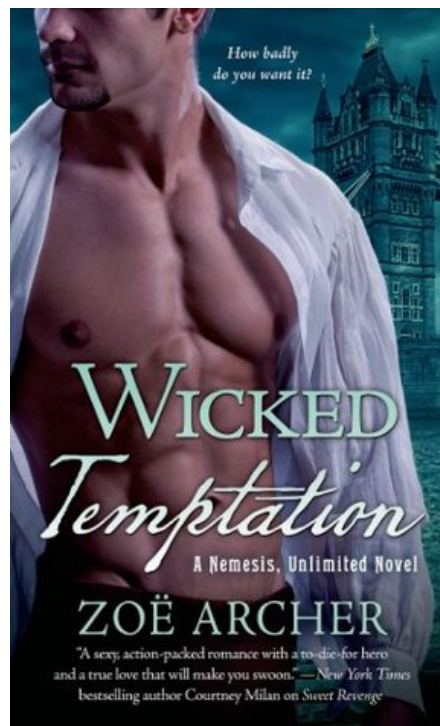




# Wicked Temptation

*Zoe Archer*

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## **Wicked Temptation** Zoe Archer

*Award-winning author Zoë Archer returns with another novel of breathtaking suspense as Nemesis, Unlimited schemes to avenge injustice--and conquer a woman's heart--in Wicked Temptation.*

### **FATE BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER.**

Newly widowed, Bronwyn Parrish's fortune has been spent settling her late husband's debts—thanks to an unscrupulous business manager—and now there's nothing left. Society has no place for a woman without means, and with nowhere to turn, Bronwyn is lost...until, from out of nowhere, a handsome gentleman steps in and makes her an offer she can't refuse.

### **WILL DESIRE TEAR THEM APART?**

Secrets and subterfuge are in Marco Black's blood. As one of Nemesis, Unlimited's most senior agents, Society women aren't his usual cup of tea. But Marco's sixth sense tells him that there's more to Bronwyn than meets the eye...and he wants to help the brazen beauty retrieve her lost fortune. But is his attraction to her worth the risk? His mission will lead him all the way to Les Grillons, France's most ruthless crime syndicate. Soon, Marco and Bronwyn will find themselves facing a danger that could cost them their lives—and a passion that is priceless.

**"Zoë Archer's books are not to be missed!"**

**—USA Today bestselling author Alexandra Hawkins**

## **Wicked Temptation Details**

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ISBN : 9781250015617

Author : Zoe Archer

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## From Reader Review Wicked Temptation for online ebook

### **Britt Marczak says**

Zoe Archer is seriously my favorite comfort read. She's an auto-buy author for me because I know, no matter what, I'm going to be absolutely satisfied when I finish one of her books. Every time I have a favorite character and think it's impossible to like another book any more than the last, I'm thankfully proven wrong.

I've been looking forward to Marco's story for a while, and I absolutely *loved* it.

The best part about Wicked Temptation? No, it's not the mysterious, sexy spy hero or the exciting adventures, or even the really hot sex scenes. (Yes, hot sex scenes in a historical!) It was Bronwyn, the heroine.

One of the things I can always count on in a Zoe Archer book is a strong heroine. Every single heroine is strong, in different ways, and it's just so damn beautiful. I love it. Before I read Zoe Archer, I was always very unimpressed with historical romances, because more often than not, the women were portrayed negatively, with weak, subservient personalities. I could never root for her, or connect with her in any way. But Bronwyn is none of this. By all rights, she could have been. Widowed, and surrounded by privilege, any other historical romance would have made her weepy and weak. But no. She's got a spine of steel, takes everything in stride, and is just so damn powerful in her bravery.

I just...I can gush for hours about how awesome Zoe Archer treats her characters. If you like your historical romance with the confidence of feminism, look no where else.

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### **Marta Cox says**

Zoe Archer is a name I've seen cropping up quite a lot recently and I was quite keen to see just what all the fuss is about and as I was in the mood for an historical romance I thought this book would fit the bill nicely. Ms Archer is an award winning author who seems to straddle numerous genres with ease so it was with great expectation that I settled in to read this book which is part of her Nemesis Unlimited series. Nemesis is a secret organisation run by men and women determined to right wrongs and fighting for justice. It doesn't matter who you are if you need help then these dedicated men and women will move heaven and earth to be there for you. Bronwyn is recently widowed but can't quite understand just what's happened to the money she and her late husband had. Now Bronwyn may have led a sheltered and privileged life but she realises that something just doesn't add up. Left destitute she prepares to leave her home one last time but a strange man appears who informs her that he and those he works with have heard of her plight and just might have a solution. Bronwyn reluctantly agrees to listen to the enigmatic Marco but what she hears changes her life. Marco has a knack for espionage and has learned to use his skills to his advantage but he abhors injustice and so secretly works to help those who have been oppressed. When Bronwyn's plight is brought to his attention he's pretty sure that the man her late husband entrusted their fortune with has embezzled it but proof is needed. Bronwyn is the only one who can identify the thief and so the hunt is on but there's just something about the young widow that appeals to Marco. Bronwyn has steel in her backbone and music in her heart but Marco has no time for romance or does he?

