



The Honey is Bitter

Violet Winspear

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"Keep your love. Did I ever ask for it?"

Paul's voice rang out. His face was a taut sculpture, chiseled out of stone-as she felt certain his heart was.

"No," Domini threw at him, "but you're not quite so inhuman as to enjoy for very long the companionship of a wife who hates you!"

She couldn't weep. Tears had set like ice in her and the sweetness of today had turned to bitterness. The rings on her hands felt heavy-like manacles, she told herself. Shackles that bound her to a man who had forced her into a loveless disaster of a marriage.

The Honey is Bitter Details

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From Reader Review The Honey is Bitter for online ebook

Jaci says

From Wikipedia: "The sentimental novel Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, by Samuel Richardson, published in 1740, is an early precursor of the modern popular love-romance. Pamela was the first popular novel to be based on a courtship as told from the perspective of the heroine. Unlike many of the novels of the time, Pamela had a happy ending. The book was one of the first bestsellers, with five editions printed in the first eleven months of release.[60]"

So, Violet Winspear follows Richardson's formula as Paul and Domini work through an amazing lack of communication to reach a happy ending. "Two people can see across mountains and oceans, Paul, if they're together and in need of each other."p.188

Not a fan of bodice rippers but it was late and the library still hasn't filled several holds I've placed. Tsk.

Dina says

I should stop rereading my teen keepers, because I'm finding out that they rarely stand the test of time. This one failed too, as the woman I am now can't stand the cruel hero and the doormat heroine anymore. It's kind of sad, like when you run into a childhood friend years later and realize you don't have anything in common with that "stranger". Oh well, at least I'm opening some room in my bookshelves for my new keepers. :)

Naksed says

At first, I thought perhaps Violet Winspear was one of the many pseudonyms used by Charlotte Lamb. The writing initially reminded me of some of Lamb's older May-December romances pitting the ethereal, willowy, dreamy woman-child against an older, sophisticated, cynical, uber-male, father-figure.

The story has that very British, quasi-colonial perspective of the world (including generalizations about unfeeling, undemonstrative, swarthy Greeks versus the creamy, pure, cool and collected Blonde Brit).

Ultimately, the flowery language got to be too cheesy for me, yes, even in the context of a Harlequin. I mean, how many times must I swoon over H's tiger like physique and smoky golden eyes. How many times does it bear repeating that h's eyes glow like sapphires or the sea. How many cheroots does this guy light up? How much more rose pink can h apply to her generous mouth?

The repetitive parallels between the story of H and h, and classic Greek myths, was laughable and similarly hammered into my head.

Finally, neither the plot nor the characterizations were satisfying.

(view spoiler)

Verdict: meh.

Rachel says

Here's what you need to know about Violet Winspear books:

- If you have read one, you've read them all, but will probably come back for more.
 - The "hero" epitomizes a misogynistic cave man bordering (and sometimes crossing the line) of being abusive.
 - The heroine thinks she is a modern woman with a spine ... she isn't. She is a simpering brainless, confidentless archetype pigeon holed into thinking that being a trophy slave to the "hero" is her only option.
 - The dub con and non con elements fulfill rape kinks.
 - Everything about the relationships these books depict is toxic and unhealthy and these are the types of books that impressionable young ladies should avoid at all costs.
 - When these first came on the market or so in the 1970's they were probably a dirty little guilty pleasure. Today you can much better dirty little guilty pleasures.
 - If you are looking for modernized bodice rippers ... these will satisfy.
-

Christine (KizzieReads) says

I know this was written in the late 60's originally, but that doesn't bother me at all. The thing that bothered me about this book was the jekyll and hyde personality of Paul towards Domini. I've read that the author liked to write her male lead characters "capable of rape" and the women subservient, and I'm sorry (not sorry), I'm not sure that a whole lot of females then or now really want their men to scare the crap out of them, as if to beat them, and then kiss them and expect passion. It wasn't as bad as some romances that I have read from the same time period or even newer romances where the male lead has been so overbearing and dominant, that it was more of promoting the jealous, protective man, but it was close.

