



Miracle on Regent Street

Ali Harris

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Evie Taylor, a girl with a big heart, gets lost in the big city. For the past two years, Evie has lived an invisible life in London. Her neighbours think she's just moved in, her sister mistakes her for a live-in nanny, and even Evie's manager at work can't remember her name. But all that is about to change ...this Christmas has brought a flurry of snow and unimaginable possibilities into town. Evie works in the stockroom of an old-fashioned, family-run, London fashion department store. Hardy's is a beautiful, wood-panelled jewellery box of a building, but it's in dire need of a makeover. One day Evie overhears that if the entire store's takings don't turn round by Dec 26th – 3 weeks' time – the family who own it will be forced to sell to one of the big chains. Hardy's is in need of a Christmas miracle. Determined to save her beloved store, Evie hatches a plan to secretly transform it into a magical place to shop again. But has the time come for her to be noticed too? When an accidental romantic encounter with handsome, enigmatic Joel gives her the chance of a whole new identity, she takes it.

Miracle on Regent Street Details

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From Reader Review Miracle on Regent Street for online ebook

Triduana says

I've given this book 2 stars on the basis that I loved the setting for this story. Hardy's sounds like somewhere I would go. It reminds me of my favourite department store from when I was in single figures.

I didn't really like the rest of the book, however. Now, because I don't tend to read much chick-lit because every book I've read of this genre is pretty much the same, I've kept this out of my review because that isn't the fault of the book.

The main issue with this book, for me, was the protagonist, Evie. I went off her in the opening chapters when she revealed herself as totally selfish, in that she stole somebody's job. As I read I imagined a parallel story of a poor girl who turned up for her first day at work only to be turned away because the job had already been taken. If that happened to me I wouldn't have just gone home, I would have fought for my job. Gaping plot hole? From that point on I knew this story would be far-fetched and that Evie and I would never get on.

So she's in a stolen job for two years and is perfectly happy for nobody to respect her, or even know her name. The person before her was well known, so it wasn't a general lack of respect for the person running the stockroom. We have an invisible character, who spends lots of time moaning and winging about being invisible, but not doing anything about it. So she deceives the people she works with by going under someone else's name, deceives the man she starts dating by assuming someone else's personality ... this is not a person I would want to associate with.

The other staff at Hardy's were an interesting bunch of people, highly stereotypical and bordering on cringeworthy. I liked Lily, she brought the sparkle to the story. The foreign cleaning team irritated me no end and I found the way they were portrayed quite insulting. Carly had no sense whatsoever, and clearly didn't respect Evie, but Evie saw her as a good friend for some unfathomable reason. Felix and Sam were nice. Delilah used Evie, which was also ok. I didn't like Joel. Another cringeworthy moment: when he was trying to win Evie back and told her she reminded him of his ex-girlfriend. Good grief ...

The idea of the secret makeovers (more anonymity) was fun, although it got highly repetitive in the story. The imagery was good. I was grateful that the book wasn't written on the assumption that every reader knows London intimately, so that was a plus-point.

The writing style was ok, it worked with the story, although the book was terribly overlong. If all the descriptions of every single thing every single character was wearing were omitted, the book would be quite skinny. There were also some hideous typos /grammatical errors in the book (not the fault of the author).

To end, I wouldn't recommend this book. It just didn't work for me.

Sarah Broadhurst says

I absolutely loved this book. A fantastic story, great to reminisce about how department stores used to be, full of history and family members. There is the old fashioned spirit of Christmas and all the magic of shopping in big stores at Christmas time with their special displays. A real nostalgic book that kick starts the

Christmas reading for me.

This is the author's, Ali Harris, debut novel and after reading this book I can't wait for the next book!

The main character within the book is Evie, a stockroom girl in Hardy's, one of the oldest department stores in London, a family run business which has been passed down the family, but is now feeling very dated and staff are despondent and down hearted as to the future of Hardy's. Evie, works all day in the stockroom, a job she got by accident, when she was confused for someone else, and accidentally started working at Hardy's. Hardy's was a shop that Evie grew up with, her parents used to work there and they got engaged there too. However, just about all staff call Evie, Sarah, because they didn't realise anyone new had started. However when Sarah unpacks a new box of stock for the designer section of the store, she finds a top she just has to try on and when she walks around the shop floor, a young, gorgeous man approaches her and they end up going up on a date, even though the man thinks Evie is someone else, Carly, the personal shopper manager who is later promoted to assistant manager of the store and tasked to make Hardy's more profitable.

The story does have romance in it, but the main story is about Evie and how she takes the future of Hardy's into her own hands, deciding to become Hardy's Secret Fairy who does makeovers of the departments in the early hours to help increase profits. After deciding to also get her true friends together for an evening, when she thinks she is getting the job promotion she deserves, she is disappointed to find out Carly gets it instead, however the get together goes ahead and Felix the aging, nighttime security guard, accidentally lets slip that it is Evie who is the secret fairy and the group of friends decide they want to be part of it too. What follows are more inspirational and nostalgic displays which brings more customers to Hardy's and profits rising.

There is a love story too - Evie, pretending to be Carly, with the mysterious American, who says he is over from US, where he is part of a family run department store, but Evie is not sure. There is also Sam, the delivery van driver who visits the store each week to deliver goods to Evie's stock room, however Evie thinks he has a girlfriend but does he?

It is a great book to read this winter time, full of nostalgia in a store full of old fashioned values and team spirit within the staff, especially those who work behind the scenes, who the customers and shop floor staff are unaware of. The book is written as a countdown to Christmas within the store and it added to the excitement, would Hardy's be saved, would Evie do what she has set out to achieve.

I loved Ali Harris's writing style and I devoured it quickly, easy to read but addictive and hard to put down. A great book for a lazy afternoon curled up in a chair!

I am already looking forward to the next book by Ali Harris and I will be recommending this to all my friends as the perfect book to read this winter.

Thank you to Simon and Schuster for sending me this book to review.

Hayley says

Review written after reading the paperback version from 3 to 5 December 2011

I've given this novel five stars as I absolutely loved the story, it was heart-warming and a perfect Christmas read. However, my copy (which wasn't a proof copy) contained too many errors. There were grammatical errors, words used incorrectly (are instead of our is one example) and details about characters changed halfway through the book. It's a real shame because the story itself is fabulous but the editor and proof readers have let this author down.

Aoife says

3.5 Stars

Evie Taylor loves her job at Hardy's department store in the middle of London. It has class and style not to mention history, or at least it did. Hardy's is failing, and when Evie overhears it's in danger of closing she's determined to save it in the run-up up Christmas.

This was a sweet, festive book that made me really wish Hardy's was real so I could visit in the heart of London, a city I love! I loved all the visual descriptions in this book from the different makeovers Evie completes in the different departments in the store to the types of clothes she begins to wear from her wardrobe of vintage goodies.

I also really liked that Evie got together a group of people that would often be overlooked or be 'invisible' in the running of the store - the tea-lady, the cleaners, the night security man and the delivery man. They mad up a very nice, mismatched group and it became clear they all cherished the company and the mission to save Hardy's. I liked the little message the group portrayed that some people just need someone to talk to them, and realise they exist.

Evie is definitely a frustrating character at times. She's definitely a wet blanket - she goes two years of allowing everyone she works with to believe her name is Sarah because she doesn't have the courage to speak up and correct them. Near the end of the book, Evie gets very frustrated about how people have treated her but i personally don't think they were all in the wrong. Yes, people could have asked her more questions about herself, and listened to her problems as much as she listened to theirs but at the end of the day they all often used her name (or what they thought was her name) and did seem to appreciate some of the work and help she did and gave.

The book was also slightly too long for me, and drawn out. The lies in her relationship with Joel could have ended a bit quicker especially as it was so obvious who she would end up.

I liked Evie's relationship with her sister and her mom too!

