



Wings of the Falcon

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The death of her English father left Francesca alone and unprotected, with nowhere to turn but to the noble Italian family of her late mother. Adrift in a strange land, surrounded by cold and suspicious relatives who had disowned her mother on her wedding day, Francesca is determined to make the best of a bad situation. But nothing could have prepared her for the nest of dark secrets and oppressive cruelty she has been cast into. And her fate now rests in the hands of a mysterious horseman known as the Falcon, whose appearance will speed her salvation ... or hasten her doom.

Wings of the Falcon Details

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Christina Baehr says

I'm grateful that Michaels included an actual bodice-ripping scene on page 1 of this book. This meant that I didn't have to waste my time investing any further in it. (Incidentally, do these authors not know that it would take the better part of an hour to get anywhere with an 1850s bodice if you were ripping it? They had bones in them, for heaven's sake.)

Carly says

4.5

Christy says

Zorro rides again, in Italy. He's Il Falcone, the falcon, coming to the aid of the poor and the distressed, and dazzling the ladies. Right now he's tied up in a revolution. Our heroine, a sweet young thing from England, gets caught up in the intrigue. She thinks she knows his real identity, and she thinks she's in love with him. And she's so clueless. Of course it's obvious to the reader who he is. Luckily most of us have more brains than your standard British gothic romance heroine.

Laura Guill says

An early book of hers to be sure, and a little predictable, but I enjoyed the voice of the first-person POV. While this one was written after the first Amelia Peabody, there was a Amelia-type character, which made it feel more related with the Elizabeth Peters stories, rather than the Barbara Michaels.

Laura Baugh says

Perfectly readable potboiler, typical of the author's work (archeology, language barriers, a couple of handsome young men) but enjoyable. At least I always learn something historically interesting from her!

Tasha says

This is another one of my favorite Michaels books. It takes place in Italy and is a very traditional heroic journey, although you don't think it will be at the beginning. I really loved this book; I was surprised at how good it was.

Caitie says

I'm pretty sure B Mike woke up one day and thought to herself: "Hey, Italian revolutionaries are hot. I will write a book about hot Italian revolutionaries, thinly disguised as a mystery with an irrelevant tangent about Etruscan tombs!" Not that I am complaining. It was a fun time, even if the implications of a lot of the stuff about social justice were kinda offensive. I'm so sure it was aaaall thanks to idealistic rich people that Italians overthrew the Pope and feudalism and all of those kings.

Larissa Reinhart says

Wings of the Falcon today would make a great YA Historical Romance, and I am recommending it for my friends' teenage daughters. Wonderfully romantic with great action and suspense, Wings was written in 1st person from the point of view of seventeen year old Francesca. It's filled with the teenage wistfulness, angst, and naivete that marks any great YA book.

What's also nice about passing Barbara Michael's books to impressionable daughters is the romance is heart rendering without explicit sex scenes and the strong heroines seek justice, truth and love without cowing to men (although they might need a rescue every now and then). In fact, my high school English teacher recommended Barbara Michaels to me for her smart female characters.

Reading Barbara Michaels is like eating comfort food. Great, timeless books to reread and enjoy.

Emily Crow says

A good story, and I liked the setting, in Italy at 1860, a time of political unrest and rebellion. My expectations weren't that high, just for a fun read. My only real quibble was with some of the characters. Francesca, the heroine, was from the too-stupid-to-live category, and her middle-aged companion, Miss Perkins, was as annoyingly perfect as Francesca was ditzy. The scope of Miss Perkins' talents was so great, and her inclusion in the story was unnecessary to the plot (if Francesca were a bit smarter and more independent, there would be no need of the Perkins character to explain events and take charge when necessary). When it turned out that one of Miss Perkins' many, many talents was archaeology, I began to wonder if I've discovered an unusual variation of a wish-fulfillment character, "Spinster Sue."

Linda says

A story in the middle of the events leading to a united Italy is a very appealing idea, and seldom used in comparison to the frequent books using the French revolution. However, the novel would have benefited from more deep descriptions of these events, because people not familiar with them can have a hard time catching on. It isn't the most important part of the book, but I would have preferred to learn about it more.

When Francesca's father dies, she is introduced to a new life with her mother's foreign family. She is

accompanied by her new acquaintance Miss Perkins and the journey to Italy is long, but Francesca is soon to discover that life there isn't dull and eventless. A revolution is on the way.

Spoilers!

Unfortunately, foreseeing things didn't require much attention.

* There was never anything charming or friendly about Galiana.

* Stefano shouldn't have been considered as unfeeling. His emotions shone through rather well, and since the first time he saved Francesca I began to doubt his cripple condition and thus his true identity.

I got the feeling Michaels wanted to emphasize the fact that people sometimes aren't what they seem, and the importance of being open-minded and not judgeful - good advices that somehow were wasted when not revealed at the right (intended) time as if they had been carefully concealed.

Some problems

* Francesca was foolish (sometimes to the extreme).

* Galiana was spoiled and foolish.

* What was with the grandfather?

I didn't like Francesca and had a hard time understanding her illogical behavior. Her father died, and she forgot it in a few days when he ended up in the shadow of her new lifestyle. She liked Galiana, no more is needed to be said about that. Her new love interest only remained as long as she thought of him as the mysterious hero. Then, she must suddenly find another guy, and who is more suited for that role than the real Falcon? Seemed a little shallow and immature.

Some credit

* I liked Miss Perkins and her sharp-witted brain!

* I found Stefano so amusing with his surly remarks and way of covering up his true emotions. I liked him from the very start and thought there was more to him than his rude manner.

