



Nothing To Commend Her

Jo Barrett

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The Earl of Pensby lost his wife in a fire, one that left him scarred in more ways than one. Hes surly, brooding, and according to half the ton, a monster. Except to Agatha Trumwell, she sees so much more than his scars. But with a pitiful dowry, unfavorable looks, and a tendency to speak her mind, she has nothing to commend her, or so she believes. Can these two lonely souls find love amid the gossiping beau monde while someone plots to tear their fragile world apart?

Nothing To Commend Her Details

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From Reader Review Nothing To Commend Her for online ebook

BJ says

H is burned and scarred due to fire that killed his first wife. The newlywed couple have a mystery and trust issues - H is mentally and physically scarred, h is odd woman for this time, a scientist. She uses her intelligence to force H to heal and be a better man. It was good but could have been better.

Maggie Hesseling says

Two people flawed in the way they see themselves find not only love but an appreciation for themselves and each other.

Agatha is a scientist, an unusual woman of her time, not recognized for her intelligence, but rather considered an outsider and unusual.

Magnus, injured in a fire while trying to save his wife is brutally scarred and dubbed The Monster by society. It takes Agatha's smart brain and gentle heart to look behind the scars and see a good man. One that is kind, generous and very lovely. Together they can heal each other.

The novel was everything I've come to expect from Jo Barrett: entertaining, humorous, well developed and complete. She leaves nothing hanging and her characters are engaging and heartfelt.

The secondary love story between Katherine and George is also pleasureable. Watching George struggle with himself and his mother's wishes for him keeps the reader constantly amused.

I imagine I'll read this novel over and over again.

SheLove2Read says

Another reviewer said it perfectly: once they got married the story became a bit of a bore. Very predictable plot and a hero who needed his head examined. 2.25 stars

Renee says

The Hero was burned in a fire as he unsuccessfully attempted to rescue his first wife. For three years he has removed himself from Society, first and foremost to heal from his wounds. He had to relearn everything: moving his arms and legs, walking, living. He was emotionally injured by the stares, the whispers, and the innuendo surrounding the fire and his resulting scars. He is weary and wary.

The heroine is considered plain, spinsterish, and a bluestocking scientist. She has firm opinions and expresses them when she feels she must. She wears spectacles and is raven-haired and dark-eyed, perhaps

the biggest drawbacks in a time where fair skin and hair were the standard of beauty. She is weary and wary.

Both the H and h are the walking wounded, for different reasons, and believe that they have too many negatives to interest another. He hates his scars and the looks and talk they generate. He was betrayed by his first wife and his trust was destroyed. She has been the looked-over girl her entire life, only appreciated (somewhat superficially) by her family. She has never dared to dream of a future of a husband and children; she thinks her intellect and her plainness too much to overcome. Together, slowly, the H and h learn to get back what they have lost and begin to grab what they had yet to have.

I loved their love story, their friendship, their respect of each other. I especially loved how the h became more beautiful, to the H and to others, as her true nature was allowed to blossom. It is a truth that beauty does come from within, and even the plainest of creatures will shine and sparkle when they are appreciated, acknowledged, loved. The author illustrates this fact beautifully in both the H and h. This is a story about what it means to love - how you are afraid of putting yourself out there to be rejected, how you wonder what the other person truly thinks when they look at you, how you worry about saying the right or wrong thing all the time. It's a story of learning to trust another person with your whole self, to take the leap of faith and try to read the signs that your interest is returned, your companionship is welcomed, that you are interesting to someone else.

This is no retread of Jane Eyre or Beauty and the Beast; those comparisons are really surface-only. There is a man scarred by a fire, his visage considered monstrous. There is no Beauty or victimized orphan, although the heroine grows more beautiful as she grows more self-assured and appreciated. The comparisons end there, honestly.

There are secondary characters that do exactly what they should - serve as foils for the main characters, the H and h, and set their storyline up. They move in the background and lend interest in their interaction. We learn more about the H/h from their friends and families. There is also a subplot that throws in a little danger and again, this only adds to the relationship budding between the H and h. They grow closer and learn more about each other as they face this threat. I guessed who the threat was from the outset, but that in no way detracted from my wanting to see how the plot resolved.

