



The Laird

Grace Burrowes

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***New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author Grace Burrowes delivers another passionate Regency romance...**

He left his bride to go to war...

After years of soldiering, Michael Brodie returns to his Highland estate to find that the bride he left behind has become a stranger. Brenna is self-sufficient, competent, confident-and furious about Michael's prolonged absence.

Now his most important battle will be for her heart

Brenna is also hurt, bewildered, and tired of fighting for the respect of those around her. Michael left her when she needed him most, and then stayed away even after the war ended. Nonetheless, the young man who abandoned her has come home a wiser, more patient and honorable husband. But if she trusts Michael with the truths she's been guarding, he'll have to choose between his wife and everything else he holds dear.

Captive Hearts series:

The Captive (Book 1)

The Traitor (Book 2)

The Laird (Book 3)

"Burrowes delivers powerful and moving romance." -*RT Book Reviews*

Praise for *The MacGregor's Lady*:

"Consistently excellent writing, deep and layered stories." -*Publishers Weekly*

"Engaging, deliciously sensual, superbly written romance." -*Library Journal*

"Absolutely enchanting." -*Romance Junkies*

The Laird Details

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From Reader Review The Laird for online ebook

Lover of Romance says

Michael and Brenna have been married for over ten years, and were betrothed since childhood. Michael left ten years previous to fight in the war, and now he has returned and he barely knows Brenna. Brenna has had to fight for keeping their home, she has had to face enemies within the clan to keep them above water, and now her husband has finally remembered he has a wife and people who care about him. In the beginning of his return Brenna has inner demons that is keeping her from being fully Michael's wife. Michael is impressed with how well Brenna has managed things so far since he has been gone. Michael doesn't want to see the animosity between Brenna and his people. But as he starts to woo his wife and convince her of his love for her, he starts to see her strength and fortitude. Michael begins to see that its not as simple as wooing his wife, he will have to win her heart as well as her affections.

The Laird is the third in the Captive Hearts series. I think out of this series so far, that The Laird is my favorite. This series has been quite a ride so far, and I would say probably some of my favorite books from this author. I loved the theme of this series, and each book has done a great job in the implementation. We see how each pair in each of the books have to fight for love, and The Laird is no different. This story is all about sacrifice and trust. Both of the characters in the story even though married, have never made love, they barely know each other, and have been separated for ten years. The story begins as a courtship, a chance for these two to reconnect, but life seems to get in the way of these two. You begin to develop a kinship to the heroine, she has heart and gumption and is not afraid to fight for what is hers. You can tell that she has some skeletons in the closet, that she has been keeping from Michael. Skeletons that she fears and that haunt her daily. She and Michael's uncle are at odds with each other (but for good reason), and the more you delve deeper in the story the more that you begin to appreciate her courage and will. Michael is a charmer and romantic. I love the way he goes about weakening Brenna's defenses and showing her how genuine his feelings are for her.

The plot of the story is steady paced and didn't feel rushed or too slow. I felt like it was just right for the theme of the story and knowing how Burrowes writes, not unexpected. But there were quite a few surprises along the way that really will shock you to the core. But I loved the way she puts the story together and it really comes together in the end in such a way that is perfectly well suited to the story. I loved seeing it unravel in slow degrees, that was enjoyable and enthralling. A story to remember, a tale to fall for and a experience that will burn in you!!! EXCEPTIONAL!!!

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

Some stories are hard to hear, that doesn't mean they shouldn't be told. All three books in the Captive series deal with abuse in all its forms and effects. The Laird is about child physical and mental abuse, I mention this because of how this can be a trigger for some but know that it is never gratuitous and except for two scenes it is more about the emotional trauma such acts can cause in individuals.