Emer says

This was a perfectly nice book. However for some reason it just didn't hold my attention for very long and I kept having to force myself to keep reading. However I really don't want to write a bad review about this book as I don't think I can be fair in my assessment of it and I don't think it deserves a bad review. There was

nothing truly wrong with this book. It was a nicely written story of essentially an ugly duckling becoming a swan.

The story follows Evie and what her life has become after a devastating breakup with her long term boyfriend; the man she thought was 'the one'. She is living with her elder sister, her husband and two little children and has an apparent dead end job in the basement stockroom of an ageing London department store called Hardy's. No one in her work place even knows her real name, they call her by the name of the previous stockroom girl. However Evie overhears that Hardy's needs to up its takings before December 26th or risk financial ruin and either closure or takeover. The story then follows Evie as she helps to makeover the store and bring it back to its glory of yesteryear and drum up more customers for the store. This makeover helps Evie to come out of her shell, regain her confidence and once and for all get over her heartbreak and find new love and happiness.

All in all this is a very sweet book. A nice storyline, a Christmassy feel.... I just found the lead character to be a little bit frustrating at times but I do think it's a lot to do with my timing in reading this book and my current post Christmas blues. I have read it in the days since Christmas Day and really this book should be read in the early part of December. It is a book all about the buildup to Christmas and instead of making me feel all cheery and festive it has made me lonely for the happy anticipation I always feel before Christmas.

However the novel was beautifully written. The descriptions of Hardy's department store were truly enchanting. Ms Harris obviously has a love of all things vintage style-wise and this really shone through in the book. Her descriptions of all the vintage shoes and handbags, antique decorations, the old-time tearooms, even the description of the orderly stock room helped to put together a very complete picture of Hardy's department store. And then each individual makeover of the departments within the store was exquisitely described and I as a reader was easily able to visualise how all the displays would look in my mind's eye.

There was also a lovely and very complete set of supporting characters in the book: from the glamorous tea lady to the cleaning staff to the old timer working in security. This all helped the vision of Hardy's store come to life and pop off the page. Evie's family also featured prominently within the book which helped to provide Evie's character with a detailed backstory, although I would have liked a little more storyline with her mother as I thought she was a very interesting character.

(view spoiler)

I'm going to award this book two stars. I'm sure that other readers would enjoy this story more than I did, after all it is a very nice story and as is usual it seems with an Ali Harris novel there are always some lovely bittersweet moments: this is the third book that I have read by Ali Harris, although I do believe this was her debut novel. I would recommend that anyone wanting to read an Ali Harris novel for the first time should start with *Written In The Stars* or (if you want to cry a lot!) *The Last First Kiss* as I enjoyed both of those novels a lot more.

Natalie says

Literally nothing is happening....there's about 5 pages of just her getting changed. It drags, and Evie is doing nothing but complaining. Pages and pages of boring work days.

I can't finish it.

DNF.

Blair says

Entry #145 in a series entitled 'I really need to look at what books actually *are* before I start reading them'. I knew this would be a very fluffy, guilty-pleasures sort of book, but because of the vintage-style cover and the blurb talking about the setting of a traditional London department store, I had the impression it was actually historical fiction. I was hoping for something like *The Lost Art of Keeping Secrets*, which might be girly as hell but is also a truly great book. However, when I started reading it quickly became apparent that the setting is contemporary, and *Miracle On Regent Street* is chick-lit, through and through.

Evie Taylor is your typical chick-lit heroine: a 28-year-old single Londoner, average-looking, average-sized, working in an average job, had her heart broken by the love of her life a few years ago and has never quite recovered, etc. She's also surrounded by an entirely predictable and clichéd cast of characters, such as the overachieving sister whose life isn't as perfect as it seems, and the beautiful and glamorous 'friend' who turns out to be a bit of a bitch. The twist in this book's case is that Evie's life revolves around Hardy's, the department store where she works as a stockroom girl. Despite having an 'invisible' job and being constantly overlooked by most of her colleagues - who don't even know her name - she's passionate about the store (where her parents met and fell in love), which represents her reverence for both old-fashioned romance and vintage style. So when she accidentally overhears that Hardy's is in danger of being shut down if sales don't improve over Christmas, she sets about using her creative ambition to give the departments a series of secret makeovers, aided by an offbeat group of fellow 'invisible' staff.

