



Deception's Princess

Esther M. Friesner

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Some lies lead to true adventure. . . .

Maeve, princess of Connacht, was born with her fists clenched. And it's her spirit and courage that make Maeve her father's favorite daughter. But once he becomes the High King, powerful men begin to circle--it's easy to love the girl who brings her husband a kingdom.

Yet Maeve is more than a prize to be won, and she's determined to win the right to decide her own fate. In the court's deadly game of intrigue, she uses her wits to keep her father's friends and enemies close--but not too close. When she strikes up an unlikely friendship with the son of a visiting druid, Maeve faces a brutal decision between her loyalty to her family and to her own heart.

Award-winning author Esther Friesner has a remarkable gift for combining exciting myth and richly researched history. This fiery heroine's fight for independence in first-century Ireland is truly worthy of a bard's tale. Hand *Deception's Princess* to fans of Tamora Pierce, Shannon Hale, and Malinda Lo.

Deception's Princess Details

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From Reader Review Deception's Princess for online ebook

Judith (Judith'sChoiceReads) says

The cover chick makes me think of *Brave* and it's almost as if Merida is getting her own book. Either way I'm stoked, it's looking good!

Crystal ☆ Lost in Storyland says

I like how the story starts with a younger Maeve and follows her as she grows and learns from her experiences. It's been a while since I read a book does this. Initially, time moves at a more rapid pace, as the focus of the story is on an older Maeve, but it didn't feel rushed at all. And looking back on the story as a whole, I can say that the parts of Maeve's childhood that we learn about are important to understanding what happens in the present.

In some ways, Maeve reminded me of Aileana from Elizabeth May's *The Falconer*. Both are high-born women who are braver than their stations allow them to express and must present a false front to society. Both turn away unwanted advances by men interested in their dowries. And both know that their fathers expect them to fulfill their duty through marriage. I was afraid that Maeve would allow her emotions to rule her like Aileana does, but Maeve has a cooler head on her shoulders and is better able to follow societal conventions. As she notes, when she cannot use a son's weapons, she uses a daughter's wits to fight.

I love how the family plays an important role in the story. Maeve obviously gets along well with her mother, and her father maintains a strong presence in her life. In fact, I'd opt to say that Maeve's family is more involved in her life than Odran, her friend and romantic interest, and equally influential in shaping the young woman she becomes. It's interesting to watch how her relationship with her family and others around her changes over time as she matures into a young woman determined to forge a future for herself. The most beautiful and poignant scenes, however, definitely go to Odran (with her friend Kelan coming in a close second). There is so much complexity to the young lovers' relationship because of who they are and what their fathers expect of them. I don't want to go into too many details for fear of spoilers, but know that there was much smiling, giggling, and near-bawling on my part.

The writing is beautiful and filled with vivid descriptions that bring the story to life. It isn't over elaborate or embellished. Rather, the key is in the carefully chosen details that Friesner gives us to portray a clear picture of characters, events, and the passage of time. These weave together amidst wonderful dialogue that give the characters life and personality, at the same time showing their relationships with one another. Select details further bring the culture to life through the peoples' customs and superstitions.

In a book with so many beautifully crafted elements, what really stands out to me is the emotions this book made me feel. While good books make me feel for the characters, the great ones make me feel things myself. Alternately, it made me laugh and smile, rage with barely contained anger, and cry tears of despair. It made me wonder if there was any hope at all for Maeve's happiness. There is so much complexity in Maeve's life, and I admire how she burns brightly with hope in the midst of all this darkness.

While *Deception's Princess* has historical roots with Maeve being an Irish princess, it also has an appeal for fantasy readers, and I would recommend this to readers of both genres with enjoy a book with a strong female protagonist. This has been one of my favorite reads of the year. I will definitely be on the lookout for the next installment in Maeve's adventures!

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For more of my reviews, visit my blog [Imaginary Reads](#).

Laura says

Thank you, Edelweiss, for providing this book from Random House Books for Young Readers for review!