Michael Brodie is finally coming home after 9 years away at war and with very minimal communication between him and his home. The years he spent in France as a traitorous non-traitor (The Captive and The Traitor) have taken their toll; he is world weary and ready for his homeland and clan to soothe his tired spirit. Michael especially hopes the young bride he left behind will lead this forefront. Brenna Brodie may have

been surrounded by home and hearth but like Michael, she lived a life full of fear and lacking security. When Brenna was sent to Michael's home as his betrothed she was only eight years old, lonely and feeling out of place she was befriended by Michael's uncle Angus. Angus groomed her and then preyed upon Brenna's insecurity for years until she hit early teenage years and began to understand something wasn't right. When Brenna turns sixteen, her and Michael are wed and on that night Brenna begs Michael to take her with him when he journeys to war. Michael, only twenty, was reeling from a recent incident that shattered his world and unable to process it, essentially escapes to war distancing himself from everyone that knows him and leaving Brenna behind.

What follows is an extremely emotional read about not only two people trying to overcome and manage traumatic events but how friends, family, and communities cope with the dark realities of life. The heart of this story is Michael and Brenna trying to traverse the vast distance years and circumstances has created between them. This is a slow moving story but at the same time, I flew through it as I was completely absorbed and invested in Michael and Brenna together and separately. The awkwardness and yearning the two demonstrate made me pull for them right in the beginning. Michael even with his scars from the war remembers Brenna as his cherished childhood friend and with every interaction and observation grows to love Brenna as the woman she is now. As the events swirling about Brenna are mostly the catalyst for the heart of the story, she is what readers will focus on and what a heartbreaking and inspiring character she is. The shame, guilt, anxiety, strength, heart, and endurance Brenna displays make her a character you will not soon forget. The gentleness and understanding Michael gives to Brenna and Brenna's simple trying makes you want to simply clutch this book to your chest and weep for them. While the ending may leave some to bemoan Uncle Angus not getting his just rewards, the healing Brenna and others exhibit is satisfying enough for me.

I am very fond of the first two books in the series, but *The Laird*, it stole a piece of my heart. When someone mocks or claims romance genre books are trashy, simplistic, or otherwise unworthy, this is the book you point them to. There is a subtleness to Ms. Burrowes writing that has me hooked and will have me looking at her backlist and watching for new releases. Some stories are hard to hear, there is in where their beauty lies.

Wendy says

The final book in Grace Burrowes' *Captive Hearts* trilogy and I wasn't sure that I was going to enjoy it as much as I had the first two in the series, although I couldn't put it down, so compelling was it, I'm still not sure that 'enjoy' is the correct adjective. It started off rather slowly and I felt frustrated at my lack of understanding as to why Michael had stayed away from his young bride for nine years. Okay the first seven years could be explained easily enough but another two when he should/could have gone home? I understand that he felt the duty and need to protect Sebastian St.Clair or Robert Gerard as he had been known in France - but two more long years for a young bride whose self esteem must have already been at rock bottom. My sympathy was definitely with Brenna, regardless of Michael's indisputable honour. No wonder his wife was unhappy and unimpressed when he finally decided to return to his home and her. I would have been hopping mad too given the same set of circumstances, and although Brenna is stately and considerate in her attitude to Michael, she nevertheless does not forgive him easily.

Michael's reasons for bolting without a verbal farewell are explained much further into the story when the two actually begin to talk to each other, still I felt irritated with him for burying his head in the sand for so long and leaving a young woman, little more than a child, to cope alone. Yes his parents' had been around for

a while initially...but still.. Ms.Burrowes reveals layer by painful layer why Michael left as he did, stayed away for so long and even why Brenna received no communication from him. Brenna's reluctance to even kiss him, seems at first to be punishment for his abandonment of her, although I did wonder why feeling as she did, Brenna would actually sleep naked with the husband she was so upset with, especially given her reluctance to finally consummate their union. Again though this was all part of Ms. Burrowes clever plan, and the reasons behind Brenna's reticence are explained.

Michael did not and could not have known the real reasons behind his sixteen year old bride's desperate plea for him to take her with him to war nine years previously nor could Brenna have known of the reasoning behind Michael's decision to leave her behind regardless of the danger, he had explained, she would face as a camp follower.

Brenna has had a tumultuous time in Michael's absence, apart from the fact that many of his tenants have emigrated, the majority left treat her with contempt and it is this realisation and disgust at the way his wife is treated by his people that is the catalyst for Michael to start investigating, unravelling and revealing the horrific time Brenna has spent, alone, unprotected and despised by all but a few people. At this point in the story Michael started to redeem himself as far as I am concerned. As the story unfolds it is obvious that Michael and Brenna care deeply for each other, both have remained faithful to their wedding vows during their estrangement and it is this affection that enables the two to start rebuilding their relationship.