Of course, there has to be a romance as well: one that's equal parts predictable and ridiculously improbable. The main male lead's interest in Evie is completely unbelievable and all his actions (including the unexpected twists) are so artificial I couldn't see him as anything more than a plot device. I could tell from the first chapter who Evie was going to end up with; I won't spoil it for anyone just in case, but I'll be amazed if anyone who reads the book is remotely surprised by this development.

By far my favourite parts of the book were those that involved Evie's mission to save Hardy's. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that I loved this element of the plot and wished it could ALL have been about this, rather than getting bogged down in nonsense like the dull-as-dishwater subplot about whether Evie's brother-in-law is having an affair. The camaraderie between Evie and her mismatched team of 'Christmas elves' is beautifully depicted, and as cheesy as it all undoubtedly is, I found myself drawn in and moved by their mission to revitalise the store and turn its fortunes around. As an ex-retail worker myself, I liked that the story didn't patronise its characters for not having done anything 'better' with their lives than working in a shop. And the happy ending made me smile, despite myself.

This isn't anything more than a light, throwaway read, but it's sweet and heartwarming. It's definitely seasonal - the entire plot is structured around Christmas, and I'd probably have enjoyed it a little more if I'd got round to reading it a few weeks earlier. Complete fluff, but we all need a bit of something soft and sugary sometimes, don't we?

Ann says

I was so excited for this book – I loved the concept and the cover. But, it became clear about a third of the

way through that the book was not what I had hoped it would be...

First things first -- Things I loved:

The premise:

---A throw-back girl with a throw-back style, eager to advance her career and save her beloved store (of which she's currently the stockroom girl) by reviving the store, via its decor, to what it was in its prime. I LOVE this! I love the era our protagonist, Evie, is trying to recreate, I love those classic styles, and the idea of going through a store, department by department, doing façade makeovers is simply delightful to me!

---The supporting characters: the leading men in this story are quite yummy, kind, and fun. The older characters that Evie seeks council from are fun, too, and unique in their own rights.

---One or two plot twists I didn't see coming. These were nice and I felt enhanced the story.

Unfortunately, these things were not enough to make up for a the:

--The *incredibly* long and repetitive middle, where there "ta-da" moments don't build on each other, so the "big moments" seem just like the "big moment" that came before.

--The selfishness and self-pity of the protagonist that starts coming out a third of the way through the book and is never truly addressed.

Evie struggles with "invisibility" issues. But what bothered me, is that Evie was annoyed with everyone else for not knowing who she was, when she never bothered to correct them. Nor did she really do anything but wait for *them* to change, instead of her looking to herself if *she wanted* to change. And then, when Evie finally does realize this, she continues to fluctuate in what felt like confusing plotting, and again, no clear arc, going from 'invisible' to 'vivid' and back again with no reasons as to why. In fact, as I read through with my sister, I called her and said after one particular change: "did I miss something? Did I skip a chapter?" I hadn't...

Also, this book has a very nice, very sweet premise, with a protagonist who pines for eras-gone-by (cool! Love it!). The book was quite PG for the first third or so. Very little language, no explicit sex, all quite innocent.

So, I was frankly rather offended when, out of the blue, a rather detailed and fairly explicit sex-scene appeared. Now, it's not that I took offense to the scene (I mean, personally I'd rather not read that, but that's personal and that's not what offended me). It was the fact that it came with no warning, was completely different from the beginning of the book and didn't fit at all.

But what made all this really bad, was that at this point in time, Evie has been lying about who she really is to the man she hops into bed with. Not only does she lie about her name and her job, but also her ideas, likes and dislikes, and frankly just about everything.

I kept waiting for her to realize how wrong this was and to apologize. And, a bit of a spoiler here, but she never really does.

