

DELIA LATHAM



*Solomon's  
Gate*



*Book Three*

GYPSY'S  
GAME

# GYPSY'S GAME

Delia Latham

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## **GYPSY'S GAME**

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## Dedication

To the company of angels who have charge over me, to keep me in all my ways. I pray I don't make their job too difficult.

## Praise for Gypsy's Game

"Delia Latham has done it again! This author has quite a gift for creating a story. Gypsy's Game is well written and hard to lay down. The warm and witty characters will capture you from the very first page. I sincerely recommend this intriguing story - the third in the author's Solomon's Gate Series. You won't be disappointed. I truly enjoyed Gypsy's Game."

~ Jeanie Smith Cash, Author of  
*Christmas Belles of Georgia*

"A tender story that shows how God sometimes uses the oddest situations to work out His will in the lives of His own. I loved watching the relationship develop between Gypsy and Jal as they grew closer to each other and to the Lord as well. A delightful read."

~ Sally Laity, *Remnant Of Forgiveness*,  
Co-author of *Rose's Pledge*, Jan 2012

5 Stars from Readers Favorite! "The books in this series...are all excellent, but I think Gypsy's Game is my favorite."

~ Lynn Fowlston for Readers Favorite

**Other Books by Delia Latham**

Yesterday's Promise

*Solomon's Gate Series*

Destiny's Dream

Kylie's Kiss 1

# 1

*...I will seek him whom my soul loveth.*—Song of Solomon 3:2  
Gypsy Lovell eyed the framed print hanging across the room. Daintily drawn letters spelled out what she assumed was part of a scripture. No scholar of holy things, she had still managed to absorb a few basic Bible facts in her twenty-nine-plus years, and after her move to Castle Creek, she'd met more religious people than she'd seen in her entire life.

Besides, it made perfect sense that the quote would be a scripture. She was sitting in the bright, airy visitor's lounge of Solomon's Gate, a Christian dating agency that had taken the conservative town by surprise—and by storm—some months ago. Sharing the bold red-and-white striped sofa with her was the agency's gorgeous, auburn-haired owner, Destiny Gallagher, whose round tummy barely made an impression under her oh-so-chic maternity top.

For the past twenty minutes or so, Destiny had bombarded Gypsy with brochures and flyers and heartwarming testimonials, all touting the success rate of this fledgling business.

Gypsy already knew most of it. She'd done her homework. The fact that Solomon's Gate was a Christian-based company had been part of what drew her here. Though she had never attended a church service, she'd sought this place precisely because she knew most of the clients were religious. That made marrying a stranger, even temporarily, feel a little safer. Men who wore Christianity out in the open like some kind of badge had to be honest to a fault...or complete wimps. Both of those traits suited her purposes just fine.

Soft laughter interrupted Gypsy's study of the cheerful surroundings. "I lost you, didn't I? I'm sorry, I still get so excited when I talk about this agency."

"I apologize." Gypsy smiled, but if it looked as fake as it felt, she wasn't fooling this bright woman. "I'm afraid I'm easily distracted."

"It's OK. Is this your first experience with a dating service?" She nodded, and a huge fist squeezed her insides. If someone had told her two weeks ago that she'd be sitting where she sat right now, she'd have threatened to turn them into a toad. Not that she had the slightest idea how to turn a person into any kind of amphibian, but she'd been born with the sultry looks to match her ridiculous name, so people tended to suspect she might.

Until now, Gypsy had no plans to ever be married. Watching her mother fade and draw into herself after being abandoned by the love of her life—Gypsy's father—freed Gypsy of any illusions about romance in general, and certainly about happily ever after.

But Destiny didn't know that.

And Gypsy wasn't going to tell her.

"Well, if your application is approved and you become an official Solomon's Gate Seeker, then we'll pray that your first experience will also be your last." The owner's open smile lit up her whole face, including the mesmerizing green eyes with their fringe of lush, dark lashes. She peeked at the application attached to a clipboard on her lap. "Speaking of prayer. I haven't asked you yet about your faith." She looked up and straight into Gypsy's soul. "You are a Christian, aren't you?" "Depends on what you call a Christian."