I really enjoyed this and found it quite unexpected. It's a very entertaining story that takes the heroine Bronwyn on quite a journey both in terms of travel but most importantly on a voyage of self discovery! She lives in a time when appearances and rules are everything but polite society isn't always kind. Marco sees a wildness in her that has been hidden and as they spend more and more time in each other's company

Bronwyn is like a butterfly leaving her chrysalis behind. This was fast paced and filled with suspense and romance. A passionate awakening that just felt right and a couple you just want to cheer for. Loved the historical details and I personally hated the way women were perceived as little more than chattels but the author has done an excellent job of bringing those outdated views into her storyline. An intelligent heroine paired with a hero filled with depths, fabulous!

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### **Keri says**

A strong entry in the series, but still loved Simon's story more. Looking forward to the next in the series.

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### **EFE says**

Did not finish. Only got a couple of chapters in and the characters didn't grab me and nor did the mystery. The setting was very ambivalent, I got a vague sense of 'olden times' but couldn't identify whether I was in Georgian, Regency, Victorian or Edwardian and that frustrated me. Just wasn't grabbed and I had too many other things I could have been reading.

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### **Marlene says**

This joint review was originally published at The Book Pushers

E: I really enjoy Archer's writing and have reviewed a few of her other works on the blog to include Winter's Heat and Dangerous Seduction 1.5 and 2 in the Nemesis Unlimited series respectfully. So, when the opportunity came up to get a copy of the third installment I was very excited. I was even more excited when it broke the string of mehish reads I had experienced at the time.

Marlene: I'm with you. I truly enjoy Archer's writing, and the opportunity to review Wicked Temptation finally pushed me to read and review Sweet Revenge , Winter's Heat and today's review of Dangerous Seduction at Reading Reality. I love her science fiction romance and steampunk too!

E: Whenever I read something by Archer, I expect an unusual pairing. In this particular case she took the man who detested the idle wealthy and matched him with one of those formerly idle wealthy now an impoverished widow. He justified the mission as an attempt to both find justice and to gain a wealthy benefactor for Nemesis' efforts. She was just grateful and puzzled that someone not only believed something wasn't quite right but was intending to fix the problem. Watching Bronwyn and Marco lose class established blinders as the story progressed was a lot of fun. Not only did they have assumptions about life on the other side but they also had assumptions about each other individually. Marco had a much greater obvious chip on his shoulder but Bronwyn was extremely sheltered and rather untrusting given the sudden reversal of her situation.

Marlene: One of the things I like best about Archer is her always unconventional but equally matched heroes and heroines. Bronwyn has led a conventional life until the story begins, and Marco has been both a spy and a Nemesis agent. Neither of Marco's occupations should have gotten him in the front door of Bronwyn's existence, until her life turns upside down. Marco even feels a kind of reverse snobbery for those who live at

the so-called upper echelons of society, and doesn't think that a society widow is worthy of Nemesis' help. His continued astonishment that Bronwyn is not only worth helping, but also capable of helping him, changes his perspective. And his life.

Watching Bronwyn's metamorphosis from sheltered society wife to potential Nemesis agent gives this story a lot of zing.

E: That change was really refreshing to see. I loved how Nemesis had to prove they were legitimate, actually cared about her situation, and had a history of helping those who couldn't pay. I think the fact Nemesis did expect something from her after the success of her case helped their efforts. I also found it touching that her referral to Nemesis came by way of a servant not through omniscient. It was also really telling to discover even though that servant trusted Bronwyn enough to mention her situation to Nemesis, she didn't trust her with personal potentially job ending information.

Just as Nemesis had to prove to Bronwyn they were trustworthy, Bronwyn had to prove to Marcos she could be more than a sheltered society wife. What really struck me about this was how she didn't set out to prove him wrong, she just was and by being, proved him wrong. It was as if once she was set free from society's contritions and given a goal everything she could be came out. The character development is one of the many reasons I enjoy Archer's writing.