Maeve's life is over-exaggerated -- for better or worse -- in bards' songs. Sure, she was a daring five-year-old when she chased after her father's prized bull. Yes, she learned how to use weapons against threatening beasts. And it's true she speaks her mind, in a witty, intelligent, and clever manner. But Maeve is a princess in first-century Ireland, and an independent, headstrong young woman is one to be feared or beaten down with a stick. She's determined to find solid ground to stand up for herself and her beliefs without angering her father, upsetting the land's most powerful druid, and crushing the druid's son, a healer and master with creatures.

Maeve, like King Arthur, is based on threads of fact but mostly of mythical fiction. Her frustrations are understandable, and the men in her life are equally supportive as well as manipulative, protective, and controlling. She can see right through them, and plays their game by speaking only the truth and pointing out inaccuracies and falsehoods. She wants to help her father defend the land -- thus her warrior skills -- but also wants to be a compassionate healer -- thus her lessons with the druid's son Odran. Maeve is a force of nature, admirable and wonderful to behold, and it was a joy reading her mind.

What I loved most about this book was what Friesner was able to accomplish with so little recorded historical information at the time. Truly, the tales that lasted from Iron Age Ireland are the tales sung by bards and centuries later recorded in manuscripts. Like the game "telephone," both in Maeve's experience as well as in research, only a grain of truth can be found in the poems. Even with little research, Friesner managed to concoct a beautiful and rich tale of love, friendship, and compassion in this tumultuous age. I loved the feast scenes -- so much laughter and joy -- and the moments Odran and Maeve spent in the hut caring for the animals. Every moment circled back to a previous, an endless loop of past events impacting the present, and it was fun to make the connections. Even the dark moments of sexist frustration and political intrigue were scattered with light, sarcastic commentary in Maeve's thoughts.

A fun read for anyone interested in ancient historical fiction, fierce young women, and awesome names you'll need a pronunciation guide to get anywhere close to its actual sound.

Books says

Set in first-century Ireland, *Deception's Princess* is an enchanting tale of courage, intrigue and love. Maeve, princess of Connacht, became a local legend when she cleverly outwitted her father's fiercest bull at the age of five. Her father's favorite daughter, this feisty princess strives to help her father in his position as high king. Unfortunately, her efforts are thwarted time and again by those who think they know better.

This captivating book paints a vivid and enthralling picture of life in first-century Ireland. At a time when princesses were only deemed good for making marriages that would benefit the kingdom; clever, spirited Maeve wants to help her father hold the reins of kingship.

Brave and intelligent, yet vulnerable enough to be utterly realistic, Maeve is the kind of main character that I love to meet in a story. The very fact that she makes mistakes, misjudges situations, and is a victim of court intrigue, changes her from a mere character in a book to a person one can relate to. When adversity strikes and Maeve feels deceived and betrayed, she doesn't balk in a corner. Rather, she makes a new and better plan, always keeping the safety of her father's kingdom as well as the welfare of her family as her priorities. Even when love seems to be coming her way, she is willing to sacrifice it for king and family.

At times, animal-loving young druid, Odran, came across as a weak-ish character. Take into account, however, that crossing his father, master Íobar, could bring down evil curses, and I'm thinking: maybe the lad is simply being cautious. It is, in fact, amazing how much power those druids had over someone as powerful as the high king and his family.

From an adventure with a bull, to tending sick wild animals, and imitating a bean sidhe to lure the enemy away, the tale of Maeve, Odran, and life at the Connacht court is thrilling, enthralling and often sad. I highly recommend Deception's Princess as a must-read to readers of all ages. (Ellen Fritz)

Alexa says

Actual rating 3.5 stars.

I admit it. I read this book only because of the cover.

And I told myself several times not to judge the book because of the cover...

**repeats mantra* I will not compare this with Brave.*

But now that I think about it, I should have had expectations! Maeve is every bit as smart and strong as Merida; without going into Mary-Sue territory. She has her strengths and she has her weaknesses, she acts like a wise adult sometimes and she acts like a spoiled child sometimes; she makes both great and stupid decisions. She's real.