Before they can finally heal, they must learn to trust and to talk to each other and as it slowly happens we learn how very cleverly Ms. Burrowes has woven her incredibly sensitive story. Brenna has lived in Michael's home since she was a child of eight, betrothed to him for eight years before their marriage and it was during this eight year period where her dreadful trauma occurred, whilst Michael was still actually around, although little more than a child himself. She has to develop into young womanhood before she has the courage to protect herself.

Everything that happened to Brenna in the period from when she was eight to twenty five is as a direct result of one person, first preying on her and then turning the tenants against her when she finally finds the courage to stand up to him. Through it all she has remained a loyal young woman, fiercely proud and dignified, she has worked tirelessly to keep Michael's estate solvent, and his people, as far as she is able... safe.

This is a heart wrenching story of child abuse, skilfully told in a way we in this day and age have come to understand. The perpetrator using first kindness, and treats to wheedle his way into a lonely child's confidence and then using that power to threaten and frighten her into submission and fear to speak out.

The story ends in a horrifying but justified climax and Michael and Brenna do finally reach their HEA but this is quite a departure for Ms.Burrowes and I felt no warm glow. This is a subject close to my heart for I know a family who were affected by similar abuse, discovered only many years after the event and the fallout and ongoing trauma is horrendous. Ms. Burrowes has handled an extremely difficult subject with sensitivity and skill and I applaud this great writer.

Sandi *~The Pirate Wench~* says

Setting: Regency England

4 1/2 Stars

The Laird is the third book in the Captive Hearts series, and what a great book to finish this trilogy! Michael and Brenna's story is disconnected from the other two except for the backdrop of the Napoleonic War.

It is also a different "second chance" at love story than the others as well. I found it to be slower in pace and less dynamic (a good thing for this one) as it worked well and was tender and touching, but still had the author's usual flare to create a powerful conflict between the hero and heroine. I found it to be a very sweet and sensitive romance this time, and some readers like myself will savor Michael and Brenna's story or may feel less satisfied because of these elements. However, for this reader this trilogy will remain on my to re-read keeper shelf.

Shortly after Michael and Brenna's wedding Michael Brodie leaves his young bride to go and fight for England.

He stays away almost 10 years before finally returning home to the Highlands. Yet, Michael comes home not only older but wiser and is certainly not prepared for the strong willed, confident and very angry woman that he married long ago. Brenna has felt betrayed by her husband's defection and is no way ready to forget and forgive him. Though she is furious with him for leaving her to deal with so many problems, Brenna quietly and meekly allows Michael to reclaim his place as laird. Brenna fears though that the terrible family secrets she is hiding will destroy not only the clan, but in Michael's belief in those he trusts and their second chance at a happy marriage.

After reading The Captive trilogy by author Grace Burrowes, I certainly plan on reading more of her romances.

And that's saying a lot considering I much prefer the older romance novels than the "tried and true" "same ole same" newer ones out these days. Nicely done and highly recommend!

Angie Elle says

This book was provided by Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

**possible spoilers for previous books in this series*

The Laird was such a wonderful love story about a husband and wife who are trying to find their way together after years of separation.

In true Grace Burrowes fashion, this book was brimming with emotion and beauty. Though their marriage was settled years in advance, it wasn't a typical arranged marriage story for Michael and Brenna. What made this unique was that though they had no choice, Michael and Brenna accepted their situation and decided they were going to love each other. From the time they met, Michael knew Brenna would one day be his wife, and he took his role as her future husband very seriously.

I loved both of the main characters in this book. Their devotion to each other and their willingness to move past things and not hold grudges set the tone for their entire relationship. This book hits on some serious issues, and the author does a fantastic job of showing how it affects not only the person at the center of it, but also those surrounding them.

Brenna was a very serious character. It was almost hard to get to know her, because she had learned to close herself off, but that didn't stop her from being likable. She was a strong heroine who worked hard for everything she had and never complained. Michael was a serious character, too, though he was more light-

hearted than Brenna. While his time at war had scarred him, it hadn't hardened him. He was a very patient, very kind man who genuinely loved his wife and wanted to make her happy.

As with the two previous books in this series, the story unfolds at a perfect pace, with the hero and heroine earning each other's trust and ultimately, love.

The Laird is a book that is definitely going to stay with you.

What makes this series so special for me is the way the characters lives are intertwined. **Captive Hearts** is an example of how good things can come out of even the worst of circumstances. Sebastian was a savior to Christian in a way that no one but the two of them will ever understand. Michael may have been in Sebastian's life by orders he'd been given, but he was a constant companion who understood the sacrifice Sebastian was making and the toll it took on his life. He saw the good in Sebastian that even Sebastian couldn't see in himself. In return, I think Sebastian was an example to Michael of how, even when things aren't going the way you expected or planned, sometimes you just have to tough it out.

I also liked how the titles of these books weren't merely reflections of the heroes, but the heroines as well. Christian and Gilly were both held captive at times in their lives, albeit in very different ways. While his peers viewed Sebastian as a traitor, Millie's family saw her the same. And while Michael may have been laird of his clan, Brenna filled his shoes when he wasn't there. The shared circumstances really deepened the connections between the heroes and their heroines.

I recommend this story, and the entire series, if you are looking for Historical Romance with a lot of depth and an intricately woven plotline.

Jojo92 says

Une cata, alors que ça se passe en Écosse je m'étais dit que j'allais adorer. Mais non, aucune passion entre les héros, un oncle abuseur sexuel! Vraiment où est la romance !!! Fuyez!!!

MsChris1161 says

THE LAIRD, the third book in the Captive Hearts series by Grace Burrowes, who I have considered a master storyteller for quite some time was indeed a captivating story. The Laird goes beyond the long delayed reunion of Michael and Brenna Brodie to the heart of the love, loyalty and sacrifices they have made during the nearly ten years of separation and what it has cost them both.

I was excited to finally get to read Michael's story. He was so mysterious in *The Captive* and in *The Traitor* so I was definitely curious to learn more about him. Apparently Michael married Brenna, a young woman, who he had been betrothed to since he was thirteen. Her parents sent her to live in his family's castle when she was just a child and he was advised by his father that as his future wife it was his job to look after her and protect her. He took that to heart and as they grew up he came to love and cherish her. But the morning after their marriage he still left to serve King and country in the war against the Corsicans. Michael left the son of a Scottish Laird and an Irish Lady, but came home the Laird himself due to his father's passing during the time he was away. His mother had taken his younger sisters and moved back to Ireland before his father

had even passed. This left Brenna the Lady of the castle and in charge but also at the mercy of Michael's father's brother, who she rightly does not trust, for help running the estate. A man who had his reasons for not wanting Brenna there and a man who enjoyed the power he held over her people as the acting steward of the castle and its tenants.

Grace writes Michael and Brenna with a true, abiding and very loyal love for each other. Neither of them were unfaithful in any way to their marriage vows despite the nearly a decade of separation. But they did each have their secrets and neither had an easy road. Both were in fact, in desperate situations and fighting a battle without true support from anyone else. Michael working undercover behind enemy lines and Brenna as the Lady of the castle with no husband to back her up and no trust from the very people she was charged to care for in her husband's absence. When Michael finally comes home from his responsibilities in the war and to the King, they are basically strangers who are not sure where they stand with each other. They had to essentially start over and come to know each other again. I loved how Michael took charge of this and set out to woo his bride. He was kind, humorous, and romantic, where Brenna wanted to be angry, pragmatic and sensible. I loved that Michael is patient with Brenna when she refuses him his marital rights. Instead of forcing the issue, he wins her trust and her heart. He intuitively knows that she is so guarded because she has been hurt and sets out to make her feel safe.

Brenna has loved Michael since she came to live in the castle as a lonely eight year old girl. He was her safe place then and as her husband quickly steps into that role for her again. She was hurt from his abandonment and I love that she does not give in easy to him. She is also holding secrets that she is afraid for Michael to learn of in fear he will not want her. She makes him prove he is sincere and will cherish her as he promised all those years ago.