All in all, this is a rather amusing read and a lot of stuff is going on. Despite it's flaws it will surely keep you occupied for some time.

Kate says

Oh, do I miss MPM! This began quite differently than usual, the story of a young English girl orphaned and fortuitously taken in by her wealthy Italian family in 1860, a very exciting time and place. She obtains a fabulous spinster companion who ought to have gotten the story to herself, a sort of more self-aware Amelia Peabody type, Miss Perkins, and thus armed against brigands, slightly mad grandfathers, and a crazy political scene, Francesca makes her way through a landscape featuring very interesting Etruscan tombs and a suave Zorro figure, the Falcon. An unpleasant cousin Sebastian, twin of the handsome and dashing cousin Andrea, an English spinster aunt, a melodramatic Italian Aunt with a malicious servant and delicious daughter round out the cast at the castle. This book is an amazing bridge between the gothic and drippy romance/mystery plots and the more zany and loving series work MPM did with Vicky Bliss and Amelia Peabody. There's no supernatural element here and lots of bits don't quite fit in, including several duplicate sorts of characters, and for sure an unconvincing love story arc (but really, I've never seen an earlier mock-John Smith/Trevalyan in a Michaels book before, oh that silvery blond hair! I forgive all instalove!) but lovely

allusions to old pulp novels, some archaeology, much solid history and some nice silliness make this worth interlibrary loan. I only wish she'd gone whole hog and pivoted to make Our Hero fall in love with the fabulous older woman Miss Perkins and left Francesca to fall in love with someone else. 1977 and MPM at her best.

Lisa Greer says

Okay, I've picked this one up again, and it's an entertaining romp so far with an Italian setting. The heroine has handsome twin cousins, etc. Standard Michaels fare. But I have decided this one is in my top five so far for the history of the Etruscans and of Italy alone. I always love how Michaels injects social justice issues in so many of her books as well as archaeology and history. I am nearing the end of this one, and I still haven't figured it all out. Good novel.

Lynn Spencer says

The combination of Italian history (this one is set during the Italian Unification) and old-school gothic was just irresistible for me. And since it's Barbara Michaels, she may use some of the traditional gothic touches, such as dashing men, creepy old houses and the like, but she's very smart about it and at times, there's a bit of a twist. This isn't my very favorite of her books, but it's definitely on the shortlist.

Be says

Well let me start by saying what I liked about this book - I liked Miss Perkins out of all the characters - I liked the history of the Etruscan architecture (loved the cemetery and tombs) , people and the royal family! It was a fast read that felt long . I felt bored often , probably because I have read so many fast paced mysteries that entailed a lot of danger and excitement. But all in all it was a good read. I will read more of her books in the future. I read somewhere that this was considered a gothic novel. It didn't feel as gothic as I thought it was going to be....

Christy B says

I just loved this book so much that I had to write something about it.

The book is told from the point-of-view of Francesca, the daughter of an English father and an Italian mother. Francesca's mother died in childbirth, and she grew up in England not knowing her mother's family, for she was disowned when she ran away with Francesca's father and defied her own father.

When Francesca's father dies when she is 17, her mother's family suddenly pops up, when her grandfather sends her cousin Andrea to fetch her and have her brought to Italy.

The story takes place in 1860, in the midst of Italy's strive for Independence. Roaming the land is the

mysterious Falcon, a man who is leading the rebels, and causing lots of problems for the military.

I won't reveal the identity of the Falcon, of course, but the author was very brilliant in making me undecided between two characters. One minute I would think it was one character, and then something would happen and I would think it was the other. However, at one point in the book I started to think about events that happened in the earlier parts of the book, and came to a conclusion and stuck with it. No matter what happened, I was convinced that THIS person was the Falcon, and I ended up being right.

When I was finished, I ended up going back and rereading parts with this character, looking to see if there were things that he said and did that should have tipped me off. Of course, now that I know who he is, things became obvious, but they were subtle the first time around.

I'm going to reveal some things that made me come to the conclusion of the Falcon. I will put these under a spoiler, of course.

(view spoiler)

Vin9 says

Politics, War, Gothic, Humor, Romance = Perfect Blend

This has to be one of the best thriller/historical novel I've read so far. The suspense of this novel is great. This novel can make an epic Movie.

The story is set in 1860. The narrator Francesca who lives in England is a recent orphan and alone in the world when her mother's rich royal family from Italy comes to her rescue. Italy is in middle of a revolution by peasants against the tyrant rulers. A disguised hero named Falcon is helping peasants and fights against the tyrant soldiers. It soon becomes clear that the "falcon" person is closer to Francesca's family and may be a person from the family itself.

Now let me dissect the book for you - A sarcastic heroine, a sulky grumpy hero, a crazy grandpa, a secret spy governess, few eccentric family members and few more mentally challenged characters. The solution is extremely hilarious. Few of Francesca's line made me LOL. Barbara Michael's is a genius.

This book is all- an adventure novel, a thriller, historical novel, political novel, gothic novel, & romance novel.

Few novels manage to balance so many genres perfectly. This is one of them. Shame there isn't more novels like this out there.

Loriann says

I was pleasantly surprised to find the identity of the myterious hero in the book was not who the author was leading me to believe it was. Very good adventure story.

Kelsy says

kady recommended this one.... AND I LOVED LOVED LOVED IT!!!

Colleen says

This book reminds me of Zorro. Love it.

Angela Randall says

We own this as part of an anthology, Gothic Treasure Trove:
