



## The Ideal Wife

*Mary Balogh*

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## **The Ideal Wife** Mary Balogh

When Abigail Gardiner knocks at the door of Miles Ripley, Earl of Severn, the last thing she expects is a marriage proposal. Desperate, she'd come to this charismatic stranger's home to plead for her future. Instead she shocks them both by saying yes. Her impulsive decision will have consequences neither she nor her new husband can foresee. For Miles has his own reasons for marrying her. And Abigail is harboring a secret of her own. As distrust gives way to desire . . . as, together, they give in to the pleasures of the marriage bed, a devastating scandal threatens their future. Now these two wary hearts will risk ruin and disgrace for a love that has changed them both forever—the kind all seek, but few ever find.

## **The Ideal Wife Details**

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## From Reader Review The Ideal Wife for online ebook

### **Jacob Proffitt says**

I don't think I've ever done this before: dnf a book because I'm afraid to continue. Or anxious? The thing is, I like both main characters a lot and they're happy. They're obviously in love and they're married and they like each other and it's only a bit over half-way through the book. In order to continue, that has to change. They need to become unhappy. And all the things Abby is keeping from her husband need to blow up in her face. And that means he'll feel betrayed or at least disappointed. And I just can't. Because the payoff is to get them back to where they are now, only without the hidden bombs. Which Abby could probably diffuse if she'd just talk to her husband, but no, she's being a coward.

So yeah, three stars because it was in solid four star territory, but I can't bring myself to go on...

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### **Audrey says**

Nothing groundbreaking here. Pretty generic, standard issue, decent, handsome-as-sin beta-ish hero. Even with that not-so-enthralling description, though, the heroine did not deserve him. She was ridiculously impulsive to a reckless, immature degree, and she and her TSTL moments vastly detracted from my enjoyment of this otherwise decent-ish book. Seriously, she was just annoying.

I couldn't really see how they were well-suited to one another specifically. Miles just seemed very easy to please, to be honest, and with his handsomeness, wealth, and kindness, it would've been hard for Abby not to like him. This was well-written, but it didn't really deliver a romance that I enjoyed reading, largely due to the heroine's antics.

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### **Leona says**

It's hard to be overly critical with a category romance. After all, given the word limitations and page restrictions, it's not fair to expect the same depth, intrigue, and character development as a full story. Yet surprisingly, quite a few authors actually do it, and do it well. Which is why the genre is so well loved. Mary Balogh built a career on it and became one of the most respected leaders in category romances. But, for some reason this book didn't quite deliver the punch I've come to expect from her. The premise was interesting. The story flowed smoothly. The characters were not cardboard cut out figures, and there was enough intrigue to keep me turning the pages. But, the story missed the mark.

My biggest issue was the heroine. Abigail, annoyed me. Most of her bumbling ways and thoughtless attitudes would be considered appalling even by today's standards. The thought that the "ton" adored her and found her amusing, was unrealistic. I did not like her endless lies to a hero, who deserved much better. Balogh overplayed her hand to the point I lost all respect for the heroine, and did not feel her worthy of one of the best heroes written in a category romance. Miles was just delicious. He saved the story with his kindness, charity, and willingness to put himself out there regardless of personal cost to his character and reputation. I just wished he had gotten a better partner.

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### **Preeti ♥? (Romance She Reads) says**

2.75 \*

So disappointing! And with that cracker beginning.

I absolutely adored the h (and the book) for about half the book and then I despised her! And that left me feeling stupidly inconsistent.

The H was okay but typically bland in ways of some MB Hs.

I'm too upset to put the rest in words.

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### **Rane says**

Very cute story by Mary Balogh, although not my fave from her. I still thought it very cute but sometimes annoying.

Abigail and Miles were the odd couple with a rushed marriage of convenience to help them both, with Abigail hiding herself behind the dull, plain woman mask, while Miles learns that his first impression of his wife wasn't very correct after all and soon falls in love with Abby.

I really love the story, but at times felt Abigail was just a little too much of a chatter bug to the point of being annoying and the misunderstandings that could have cleared up by telling the truth. Which I felt made the story drag on and on.

Overall, a cute story with a cute HEA of an oddball couple in love

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### **Iraida says**

Sweet Lord! The whole three stars go to Miles. Hadn't he existed, this book would have driven me crazy. I even thought about rating it with 2 stars but Miles didn't deserve it.

The ideal wife is an old-school romance (a.k.a. Traditional regency) which takes place in London. Our main characters meet when the heroine (that would be Abby) finds herself with no job and decides to take advantage of a really, really, really distant family connection with the hero (that would be Miles Ripley, Earl of Severn). But instead of getting a recommendation letter, she finds herself married to him and turned into a Countess.

This book was delicate and beautiful, thanks to the sensitive Miles (and, of course, Ms. Balogh extraordinary prose). At first I thought that Abby would be a breath of fresh air that could perfectly match this hero, but I slowly became bored at her dullness. How can someone make the same mistake over and over again? (view

spoiler)

So, in the end, I missed the lively and funny pages from the first half of the book because the second half was full of misunderstanding. Miles' common sense and love towards Abby were the two things that fixed this mess. I loved him! His tender heart, his patience and the way he accepted the fact that he was in love with his wife really touched me.

Mary Balogh has the skill to create love stories that are both realistic and powerful. She may fail at drawing some characters, but there's no doubt she has the ability to put up some beautiful stories that can at first seem very unlikely to happen.

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### **Sheryl Tribble says**

Not what I'd expected, going on the other Baloghs I'd read; checking the copyright, this one was written much earlier.

The title is ironic, but frankly the hero really is pretty much the ideal husband -- sends off his mistress the night before the wedding, even though he barely knows the woman he's marrying; adores his bride, even though she's nothing like what he thought he was looking for; and the rest would be spoilers, but he's pretty much perfect.

I didn't find the heroine as irritating in terms of chattiness as some did, but I wanted to give her a good thump for the lying. I didn't mind the initial "being on her best behavior" stuff, which gave hero the wrong impression, because part of that was just the heroine being overwhelmed, but then she started actively manipulating and lying to him after they were married and he'd shown himself to be a good guy, which did not please me. OTOH, the book covers such a short period of time, it's a bit more forgivable, because although the hero's near perfect, the heroine hasn't had enough time to be sure of that.

So a flawed book, but, for me at least, those flaws didn't ruin it.

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### **Indiana says**

Bleh. Mary Balogh had this format she used for a time in her earlier books where the heroine was keeping a secret from the hero and this is the driving point for most of the plot. I can tolerate it once in a while but after more than two books it gets annoying. For example I can deal with it in her book "Heartless" because I loved the hero in that one. This book features this plot device and it is ANNOYING. It starts off with a meet cute premise...the hero, the Earl of Severn, needs a wife to avoid being set up by his mother so he vows to marry the first plain manageable female who crosses his path who he can set up in his country estate and ignore. Enter an impoverished relative looking for a work reference so she can obtain respectable employment – Abigail Gardiner. She just happens to be PLAIN (and we are reminded of this constantly...what is it with Balogh and plain heroines?????) and seems meek and the sort who can be tucked away in the country. So he proposes marriage. She isn't stupid and recognizes it is much nicer to be a Countess than a governess so she accepts. Except she isn't as meek and manageable as she first seemed. And she's got a secret....\*enter annoying secret plot device that I hate\* Half the story could be avoided if the heroine just opened her PLAIN

mouth and confessed all to the hero. Who, of course, when she finally does is like all like...oh is that all? I love you, you are the light of my life \*rolls eyes\* \*chucks book in charity pile\*

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### **kris says**

Abigail needs a letter of recommendation, and applies to her distant, distant, basically-on-another-continent-distant cousin, Miles. Who happens to be a hot Earl. So, he asks her to marry him because REASONS. (Mainly that she's plain and demure and WHY THE HELL NOT RIGHT.) Except feelings get in the way!!! OH NO.

1. MOC BOOKS WHY DO I LOVE YOU SO MUCH. This wasn't even that good because basically 10 minutes after saying "I do", Abigail is like "SO I AM ACTUALLY A SASSY, PRETTY CHATTERBOX!!! SRY!!!", which. I was looking forward to the gradual discovery of *more*; that careful realization that the person they thought they had married was merely a mask for something better, something deeper, something *true* and I didn't get that at all! He's 150% A-OK with her being the antithesis of what he wanted in a wife because, idk, sex or something?

1.5 Of course SHE'S PRETTY HOW COULD SHE BE OTHERWISE OLDKJKGJFSDLKJ

2. I was really disappointed by the heroine's immaturity. She just keeps...hoarding these various secrets and while yes, they were kind of Serious, they're also... things that should be shared with a married partner??? I JUST DON'T KNOW? TRUST? HOW DOES THAT? FUNCTION?

3. Meh.

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### **Melissa says**

Oh dear, oh dear. First of all, I really like Mary Balogh's writing. She has a lovely style and her stories (well, the three I've read, anyway) have a humanity and warmth that I really appreciate. I'm glad she's such a prolific author, since it gives me a lot to look forward to reading in the future.

That said, this book was a bit of a disappointment. It started out strong, with one of my favorite historical romance tropes, a marriage of convenience that blossoms into love, but as the story progressed there was no *there* there. The obstacles between the husband, a socially prominent and very wealthy earl, and his bride, a down-on-her-luck lady's companion whom he marries in order to avoid wedding the snooty debutante earmarked for him, are almost nonexistent.

Yes, she has secrets regarding her less-than-savory family history, but as each one of these secrets is revealed, the husband is completely unperturbed and accepting. He has swiftly fallen in love with his bride (like, within a week), thinks she's kind and lovely and adorable, and doesn't really care that she has all these messes in her background. Or that she's a jabbermouth, even though he thought when he proposed that she was shy and demure. Or that she's always interfering in other people's lives in order to match-make and help them, even though he thought he would hate to marry a woman who poked around in other people's business. The guy is, frankly, too good to be true. Rich, swooningly handsome, almost instantly smitten, and completely supportive and kind.