That is my highest praise for this book: the author is very good at creating believable characters. We have very few "good" or "evil" characters, everyone tends to be quite normal. They have their good moments and they have their bad moments, they make mistakes, they make amends, they live.

I also love the descriptions of people, places and scenes. Everything is described in such a vibrant, vivid detail that it's easy to feel transported in time and get sucked into the story.

However there is a glaring problem with this book: It's darn slow. The plot starts fast paced, then drags in the middle for so long I was tempted to abandon it at some point. Also, the romance doesn't feel natural, it feels awkward and imposed; like it's there just to complete a requirement.

Romance? Check.

It's not rushed. It's not insta-love. I cannot even pinpoint what is it about the romance that bothers me so much except for the fact that there was no need for it, and that it feels... off.

Also, I was shocked when I got to the ending and realized there was a cliffhanger and a second book. I feel

there was no need for a second book, unless the story *really* picks up. I would have heavily edited this one and continued.

But don't take my word for it, read it and let me know what you think!

Nora says

That is Merida. There is no power on this earth that can convince me that the girl on the cover is not Merida.

Princess Debz says

This looks slightly familiar...

Jasmine says

sees the word Ireland used in the blurb, sees all the green, sees the falcon on her arm, then stares judgmentally at girl's hair

Tiffany Holme says

I am glad that this series of books is more of a duology for each girl. I was really attracted to the synopsis of this book, but was concerned that I might be missing out by not having read the other books. However, to my relief the books take place in different places and different times. This was also a shock to me because I loved Friesner's writing and couldn't believe that I had not picked up anything of hers prior to now. She spins a captivating tale with a heroine that you can really connect with, and is vibrant.

This is not a book that takes its precious time setting everything up. No, it jumps right into the real story. This is not saying that the characters and the world wasn't well done, because it was. The thing is that you kind of get to watch it grow, you get to start out with Maeve young and her world before it changed. She may have always been a princess, but she is a princess with a spirit and a mind of her own. I loved watching her grow and figure out how to do as she wished, while still pleasing those around her. This also ensured that the pacing keep up at a steady rate, as you watched the progression of both Maeve and the world around her.

There is no way anyone could dispute Maeve's strength. At times she may have acted before thinking things through, but I believe part of that was her position in life and the fact that she was the youngest of six daughters. Most youngest children seek the attention, and being the youngest of six Maeve has a lot she feels she needs to prove that she has the strength that none of them seem willing to recognize. She is wild, strong and free spirited. This is not the expectations when it comes to Princess' but Maeve is nothing like what is

expected. I loved and admired that she stood up for what she wanted and was willing to problem solve for herself. This means she did it in such a way that it was proper and acceptable for royalty, and yet it served her purposes. Honestly, there is nothing I could complain about when it came to her. She wasn't perfect but she was an extremely well built and well rounded character. She is the girl you may not be able to relate to but you still want to know more about her.

What was sweet about this book was that the romance was more of a friendship that developed between Maeve and Odran. Well, that is what it was to start. There was no rush for the two to fall in love, and they still may not be. However, by the end there was a recognition that there was attraction and neither one wanted to lose the other. Like Maeve, Odran was well developed, but maybe just not to the same extent. I did like him but found him to be a little submissive for my liking. He is not the guy you swoon over, he is the guy that you place permanently in the friend zone because he is sweet and not quite the one that you want to chase. The reason I believe these two worked so well is because they did start off as friends, and no expectations was not something that the young princess was used to.

I feel that after reading this book that I have not give enough credit to this author. I have overlooked her previous works but will never do so again. This book was well written, imaginative and structured in such a way that I did not want to put it down. If Deception's Pawn is as good as this book, I will undoubtedly be trying to get my hands on the authors previous works. This is the perfect read if you are looking for something that has a little bit of magic and a well built world, that holds wonderfully designed characters. Don't hesitate to pick this up, you wont regret the time you spend living amongst these pages.