Instead of trying to explain Evie's selfishness, I think it's best to provide some examples. After a particularly hard break-up with a long-time boyfriend, Evie's sister, Delilah, lets Evie stay at Delilah's house rent-free, in exchange for babysitting Delilah's kids. This is fine for Evie... until she starts to get opportunities to do something else. After not coming home to babysit the kids (nor calling) one evening, Evie gets upset at Delilah for being upset that Evie bailed. And another time, when Evie has already committed to babysitting

she calls Delilah to find out if she can get out of it because she has a date offer for that night. Now, I don't have any issue with Evie's asking, but it's her attitude when Delilah (who also has been going through a very difficult time) tells her that she really needs Evie to babysit:

"I'm twenty-eight years old and I feel like a child asking her mother for permission to go round her friend's house on a Saturday night. Shouldn't a woman of my age have more freedom?"

Now, personally I don't think anyone ever reaches any age that allows them to back out of commitments without asking and getting the "okay." Plus, instead of seeing how much Delilah needed a break, Evie only thought about what she wanted...

Here's another perfect example:

Evie's contemplating her relationship with Joel, the man to whom she's been lying to. Anyway, here's Evie's "logic":

"It's one thing to pretend to be someone I'm not, but I'm trying to make things as uncomplicated as possible. As much as I'm relishing my time with Joel, I know that it can't go on forever. Either he will discover that I'm just a lowly stockroom girl and will never want to see me again, or he won't find that out, things will go on being as wonderful as they are, and then he will want to get closer to me than I can let him. You know, meet my family and friends, introduce me to his, and obviously that can never happen. Ultimately it's a no-win situation but I'm trying not to let that thought cast a shadow over everything, because for the time being I want to wallow in this imaginary world where I am a girl like Carly with a gorgeous man and a fabulous job. I know it can't last, but the prospect of going back to my old life, to the old me just yet, doesn't bear thinking about. So all I can do is block out any thoughts of what will happen when Joel finds out who I really am and focus on the here and now."

Again, absolutely NO thought to how this might affect Joel, who's obviously falling for "Evie" and who has, himself, recently come out of a bad relationship. Maybe this will hurt him? But no, Evie couldn't possibly be bothered to think about that. :-\

I couldn't tell if the author was okay with Evie's selfishness, if she wasn't aware of it, or she was trying to rationalize the plot. Whichever it was, it didn't work – at least not for me.

Plus, I felt certain endings to certain plots and the reasons behind them, were a bit of a cop out.

There are so many other things I took issue with but I hope this is enough to give an idea.

Quite honestly, the best part of this book is the cover (which is so gorgeous!).

I really don't like writing negative reviews, but this book was not very well written, the structure was bad, and after the first third of the book I stopped pulling for the protagonist, which pretty much puts a damper on the whole book...

Agi says

1.5 stars.

I have bought this book because I'd read many wonderful reviews and hoped it will be the next jackpot on my list.

Unfortunately, it wasn't. It took me a lot of time to read this book because in between I have read every other book that I got/bought. Everything else was much more interesting.

First of all, one can't like a book when one doesn't like the main hero, no? I think I have not met a girl with such a low - esteem as Evie, Sarah or whatever her name. Many times I wanted to stop reading this book, especially after the words "why can't they remember my name?". The whole idea of pretending to be someone else, or wanting to be someone else was totally not my pair of shoes, I couldn't understand how someone can think so bad about herself and feel so low in her skin.

Then I had some issues with the family of Evie. She thought her parents had the best marriage ever, but I have never met such a sexist man as her father. Just typical: a man hunts, a woman takes care about children and home and the man is allowed to have fun and other women. If it is the vision of perfect marriage than I'd say, thanks but no thanks. And the way he treated Evie, totally no go. I understand also that Evie wanted to repay her sister for her hospitality but on the other hand how old was she to call and ask her if she can go on a date???

Then the idea of friendship with Carly. How naive must one be to think that this what they had was friendship???

Then the stereotypes: cleaners from Poland, a gay in menswear...

