



Chained

Elise Marion

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House Toustain. House Maignart.

Two royal houses once embroiled in a bloody feud. Thirty years of peace now broken in an instant.

Sir Caden Maignart has been captured, beaten, locked in a dungeon, and wrongfully accused of kidnapping and oath-breaking. Determined to free himself and his men, and clear his besmirched name, Caden does not count on the willful nature of his captor, Lady Gwendolyn Toustain, the daughter of the man who was once his father's mortal enemy. After several attempts at escape, the lady orders him bound and chained to a wall in her chambers—where he will remain under her personal guard at all times and kept from conspiring with his men. While the lady's high-handedness infuriates him, Caden cannot deny that everything else about her drives him to distraction. Forced into close proximity with her, Caden soon finds it hard to remember his mission of escape.

When Lady Gwendolyn of House Toustain first lays eyes on her prisoner, one thing about him is abundantly clear: Sir Caden of Daleraia is a dangerous man. Yet, she must show him no fear. The captured band of knights from Daleraia are her only clue in the mystery surrounding the disappearance of House Toustain's sons, and it falls to Lady Gwen to seek justice. Is this kidnapping merely the ploy of mercenaries out for a ransom? Or has Sir Caden acted on the order of the High Lord of Daleraia and broken the peace? As she searches for the answers, she never expects the surge of passion that ignites between herself and her prisoner. The longer he remains in her clutches, the more Gwen realizes that though she has him chained, she is the one who has been captured.

Chained Details

Date : Published July 21st 2014 by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (first published July 2nd 2014)

ISBN : 9781500288945

Author : Elise Marion

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Romance, Fantasy, Historical, Interracial Romance, Historical Romance

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Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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I read this book for the Unapologetic Romance Readers' New Years 2017 Reading Challenge. For more info about what this is, [click here](#).

CHAINED was an impulse item from the free section of the Kindle store. Part of the allure - apart from it being, you know, *free* - was the prospect of a historical interracial romance. The perspectives of people of color are sorely lacking in most historical romances (the only authors I can think of offhand who write them with any regularity are Courtney Milan and Beverly Jenkins), so this was a huge selling point for me.

I was therefore annoyed when I began reading the book and realized that it wasn't "A Medieval Historical Romance" as advertised on the title, but a medieval-inspired *fantasy*.

Those are two very different things.

Putting my annoyance aside, I continued to read the book despite its deceptive packaging, and found to my surprise that CHAINED was actually a pretty decent story. It is set in a world called Alemere. The heroine, Gwen, comes from a country called Dinasdale. Her people are proud of their royal heritage and lean towards archery. The hero, Caden, comes from Daleraia. His people are less refined, ruthless, and brutal. Unlike the Dinasdallians, they have no gods; their sword is law.

Gwen is engaged to a prince from Lerrothe, but her wedding night is unsatisfactory. She doesn't really want to be a princess, anyway. She is a skilled archer: when we meet her in the beginning, she shoots five men in her father's woods for attempting to rape a girl. In her father's absence, she is the word of Dinasdale, so when a band of Daleraians are brought in after a woman in her kingdom is raped and murdered - allegedly by a member of the Daleraian noble family, Gwen has to decide what to do with them. She decides to imprison them but keep them in good condition for ransom. Caden ends up imprisoned in Gwen's own quarters because of his constant attempts to escape.

It doesn't take Gwen and Caden long to realize that both events - the rape and murder and Gwen's own wedding - might be the byproducts of the sinister machinations of someone attempting to sow discord in Alemere, thereby breaking the tentative peace between Dinasdale and Daleraia. It also doesn't take long for them to realize that they have a rather potent attraction to one another, either.

I enjoyed this story. It's reminiscent of GAME OF THRONES in some ways, and the court intrigue is well done. I liked Gwen's character. She is a strong woman with good political sense, who isn't afraid of her sensuality. She killed five men and kneed a would-be rapist in the testicles. She never did anything in the book that made me shake my head and say, "Well, that was stupid!" She was bad-ass.

I was less impressed with Cade's character. There is an OW and Cade does get kind of wishy-washy about her and Gwen, although it's always clear who he prefers more. Plus, he does something very stupid towards the end. When Gwen falls under suspicion he's forced to imprison her and insists on doing it himself so he can explain the reason why to her. He doesn't do this. Instead, he has sex with her, lets her fall asleep, and when she wakes up, basically says, "Congrats! You're going to jail!"

Overall, CHAINED is one of the better finds I've gotten from the "free" section of the Kindle store, which can be a bit of a crapshoot. I would recommend it for people looking for a fun, light fantasy read. The author really needs to change that "Medieval Historical Romance" tagline, though. I can't imagine that I'm the only person who felt cheated when they found themselves reading fantasy...