Chelsey Wolford says

Did anyone else think of the movie Brave when they saw this cover? I know I did, and the heroine, Maeve, is just as strong-willed, confident, feisty, and determined as Merida was. Maeve became her father's favorite, she is one of six girls, at the ripe age of six when she dared to chase her father prize winning bull. Her father immediately fell in love with her clever spirit right away, and when all of her other sisters were sent away to live with other families, as was custom for them, Maeve was chosen to stay behind. However, Maeve is still an Irish princess and her father was not given a son. Maeve becomes determined to learn to possess warrior-like skills just like her father. She wants to be able to control and protect their land and namesake, but can she do this without upsetting her father?

This story is actually based on Queen Maeve of Connacht, who was allegedly an Irish Warrior Queen. Many legends and stories have circulated about her, but from what I have read so far, no one is 100% of the details of her life because so little was actually recorded when she supposedly lived. This story was realistic when it came to historical context, and I think Friesner did a nice job of conveying what it might have been like to live that long ago. Her depictions of life at court and of life in general for the Irish people were very pleasing. Nothing seemed too far-fetched for me. The author was able to do a very nice job with as little facts as she possessed about the actual queen.

I don't care how many times I say it, it is always fun and inspiring to follow a determined, clever heroine who has steady goals and virtues. Maeve is just a very inspiring character. I knew that I was going to love her from the moment she chased after the big black bull that was probably four or five times her size, only being a five-year-old at the time. Then she stole my heart all over again when I saw how much she loved and was willing to sacrifice for her father. She was very well-developed. I am anxious to see what else the author produces in this series!

***A free copy of this book was provided to me by the publishers at Random House for Young Readers in

exchange for my honest review***

Luthien says

Also posted on my blog, Luthien Reviews.

What a dreadful book.

I don't often give stuff one star, and I feel like I'm going to be too hard on it because it's not only young adult, but the recommended age range is 11 to 14.

It deserves one star anyway.

I picked this up because I liked both *Nobody's Princess* and *Nobody's Prize*, and because hardly anybody writes historical fiction about Ireland at all, much less Iron Age/medieval Ireland. It wasn't a pretty or romantic time, but one of cattle raids, fierce tribal loyalties, potentially vicious warfare, and of course, a time of druids, paganism and the "old ways" when they were truly alive and flourishing.

In fact, I finished it for that reason, and that reason alone, and despite the setting, this book is unforgivably bad.

Deception's Princess is the story of Maeve, the beautiful youngest daughter of the King of Connacht and High King of Eriu (aka Ireland). Since she has no brothers and is her father's favorite, every man wants to marry Maeve. (I don't know exactly how inheritance worked in first-century Ireland, but it puzzled me that Maeve's father promised his primary kingdom, Connacht, to his *youngest* daughter's husband, but maybe Friesner's got evidence to back that choice up. I really have no idea.) Stuff happens to Maeve throughout the book, but it's lacking in any real plot. It's a mixture of Medieval Times and a plodding coming-of-age story.

I clear this up before I go any further: though Maeve and her family never existed, this is a work of **historical fiction**; it is *not* fantasy. Nothing magical happens. I'm not even convinced that Maeve really believes in the "Fair Folk" or her own gods, for that matter. *This is not a fantasy novel.*

Phew. Okay. Moving on!

Maeve herself is this book's biggest problem—though far from its *only* problem. Unbearable side characters aren't good, but an unbearable protagonist (and narrator)? That's a death blow.

First person is not always an author's friend, especially when a character is so whiny, selfish, and all-around self-centered as Maeve is. The cover may be reminiscent of *Brave*, but Maeve is no Merida—she never grows or learns and is absolutely not a strong (or even responsible) princess or a strong anything. She's incredibly annoying, and that's about it.