For the sticklers: there are some typos and typesetting errors scattered throughout the book, and frankly I cannot understand why independents or traditionally published authors can't get these cleaned up when they are pointed out, but errors like this do not keep me from reading nor recommending a book wholeheartedly. There is also explicit sex in this book. It is written of in a loving and tender way and in no way gratuitous.

namericanwordcat says

I was so looking forward to this book. I love beauty and the beast, married couples, bluestockings. I was thrilled. Those aspects of the book were very good. She is a scientist. Very cool.

Here was I disliked. Even though the heroine was forthright, there were dumb misunderstandings of intention. The mystery was very very easy to solve. This is not a big deal because I didn't buy the book for the mystery anyway but it was so easy and took up too much space that could have been used for more time between the couple. The secondary romance while good was rushed. I would have liked a fuller bloom here. And most of all the hero was twit about his burns. This doesn't mean I don't think your self esteemed would be fragile I do but ... even after hot kisses... anyway.

What I hated, which is why I am bothering to write this review, is that the villain was a scorned, crazed best female friend of the hero's dead wife. She was a lesbian, full of unrequited love, rage, and crazy. I really hate the deranged homosexual villain. Enough. It's a vile stereotype.

It ruined the book for me. It might not for you.

Wealththeow says

Plain, intellectual Agatha wishes she could have both a husband and her fertilizer experiments. But given that no man has ever been interested in her, and she doubts any would let her continue her studies, she's resigned herself to the loveless life of a spinster.

A chance encounter with the horribly scarred Lord Leighton leads to a swift private marriage. Both Agatha and Magnus used up all their courage just getting to the altar--neither has any left to try to bridge the gap between them. Weeks pass, and it looks like their marriage will remain unconsummated and fulfilling.

Then Agatha starts experiencing terrifying accidents. The threats to her life give her even more determination to have a true marriage with her husband.

I quite liked this. Agatha and Magnus are fairly unique in the Regency world--neither is handsome or popular, and although Agatha is smart she's not witty. There's no make-over scene where Agatha gets loads of new clothes, helped by a simpering French modiste, there's no courtship, there's no waltzing. The couple falls in love *after* their marriage, powered by their animal attraction to each other and their kind deeds toward others. It's far from perfect (Magnus seems inordinately focused on the "berries" that apparently sprout from Agatha's breasts, and near the end everything is swamped in matchmaking other characters), but it was good enough that I've sought out another book by the same author.

V.L. Holt says

I was delightfully pulled in to this Regency era romance. Loved the bluestocking heroine, and loved the brooding Beast for the hero.

Author used all the appropriate tools of the genre, and seemed to have great familiarity with the protocols of the day. Regency fans will have nothing to complain about here.

I personally love Regency heroines who buck the conventions of the day, and this lady definitely does that! An accomplished scientist in her own right with no interest in courting or marriage...she makes a fantastic female lead in the book.

I also really liked the delicately flavored gothic aspect to the story.

The author did a great job displaying the angst of each character and creating a relationship that the reader really wants to see resolved.

Great read, highly recommend. There are some sexual scenes, so recommend for mature audience.

Tammy Walton Grant says

This little book started out so promising. I LOVED the title, the Kindle sample hooked me big time (damn you, Amazon) and I bought the book with such high hopes.

Dashed.

Agatha, the homely spinster, meets Magnus, the scarred monster, at a ball when she defends him to a group of socialites and literally runs into him in the hallway. They are taken with each other and before you know it, Lord Leighton has offered for her hand and Agatha accepts.

All good so far, I think.

But then they get married, and as soon as they say "I do" they seem to lose whatever brains they possess, and for 2/3 of the book the reader is treated to endless misunderstandings based on their insecurities, they constantly second-guess themselves and pussy-foot around each other until I wanted to shake somebody. (view spoiler)

There is a mildly entertaining secondary romance involving Magnus' best friend and Agatha's American fertilizer supplier (WTF you say? Yup.) A little bit contrived and convenient for my tastes, I think. I don't mind being spoonfed, but you have to do it well enough that I don't KNOW I'm slurping pablum. The endless machinations of his friend's matchmaking mother was amusing, but in the end couldn't distract me from the frustration I was feeling at both the leads.