Marlene: Except for Winter's Heat, all of the stories in this series so far revolve around a couple who are at opposite ends of the social spectrum; a teacher and an escaped convict, a bal-maiden and a lord, and here where we have a society widow and a spy. These are people who should never have crossed paths, but do because of Nemesis' need to right society's wrongs, one injustice at a time. Each of the stories features people who are unable to accept what society and their position have decreed for them, and it is just as true for the ones at the top of the scale as it is for those at the bottom.

Marco's reasons for both his spying and his starting Nemesis both stem from his need to fight injustice, and for his desire to "stick it to the man" as we would say now, for the way that society has treated him and his family.

It takes him a long time to figure out that any woman, no matter supposedly how high, can be immediately turned into a victim without much ability to fight back. Eventually, his figures out that all of his assumptions are wrong, but it happens because Bronwyn begins fighting back against her role almost immediately.

My favorite line in the book is when Bronwyn says, in response to Marco proclaiming that he is no knight, "I know. And I also know that I don't want to be rescued. What I truly need are lessons in holding the lance, so that any time another dragon crosses my path, I can slay it on my own."

That's pretty awesome.

E: Such a wonderful line!!! Marcos's chip was a very impressive one. Watching it slowly dissolve as he and Bronwyn trekked through England and various parts of Europe moving from one situation to another was a lot of fun. His change didn't come easily or smoothly. On more than one occasion I wanted to shake Marcos when he made some disparaging comment towards Bronwyn and her place in society but seeing him start to regret his statements relatively quickly and learn that he had to depend on her to succeed made it all worth it.

Marlene: Wicked Temptation is another story where Archer constantly ratchets up the tension, bit by bit, until you can't hold your breath another minute. Marco takes Bronwyn on a transcontinental manhunt, in order to find the person who stole her fortune, only to see the man shot by a ruthless French gang the minute they track him down. Then the hunters become the hunted, as the gang goes after them.

The pace never lets up, as Marco and Bronwyn try to outrun the thugs while tracking down the information needed to bring down the gang AND return Bronwyn's fortune. Getting some money into Nemesis' coffers would be icing on the cake.

E: Archer included a few more twists to Marcos and Bronwyn's path towards restitution and happiness than I expected. I knew they would be in danger and things wouldn't be quite as obvious as one would expect but I wasn't mentally prepared for ALL the tension. I loved the glimpses of the seedy underbelly to society, old contacts, hidden knowledge, and the danger of mistrust. The variety of clues, leads, and setbacks really kept me just as enthralled with the suspense as I was focused on the central relationship. The balance between those two elements meant I was never pulled out of the world but stayed fully immersed.

Marlene: One other common thread among all the stories in this series is that even though the hero and heroine fall in love, they both believe that a long-term relationship is not possible. Marco doesn't believe he is capable of love, and that it is impossible for a spy to put anyone through the torment of never knowing when, or if, he will return from a mission. And all the Nemesis agents believe that working with Nemesis means that they can't trust anyone else to keep their secrets, and that the work is too important to give up. So the heat of the sexual tempest is always tempered by the sadness that it can't last. Until it does.

E: I will admit I get a good laugh out of all the "no relationship" people gradually succumbing but not with just anyone. I think Nemesis as an organization has grown stronger as this series progresses and new skills are adopted as the membership expands. It is always good to catch a glimpse of prior couples as they continue their work supporting Nemesis. Those encounters provided both faith and some levity because they could see the growing relationship with each original agent and their temporary partner. After writing this review and seeing everything Marlene enjoyed as well I really want to do an Archer reread glom! I can't wait to see what Archer comes up with for her next case and relationship.

I give Wicked Temptation an A.

Marlene: I sincerely hope that you will be tempted by Wicked Temptation, and the entire Nemesis, Unlimited series. The combination that Archer has created of slightly nefarious justice seekers who find love with partners that they can count on mixes action and adventure with passion.

I give Wicked Temptation an A-, only because Alyce is still my superheroine.

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## **Linda says**

As reviewed on Read Our Lips:

When Bronwyn's husband's death left her without anything, she was forced to sell everything. The only thing she managed to keep was her beloved violin. About to seek employment as a companion, a former maid comes to aid - with the help of Nemesis, Unlimited.

Marco isn't keen on helping a titled lady, but he's downvoted when Nemesis decides to help her. He's reluctant, but the curious widow grows on him while they travel through France and Italy in search of her fortune. Will they succeed, and will Marco give in to all the feelings?

Historical romance, action, suspense and smutty fluff in a great combo. Love this series!