She would be the definition of a Mary Sue if she wasn't constantly screwing up, embarrassing herself and her family, and generally ruining everything. She's so beautiful (apparently even at 11...?) that all the men want her; she's (supposedly) brave; she's equally kind and gracious to almost everyone below her in society, including slaves; and she would apparently make a good warrior, or so one of her friends says. And oh, she's "not like the other girls," because they gossip and giggle and like *boys*. The horror. ~~Don't even get me started on the fact that most women, especially women who started training relatively late in life compared to their~~

~~male contemporaries, lacking enough upper body strength to properly wield a monstrous broadsword or other Iron Age weapon. That would require biological facts—or at least some logic—and facts, my friends, are stubborn things.~~ No one even stays upset with her for very long, even when she deserves it.

This is the reason they say “show, don’t tell”—Friesner (through Maeve) tells us that her heroine is all the things I listed above, but what evidence do readers have to make them believe her? How do we know selfish, whiny Maeve is even a reliable narrator?

Is she beautiful? Maeve constantly moans and groans about all the compliments and flattery heaped upon her by hopeful suitors, but all we know specifically about her appearance is that she’s got curly red hair.

Is she brave? She’s certainly *reckless*, sometimes to the point of being stupid, but her actions throughout the book give us a muddled picture of a girl who challenges powerful druids but who also cowers at the sight of fox cubs.

Is she kind and gracious? Sometimes. She’s nice to her best friend’s sweetheart (who also happens to be a servant). (view spoiler) But she also has no friends, and it’s not hard to see why, since she thinks she’s better than all the girls in her household. She’s always haughty and short with every man who admires her in any way, and she’s often flat-out rude to her elders. She thinks she knows everything and is smarter than everyone, even as the story proves, time after time, that she isn’t and doesn’t.

In short: people don’t consider her rebellious because she’s a woman who dares to speak her mind. It’s because she won’t sit down, and shut up, and listen when she ought to and doesn’t believe that anyone knows any better than her about anything.

For example:

I wanted answers *now*. ... “Let me pass, I cried, trying to shove my way between them. ...
“Mother! Mother!”

“Maeve, stop acting like a wild thing and *go*.” Mother’s voice was tense and strained. “This doesn’t concern you.”

“It’s about father. It *does*”

Can you hear me rolling my eyes yet?

“Maeve, I’ve told you not to trouble your mind with this. It’s *my* place to handle it.”

“And what’s mine?” I would not shout at him. I would not give him the chance to claim I had no more control over my temper than a cranky child. “To sit and sew?”

“That,” he said lightly, “and to go on as you’ve been with our visitors, my spark. ... Keep the peace for me.”

Yeah, it’s like you’re a princess or something.

And did I already mention she was selfish?

“What are *you* doing here?” I demanded. He didn’t deserve such a hostile reaction, but his

unexpected presence had spoiled my plans to enjoy solitude. I wasn't thinking about fairness, only: *This is my place, my special hideaway, mine! He has no right to come here uninvited, with or without those nasty beasts.*

Oh, what a prize, that Maeve.

"Father, I tell you, it was an *accident*. I didn't—"

I pleaded my case, insisting that the wild chariot ride was nothing I'd planned, not mischief but mischance. I begged Fechin to defend me...

Or you could own up to making the mistake of stupidly playing around in another king's chariot even though you know nothing about horses...? It's the Iron Age, not Disneyland!

It's like Friesner *wanted* to make Maeve good and likable and kept trying to make her out to be those things when she obviously was not.

For example, the blatant hypocrisy of these two statements is so awful it's almost wonderful:

"You know she's carrying twins again, and that can mean difficulties, especially for a woman of her age. ... [T]hey're punier than other infants, sometimes too small to live."

I shivered to hear the midwife pronounce that dark hint of unthinkable possibilities. "Please don't say such things," I told her. "It sounds too much like ill-wishing." Cera glared at me for that.

Mother took my hands. "Dear Maeve, Cera...didn't soothe me with falsehoods but gave me the hard truth, so I'd be prepared."

"*Some* people value honesty," the midwife snapped.

"I'm sorry I offended you, Cera," I said. "I do appreciate the truth."

She cocked one eyebrow at me. "If you say so, Princess."

What does she mean by that? I wondered.

Maybe that you're an idiot, Maeve?

"Lady Clothru will only stay with us until after Samhain's past and she's complied with the High King's wishes."