Along with the reunion and love that grows and matures between Michael and Brenna, the Laird sensitively portrays the struggle and despair that pervades the life of a victim of child abuse. The betrayal when a trusted adult takes advantage of a child's love and innocence. The threats, shame and fear the abuser instills in the heart of his victims so that they keep his actions secret. Grace does an amazing job of unfolding these secrets little by little as Michael and Brenna's relationship grows. It is not an easy subject to read and it could not have been an easy subject to write, but I thought it was very well done. I felt the mystery and suspense it created added to the overall story without overpowering it.

I was happy to see Sebastian St. Clair and his bride, Milly come to visit and offer support to Michael. Maeve, Michael's eight year old sister was spunky and played an important role in the story. Brenna's cousins were very aloof for most of the book, until the end when all becomes clear and explains so much of their behavior. The ending itself I felt was wrapped up neatly, amazingly still had a wonderful HEA, and even a nicely done epilogue. 4 stars

~Complimentary copy downloaded from NetGalley in exchange for a honest review.

Caz says

I've given this an A- at AAR, but am leaving it at 5 stars

This is the final book in Ms Burrowes' *Captive Hearts* trilogy, which has focused on three men who were profoundly affected by their experiences during the Napoleonic Wars. In the previous book, *The Traitor*, we learned that Michael Brodie, half-Scot, half-Irish, had been sent to protect Sebastian St. Clair – or Robert

Girard as he was then known – while he carried out his work as an interrogator in the French army. The reasoning behind Michael's deployment was complicated (basically, Sebastian had proved himself a valuable asset to the British and Wellington wanted him kept there and kept safe), and also meant that, even after the cessation of hostilities, Michael felt unable to go home given the frequency of the threats made against St Clair's life.

The Laird is the story of Michael's homecoming and of all the difficulties he has to face upon coming back to the land he has not seen for nine years and, more importantly, the bride he left after their (unconsummated) wedding night. The overall tone of the story is somewhat different to the other two and, indeed, to many others of Ms Burrowes' books, but it is no less compelling for that.

Michael's wife, Brenna, was sixteen when they married, having been brought up at Castle Brodie since the age of eight. After their wedding, she begged Michael to take her to France with him, but not wanting to subject her to that sort of hardship, he refused. He also refused to consummate their marriage because he didn't want to leave her pregnant – although as the story progresses, we discover there was another reason behind that decision. And he also had no way of knowing that Brenna's desperation to leave with him was due to more than the unwillingness of a bride to be separated from her new husband. Michael concedes that Brenna has every right to be angry with him for his extended absence, but there is something else behind her wall of cool stand-offishness that he can't quite work out.

So Michael has returned to a wife he barely knows and who is full of anger, resentment and, he is surprised to realise, fear - as well as to a home and lands which are much changed since he left. The estate is failing, his tenants are wary of him, and, for no reason he can fathom, have taken his wife into active dislike. Even though she has provided financial assistance to those who have defaulted on their tenancies and then decided to make a life overseas rather than to scrape a meagre existence in the large coastal towns, and even though she continues to help the community as best she can, Brenna is treated with discourtesy and thinly veiled hostility.

In his absence, his uncle Angus has been responsible for running the estate, and he soon realises that there is no love lost between his uncle and his wife – and that his uncle is widely disliked among the tenants. Then into the midst of estate troubles and marital issues, his youngest sister, Maeve arrives from Ireland, resentful at being sent away from the only home she has ever known to the care of a brother she's never met and who doesn't appear to have any time for her.

The Laird is an emotionally charged story – not just in terms of the romance, but in all the other factors which come into play. At its heart is the very dark topic of child abuse, and the way in which one character preys upon the loneliness and isolation felt by a child sent into an unfamiliar environment. I'm no expert, but the way the author has written this particular character (and it's not difficult to work out who it is from very early on in the book) feels very accurate and his actions are completely plausible. I should also warn readers that towards the end, Brenna describes the abuse she suffered, and while the description is quite specific, it is in no way gratuitous; Ms Burrowes treats the entire subject with great sensitivity, although she doesn't sugar-coat anything.