Also, there is a cliffhanger ending, in case you're curious.

3 stars!

Mstcat says

Two things drew me to this book - #1 an amazing cover and #2 the hope for a well written historical romance featuring people of color. What kept me reading was the fact that it had an actual STORY and characters that weren't just there for the sake of sex or an unbelievable and instant "love." There's a lot to like about this book...

What it's About: Two realms/houses have a long history of war. In one realm the people are of light skin, easy to anger, and skilled with the sword. The other realm is filled with people of darker skin who are skilled archers and filled with pride. A third realm, that is not at war, only wants peace. Here people are often of mixed race and heritage. To establish peace the three come together under the rule of a single king. For thirty years this peace has existed, although it is rife with suspicion and deep-seated prejudices; however, events

are taking place that threaten to shatter it. Things are not what they seem however. Can the truth be discovered in time, and will anyone believe it? Have things gone too far to prevent war? Can two people from different sides overcome a lifetime of distrust?

My Thoughts: I really cannot express how much I enjoyed this book. I read it non-stop and when it was over I wanted to read it again just to see if I missed anything. *Chained* takes the time to set the story, it introduces you to the characters, their personalities, strengths and weaknesses. It gives us history and tells the tale of war, tentative peace, love of family, duty, lies and deception, death, anger, grief, fear, and finally burgeoning love and betrayal. There is no simpering, weak female heroine who stumbles over her two feet and makes silly decisions with seemingly no thought (we've all seen this type of heroine far too often). Gwen, our heroine, is a woman who was meant to be nobility. Her actions are in the best interest of the people who look to her family for leadership and guidance. If she makes a wrong decision it is because the facts, as presented, led her to a decision that she believed was the right one. Any mistakes she makes she owns up to and tries to make right.

In Caden you have a hero who is also a person who was meant to be nobility. He is an alpha male yes, but he isn't the type that we've come to expect in more modern tales. He is strong and accepts the fact that by birth he is a man that others look up to and expect great things from. He feels emotional pain, and is ruled strongly by passion be it for life, war, or sex (This isn't an over sexed book however. Sex happens when the storyline dictates it and it never goes overboard. No pages and pages of marathon graphic sex).

The world building is very good. But be forewarned, this isn't a book that you can mindlessly read. You'll need to pay attention when it comes to the different realms and houses, as this is a story that has many different players and is steeped in a history of conflict and distrust.

If there was anything that I did not like about the book it was the fact that it ended with a "to be continued..." If you follow my blog you know I'm not a big fan of that. I would normally deduct a point off of my total rating, but it does say trilogy so it was something that I should have expected. What I didn't expect was to wait until December for the continuation. Also, if I have to pick a problem it would be Caden's behavior at the end. It seemed somewhat manufactured to me. I guess I don't see why he would behave this way over handling the situation differently. I hope there will be more insight on why he choose the path that he did in the next book.

I've been hearing a lot of discontent from fans of the IR genre lately. Authors I'm not sure if you are listening. If you are I direct you to *Chained* as an example of the fresh air that is needed in the stale room that has become IR romance. Historical isn't for everyone, but the initiative and bravery to break from the pact and do something different is worthy of applause. So I applaud you Elise Marion. You are an author that I'll recommend at every opportunity, particularly to those who are looking for more diversity in books that feature black characters. This is a 5 out of 5! I can't wait until December for part 2!

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for a fair and honest review

Adrianna Dora Ybema says

Amazing!

Oh my goodness! I could not put this book down! I am looking forward to the second book in the series.

Renee Watson Butler says

Great read for a historical piece. Loved how it brought me back to my favorite Romeo theme of star crossed families. You live in the moment and it is far from predictable. Thank you for genre that I tend not to venture into often.

Valerie says

WWhat a great, satisfying interracial romance! This book has it all....strong yet sensitive heroine loves an equally strong yet sensitive hero, seriously terrific battle scenes, great secondary characters. I've already started on the second book in the series....hope it can live up to my expectations!

The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

Darn it. Sometimes it's a hindrance to be such a fantasy geek. This book (which should have been longer as befits anything that is fantasy medieval) should have been an easy five stars. In fact, I'd easily award it more than that for the simple fact that it's set in a multicultural medieval fantasy world that could exist. It's also an example of what IR can be when more authors choose to think outside the box. There are crap-stacks of bad boy billionaires and sexy mob dudes. There are FEW historical fantasy medievales featuring PoC.