"His...wishes?"

"That she fulfill his role at the rites."

"But he promised that honor to me!"

Jolted, I cried out too loudly. I lowered my voice...and repeated, "He promised it to me. I

earned it. ... There must be some mistake.”

Lady Ide cradled my face in her cool hands the way Mother sometimes did. “I’m sorry, dearest Maeve...I was sure you already knew he’d changed his mind about your part in the rites.”

“Why would he bother to tell me? He gives and he takes away, with cause or on a whim. Nothing’s changed since the day he let me think he’d give me Dubh but never did.”

“Maeve, you mustn’t be upset—”

“I’m not,” I said, and was surprised to realize this was true. I was strangely calm after learning how father had taken back the honor he’d given to me.

Sure you’re not. It’s not like you just made a *scene over it* or anything.

Maeve also believes in the “Fair Folk” and the sacredness of the guest-host relationship, but not, apparently, in the power of the druids. But the worst of her hypocrisies is that, from the beginning of the novel, Maeve longs for freedom, say she’s not a prize to be won, and loathes the very idea of suitors, much less the actual attention they pay her.

“Do you hate learning your future duties so much?” [Mother] demanded. “Or do you simply have no respect me?”

I wanted to tell her what was wrong. I wanted to say, “Men are looking at me all the time. Men are talking to me, And I don’t like it.” But I couldn’t. When I put my feelings into words while alone, they sounded stupid. [p. 20]

~~Yeah, they do sound stupid.~~ And then, suddenly:

And somehow, in the middle of so much joy, I vanished. ... [I] braced myself for renewed assaults of courtship. These never happened. ... It was a *kind* of freedom, becoming unimportant,—the wrong kind. [pp. 262-4]

Good God, girl, make up your mind. What do you want?!

Maybe worst of all, she rings false as a girl from her time and place. She’s afraid of foxes and even of some dogs. She almost faints because of a nasty smell. *She lives in the freaking Iron Age* and we’re expected to believe she’s a potential warrior, but also this much of a wilting flower? Please. Spare me.

There were other issues, too. The (stock) characters were almost caricatures; the Strong Warrior/Weak Man King, the Catty, No-Nonsense Queen (who could have been the most interesting character of the book *if she’d actually been in it at all*), the Evil Druid and his Meek Love Interest son...just spare me. (The Evil Druid character particularly bothered me—his weirdly sexual behavior towards Maeve aside—because he wasn’t anything *but* ambitious and evil. Hasn’t anyone ever told Ms. Friesner that characters that are purely evil with no other personality traits are as boring as watching paint dry?)

All this could’ve been redeemed if there had been any semblance of an interesting plot, but there wasn’t. Everything was very episodic—one thing or interaction happened, then ended; then another conflict began and was quickly resolved. As I said, Stuff Happened to Maeve, and that’s really the only “plot” to be found

in this story.

Another note to authors: every event doesn't need to center around or be caused or dramatically affected by the protagonist to make an interesting story. If stuff wasn't happening to Maeve, very little stuff was happening at all, except for the "the probably-forty-year-old-queen-is-pregnant-again" subplot.

Insta-love is pretty much the only YA sin this book doesn't commit, at least not outright, but even the love story is forced, contrived, and ends abruptly. (view spoiler)

The prose itself wasn't *terrible* (or particularly difficult, since this is a book for young teens), so that was a blessing. I didn't really care for Ms. Friesner's writing style (italicize *everything!*), but if the bones of her story had been decent, that could have been easily overlooked.

I'll grant that Ms. Friesner probably did quite a bit of research for this book. There isn't a lot of information on Ireland at this time—the Romans called it "Hibernia," the Land of Winter, and generally didn't give a shit about it—though there's enough solid archeology on which to build a world for a YA historical novel. That said, I wasn't particularly impressed by the "world-building" here. I never had a good sense of place or even of time. There were aspects of Maeve's life and culture, such as the very concept of foster families, that were very poorly explained, and Maeve would throw out plenty of place-names, but there was shamefully little description of Connacht or the hill-fort she lived in, especially considering how often and how far she supposedly wandered. Ireland is a gorgeous country and first-century Ireland, especially, should provide an author opportunity for lush descriptions—where were the rolling green hills, the silvery mist, the thick, shadowy (or sun-dappled) forests, the mysterious stone circles? All we got was some half-hearted descriptions of fairy mounds.