And then there is the heroine, who drove me up the wall! She was a good soul and meant well, but her chatterbox tendencies and inability to think before speaking and acting got old quickly. And for a long stretch of the book she was lying and hiding things from her husband, when just a simple conversation with him would've straightened everything out.

This felt almost like an early draft of a book that could've had much more depth of characterization and a more interesting plot. The bones were there for something good, but the flesh was never added to the bones. I'd give this 2.5 stars, I think. It's a pleasant enough way to pass a few hours, but it might not leave you completely satisfied.

For a truly excellent marriage of convenience story by Mary Balogh, one with complex characters, genuine and compelling conflict, and a lot of emotional resonance, read *Slightly Married* instead. It's much superior to *The Ideal Wife* and one of my favorite HRs.

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### **Mo says**

Completely predictable and very farfetched... but that's ok. I wanted something easy-peasy.

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### **Linda says**

I would call it fate. Others would say it was a disaster-in-the-making. Either way Miles Ripley, the Earl of Savern, was expected to marry. He was thirty years old and an only son; his mother and sisters were expected to visit any day and he just knew they had someone in mind. But the young lady wasn't whom Miles wanted as a wife.

So, when Miss Abigail Gardiner unexpectedly showed up at his residence there was, naturally, a bit of confusion. Abigail was expecting a much older gentleman; she believed Miles was the Earl's secretary. She was in dire straits and needed a reference. Without it, she would be living on the street.

The young woman was plain in looks and, at that moment, mild in spirit; Miles was looking at his ideal wife. After identifying himself and inquiring as to why she was visiting him, he did the unthinkable: he proposed marriage. At first shocked, Abby accepted his offer thinking he can't be serious, can he?

I am the first person to admit I have a hard time reading about insta-love and insta-sex. Mrs. Balogh infused those ideas into a plot that dealt with hardship among the working class. *THE IDEAL WIFE* covered roughly three weeks with various misunderstandings that caused some expected bumps in the road.

It turned out that Abby was both naive and feisty. She also avoided telling the truth when Miles approached her, after their hasty marriage, with honest questions. (view spoiler) I read the romance because Miles was such a sweetheart. He deserved happiness.

After all, it was fate.....

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## **Amy says**

Really dumb misunderstanding and pointless secrets.

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## **Kit says**

Mary Balogh is one of my favorites but the Ideal Wife might not have been the best choice to republish with a new cover. The details were all "too much". The plot was too much, Abigail was too much and bordered on annoying, Miles was too much, too good. I would recommend reading Mary's newer more polished and crisp work. The Slightly and Simply series. Because I liked those so much I was buying what was on the shelves, I found the Secret Pearl to be a disappointment as well. I think that I'll try her new Huxtable series and leave her older works on the shelves.

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## **Zel Polev says**

This is so terrible that I am considering not finishing it even though I have endured 80% of the story. It follows a destitute governess Abigail and an earl, Miles. Their big character flaw? They don't make sense. Abigail is a nearly destitute woman but once she has money, she has no problem spending it and not making any savings. Miles, he is marriage shy. So what does he do? He marries.

This was such a frustrating read because Abigail is so over the top annoying. I don't like her because she is loud. I don't like her because she is dumb and she has no scruples spending someone else's money. She accrued a 7500 pounds of debt within a week and it was so galling to read someone like that. She lies compulsively and doesn't even have a respect for her husband to tell him the truth, the source of money. She doesn't think about the damages she makes. In the end, it is all about her. I don't like her, not because she is demanding, I don't like her because she is demanding and dumb, a scary combination. She demands outrageous schemes with no heed to her actions. Her character flaw wasn't really that she was demanding and independent. She just talks a lot about nothing and that is supposedly charming. The only way she could get away with it is a convenient fast love.

Of course, that is engineered by the author. Miles falls in love with her when they get married. I don't know why. The fantastic conversations happen off screen because I don't know what she could possibly say to delight him. The conversations in writing are mediocre at best, nothing to flutter your heart. It was just terrible. They have known each other for a week and Miles just smiles at her supposed quirky nature.

I guess what I dislike the most is that for a character who supposedly supported her family through hard times, she was remarkably dumb. I saw no evidence of her hustling. It is either she is delusional or she transformed into another person.

I could deal with the love fest in the beginning but the bait and switch characters the author did was too much. I dislike both of them immensely because they were poorly written. Miles looks at her way too fondly for a man who is married to a stranger. She is too free with someone's finances. I felt for Miles' friend, who clearly saw she was no good, but has to hold his tongue because he loves her.

I suppose the biggest flaw in this book is Abigail. She was supposed to be charming. I was supposed to fall

in love with her. I was supposed to see her mismatched pairings and really dumb schemes to be cute. No. Whatever she is serving Miles, I'm not getting. I'm not in love with her and she can't get away with her schemes. This book is terrible.

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