There was a bit of mystery thrown in here as well. It introduced me to the most interesting character in the whole book, a misogynistic magistrate who won't look a woman in the face or speak to her directly. He was the most historically authentic dude in the book, imo.

It was a pleasant, mildly entertaining, slightly maddening Regency once all was said and done. Some glimmers of great writing and compelling storytelling that I felt were lost in a Big Mis plot that could have been much better. Unfortunately, I felt the title was a self-fulfilling prophecy for the book itself.

2.5 stars.

Original comment September 24/11: What an excellent title. The book, meh.

Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says

Agatha knows that she has nothing to commend her in the marriage mart but her cousin Hattie will not give up on finding Agatha a husband. Hattie has Agatha at another of the pointless balls when Agatha overhears some of the young girls calling Lord Leighton a monster because of the burns he suffered while trying to save his wife from a fire in their home. She takes them to task, storms from the room and runs into a large man loosing her glasses. Unable to see she rants about the unfeeling girls not knowing that the man she is

talking to is Lord Leighton. Both feel a connection and several weeks later Lord Leighton makes an offer of marriage. Both feel they have nothing to offer to the other, their home fills with uninvited guests, and someone wants to punish Leighton by hurting Agatha. The marriage is off to a rough start.

Jo Barrett is one of my favorite Wild Rose Press authors. I have purchased and read most of her books. Nothing to Commend Her is her latest release and is a great addition to her books. The writing is crisp, the characters are well drawn, and story has a well-developed plot. The mix of humor, romance and danger makes for a book that you don't want to put down. Pick this one up, you won't be sorry.

Darla says

****POSSIBLE SPOILERS****I really enjoyed this book, it was my first by the author, but it probably will not be my last. I loved the story between Agatha and Magnus, and how they found each other and turned out to be just what the other needed most. I loved Agatha's personality, how she wasn't just another pretty face with nothing more to offer than nice window dressing and not empty thoughts. I also loved how despite the fact that she believed herself unattractive and firmly shelved at 25, that she still, deep down, had dreams of a man finding her who looked at her and saw her and loved her for herself!!!! Now I loved Magnus too, he sounded totally handsome and manly to me even though one side of his face was disfigured. He actually was a very nice and caring man, who others took for granted that he had feelings that could be hurt. I loved how fate brought him and Agatha together when they both least expected it. Once they were together it made me think of Beauty and the Beast, the way they were both so unsure of themselves around the other, and reading every comment and action too deep into context, thinking it meant something else when it actually meant something they were too scared to hope it could be. Magnus didn't want to scare Agatha off by asking for more than he figured he deserved, and Agatha didn't want to offend Magnus by asking for what she wished from him. Overall the story between the two was very sweet and more about seeing and accepting the people that you love for themselves, and that just when you've given up on love is when you'll find it in the least expected place. I strongly suggest you read this book if you are into romance, especially regency type time pieces.

Suzanne (Under the Covers Book blog) says

Agatha feels she is very much on the shelf at 25 years old, she has never had a marriage proposal and feels she never will. However, she has her scientific studies to keep her occupied and her father to care for. This all changes when she comes to the defense of Lord Leighton, known as "The Monster" because of all his scarring he received whilst he unsuccessfully tried to save his wife from a fire. A chance encounter with him after she has come, rather valiantly, to his defense leads to a marriage proposal. As the pair try to overcome their insecurities so they can find the happiness they deserve, attempts are made on Agatha's life from someone in Magnus' past, determined to destroy his happiness.

This was an entertaining read, both the lead characters were sympathetic and likeable. They each had their own insecurities and issues that needed to be overcome so that they could find happiness with each other. This book relies heavily on misunderstandings between the two, especially at the beginning, that although was a bit repetitive it was soon worked out. The romance between the two characters was sweet and moved along at a steady pace as they got to know each other better. It was also quite romantic, here is one of my favourite lines from the books:

"A pretty face is well and good, but that is not where true beauty lies." His wife had taught him that lesson quite well.

Those tempting lips pulled into a smile, wide and bright, filled with guileless warmth that touched him where even he dare not go.

He took her hand, noting the sudden intake of her breath, and kissed the back. "And you, Miss Trumwell, are beautiful," he said, and slipped her spectacles into her trembling palm then exited the gallery.