Well, and this:

Bog land and forest, streams and ponds, deer paths and grazing fields for cattle, all of these became my realm.

What an unbelievable way to waste a potentially stunning setting.

A much better example of historical fiction from this (approximate) era, though it's set in Iron Age Britain and not Ireland, is *Child of the Northern Spring*. There, the entire world, geographically and culturally, really comes alive. In fact, that whole book is similar (but far superior) to this one in a number of ways. Its narrator is also a much more believable and likable character, for what it's worth.

This book also interpreted gender roles, um...interestingly. I'm not denying that there was probably some sexism in Iron Age society, but at the same time, when you've got a pantheon full of ferocious goddesses and you're all struggling together to survive—and women, in at least some cases, can rule in their own right—I find the *blatant*, in-your-face sexism as presented in this book a little unbelievable.

If anything, Maeve herself is the sexist one.

"That's a *sensible* reason for me to spend the day with a mob of...giggling girls."

She's constantly scorning the gossiping, chatty foster-girls who live with her family, as if she's somehow better than them because she does not fit as neatly as they do into traditional feminine roles—when in reality, at least they've got companions, sweethearts, and aren't always being contrary, selfish, or utterly miserable.

Oh, and one last thing: I mentioned *Brave* earlier. A lot of other reviews have said, “Oh my God, that cover art is exactly like *Brave*!”

Well, other than being reckless and scorning the idea of marriage (and the very concept of being a princess), Maeve is nothing like Merida, as I also already said, and *Brave* is set in Scotland rather than Ireland ~~contrary to popular belief~~, but there are some obvious parallels in the story overall, particularly towards the end—when you read it, you can’t avoid thinking, “What a rip-off”—that annoyed me quite a bit.

At least Merida never had a half-baked, uninteresting love interest to bog her story down.

As a whole, this book was just a wash. I certainly won’t be checking out the sequel—or the rest of the Princesses of Myth series, for that matter.

P.S.: I never really understood what the “deception” the title referred to was. Maybe I’m just dumb.

Becki says

Wow. That's an uncannily close resemblance to Merida from *Brave*. Especially since that was animated.

Savannah says

I loved this book. Of course, I love all of the Princess of Myth series but that's beside the point. The best part of this book was that it was set in Ireland and since I am 75% Irish, it was perfect for me. Action, adventure, princesses and a beautiful country with an interesting religion and culture. What more could you ask for?

Josie says

Wow! I completely devoured this novel in one sitting! What a story! Talk about a story that really has it all! Esther Friesner does it again and captivates audiences with *Deception's Princess*!

If you're looking of an excellent period piece with a headstrong, determined, sharp-tongued, strong-willed, intelligent and quick-witted heroine, than this is the book for you! Maeve is all that and more!

If you're a lover of Irish Mythology or event if you're not, Friesner will quench your thirst for rich world building and excellent character building. I will warn that you might start to actually believe that you are living in the bustling Irish castle or running in the tall grasses of the pasture or even find yourself within the walls of a smelly cabin. This transportation into Friesner's world is so gloriously vivid that you will want to visit again and again!

Deception's Princess follows Maeve which is based on Queen Maeve (Medb) of Connacht who has many legends about her character but as portrayed in the novel, who can really know what is truth and what is exaggeration. Maeve however, is very true to herself and continually shows her intelligence and strong-will throughout the novel. She knows how to read people and how to play people but also isn't into playing games and in that vein remains true to her virtues and make (if but few) lifelong friendships.

This was an excellent coming of age/legend/historical story that really depicted the woman we all strive to be; determined, virtuous, intelligent, beautiful, funny, etc. Who can't help but love her!