The romance in **The Laird** is as beautifully written and developed as I have come to expect from this author. She has a lovely way with language, and her characters have a manner of speech which is completely unique to her, which is something I now look forward to each time I pick up one of her books. Michael is naturally eager to pursue his marital duties, but sensitive enough to realise that Brenna's skittishness and dislike of casual and unexpected physical contact need to be treated both seriously and carefully. He also has his own demons to exorcise, so the couple has a very difficult path to tread. The way they come together – in mind,

as well as in body – into a truly caring, mutually loving and supportive relationship is beautifully done.

Lady Wesley says

I chose this book, and the entire Captive Hearts trilogy, as one of the Best of 2014 at Romantic Historical Reviews.

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I haven't had time to write a proper review of this amazing book, so I'll just direct you to my friend Kyrarker's review.

Wollstonecraftmegirl says

I think this is one of Burrowes's strongest books, and she's written some excellent ones. It's not five stars because it's not, it doesn't make me soar like it needs to, to get that top title, but it's < > this close.

This book follows on from the events of *The Traitor* but can definitely be read as a standalone. I think Burrowes is best when she's writing from her distinctive historical and style perspective but isn't utterly wedded to the massive web of the Burrowesverse. It's great at times to have Windhams and Windhams-by-marriage popping up all over the shop, but often it distracts from the romance.

The Laird doesn't have any of that. Instead we have Burrowes laser focused on her H/h, the story of their marriage of convenience and their romance. This book has a big, difficult, complicated topic at its centre (view spoiler) and it's managed thoughtfully and, in my limited experience of these matters, in a believable way. For some people it's undoubtedly going to be a triggering topic and it's probably lost this book some readers, but it's not an issue for me to see these, sadly all too common, issues tackled in mainstream fiction. The big topic is weaved throughout the story and makes for a solid villain getting in the way of our H/h and results in a suitably dramatic climax. Burrowes is sometimes guilty of moustache twirling, *mwah-ha-ha-ha-ing* villains. They often come out of left field for last minute ~dramaz~. Again, this book doesn't have that issue; it works marvellously as a whole.

The characterisation of Brenna, the heroine, is particularly good. She's prickly, she's secretive and she's proper. She's also a great combination of scared and brave. The effect of her background, both the trauma and being left by Michael at such a young age without any sense of when he might return, have really shaped her and it comes. At the same time, she develops during the book, she lets Michael in, and it's very organic. Michael, our hero, is good, but I think there's no doubt that he's playing second fiddle to Brenna. He's a beta hero and he exists to be a great husband and rock a kilt, and he manages both. That said, I wish he'd been a bit more developed, as he is the eponymous Laird and one might have thought his issues arising from the war and being away from home for so long etc would also be explored. Instead, they're skirted over.

The romance is a lovely thing. They grow together. Michael helps Brenna work through her issues and comes to really appreciate the woman his wife has become in his absence. Brenna learns she can love and trust. It's just very well done. I think Burrowes could have cut some words in the mid-section and lost nothing, it takes a bit too long to get to the resolution. I wish there had been one more sex scene, but what we

got was great.

All the usual great aspects of Burrowes's writing are here. Great language. Lovely turns of phrase. Strangely explicit, but somehow not explicit at all sex. The characters consume their mandated quantity of scones and lemonade. Everyone and everything has a scent.

All in all: wonderful book.

Kathie (katmom) says

HAPPY RELEASE DAY!!! 9/2/2014

This is third book in the Captive Heart Series. It stands alone, but St. Clair and his wife from The Traitor make a very welcome appearance.

This series is darker than many historical romances. It deals with the real issue of child molestation and that may be a trigger for some. While I give that warning, I must also say that Ms. Burrowes deals with the subject matter in a very sensitive manner. I was impressed that she put an author's note at the beginning of the book stating that while the issues were hard, there would be an HEA. She also had me on the edge of my seat as I stayed up until 1:30 in the morning reading. The tension had me chewing my cuticles to the quick.

