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COULDN'T HE PRETEND...JUST A LITTLE?

Laura had always been used to taking second place to her pretty younger sister, Joyce. If Joyce wanted something, she got it! It was, therefore, no surprise to Laura that when she fell in love with the attractive Dutch doctor Reilof van Meerum, he chose Joyce instead. But when Joyce walked out on him to marry another, richer man, Reilof asked her to marry him. He needed a wife, and Laura, it seemed, would do as well as anyone. So she accepted?but could she really expect to be happy with a man who did not love her?

The Hasty Marriage (Best of Betty Neels) Details

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Kathy * Bookworm Nation says

Oh boy, I was not a fan of this one. I don't even know where to begin. I will say, it was clean and the premise was interesting. The execution just left a lot to be desired. Laura was okay, your likable plain-Jane with a huge heart. She's lived in the shadow of her gorgeous younger sister her whole life and has little self-esteem as far as her looks go. I was disappointed Laura NEVER stood up to her sister; personally I would have cut Joyce off. She'd be much better without her in her life. Rielof was awful. I'm sorry, but I just didn't like him, at all. While Laura falls in love with him at first sight, he does very little to actually earn that love. Laura somehow finds things to admire in him, but his treatment of Laura was awful. Laura was a fool to marry him, at least under the circumstances. He wasn't abusive or anything just said unkind remarks and neglected her quite a bit. They have no chemistry together, horrible communication skills and I have serious doubts about their relationship. While the ending was predictable, it was unbelievable. I think if we had seen them spend more time together had actual conversations I might have bought it. As it was, their conversations were not only few and far between, but lacked any depth and were too short to really build any kind of relationship. (Don't even get me started on the word "super" used throughout the book!)

Overall, a disappointment.

Content: Clean. I was actually surprised to find this was published by Harlequin, considering how little romance was actually in it.

LuzAdri says

First book that I read by this author. I don't know how to describe how I feel about this book. I liked the premise, but somewhere along the lines it felt rushed. Laura fell in love at first sight and since the book is from her POV I never felt how or when Rielof fell in love with her. I could tell he would be jealous of the time she would talk to Jan, but other than that nothing of romantic inclinations towards her. His family was very nice, her sister is a very different story. Joyce was very hateful.

Kat says

I actually mostly enjoyed this one. It's still a Betty Neels book, but the main character more or less acted like an adult human through it and did things and didn't put up with all of the hero's dickishness.

Aayesha Khatri says

Review to come.

Clare says

This book kind of took me out of my comfort zone, I've read Betty's stories where the H is engaged to another woman which is fine because to the h that woman is a stranger and the H always ends up falling in love with the h and then he finds a way to break up that engagement and alls well that ends well but in this book I found it a bit uncomfotring that he proposes to the h Laura's spoilt little sister and when her sister elopes with another man, Laura who in my eyes has no dignity or pride decides to marry him in her sister's place and he basically tells her that she is second best.

I would have been happier reading the book if Laura despite being in love with the H had just packed up everything she had and then tells the H that her sister belongs to him now and then she moves on to a better life and then marry someone who loves her and puts her first but as from what I've written above she doesn't lol.

I did like that Laura had some backbone and that the H Reilof did get jealous when she made friends with his younger partner, I didn't like how she kept comparing to herself to her sister and it made me chuckle when Reilof tells Laura he basically married a similar woman to her sister years ago and yet he couldn't see that history would have been repeating itself, he wasn't very tactful towards her and most of the time he kept her down without knowing it and obviously her sister comes back and causes trouble which makes Laura eventually leave which I was happy about as I was hoping throughout the book that she would but Reilof eventually finds her and basically tells her she's no longer second best and it's a happy ending all round but I think in the future that if her sister came back free and single he would probably take her as his mistress because to me that what her sister is stereotyped as in these books lol.

Mou says

Definitely, the trope was not my liking but I was just trying to get out of my comfort zone!

I didn't like it.

The heroine was always the second one when it comes to family. The heroine's parents were unashamedly biased toward their second child. And the result was a spoiled kid who just likes to play mind games with others just to make herself happy! Not new, right!

The hero was courting the spoiled sister and they were about to marry but she eloped with a rich American! So, the heroine, the older and responsible one agreed to marry the hero just for convenience sake. she was also secretly in love with the hero So, she hoped someday the hero will forget her sister and fall in love with her. She literally accepted a replacement option and my question is where is your dignity women?

Well, what happened after the hasty marriage? Just some here and there friendly zoned talking, little bit jealousy show and misunderstanding drama. Then out of nowhere hero said ILY and HEA.