Then the idea of the shop makeover itself. Sorry, but totally out of place for me, no offence but Cinderella comes to my mind immediately, although I think Cinderella had more gut than Evie. Hocus - pocus and the shop is saved because of some makeovers. Yeah.

Then the long, long descriptions of everything, vintage clothes, shop, makeovers, meetings... I skipped a lot of them and didn't feel that I lost something.

The cover promises that I'll fall head over heels for Ali Harris. Not with this book, sorry.

Sophie says

This is a fine example of everything I find stomach-churning about 'chick lit'. Predictable, schmaltzy tripe. Yes great if you want something to get you into the Christmas spirit and don't want to be challenged at all. It's fluffy, festive fun, but the characters need more than descriptions of every stitch of clothing to become 3-dimensional. The main character Evie annoyed me so much - she may be mousey and lack in self-esteem, but would someone really not correct the people she works with for getting her name wrong? And the stock room she is responsible for, I think it must have been a Tardis. It smacked of fairy story here as this detail was just too much to believe. Anything and everything that was needed to make over the department store was magically found if Evie rummaged deep enough in the stock room. And would giving each department a makeover really turn a struggling shop into a booming sales success overnight. I don't think so.

This is the sort of book that makes my head hurt it is so full of stereotypes - the Eastern European cleaner... the gay male shop assistant of menswear (you get the message). I suppose being stuck in an Austrian hospital over Christmas whilst reading this probably didn't make me particularly charitable in my response to it, but it was pretty nauseating stuff. And typos to boot - that, dear editor, is pretty sloppy.

Just made me remember why I don't read this genre, but it was reviewed so well by one blog that it tempted me.

Hannah Howard says

an absolutely amazing book that has had me in tears and giggling (very loudly in inappropriate places (like

coffee shops and on the bus lol)

Hannah says

Evie Taylor has been living an invisible life at Hardy's department store for a couple of years and is working in the stock room. One day her friend Carly gets a promotion over her. A new guy is in the store an American named Joel and she thinks he wanted to see Carly not her so pretends to be Carly for a while. I honestly would have just told Joel I was Evie from the start, it dragged out way too long. Joel is not a horrible guy and would have preferred the truth long before he gets it.

Next Hardy's is on the blink of closure I like the business and Christmas side to the book and I feel in the middle there is not enough of it. It's all about the romance and I just didn't feel the romance in this book. The romance with Joel to me is just a lie all the way through. Saying that though the relationship with her family is even more annoying Deliah treats her as a personal dogsbody babysitter getting in a mood when she wants a life of her own. Then there's her old fashioned parents her dad's comments to me are so rude when he's the one having an affair. Her mum does however grow on me. The Sam thing is thrown in somewhere along the way and it's obvious he likes Evie and they do make quite a good pairing but again the romance side of this book didn't really have me gripped in any part.

I just didn't like Evie trying to be something she wasn't and I liked it when she realised this herself. This book took me longer to read than I thought it would, It was a little bit of a disappointment from what I was expecting it wasn't even bad just really not the best book I've read. The middle really went on too long.

Aimee Bates says

Despite this taking me forever to actually finish, and the fact that it didn't half feel as though it dragged on for no reason in the middle, I ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT!

This book is everything that a book should be to reminisce about old department stores and how they would look at Christmas time, and the hustle and bustle of the festive time of year.

It's a shame that it felt as though some of it was unnecessarily dragged out for no particular reason, but I really can't take anything away from the beautiful writing and how well you were made to picture literally every detail about the store and the makeovers.

As for the characters, I loved each and every one of them. Yes, at points throughout the book there was a couple of people who were slightly annoying, but by the end they had all managed to squeeze inside a place in my book heart somewhere. This is a proper feel-good, heartwarming book which really does focus on friendship and getting across the point that you don't have to pretend to be somebody you're not to impress or please someone, you don't have to change yourself for others, it's okay for you to be exactly who you are and you should be proud of that!