Brenna has been a wife in name only for nearly ten years after her new husband joins his regiment the morning after their unconsummated wedding night. In the intervening years she's had to put up with loneliness, gossip about her abandonment, and has been labelled a thief. With only one or two short letters from her wayward husband, she's kept the castle and the land going strong as she waited for Michael's return. He's been working for King and Country, undercover. So she has also put up with rumors of his treason.

She's not that impressed when he comes back a Baron, which makes her a Baroness. Now, I was worried about cheating...he has been gone for so very long. I am glad to note that there was none, whew! That's always a hard line for me.

Michael is a very patient man. I loved that about him. He knows what he wants and he's willing to work for it, without pushing Brenna beyond what she can handle. He's also very observant and he works carefully to keep her comfortable in his pursuit of her. He notices that she's a bit skittish...and he wonders as to why that should be.

When the secrets are laid bare, as we all know they must be, I wanted to hug them both. Once again Grace Burrowes fills the shadows with unraveling threads and then lets us see them knit back together. While it is a darker novel, there is joy in the way these two finally come together.

The supporting cast of the St. Clairs, her cousins, Maevie (Michael's little sister), and assorted villagers fill the pages with depth.

I enjoyed the book very much. The joy to be found was worth the anxiety I felt as I read through the night. I highly recommend this book.

Thank you, NetGalley and Sourcebooks Casablanca, for the opportunity to read The Laird

***The Angry Reader* says**

So. Dang. Good.

Michael has been in the previous books - quiet and guarded. Here we see him return home and blossom.

Brenna, Michael's wife, has a secret that makes their marriage difficult. But Michael is patient and perceptive - and a dramatic resolution comes about - during a surprise visit from St Clair.

As with the previous stories Burrowes' pacing is flawless. She lets the story unravel at the perfect intoxicating pace - helping a reader fall in love with her characters as they fall in love with one another.

Emily says

Michael Brodie left his new bride to fight a war that took years to finish, even after it did he still stayed away but now he is back home and is surprised his wife Brenna is not happy to see him. Brenna put up with nine years of gossiping about why her new husband would walk away the day after they married, the rumors swirled whether he was alive or dead for years and now he is back Brenna is ready to walk away from the marriage but Michael wants their marriage and plans to woo his wife. Can Brenna trust Michael and can they have everything that he is promising?

There is a whole part of the story about Brenna that gets uncovered while the story progresses which was surprising. I thought this was excellent, going to have to go back and read rest of series. Brenna you get where she is at with Michael and I felt sorry for him but felt like he owed it to Brenna to regain her trust. Liked the pacing of this story, very entertaining.

Melann says

Plutôt 2,5/5.

Oui Ok, on m'avait prévenu ! (:D) Mais comme j'avais un avis positif et un très négatif, j'hésitais toujours. Bref, c'est vrai que c'est un livre assez plombant. Les relations entre les protagonistes sont assez froides une grande partie du livre. J'ai eu du mal à comprendre les non-dits qui durent tout au long de l'histoire (surtout de la part de Brenna) et qui auraient pu avoir des conséquences fâcheuses (sur la petite soeur). C'est dommage, Brodie avait du potentiel, je l'ai bien aimé (Brenna aussi, malgré tout).

Tin says

Disclosure: I received this review copy for the release day event. Thank you to Grace Burrowes and

Sourcebooks for the opportunity. Yes, this is an honest review.

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As I was reading **The Laird**, I imagined Odysseus at the end of his travels and Penelope was waiting faithfully for him. Is that the end of the story?

For Grace Burrowes's Michael and Brenna, the homecoming is only the beginning of the story. Michael's been away at war for a number of years, and, when the war ended, he stayed two years more in London, without sending word to his wife about his welfare or whereabouts. Now he is home, and, to Michael's credit, he really isn't expecting much in terms of a welcome.

"Brenna is entitled to be exceedingly vexed with me. I was gone too long, I didn't write enough, and I should be made to pay in the coin of her choosing for as long as she pleases."