Alyssa says

Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog

Deception's Princess by Esther Friesner
Book One of the Deception's Princess series
Publisher: Random House Books for Young Readers
Publication Date: April 22, 2014
Rating: 2 stars
Source: Public library

Summary (from Goodreads):

Some lies lead to true adventure. . . .

Maeve, princess of Connacht, was born with her fists clenched. And it's her spirit and courage that make Maeve her father's favorite daughter. But once he becomes the High King, powerful men begin to circle--it's easy to love the girl who brings her husband a kingdom.

Yet Maeve is more than a prize to be won, and she's determined to win the right to decide her own fate. In the court's deadly game of intrigue, she uses her wits to keep her father's friends and enemies close--but not too close. When she strikes up an unlikely friendship with the son of a visiting druid, Maeve faces a brutal decision between her loyalty to her family and to her own heart.

What I Liked:

First thing's first: I have not seen Brave. So if I'm supposed to expect Brave to be like this book or this book to be like Brave... well, I wouldn't know. I'm not entirely interested in seeing Brave. I did see Frozen though, and liked it. Anyway.

In this novel, Maeve must discover herself and worth, as she is not just a youngest daughter, the apple of the High King's eye, the heir of sorts. She doesn't just want to be won, or bought, or claimed. She wants to discover her own destiny, on her own terms. But she finds that even her beloved father doesn't hold her opinions in as high a regard as she thought...

I think I liked this book, but probably not enough to want to read the next book. The story/plotline wasn't that interesting, in my opinion, so it took some effort for me to finish this book. There was the plot involving Maeve finding herself, Maeve's relationship with Odran, Maeve's future... I honestly didn't care much.

I liked the creation and crafting of Maeve's character - I could see her growth from a naive child to a strong young lady. I also think she could have had some more backbone, but I suppose because it's "historical-fiction"-ish, she needed to be in character with the times.

I kept reading this book, because I wanted to know what would happen, with Maeve's mother, the romance, the druids... but honestly, I didn't really care that much. Read on!

What I Did Not Like:

Meh. That's the general feeling I got from this one. I heard a lot of people were excited about this one because it's like the movie Brave, or something like that, but I could care less. Still, it's fantasy, so I was like, why not give it a shot?

I didn't really care about Maeve. I didn't care about her trying to hold her father's approval, so live for her kingdom, to help her parents, blah blah blah. She wants to follow her heart, but she doesn't. We get it. I was a little sick of her fickle nature, honestly.

The romance was sooooo poor. I thought Odran was a bit of a wimp, and who likes wimpy guys? Not me, anyway. I'm definitely an alpha-male-loving female... but I don't mind your average Joe. But wimps? Nahhh. No, thank you. I'm not saying Odran needed to be a warrior, or a brooding druid, or mysterious, or whatever. But... he gave off an almost feminine touch, which didn't appeal to me.

Anyway. The romance. Ew. It was there but it wasn't. You can just TELL from the beginning that Odran and Maeve won't have a happy ending... and I won't spoil anything specific, but let's just say that the romance doesn't end nicely in a neat package. I didn't like the romance, anyway.

I didn't care for the plot involving the animals - in which Odran and Maeve took care of wild animals. Cool, bonding time, but it was so boring. The plot with Maeve's mother, and her condition - boring. I don't care. Honestly, I think parents that have kids at an old age, especially when they have grown twenty-something-year-old children, are selfish and stupid. Especially in this implied time period! Talk about difficult labor.

Maeve is such a daddy's girl... and she never sees that her father treats her like property, just like each of her siblings were treated. I'm sorry, but the entire book deals with this disgusting attitude, and I wasn't having it. I GET IT - in "historical times", sexism was totally a thing. But I didn't like Friesner's portrayal of it. Whether it occurred like that or not, meh.

Would I Recommend It:

Nahhhh, keep leaving your life and read something else. I don't think this author's books are for me.

Rating:

2 stars. It was a good attempt! And hey, it's a library book - I'm supporting my public library system, yo!