The other woman's smile disappeared. "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior? Do you believe that He is Lord? That He died for the sins of the world, that He rose again on the third day, and that He now lives in the hearts of those who love Him and live according to His Word?" Her otherwise smooth brow furrowed enough to place a neat little crease across her forehead. "It's not a trick question, Gypsy. Either you are a Christian, or you're not."

Gypsy shrugged. "Then I guess I'm not. Is that a problem?" "Yes, I'm afraid it is." Destiny laid aside the application she'd been studying and shook her head. "My Seekers are Christians. That's the foundation Solomon's Gate is built on. I rarely make exceptions to that rule, and then only when I feel a direct unction from the Holy Spirit."

What on earth was the woman talking about? Unction? Holy Spirit?

Gypsy stood and crossed to a window that offered a view of a huge, rolling green lawn. She had hoped not to have to explain herself in too much detail. Heaven only knew how much she needed to find what she was looking for in a hurry. She didn't have time to go traipsing off to Sacramento—the nearest large metropolis—to find an agency without all the goody-goody hang-ups.

"Let me be honest, Destiny. I'm not here to find—" Gypsy tossed a derisive glance at the scripture on the wall. "'he whom my soul loveth.' I have no use for romance, and I don't believe in love. I just need a husband for a few months."

"I—I beg your pardon?" Destiny stammered.

Her elegant hostess seemed a bit ruffled. *Oh, well.*

"Look, I'm sorry, but I don't have time to play games. I stand to inherit quite a bit of money. Money I desperately need." She

balled her fists at her side and steeled her voice. "I am entitled to that inheritance, and I intend to have it. My father owes me."

"What does that have to do with your being here?"

Gypsy crossed the room to stand in front of the other woman. "I can't claim any of this inheritance unless I'm married. And I have to stay married at least six months in order to get the entirety of it." She tried to smile, and felt her lips curl into what felt more like a bitter snarl. "My dad wasn't around while I was growing up. He left when I was four and we—my mother and I—never heard from him again. Until now, that is, and apparently this is his last laugh. Dangling his money in front of me like a carrot, then jerking it out of reach by attaching this ridiculous stipulation to the will."

Destiny stood and crossed her arms under her breasts. Her shoulders raised a bit, hunching towards her neck, and she shook her head. "I'm afraid I can't help you, Gypsy. I'm sorry."

Something in the matchmaker's somber gaze gripped Gypsy's heart. Sadness? Pity? Whatever it was, it curled her stomach into a tight little ball and stung the backs of her eyes with forbidden tears.

On to Sacramento, then.

She bent to pick up her purse and slipped the strap over her shoulder, and then met Destiny's gaze, which now brimmed with moisture. *Oh, good heavens*. Waterworks. Just what she needed.

Pretending not to notice the matchmaker's emotional reaction, Gypsy offered her hand. "I'm sorry, too. I wish we could have made it work."

To her surprise, Destiny ignored her outstretched hand and pulled her into a warm hug. "I'll pray for you, Gypsy." She stepped back and swiped at her damp cheeks with one hand. "I really w—"

"I'll do it." A deep, resonant voice interrupted, and both women spun around to face the door. "I'll marry the lady." Gypsy sucked in a startled breath. She wasn't fond of men, but she wasn't blind, either.

This guy left 'mediocre' miles behind. He lolled against the door frame as if he'd been formed for no better reason than to stand there in that position. A pair of dark, impossibly beautiful eyes narrowed as he raked her face with a piercing gaze. A lock of deep brown hair fell over his forehead, and a five o'clock shadow lent a slight rakish look, which was further defined when his precisely molded lips curved into a crooked half smile.

Gorgeous. The man was gorgeous, and he'd offered to marry her.

Maybe there was a God.

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this inspirational work of fiction.

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