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## Beth says

Nemesis is an organization created to help the helpless. In *Wicked Temptation*, one of the founders of Nemesis, Marco Black is a reluctant savior to the newly widowed Bronwyn Parrish. Claims of debt have been made against the Parrish name has left Bronwyn homeless and penniless. As a woman without a man, Bronwyn has no recourse to prove these debts false. Marco vows to assist Bronwyn in reclaiming her stolen money and bring those who prey on the weak/vulnerable to justice.

Marco doesn't want to want a socialite but Bronwyn's tenacity and perseverance is just one of the many attributes that draw Marco in.

Passions fly in this wickedly delightful historical romance. This sensually enticing plot is infused with intrigue, mystery and action. *Wicked Temptation* is a highly entertaining and very enjoyable read.

I received this ARC copy of *Wicked Temptation* from St. Martin's Press in exchange for a honest review. This book is set for publication June 3, 2014.

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## Phoenix77 says

The books of the *Nemesis Unlimited* series just keep getting better and I'm so sorry that this is the last one. But gosh, do things finish on a high note! I took this book with me on vacation and I found myself wanting to stay in the hotel room to finish scenes rather than put the story on hold.

As with the other books in the series, the plot unfolds like the script of a television show with this week's "case" being the widow who was unfairly duped out of her inheritance by an unscrupulous financial advisor. Being that the widow in question is a noblewoman, this isn't normally a case the agents of Nemesis would bother with and founding member Marco Black is dead set against wasting their time or resources in getting her money back. However the principles of the organization convince Marco that anyone in need of their help should receive it, so he takes on the problems of Bronwyn Parrish not expecting her simple case will lead to revelations that run much farther recouping one woman's loss.

One of the best parts of this entire series has been the introduction of truly strong and passionate heroines who are matched with men who compliment them rather than complete them. Upon her first introduction the reader would wonder why Bronwyn would be included in this same group of women; however the gripping part of the story is watching just how powerful she truly is once given the chance to express herself. Her

previous life in her marriage was full of duty, social obligations and a warm companionship with her husband that never forced her to think outside of her station. On losing everything at her husband's death, Bronwyn is confronted with the cruel reality that all of those things can be quickly stripped from a person and all they are left with are their own hopes, dreams and choices. Joining Marco on the quest to track down her missing inheritance shows her another side of life in London and gives her so much more to consider about her future. I loved watching Bronwyn take in every new experience and see how much more life she has to live away from just being a noblewoman.

Despite Marco's objections to taking on Bronwyn's case he is always moving forward to solve the problem and restore her money by any means necessary. He is so dedicated to righting the wrongs of the world that it has become his only mission in life to the expense of living his own. In watching everything unfold through Bronwyn's eyes and watching how she reacts to things outside of her normal world Marco is slowly able to let down so many of the guards he has put in place in order to survive. He begins to feel again while doing his job and this leads to revelations about just where his own future was headed in his normal work and his experiences with Nemesis. There are so many great moments of introspection for Marco and we really feel the connection that he forms with Bronwyn besides just their passions.

I love this series most of all for introducing characters that have to live in the "real world" and not the rich and privileged side of Historical Romance. There is nary a ballroom or house party in sight for Marco and Bronwyn and their courtship. Instead we get a chase across France and Italy, life and death choices, people living on the fringe of society and true consequences for every action taken. There is grittiness to the story from page one that doesn't go away even when things are looking good for our characters. As a reader there is the idea that so many more stories could be told about Nemesis working its brand of justice behind all the glamour we normally see in this genre.

\*\*Thank you to the publisher for providing a copy of this book through NetGalley.

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## Jennifer says

"Wicked Temptation" is book 3 in the Nemesis Unlimited series and Marco's story. Throughout the previous books Marco has been this elusive character, a master of subterfuge. And now he wants to help Bronwyn Parrish to hopefully retrieve her lost fortune. Bronwyn, newly widowed, has lost her fortune through an unscrupulous business manager and now she's being put out of her house and is being forced into an unknown future.

And before she has the chance to experience life without a protector, Marco enters the picture. And of course attraction and temptations fly between the two. I liked that there's a point to say Nemesis Unlimited generally only helps the under-privileged and unrepresented. But when Bronwyn's case comes up Marco at first does not want to help her retrieve her fortune back. After all, there are hundreds of people who could benefit from his help. But when he realizes if he doesn't help her, she'll be in the poorhouse (well as close to that as possible for a woman of her station) he agrees to help. When he meets her, he judges her as being a superficial unknowable woman of her class and station rather than someone who could care and actually be a decent human being.