There was also a mystery in this aswell over who was trying to kill Agatha, however, I guessed who it was early on but that didn't detract from the book too much as I was more interested in Magnus and Agatha's relationship.

Also this book could do with a bit more editing, which although didn't take away anything from the story, a few of the senteces didn't flow quite right and words were repeated when they shouldn't have been.

I would recommend to anyone wanting a quick romantic read (this books is quite short, only about 250 pages) with a feisty heroine and a tortured hero.

Gerrie says

This book had a great deal of promise. Agatha, the heroine, was very engaging - smart, outspoken, compassionate, and interested in science. She wasn't interested in society, fashion, or any of the other pastimes considered proper for young ladies of her class. Magnus, the hero was burned, and terribly scarred, in a fire that destroyed his home. The shallow young women of the ton consider him a monster. That, and his severe disfigurement, have shattered his self confidence. These are all the great ingredients for one of my favorites plot themes, beauty and the beast.

The author writes well, with good solid pacing (I'm more attuned to pacing now that I've read a number of books where it's totally off). However, as many other reviewers have noted, the misunderstandings once Agatha and Magnus got married went on far too long and ultimately became annoying. Agatha considered herself plain, and felt Magnus wasn't attracted to her. Magnus felt that his extensive scars would repulse Agatha, even after she tried seducing him, as well as telling him that his scars didn't bother her. They constantly misinterpreted each other's reactions. Since I'm not a fan of misunderstandings to begin with, this got on my nerves. I'm a big believer that an author can create a serious enough conflict without resorting to misunderstandings. And if the author feels that misunderstandings between the H and h are necessary to move the story along, they should be cleared up as soon as possible.

If I could, I would give this book 3.5 stars. Also, I would certainly give other books by this author a try.

Tonileg says

Historical English poor spinster bluestocking that likes to study fertilizer who is kind and her kindness attracts the lonely and maimed in a fire, Earl of Pensby one night at a society ball when she defends him without knowing that he was present.

Lord Leighton, Magnus is interested in marriage with the kind Agatha Trumwell, but he is also attracted to her. So there is lots of miscommunication between Agatha and Magnus because of fears, inexperience and

innocence so that goes on for at least a hundred pages which could have been boringly frustrating, but it wasn't, this author has a way with internal dialogue and conversations that make the miscommunication realistic just like any new relationship when the couple has to figure out how to talk to each other. The mystery of death threats push the story forward with secrets and strengthening friendships coming out of the investigation.

Well written damaged/maimed hero finds a kind spinster and both find love while solving a death threat mystery in this English noble society setting.

Can I just mention that I started to laugh every time Magnus is asked about keeping a mistress because everyone and their sister believes that he must have one in his past, very funny thread through out the investigation.

248 pages and kindle freebie

3 stars

adelina. says

Just, well boring. I don't know how to describe this book with any other word. Just nah.

Story started very well, but after you get really into the plot it gets boring because the lead character is having so much problems with himself it's not even possible to have issues like that.

Becky says

Magnus, the Earl to Pensby lost his wife in a fire, and severely injured and scarred himself in the attempt. He knows what others say about him behind his back, and he knows the repulsion people feel towards him. He wants a wife for just namesake. Agatha Trumwell is not the most beautiful woman, a wallflower and very intelligent. She has prepared herself to be a spinster and a scientist. Until, her cousin forces her to attend a ball, where she over hears some women making cruel remarks regarding the Earl, call him a monster. Being the outspoken woman she is, she lets them have it and then leaves. Only to encounter in the dark a mysterious man who picks up her spectacles after losing them running off. Agatha then finds herself being betrothed to the Earl by her father. After a quick marriage, Agatha feels that this is a marriage of convenience only and that the Earl has no affection for her. Magnus is fearful to approach Agatha for being rejected by her repulsion of him once she sees him. And now, someone is trying to kill Agatha to make Magnus suffer. I absolutely love historical romances and just adored this one. I fell in love with all of the characters and story line. Two people who have their own scars, who can find each other in love and friendship is so heartwarming. Both so very headstrong and independent, they are great together. Usually I can figure out the "who dunnit" in books but this one really surprised me at the end. I say "bravo" to Ms. Barrett. I really enjoyed this book and can't wait to read more of her work.