But...

Yes, I get that it's also a romance and THAT, in my view, was where the intricate political machinations between three peaceful realms (something I love in novels like this) goes completely awry. Romance tends to be the bane of fantasy-based romances. Not because of the romance per se, but how (usually) the heroine ends up a slave to her hormones at the expense of common sense. And Gwendolyn, the heroine of this novel, deserved far better than to be diminished at the sight of Caden's massive muscles. Facepalm. It was hard enough to stomach the whole virginal and untutored thing, but on the flip side she's brave, rash yet very capable and loyal.

If anything, a romance works in this case when both heroine and hero are blissfully unaware of their attraction, but yet can't seem to get away from it. As a fantasy reader, I don't mind waiting awhile for the eventual payoff.

I admit to being an unapologetic fantasy geek first, long before I started getting back into romance, so I have certain expectations when reading fantasy-themed romances. Having said all that, this IS a darn good book though if you're not used to fantasy medievales with lots of characters (think of Chained as a romance version of Game of Thrones, sans dragons and with more PoC), the various Houses might give you a wee bit of a headache. The author does include the very large dramatis personae at the back of the book, but seriously, it needed to be at the beginning. As far as story, we have three realms (together known as Alamere) at peace after years of bloody fighting; unfortunately too much peace doesn't sit well with some. Best way to fracture peace? Stir up old resentments, plant false evidence, and have a lot of hot-temperes looking for an excuse to

flex their power.

Into this growing maelstrom are Caden of House Maignart and Gwendolyn of House Toustain, on opposite sides of the growing conflict but who seem to be the few to suspect treachery from elsewhere. Caden, true to his birthright is the typical hot-tempered, lusty alpha, but with a brain. Gwen is part dutiful daughter, part rebellious daughter, both innocent and wise. By the way, Caden, you can stop calling Gwen "wench", especially knowing she's equal in rank to you. Oh and Gwen, you might want to slap him for showing such disrespect. Again, why romance can get in the way of a great story. Still, I'm definitely looking forward to the next book.

The cover is all kinds of awesome as well!

Oh yes, as I mentioned in my first status update, a kirtle and surcoat are NOT proper attire for climbing trees and slaying would-be-rapists. And I think it's "chemise" and not "chainse". Update: after consulting with my dog-eared copy History of Medieval Fashion and a wonderful response from Ms. Marion, the term "chainse" is correct. It was a undergarment worn by both men and women. Hey, I learn something new everyday.

Colette says

This was an excellent, elegant book. Appropriately prosed, intriguing and layered events, characters that made me swoon or smile or bite my nails in fear of their next action. I fangirled when I started reading this! Because I must say, though they may be out there in some far, hidden numbers, i've never read a full length period piece featuring a

Black Woman of Color as her own. The heroine, near-royalty, not servile, and in a European-medieval-esque setting...i've yet to encounter this, and so nonetheless, I was sighing with glee and longing.

Plus Gwendolen, the heroine, is such a well-rounded character in general. A "Strong" female character; willful, spirited, courageous, but also very soft and feminine and i'm so ecstatic she was allowed to be all of that.

That and desired, defended...which leads me into Caden. He was also a pretty great character. I love Gwen and Caden together but also separate, which is a good sign for me, since there's been books where I only liked the hero if it was when he was loving the heroine...meaning they didn't stand on their own. But Caden is definitely a realized character himself. At first I was hardened to him based on (slight spoiler) his having a lover (i get possessive of my male future love interest characters okay) but then he grew on me pretty swiftly from that and I'm hoping this lover doesn't follow into the books as a sort of triangle tryst. It doesn't appear to, though, so i'm happy about that.

But speaking of lovers and such..Gaiwan. Ugh! You despicable, sexy tan Victor Krum! Without being too spoilery, I'll just say I hope he's redeemable. Not that he's a villain or not necessarilyyy, but just a man. in a sexist society. that's all i'll share of him... If only the author didn't describe him so sexily I wouldn't care but alas!

So all and all, great book. The cover made me wary, as Caden's shirtlessness makes me think of book focused on sex, though there's that, but it's not the core of this. Plus there's an elegance to the book and script that the wide bare-chested man on the cover might not clue you in on. Gwen was perfect though.

Well there's another book to come and I eagerly await it. The ending felt like the winds and crashing waves before

the hurricane...so i'm looking forward to the high stakes that are to come with this tale of forbidden romance and politics and power.

deb says

Chained

Wow! What an amazing historical romance. I love how Elise took time to build the story and the relationship between Caden and Gwen. The background story really helped me to understand the mistrust between the Daleraias and Dinasdalians. This more than just a love story, it's a story of war, a story of suspense and mystery. It is intriguing and captivating. This would make a wonderful movie.

