



McKinnon's Royal Mission

Amelia Autin

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The secret princess's bodyguard...

As head of a visiting royal's protection detail, Trace McKinnon's focus should be strictly on the external threats against a woman's life. But what happens when he finds Dr. Mara Marianescu—a princess incognito as a college professor—much more intriguing?

And that's only the start of his troubles. When actual danger arrives for this beautiful royal, Trace isn't sure if it's because of a genuine threat from her country—or because of the darkness in his own past. Trace knows he should let Mara go—and does his best. But the cool, intelligent princess might just risk the one thing she has that is all her own—her heart...

McKinnon's Royal Mission Details

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Sarah says

This is one book i just could not get into. I couldn't appreciate or like the characters. In fact the main female character did nothing but annoy me. It is in the Romantic Suspense genre, but is very light on the suspense side of things for much of the first half of the book. One positive however, is that this story was set over a more realistic timeline, rather than the meet, fall in love and propose over the course of 3 days that we have come to expect from this genre.

Suzanne says

I actually give this book a 3.5. I liked the story and characters, but for me, there wasn't enough 'suspense' or action, given this book is in Harlequin's 'Romantic Suspense' line.

Debbie Oxier says

There are just some books that capture and hold your attention from the start. Sometimes it's because it's a favorite author and you've been waiting for their next release. Sometimes it's because you've read several of that author's books and you like their style so you're sure they won't disappoint you this time either. Sometimes it's the opening lines that hook you and make you want more, or the description of one of the characters that has you eager to read their story. In this case, it was all of the above for me. Ever since reading Cody Walker's Woman I've been itching to get my hands on the next book in this series. I'm happy to say, I was extremely pleased with the result. While I'm not a huge fan of 'princess' stories (must have gotten my fill as a child!), it was the hero I was most looking forward to reading about. Trace was hard working, dedicated to his job, and determined to protect the princess at all costs. He'd had a difficult upbringing, never knowing who his dad was, his mother leaving him when he was little with grandparents that hated having him under their roof. He didn't grow up with the knowledge of what it meant to be loved. Mara was sort of in the same boat. While King Andre, her brother loved her, she'd spent most of her life knowing her father hated her. He'd wanted another son but gotten Mara instead and to make matters worse, his wife had died while giving birth to Mara. When she comes to America to teach at a university, Trace is assigned to her protection detail for several reasons. He's not happy about it but agrees nonetheless. What he hadn't counted on was falling in love with the Princess. However, when it appears she's in danger and he might well be the cause, he feels he has no choice but to back off in order to keep her safe. This was a fast-paced read with plenty of action and suspense. I enjoyed the way the author gave you a good glimpse into the character's heads as they struggled to come to grips with their feelings for one another as well as struggling to discover who they really were when together. Trace was no longer that wounded child but still carried the scars from his childhood, while Mara wanted to know what it was like to be normal while battling the idea she was somehow unloveable thanks to all those years with her father. It takes Trace and Mara awhile to realize their love is special and that they are worthy of each other but the end result will leave you sighing. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and look forward to the King's story in the next one.

Skhan says

I'm going to start off by saying this is literally the first romance novel I have read in the past 8 years. I am certain I was forced to read something in high school but that is it. I would have never picked this book for myself but when I won it at goodreads I thought I would give it a try. To my surprise I got so into it that I finished it in a single day. Absolutely loved the book! The emotions were very strong but it somehow maintained an air of realism. As if things were perfect but not too perfect. If that makes sense...I don't know how else to put it. It was a great read. The book is simple and ties the reader up in a lot of basic human emotions... primarily the need for affection.

Susan says

Fantastic book. I loved the suspense and the romance, but it was the depth of emotion that put this one over the top for me. I first met Trace in Cody Walker's Woman, where he was Kiera's partner. His respect for her abilities, while still being protective made him pretty special. I loved his interactions with her, and was thrilled to find out he would have his own story.

Trace has been asked to head the security detail for Princess Mara's stay in the US, while she is teaching at a local college. He's been asked to use his knowledge of her language covertly, to make sure there is nothing untoward going on. There are also those who want him to use his good looks to get closer to the princess, but that he refuses to do. During his first encounter with her, he hears something that makes him think she is cold and that she thinks she is superior to others. It colors his treatment of her for some time, because he had experienced too much of that treatment himself. He was raised by his grandparents, who never let him forget that he was illegitimate, and that his mother had no idea who his father was.

Though Mara misses her homeland and her brother, she is happy to be doing a job she loves. It gives her a sense of satisfaction that she rarely receives anywhere else. Mara spent her life feeling her father's hatred of her and enduring his constant belittling. Even after his death, his words haunt her, making her believe that no one will ever love her for who she is. Trace's treatment of her only reinforces how she feels. She doesn't know what she's done to make him feel that way, and it hurts her.

I loved seeing them together. There were some interesting clashes between them as Mara had to adjust to the restrictions placed on her and Trace had to balance her safety with allowing her some freedom. Their love was a slow growing one that had major obstacles to overcome. There was attraction between them from the start. Trace knew that, as her bodyguard, getting involved with Mara would be wrong on many levels. He fought hard to keep a distance between them, but it was a losing battle. As he got to know her, he learned more of the things that had shaped who she was and couldn't help but be affected by them. This was really apparent on their hike when he confronted the man with the camera. He begins to see a different Mara than the one he thought she was, and that Mara is one he likes a lot.