There's a lot of tension between the two characters because Marco makes it a point to say that if they do become lovers he'll leave after a while. He's a transient, he flits in and out of beds and lives. And for the moment, he's ok with that. But only when he spends time and goes on an adventure with Bronwyn does he rethink that.

Maybe I've hit my reading slump, but there was something I just couldn't connect with. The Marco in this story didn't seem like the Marco in previous books. And even Alyce's characterization didn't seem to be similar in her previous work. I really liked the previous book "Dangerous Seduction" - there was almost something sad about it. But for some reason I thought the actions of the characters kind of came out of nowhere. I'm going to blame myself and say I just didn't jive with this book as I have with her previous books. It's a shame because I've enjoyed the previous books a lot. Oh well.

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### **Lisa Jo says**

This is a difficult review to write. Zoe Archer has such a beautiful way with words and I always find so much to enjoy while reading her writing. I loved the adventure and excitement of the chase, but I had trouble with the hero. He was so cold...just so cold, I couldn't get past it. Marco Black was not a man to be crossed, nor was he a man with many emotions. I was baffled how the heroine was falling in love with him at certain points.

I loved Bronwyn Parrish. She was a spectacular heroine. She's thrown into a mess, doesn't despair but runs off into this cat and mouse game because she literally has nothing to lose. She was quick on her feet and very much a fighter. She was unique, and fresh and just delightful. You were rooting for her to find her HEA.

I felt Bronwyn really gave in to their mutual attraction way too easily. As I said before, this is really difficult review for me to write because I didn't understand all the things that encouraged her attraction in the first place. I didn't warn up to the hero until 3/4 of the way through the book. And his 360 into an emotional, conflicted human being happened way too quickly. I just couldn't believe it.

But overall, I enjoyed it. Mainly because Archer takes you on such a fun adventure filled with danger and passion. I'm certainly going to miss Nemesis, Unlimited! It was a really great series!

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### **Amy Webster-Bo says**

loved this one good characters, on your toes book

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### **Thorn says**

- a) This is very boring.
  - b) There was one bit where I had to seriously wonder about the heroine's capacity for logical thought.
  - c) A lot of the "thriller" part of the plot made no sense.
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### **Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says**

Ms. Archer has written another lushly sensual historical romance that entertained me, but also made me think. It was more suspense than action-oriented outside of the romance, but readers who like espionage

fiction will probably enjoy that. I liked the depth she gives her characters with quirks like Marco cursing beautifully in Italian and teaching Bronwyn rude Italian hand gestures, as well as Bronwyn's incredible violin-playing skill. It's worth a read.

Reviewed for Affaire de Coeur Magazine in the June 2014 issue. <http://affairedecoeur.com>.

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## Caz says

Review to follow - at some point.

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## Jennifer says

### 4 Stars

Every once in awhile I find myself in need of an action-packed story and Zoe Archer's *Wicked Temptation* definitely fit the bill. The characters were well-developed, the romance was both steamy and sweet, and the suspense plot just helped tie everything together into an enjoyable story.

It is the third and final book in her Nemesis Unlimited series which tells the stories of a group of people who work together to help people in dire situations. Usually Nemesis focuses on the lower classes, but this time they are asked to assist an aristocratic widow whose money has been taken by a corrupt financial adviser. Marco Black is one of the heads of the organization and isn't very happy to be dealing with a member of the aristocracy, but, after meeting and learning more about Bronwyn Parrish, he discovers that there is much more to her.

I really liked both main characters and enjoyed their journey together. They each have impressions of the other which are changed as they travel through France then to Italy and back to France again. Marco believes Bronwyn to be a weak-willed widow who only thinks of herself while Bronwyn views Marco as a brash, violent man. They are forced to spend a lot of time together and quickly learn there is much more to each other. I particularly enjoyed the slow reveal of Bronwyn's strength and ingenuity in times of crisis.

It is always fun when characters try so hard not to fall for one another, but just can't resist the tension. That is definitely the case with these two and I enjoyed every minute of it. The mission element helped them move towards a goal and also provided them with a tenuous ending for what they thought would be an informal affair. Zoe Archer does a wonderful job showing the changes in their relationship and also made sure they reacted to situations in a mature and realistic fashion. No big misunderstandings here!

I have enjoyed the Nemesis Unlimited series and I am sad to see it end. I love the idea of a group of people from different backgrounds working together to help those in need. If you enjoy thrilling action, witty conversations, and well-developed romance, I highly recommend this series and any of Zoe Archer's other books.

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