patience says

This book was a giveaway with groceries in about 1977 or so. I read it then (about 9 years old) and even then I was bothered by the story of the 17 year old girl who is virtually forced into a marriage with a much older, wealthy man. On the bright side, it made me realize that even I could write a book that was good enough to be published by someone.

thadine says

Domini Dane agrees to marry Paul Stephanos in return for not having her cousin Douglas jailed for stealing from him. Domini was mentioned in "By Love Bewitched" and I was intrigued by her story. This book opens just after Paul and Domini's wedding (and before they have consummated their marriage). Domini is bitter at being blackmailed into marriage whilst Paul is quite frank in admitting that he intended to have her since they met no matter what the cost; the opportunity to blackmail her presented itself, so he took it. I really liked this book. Paul was generally very gentle and treated Domini with respect. He really didn't act like he just wanted her for her body though she seems convinced of that. I guess I just didn't really understand Domini. It was her own choice to marry Paul yet she can't seem to accept that and keeps wanting him to let her go. Her uncle discovered what his son had done and suspected she was being blackmailed. Paul prevents Domini from speaking to her uncle until after they have consummated their marriage, and she hates him for it. Why? How could her uncle's suspicions change anything anyway? It still wouldn't change what Douglas had done or keep him from prison. Anyway, they stay together and their relationship gradually progresses in spite of Domini's objections. At the end we have two climactic events which cause Paul and Domini to reveal their love for each other and live happily ever after. I'm never fond of these sort of "forced" endings. I'd much rather something more natural, where they act like adults and just love each other. Nevertheless, this was a very enjoyable book and I recommend it for your reading list.

Maddie says

This was my first Harlequin Romance way back when and I was immediately hooked. I love the cruel Alpha Hero, the wimpy heroine and the tension, angst and of course the HAPPY ENDING!!

Mudpie says

Not too bad! Not outright rape and justification. ..in fact the wedding night was sweet and enjoyable for Domini. Glad they had that one day of honeymoon before it all went pear-shaped. This is the prequel or Book 1 before Dragon Bay which I had read first. Kara is Paul's much younger sis and was delightful here. Her own story is Dragon Bay so I kind of had spoilers for this book but it made me want to keep reading this to get to their HEA. I read Violet Winspear's Wikipedia page and have a better appreciation of society back in the 60s to 80s when her books were written. Indeed it was a snapshot of social mores back then which was women had few rights and good girls and sex do not go together. ..this is why the heroes are usually depicted as more ahem "forceful" in order for the heroine to still be a "good lady" despite enjoying sex. ..Domini and Paul...even the secondary cast are well characterised and mostly likeable. Though all the Apollo and tiger reference for Paul gets really tired...to the point of ridiculous by the end. I was busy picking out tiger and Apollo by the end of the book haha! All in an easy 3* story.

Doris says

This was the first romance story I ever read, and it came into my possession when the local grocery put in a book rack, where this book resided, marked "FREE". I picked it up and for years afterwards read Harlequins.

In this classic tale, the poor British woman marries the arrogant, wealthy Greek magnate to protect her family from recriminations.

She falls in love with him, and the story of how she saved him is classic and powerful. Beautiful story.

IamGamz says

Location: Greece

I wasn't expecting too much of this book after reading some of the reviews, but I was pleasantly surprised.

It is a bit slow and the characters are annoying, but overall, the story was decent.

Paul forces Domini (love that name!) into marriage to save her cousin from going to jail for embezzling money from Paul's company. Their relationship is hostile from the start. Domini hates Paul although you can tell that he is very attracted to her.

They marry and after the marriage is consummated and Domini learns that her uncle may have been able to get her out of it. Paul wasn't having it. He's Greek and he keeps what is his.

They travel to Paul's home in Greece and Domini unexpectedly meets her ex boyfriend, the artist. He tries to get her to leave Paul and run off with him.

There's a lot of tedious dialogue and the book drags. Paul is cruel and Domini is distant and cold. Sex is a once in a while thing when Paul forces the issue.

They muddle along until on an outing, part of a cave falls in on them and Domini gets buried under rock. She's fine but miscarries the baby she didn't know she was carrying. She survives and shortly after Paul ends up in hospital in critical condition. It's all very dramatic!