Kathryn says

I'm wavering between two and three stars on this one

4 stars for the beginning

3 stars for the end

1 star for the (way too long) middle

SPOILERS AHEAD (though, since I don't really recommend this book, my friends should feel welcome to go ahead and read my review!)

Although this might win my "Favorite Book Cover of 2011" Award, there is no way it will win any awards for the book itself. Unless, perhaps, it is the "Why did I bother finishing this book!?" Award. Then again, I do know why I finished it. I loved the beginning. I was lured in by the many four and five star reviews and wondered if maybe I was missing something and the end would redeem the mess made in the middle. And it was a buddy read with my sister and it's so much more fun to read a dreadful book when you have someone to complain about it with! ;-p

I should preface my review by saying that I'm major into vintage these days. And, I'm a huge Anglophile. So, I loved the idea of this book, transforming a has-been London department store to its former glory days with a vintage make-over. Oooh, yes! I thought maybe it would be a bit of a modern "Shop Around the Corner" or something like that. Well, I have to say that I did love Hardy's department store. It sounded just wonderful. I so wanted to be there and see all the made-over departments, to shop amidst the vintage fashion displays, to see the vintage Christmas decorations. Swoon! And a few of the characters there were very sweet, like the vivacious and warmhearted retired dancer-turned-store-teashop-proprietor Lily and the sweet elderly night guard Felix, trying to get over the loss of his wife. Sam the big-hearted and hunky delivery guy was certainly pleasant enough, too.

However, my biggest gripe with the novel is that the protagonist, Evie Taylor, was a rubbish human being for most of the book. She has such little self-esteem that when she is hired on for a job as the store room girl and the store staff mistake her for the old girl (they looked something alike), she doesn't have the gumption to correct them. Two years later, she is secretly angry with all of them for still calling her Sarah. Um, hello? How were they supposed to know!? She is upset that they dump on her with their problems and don't help her with her own, yet she never asks them to stop, and never shares any of her own life with them! Frustrating, but I know every protagonist must have a problem to overcome so I was content to see how it played out...

For awhile! You see, Evie knows that Hardy's is in great financial trouble. So, she decides that maybe what it needs is a return to the old glory days, especially the 1940s. So, she begins to secretly make over each department with vintage flare, using the vintage things she finds in the stock room. Nevermind that she must have a fairy godmother or something because there is no way one human being could transform an entire menswear department in two hours, nor that all the things she would need to do so are magically found in the storeroom. When the customers start flocking in and the management is impressed, does Evie step forward and reveal that she is the one behind the improvement? No! Instead, she lets the (hugely stereotypical) gay man who works menswear take the credit to help him save his job. Now, this could be seen as very generous on Evie's part. Except that she then continues to be upset that people don't give her the time of day, so it's not really that altruistic. This continues with numerous department makeovers. I did love reading about the style ideas and the displays sound just divine, but it got a bit tedious.

Now, this might be bad enough but it gets worse... In order to make herself feel better, Evie poses as Carly, the hip, exciting personal assistant who recently snagged the promotion to manager that Evie wanted for herself. You see, this sexy American gentleman mistakes Evie for Carly, whom he saw at Hardy's one day, and asks her out. Evie thinks, what the heck, and even though she knows Carly is interested in the guy, she

goes out with him anyway. Worse, she lies to Joel, telling him all the things she thinks Carly would say (like how Hardy's should be madeover like the hip new department store Rumors), not being herself at all. While perhaps one moment of weakness could be excused, Evie goes out on more dates with him, sleeps with him (and the sex scene SO did not belong in this otherwise PG book) and continues to lie to him even when he makes his feelings pretty clear and even calls her his girlfriend. Oh, and did I mention that while this is happening, Evie begins to feel a stirring of special feelings for Sam, the delivery guy who has been her friend for two years? Only after she completely, unwittingly crushes his heart by inviting a bunch of people on the date that he thought was just going to be the two of them. Oh, and also Evie ditches her sister (and heretofore best friend) when the sister is going through a major crisis thinking her husband is having an affair. Evie justifies her actions by thinking that she has been helpful to other people all this time and now she just wants to have fun. (Fun that involves lying to another human being who is falling for you? Wow, real mature!)