InD'tale Magazine says

4.5/5.0

A world plucked straight from our medieval times, readers will understand the intricacies of courts and the slowness and inaccuracies of information going from one place to another.

Read full review in the 2014 November issue of InD'tale Magazine.

Monica **can't read fast enough**** says**

CHAINED is an epic historical romance with a complex storyline, diverse characters galore, suck you in world building all wrapped up in a wonderfully fluid writing style. The world Marion has created is rich with detail, political intrigue and betrayal, as well as a slow simmering romance. CHAINED isn't a quick fix mindless read. There are lots of players in this world with plenty of differing agendas. The secondary characters are so excellent that I honestly can't see how Marion can keep this series small unless there is a spin off series. Yes, the secondary characters are that interesting! I can only imagine this world expanding and getting even more interesting.

I am not even going to attempt to summarize this one at all. This review would be way too long and full of spoilers if I tried to do that. Gwen and Caden are from different houses and after a turbulent beginning work together in an effort to save the realms from further chaos and destruction. The fragile peace between the three kingdoms is being threatened while Gwen and Caden try to prevent their worlds from being completely ripped apart. Caden can be arrogant and condescending at times but his intentions are genuinely good. As a man in his high position he is used to being deferred to and doesn't always handle being challenged well. Gwen is close to being a perfect heroine for me. Strong, decisive, and willing to accept responsibility when something goes wrong.

If you are looking for a unique take on a historical romance that feels more like epic fiction CHAINED will

fit the bill. This is not a quick sexy read. The story is complicated and richly detailed. I actually wanted to flip right back to the beginning and re-read this one because I am afraid that I may have missed something. I read this during a trip and I had to stop and start the story too many times for my liking. This does end with a lot of loose ends however BOUND (Book 2) is already out, The DALERAIAAN (a novella) is due to be released July 10th, and a second novella WAR BRIDE is due to be released July 31st. This would be a perfect series to binge read and that just may be what I will do after WAR BRIDE is released. A second reading of CHAINED will be no hardship at all! I love it when I find a world/series that I enjoy so much that I do not want to emerge from it and this world Marion has created is one that I have fallen head over heels for. Yes, CHAINED is going on my favorite reads list!

You can find more from me at Monlatable Book Reviews

<http://www.monlatablereviews.com/>

Tara says

Talk about drama. Gwendolyn Toustain and Caden Maignart are like Romeo and Juliet. They belong to houses that despise each other, but have been at peace for the last thirty years. Through a series of events, lies, and deception their two houses slowly edge their way to war yet again. Each house commit vile acts against the other resulting in the death of Gwen's brother who is the heir and Caden's youngest brother. Hatred is built up and both houses plot against the other. Yet all isn't as it seems, and some third party is truly behind all the chaos, misunderstandings, and deaths because they want the Toustains and Maignarts to slaughter each other. In the middle of all this is Gwen and Caden. They know someone is plotting against the two houses and try to persuade everyone to see reason, but they won't, anger, loss, and hatred has piled up too much. Still, against all odds the two draw closer and become lovers temporarily even though they know they can never be together, too much history between their houses and with war just around the corner it can never be. To make matters worse Caden is forced to imprison Gwen, causing her to feel betrayed, what the two don't know is they should be watching their backs. They only know of one of their enemies when in fact there's two. Can't wait to see what happens next especially with the tension and strife between Gwen and Caden. Hopefully their ending isn't like Romeo and Juliet's. >_<

Kayti Raet says

Reviewed for Readers' Favorite

In Chained the first in a trilogy by Elise Marion, Caden Maignart and Gwendolyn Toustain are children of two of the highest families in the kingdom of Alemere. Alemere has only been united for thirty years and before that the two once royal houses were locked in a bloody feud for generations.

Now, it looks as though Daleraians are invading Dinasdale lands once more, and when a misunderstanding goes horribly awry Caden finds himself captured and at the mercy of Gwen who believes he may be responsible for the kidnapping and murder of her brothers. He is her only clue in the mystery surrounding her brothers disappearance, but the longer he remains her captive the more she feels things aren't entirely as they seem. As she searches for the answers, she never expects the surge of passion that ignites between herself and her prisoner. The longer he remains in her clutches, the more Gwen realizes that though she has him chained, she is the one who has been captured.