Mara had started out by being intrigued by Trace, even as his attitude hurt her. Although she felt that he disliked her, she also knew instinctively that she could trust him. Mara had come to the US incognito, wanting a chance to feel like a normal woman and just try to fit in. She gets to know Trace better and her feelings for him begin to change. What she feels is something she's never felt before and she can't help but show the way she feels. After an afternoon when their attraction leads to more than either expected, Mara knows that she loves him and believes he loves her too.

Their relationship changes, and both of them find a new level of trust with each other. I loved seeing them open up with their fears and dreams and emotions. I loved seeing Mara become more confident in herself thanks to Trace's influence. She and Trace are both happy, though neither talks of the future, especially Trace. He can't forget who and what he is and the gulf he sees between them.

There is also trouble brewing. When Trace discovers he's being followed his first thoughts are of Mara's safety. It's unknown if the trouble is because of who Mara is, or if it is trouble from Trace's past. When he comes to suspect the trouble stems from him, he is determined to keep Mara safe, and believes that separating himself from her is the only way. An attempted kidnapping cements his resolve. He also knows that Mara will not accept his departure and can think of only one way to make it happen - he has to make her think he doesn't care.

What happens then was so very hard to read. I don't know how many tissues I went through as Trace says things that tear his heart out even as they break Mara's heart. He knew he was hurting her, but thought it was the only way. Seeing his misery and doubts afterward was so painful. It takes straight talk from Kiera to make him see what he has done and give him the push he needs to try to fix it. What follows had me go through more tissues as Trace breaks the chains that kept him from believing he could have it all. I loved the ending and seeing Trace and Mara both happier than they ever thought they could be.

There are a couple of very interesting twists that happen before Trace can get to Mara, one which was pretty amusing given what Trace does for a living, and the other which I did not see coming, but both were great.

I can't wait to read Mara's brother's story, after the hints that were dropped in this one. I fully expect that it will be just as good. I also hope to see books for Alec and Liam, the other two bodyguards - who are also Kiera's brothers. I loved them in this book, with the way they also cared about Mara, and how they stood up to Trace because of it.

Advanced copy received in exchange for an honest review.

Amelia says

Although Trace McKinnon has been featured in other books by Amelia Autin, it is not until he gets to tell his own story that I get the full picture about this fascinating man. While I knew he was a dedicated agent plus a loyal friend, I did not know a lot about his background and what made him the man he is today. The woman whom he has been currently assigned to watch over should have been just another task, but from the first moment Trace sees Dr. Mara Marianescu, nothing about his life is ever the same again. Amelia Autin skillfully entwines building suspense with intensely portrayed emotions to create an engrossing first book in the **Man on a Mission** miniseries. Wholehearted feelings along with particularly likable characters make **MCKINNON'S ROYAL MISSION** truly memorable.

Since several abilities of Trace McKinnon make him a good choice for an upcoming assignment, the agent will be guarding a princess from Zakhar for much longer than he wants. Working with the Diplomatic Security Service, he will be overseeing the safety of Dr. Mara Marianescu as she teaches math at the University of Colorado. Though she is a professor, she is also royalty and could possibly be in danger from a number of sources. Keeping Mara protected is his main goal, and Trace knows he must ignore his attraction to her or it could complicate the mission.

As daily routines are established and she begins teaching at the university, all seems to be going smoothly for Mara and everyone looking out for her. Her classes are bringing her much pleasure, as having a career she loves lets her feel like a normal person. Mara comes to respect Trace and the efficient way he runs the team, but she cannot understand why he keeps her at a distance. When it appears they are being watched, Trace must uncover exactly who is spying on them and for what reason.

Mysteries abound in MCKINNON'S ROYAL MISSION. From time to time, a vague clue is given concerning what could turn into a threat. The author gave just enough facts to make me anxious and fear for the well-being of the couple for whom I came to deeply care, and the tension kept mounting as new information was revealed. Not knowing the truth about what was going on kept me eagerly turning the page, and several surprising disclosures are eventually exposed. The two brothers of his former partner are also working the case with Trace, and they certainly livened up several scenes with their pointed comments.

When it comes to Trace and his behavior, he makes competent decisions when it comes to being a bodyguard yet some of his personal choices are not the best. The scenes where he and Mara discuss their feelings for each other are filled with such profound remarks, and their admissions about their earlier years touched me in ways I usually do not feel while reading. Amelia Autin has a special talent for making the reader experience a situation right along with her characters, and regardless of whether Trace and Mara are happy or tormented comes through so clearly. What is shared between these two is always backed by such genuine emotions and honest passion, and the consequences of some of their actions made them even more real. The details learned about the brother of Mara make me glad he will get the chance to find happiness in his own Man on a Mission story. MCKINNON'S ROYAL MISSION is emotionally affecting and keeps you completely enthralled.

Received copy from author for a CataRomance review

Harlequin Books says

"Heartfelt storytelling, a solid plot and genuine characters are the highlights of this story. Trace is an appealing alpha hero, and the love and chemistry between him and Mara will draw readers into the book from the start" (RT Book Reviews, 4 1/2 stars).

Miniseries: Man on a Mission