Evie somewhat redeems herself at the end but not to the extent I would have liked to see. I do think the author's heart was in the right place, but it just didn't play out well. Evie's immature behavior continues when she constantly runs out on the men in her life, prejudging them for being untruthful to her, not bothering to hear their side of things or admit that she has been living a lie herself. She comes to realize some of her mistakes, but I still think she mistreated Joel terribly and doesn't really apologize for it.

While I did enjoy the beginning of the book, and found myself smiling a bit at some of the sweet moments at the end, by and large this book was a huge disappointment. I did love the vintage makeover bits, but Evie bothered me so much, and most of the book was sooooo predictable, the big reveals were no surprise, and the book could use some major editing as it was so overlong and rambling in places. Not to mention the terrible typos by the editing staff. Sadly, I would not recommend this book to anyone and the best thing about it really was the cover. If you want a vintage charm Christmas story about a shop making good at Christmas, go watch Jimmy Stewart in "Shop Around the Corner"!

Shaz Goodwin says

Evie really is invisible in the London she inhabits. She's not called by her correct name at Hardy's by the staff who visit her in the stockroom to tell her all their problems or by the yummy mummies at the nursery her niece and nephew attend. She also dresses in drab clothing. Evie has cultivated this 'non identity' for reasons that become clear to the reader as the story unfolds.

Rupert, the great grandson of the founder, now manages Hardy's. We get to know Evie's history with Hardy's, which is linked to the perfect relationship of her parents and the sparkle of her childhood. Evie has an idealised view of her parent's love that's been perpetuated by them. Falling into the job in the stockroom she is such a success at it that two years later she is still there. Her aspirations of promotion are denied and then she overhears the conversation that changes many things in not only her life but in her colleagues too.

Evie is living with her elder sister Delilah throughout the story. She's always looked up to her and wanted to emulate her. Delilah is married with two children and Evie looks after the children before work and afterwards. The stresses on a relationship of family life with young children are portrayed very well. We also get to experience family life when Evie and her siblings go back to the family home for a meal – a tradition that is held once a month.

There are some brilliant characters in *Miracle on Regent Street*, not least of them Evie herself. Evie tells us

the story and despite what she sees as herself failing, is such a warm and chatty person, asking rhetorical questions that pull the reader in, making them feel a part of the whole journey. She is a 'fixer' – listening to everyone's problems and subtly making suggestions that help to make changes. Being invisible suits her for where she is in her life but we get to see her start believing in herself and blossoming. The characters of the store employees are also brilliant – especially the group who see Evie for who she really is.

The romance of the story is not just about Hardy's trying to recover its former glory, but also about the two leading men ... Sam, the down-to-earth delivery guy and Joel who is gorgeous and charismatic (and who is a friend of Rupert's). I couldn't make my mind up who was right and so wasn't sure who I really wanted to 'support'. These storylines were cleverly crafted!

I absolutely adored 'The Wardrobe' ... and the part it plays in Evie coming to life. The night in with sister Delilah left me wanting to know what other gems were hidden in there!

The plots of romance and family life are played out with the backdrop of Hardy's there all the time. I loved the descriptions of the architecture of the store and of how it used to be. Once changes started happening, I loved the descriptions told through Evie's eyes. There are some fabulous scenes in Hardy's that made me laugh, made me cry and made me sigh with longing! The finale was just perfect (as was the epilogue).

There were a couple of twists that I didn't see coming. Not that I needed that as Miracle on Regent street had my full absorption from beginning to end. I don't think my review has done it justice!

If there is one book that I thought would be fabulous as a movie it has to be this one. It would be an amazing chick flick and not just for Christmas. It would be one to watch again and again for that feel-good factor (and would knock my favourite, Pretty Woman, off the top spot).

You can also read my review on my book blog Jera's Jamboree <http://shazjera.blogspot.com/>