Chained by Elise Marion, is a fast paced medieval fantasy novel full of romance, mystery and political intrigue. Gwen is a head-strong, formidable character, with Caden being her perfect match, the dialogue between them sparks and draws the reader in. Even though Marion's world building is fantastic, Chained read more like an historical romance, than the epic fantasy novel I was expecting. No dragons here.

But despite the minor hiccup on my part, I still found myself thoroughly enjoying Caden and Gwen's adventures, the growing romance between, as well as the mystery of who is really the mastermind behind the growing war in Alemere. The end definitely leaves you hungering for more!

NJS says

This was SO GOOD! Number one, we have a romance with actual plot. Number two, we have an interracial romance in a historical setting. There is still prejudice and tension in the race relations, to make the love taboo, but it is not based on/in the American shame, which is refreshing.

I loved that there was a plot, an intricate plot, as the main story with the romance as the subplot. The romance was still present but it did not make the book another sappy/trashy novel. I liked that it took quite some time for the MCs to fall in love. There was an acknowledged attraction but the love was not instant, overly simple, sugary, and melodramatic.

I like that the female MC was both girly and a bad-ass. I hate when authors try to make the princess so tomboyish to make her cool. When there is nothing wrong with being a girly girl or tomboyish. So, that she can kill some men and then rock a dress and tiara later is cool in my book.

The male MC was very male, very...just...what you want in a man. I don't know how else to say it. He respected her, even though he lusted, and he didn't baby or belittle her.

I think the MCs were very well written and you could understand how they respected each other and then came to care for one another. There was no left field, implausible love. You get it.

Now, I will say that there are WAY too many characters but if you plow through you start to know who is important and who is filler. Once the story is underway the characters make sense and fit into their roles of the story. It is not as hard as it seems at first.

Update: I reread this in 2018. I recognize a few more cons. The biggest one was the resemblance to Game of Thrones. Now of course the premise has been done many times but something about this reminded me of GOT. This also needs an editor to sweep through it again.

Fiza says

~*~(*~♥~*~),~*~**Review**~*~(*~♥~*~),~*~

History has a habit of repeating itself...

I'm not one who picks up historical reads often (without the fairy tale aspect) so for Chained to have drawn

me to it, is quite a feat on it's own.

Maybe it was the title or the kidnapping and imprisonment aspects but something sparked my interest and I could not, not read this one. And when I started reading I couldn't stop either, that might be a cliché and overused sentence but true in my case.

I like the way the story is build up, it flows well and is set at a pace that isn't too fast or too slow. It isn't overly descriptive, so no long explanations that brings the story down which I am very grateful for. And all the characters added something unique to the table but yes, the main characters are definitely my favorites.

Gwen is pure, witty and strong but hides a sadness deep within. She's never known true freedom and that little bit that she had is taken from her when her parents give her hand away to a man she barely knows but instantly dislikes. Then you have Knight Caden, a player at heart who doesn't waste a thought at settling down. Much to his mother's dismay by the way. He's also quite the hothead but when he gets captured, his captor Gwen somehow calms him.

Gwendolyn and Caden are each other's opposites in many ways but there are also some similarities. The latter is what brings them closer to each other, makes them think that they aren't that different after all. And that's what I love about them, apart and together. They are both smart, though one tends to think more with his heart while the other uses her head.

As it's a multicultural read too, I am pleasantly surprised that the race factor isn't that big of an issue. It's mainly the disdain and distrust between nations and royal houses. All in all I find Chained an adventurous read that held me captive till the words the words To be continued... appeared. Yes I really enjoyed this one, the subtle but sensual romance is cleverly woven into the story and I hope to find lots of it back in the next installments in the series. I did find the first two chapters or so a bit confusing as I was introduced to many names and the history of the two royal houses ,which Gwen and Caden hail from, at once. But after that the story flows fluently and enfolded before my eyes like a movie.

"Chained" is only the beginning, the second book in the "Chained Trilogy" releases in December, I went looking and found it could be pre-ordered on Smashwords. But December is still so far away....

•,(•,♥,•*)•***Rating***•,(*•,♥,•*)•*

4 Stars

Robin Gautier says

First I would like to say it is refreshing to see an African American woman venturing into the realms of fantasy. Mrs. Marion has woven a beautiful tapestry of love, honor, betrayal, and evil into this trilogy. What I love most about the romances that she portrays is the reality of love. Nothing over the top or too sappy. There is depth to her characters, all of them, not just the heroine and hero. There is also much time and insight put into the realm of Alamere. I also loved that she elaborated on the back story, and you learned more and more of the back story through the introduction of every major character in the book. She didn't overly glorify the hero nor the heroine. You will not be disappointed by her work I can't wait to read the third book and more of Mrs. Elise Marions work.