I finished the book. It was ok. I didn't love it or the characters. Domini was weak. Paul was a bully. I did like Kara, Paul's young sister. She was a bright spot in the book.

This one is a read at your own risk.

Penney says

Loved this one

Maxine Sullivan says

The very best thing for an author is not only having someone read your books, but having someone re-read them over 30 years later has to be the ultimate compliment. In the 70s I read *The Honey is Bitter* by Violet Winspear, and the title of the book and the heroine's name, Domini, have stayed with me ever since. I

remember it as a fabulous Mills and Boon, and curious to read it again I recently bought some Violet Winspear books.

The story was originally published in hardcover in 1967 and up until 1980 it had been reprinted 29 times throughout the world. The writing style was very much of the 70s, with a lot of narrative, description and melodrama the whole way through, never letting up on that intense emotion, culminating in a dramatic black moment before the happy ending. In other words, a vintage M&B.

They say you should never go back, but I'm so very glad I did. I thoroughly enjoyed the love story of Domini and Paul a second time round.

Leona says

I first read this book back in the late 70's as a reissue. It was actually first published in 1967. At the time Violet Winspear was one of my favorite authors and I remembered liking this book.. However, as a romance it did not stand the test of time for me. I didn't particularly care for the heroine. Her "woe is me" attitude got tiring and she was superficial and narcissistic. Other than beauty, I am not sure what the hero saw in her. It certainly wasn't her winning personality. As is common in the older HP's, it was hard to get a real feel for the hero. He is portrayed as somewhat aloof and his POV is so very rare that I never got a chance to know him....I always felt like he was just slightly out of reach. Probably done intentionally by the author.

But WHAT was fascinating for me, was the historical references to Greece, to the violent civil war, to the kidnapping of children through Albania over to communist countries. That's when I went back to look at the publish date and started doing the math. Paul Stephanos fought in that civil war. Today he would be mid to late 80's. He took a grenade in the face that left him scarred. His sister references the fight that brought brother against brother and I started to recall the many stories my father told me when he fought that same civil war.

For those of you that are history buffs, you know that the unintended consequence to WWII, was the loss of over half of Eastern Europe to communism...That battle raged in Greece from 1946-1949 and had a devastating impact on the country and the people. It wasn't until the US government forced Albania to shut their borders that those fighting on the side of democracy had a chance of winning the war. The realistic historical references that the author so subtly wove into the story about Greece were spot on and very well done. You don't often find that in category romances and I wonder what compelled the author to weave such a compelling piece of history into her work. I am actually going to go back and reread this book when I can do better justice to it. I just hope I can put up with the heroine.

Noël Cades says

Glorious, vintage romance packed with melodrama, glamour and sexual tension.

Violet Winspear's "The Honey is Bitter" is a classic of its time: from an era of virginal, teenage heroines and rakish, worldly older men. Written in 1967 and published by Mills & Boon you're clearly not going to get explicit sex, but there's enough tension and "hunger" and "surrender" that it's pretty clear what's going on

when the drapes are closed.

Paul Stephanos is one of Winspear's notorious "Greeks" - she had a thing for dark, dramatic heroes seething with alpha male passion. He's constantly described as a "tiger" and "pagan" and literally paces up and down in a couple of scenes.

Domini, the 19-year-old(?) English heroine is extremely beautiful and spirited, and very self-possessed for her years. Women in that era were considered women when they reached the age of majority, not girls or "kidults". It wasn't unusual for a woman still in her teens to be married and setting up a home and having a family.

We get endless melodramatic dialogue about "Greeks" versus "English" - Greek readers or those married to Greeks will probably enjoy a chuckle - lots of beautiful descriptions and exotic scenery, endless references to Apollo and so on. It's dramatic and great fun.

That said, it's not really possible or fair to read books from this era with a modern, feminist eye and expect to be satisfied. The reality is that there's a huge power gap, the heroine has pretty much been blackmailed into marriage, and much of the seduction is quite coercive. Which is wonderful if you enjoy that, but if you require absolute gender equality and unequivocal spoken consent in your romance, then skip this (and many others from this era).

This is a great one for vintage romance lovers, those who like age gaps and those who enjoy a little bit of dominance/reluctance.