"Damn right. With interest."
- loc 1618

The word that came to mind when I sat down to write this review is "masterful" -- and it's a word that I've used only twice before in almost 3 years of blogging, but this is one of those books and Grace Burrowes is one of those authors that merit this adjective. Here's why:

The story could easily be a highly dramatic homecoming story with tearful confrontations and the like, but Grace Burrowes takes a very contained approach to the story. There are no big scenes and no soap-opera moments. It all simmers underneath the surface. I have to give Brenna credit for being such a heroic heroine. She has sacrificed her youth, her reputation, her very life to serve Michael's people, and she's never been recognised or appreciated for it, and, in fact, suffer their hushed speculations about why Michael left her to become a soldier (among other things). She was very young when they married, and then she was left to manage the castle when her mother-in-law decided to decamp to Ireland. Then her father-in-law, the former laird, dies and that leaves Brenna alone. She came into her own without much guidance, and without her husband -- and she had to figure out her own way. Life has taught Brenna very painful lessons, and Michael knows this -- but Brenna never talks about it, despite Michael's inquest. And this is a question I asked myself: Was it right for Brenna to keep silent about what happened to her?

We've seen Michael's story unfold slowly in **The Captive** and **The Traitor**, and there's been a lot of ambiguity in how the author has portrayed his character. Is he a deserter? Why did he stay with Sebastian? Even Milly, Sebastian's wife was a bit uncertain about whether she should trust Michael or not, but, we've seen his steadfastness and loyalty to Sebastian St. Clair, and we realise (later on) the tremendous sacrifices he has made for King and Country.

His own story, **The Laird**, shows us that life, marriage, war, and everything that happens are never one-sided. The idea of battle pervades this story -- and Michael and Brenna have both waged wars in their respective places. I love that Grace Burrowes does not discount Brenna's life or reduce it or diminish her struggle. This, of the three novels, is a perfect example of a domestic drama: Michael and Brenna's lives are tied to their people and the troubles of one are borne by the community (except Brenna's). It's enlightening to see the inner workings of a clan, of a castle waiting for it's master to return -- in the meantime, things go on as usual, but not "as usual" at the same time. Michael's return somewhat upsets the delicate truce that has

been in place since he left -- there's a lot of cryptic hints about what has been happening in the castle and it takes a discerning eye and ear to figure out all the troubles that Brenna's been dealing with. In that Grace Burrowes elevates the "ordinary" concerns of a household -- the author shows us that the Brenna and Michael's struggles are the same and the sacrifices made are of equal weight and value.

"Who or what was supposed to comfort me, Michael Brodie? When I was told you'd gone over to the enemy? When I was told you were dead? When I imagined you captured by the French or worse?"

- loc 80

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"You're saying Brenna faced a challenge."

"You never were stupid, Michael Brodie. Brenna faced a war. Your parents were too absorbed with their own dramatics, and everybody from Goodie MacCray to Angus Brodie assumed you'd left to get away from your bride."

- loc 709

It's beautiful to see a relationship being repaired by two willing parties. There's a lot of wariness, but also a lot of patience -- and while there's so many questions that hang in the air (about motivations and secrets, about Angus Brodie and Brenna, about the clan), what is without question is the love and the faith in that love that both Brenna and Michael have. As with other second-chance-at-love stories, there's always the poignancy presented by the "what if" -- what if Michael hadn't left? What if he had come home two years sooner?

"Brenna, if you had three wishes, would one of them be that you had never married me?" His tone was gentle, not accusing.

- loc 838

But there's also the moving forward: neither our hero or heroine dwell so much in the past, but, rather, have their hands immersed in the present and their eyes fixed to the future. It's not a perfect relationship, but it's a relationship that works.

"A marriage is a committed union of two souls, Brenna Brodie, not the desperate attempts of one soul to attach the affections of the other. So I'm wondering: How will you woo me?"

- loc 928

In her author's notes, Grace Burrowes talks about how much heart she has put into this book -- and you can

really see it as you read through this novel. It is a palpable force that drives this story forward and breathes such life into these two characters. While we see historical romance as fantasy and escapist, I see a real-ness to Michael and Brenna's story and it is a wonderful and mesmerising ending to one truly amazing series.

The Laird is book 3 in Grace Burrowes's *The Captive Hearts* series and was released today, September 2, 2014.