I just didn't feel any connection. Some of this kind of books have sexual tensions but this book failed in that departments too! I was just bored!

The book was safe through!

My first try of this author and I am not sure if I should read any more of her books.

Claire says

Betty Neels does marriage-of-convenience stories -- lots of them. But I believe this is the only MOC where the hero Reilof admits upfront that he's in love with another.

What I like:

1. Martha/Mary complex. Background info: In the bible, Mary was the one who worshipped at Jesus' feet while do-gooder Martha was the one with household tasks to finish. (Unlike Jesus, I always sympathized with Martha more....)

From the start, we immediately see the contrast between the heroine and the sister when two visitors dropped in for a visit. The heroine, like the biblical Martha, was slaving in the kitchen while the younger sister went to entertain the guests, one of whom was the hero. There's a poignant instant there when the girl simultaneously recognized the hero as the one she had been dreaming of and realized that she was hopeless beside her beautiful sister.

2. The gauntlet. I think this is the only BN where it was the heroine who actually proposed. Reilof's distaste was evident when he said, "Good God, girl, if it comes to that, I might just as well marry you." But then the heroine threw down the gauntlet and she challenged him, "Then why don't you?" He merely accepted the challenge.

3. The Other Man (OM). There's nothing like the scent of an imagined suitor to rile up the green-eyed monster. But what did the hero expect? True, he relegated her to the sidelines but did he think she would continue on with a half-life?

4. Lost and found. But if I were really to torment him, I would tweet from various localities so he wouldn't know where to look.

I know Shakespeare warns that a "hasty marriage seldom proveth well" but an HEA is believable in this case.

Leona says

I think this book is either a hit or miss for readers. There is definitely no in-between. The key being whether you can forgive the hero enough to believe in their HEA. Sadly, I couldn't.

First, Laura is not your typical BN heroine. She is a doormat to her sister and everyone else. She falls instantly in love with a man who is not worthy to wipe her feet. She is very one dimensional with only one train of thought I love Reilof, I love Reilof, I love Reilof. Frankly, I got bored with her pretty quickly.

Secondly, the hero, is very self-serving expecting the world to revolve around his every whim. He also was

atypical of BN heroes, who are absolutely "to die for", "swoon" worthy! The author tries to allude that he was just infatuated with Joyce (OW and sister of Laura), rather than in love. Therefore, when Laura accepts his mad proposal, we are lulled into believing this great romance is about to begin. Yet, that never happens. The truth of the matter is, Joyce and Reilof were much better suited to each other. Laura should have served him up to Joyce and run like hell back to London screaming for freedom.

Finally, I felt the writing was not up to Betty's normal standards. I actually found myself bored with the descriptions of key family events, and drives through Holland. Normally I am mesmerized by these types of scenes, but the chemistry between the two just didn't exist so these filler moments were dull.

For me this was not one of Betty's best.

Teri-K says

Suppose the man of your dreams gets engaged to your beautiful, spoiled, much younger sister. Now suppose she dumps him, leaves you to break the news, and he proposes to you. (Come on, it's a romance, it doesn't have to be realistic.) What will your life be like now?

I quite enjoyed how the author milked this situation, giving us the heroine's concerns, reactions from co-workers, etc. I wasn't as in love with the last part, where the jilting younger sister comes back into their life. But it's a Neels and of course our heroine will get her HEA. In the meantime we get a clean story full of clothes, food, servants, travel, lovely furniture, interesting family - and a short break from the pressures of real life. What more do you want?

Barb in Maryland says

This book is one of the high-points of the Neels canon, and one with the most widely divided opinions about the Rich Dutch Doctor. You either think Reilof becomes worthy or that he's a total ratbag! You see, dear old Reilof meets our plain heroine, Laura and her younger, very much prettier sister, Joyce at the same time and is so bowled over by Joyce that he proposes after knowing her for only a few weeks.

Joyce, the opportunist that she is, dumps Reilof for Larry, American Millionaire--writes him a dear John letter and elopes with Larry.

In a fit of pique he snarls that if he can't marry Joyce, then it doesn't matter who he marries, and our martyr heroine says why not me? (Classic Neels--she fell in love with him at first sight).

So the last two thirds of the book is a Marriage of Convenience type story. A very rocky marriage--with Laura getting the short end of the stick. I think Reilof makes one too many Joyce remarks and is very, very slow on the uptake. Laura is not a total doormat, however, and holds her own.

Lots of angsty fun, but since this is Neels, there is a happy ending, and I do believe in it.

Reader says

Hands down my favourite Betty Neels book - angsty goodness all the way.

