The ending really sealed the deal for me, and is, again, something that I refuse to spoil because you really should just go out and read it. It is a great for anyone who loves history, especially the glitz of the Tudor era. There are so many fabulous names that come up in this book like Nostradamus and Catherine de Medici. I loved this book so much that when I get a chance I'm going to pick up *The Second Duchess* also by Loupas.

Diane S ? says

What a wonderfully entertaining romp through the history of the middle 1600's when a very young Mary Stewart returns to Scotland to rule. When her mother Marie Guise dies, she entrusts a silver casket to one of her wards, Rinette, tells her to hide it and only give it to the Mary when next she sets foot on Scottish soil. What follows are the many plots, counter-plots, assassins, secret groups, political maneuvering and forced marriages. All that made living at court such a treacherous business. Rinette is the flower reader, she can read and sometimes hear the future from certain flowers and is more than once accused of witchcraft. I loved this element as it added something very special to this novel. I have never read this author's first novel, *Second Duchess*, but liked this one so well I will definitely read it soon. Also appreciated that the author included an afterword, telling the reader what was real or not and what people actually existed.

Frances says

3.5* Mary of Guise, queen regent of Scotland lies dying in Edinburgh Castle in the year 1560. Knowing her life is seeping away she pleads with Rinette Leslie to hide a silver casket containing secret letters and documents. Afraid that many powerful people are desperate to get hold of the casket, Rinette must conceal it until the queen's daughter Mary Stuart arrives in Scotland to take possession. With her knowledge of floromancy, Rinette uses this ability to see into the future to save herself and those she loves. *The Flower Reader* is a tightly constructed historical mystery with deception, murder, and intrigue.