StMargarets says

Betty wrote one novel with the Harlequin Presents formula and this is it. I love HPs and I love Betty, so this is catnip to me. Many readers never warmed up the hero and can't forgive him for being so mean to the heroine. Others thought Laura, the heroine, was too much a martyr. To me, they're acting very much in character in an extreme situation.

Laura, a nurse, falls for the new Dutch doctor at first sight. He seems interested in her until he meets her younger, prettier sister Joyce. Joyce and hero get engaged. Laura is heartbroken, but sucks it up. Joyce ditches Dutch doctor to elope with a rich American. Laura has to tell the hero and he takes it badly. Laura proposes a marriage of convenience and he takes her up on it out of spite.

(view spoiler)

Fiona Marsden says

This is one of my favourite of Betty Neels Marriage of Convenience stories. It is a bit more emotional because we all know the hero was madly in love with the heroine's sister Joyce until she dumped him.

Not caring at all Reilof marries Laura but doesn't treat her well, more or less ignoring her and keeping her cut off from his working life and rarely spending time with her.

The return of Joyce, just when Laura is starting to think Reilof might one day become fond of his wife is a severe blow.

I've read this one a couple of times and enjoyed it each time.

Kay says

4 Stars ~ Joyce was the apple of her father's eye; she was young, beautiful and full of life. She'd tried various jobs but nothing seemed to agree with her, so she decided that she'd marry well. Laura loved her younger sister, and she knew that Joyce would always outshine her. Several times a year, Laura's Godfather traveled from Holland to visit them, and this visit he accepts a ride from his friend Rielof. When they arrive, Laura's delighted to see Godfather, and when she looks into Rielof's face her heart recognizes him as the man she's been waiting for all her life. To her dismay, Rielof only has eyes for beautiful Joyce. Laura returns to London where she is a ward nurse at a busy hospital and much to her surprise Rielof is a consultant on her ward. Her sister calls her to tell her she has her sights on Rielof and prefers it if she were to stay in London during her off shifts. This is more than fine with Laura and soon she gets the call that Rielof has proposed. The weather warms up and Laura has to go home to change out her wardrobe. She arrives early on Friday hoping to be long gone again well before Rielof arrives. Her father and Godfather are out, but Joyce is home and she's busy packing. At first Laura thinks she's eloping with Rielof but Joyce confesses she's found

someone richer and they're off to America. Packed and running out the door, she hands an envelope to Laura for Rielof. All Laura can do is pray her father arrives soon but that's not to be, and so she's the one who has to break it to him that his fiancee has just jilted him. When Rielof proposes a marriage of convenience, Laura accepts, hoping that some day he'll feel more than friendship for her. Just as they settle into a routine, Joyce turns up and she wants Rielof back.

Betty Neels wrote several marriage of convenience stories; this is the first I've read, and the first where the heroine falls in love at first sight and has to be patient with the hero. I felt horrible for Laura, though older, she'd always took second place to Joyce. I wanted to smack Rielof a few times and cheered when Laura finally let him have it. I would have liked a stronger ending, however this one was very satisfying.

Pamela Shropshire says

This has an unusual plot in The Canon. The hero, Reilof, falls in love with someone other than our heroine. The OW is the heroine's younger, more beautiful sister, Joyce. Joyce is a spoiled brat, to put it simply. Reilof is apparently a sucker for the type, since he was previously and unhappily married to the same type. Typical man - didn't learn anything.

Laura falls in love at first sight. She is there to pick up the pieces of his broken heart when Joyce jilts him. He treats her quite nastily, but she excuses him because of said broken heart. A marriage of convenience ensues.

Reilof's Redeeming qualities.

1. Rescues dog hit by car and repairs his legs in Casualty.
2. Even before he knows he loves Laura, he is jealous of her friendship with his partner, Jan.
3. He acknowledges that he has treated her badly.

But he doesn't know how to give gifts.

1. (Family jewels - rubies, not THOSE family jewels) "The eldest son's wife inherits them. I can hardly take the credit for giving them to you."
2. (Blue Fiat) "Hardly a present, more a necessity, I should have said."

Laura's optimism.

1. She is encouraged by the blandest of compliments: "You put your hair up." "You're a nice girl, Laura." He tells her she is "long-suffering, patient, understanding, but never beastly."
2. She tells herself she is "beginning to fit nicely into his life."

Very satisfying ending - Laura's runaway; Reilof's search - it takes nearly a week to find her and etches lines of worry in his face; his declaration of love; implied future conjugal activities (hopefully in the "enormous bed" in the hotel bedroom) resulting in children and a HEA!

I reread this in late June 2016. I had much more sympathy for Reilof. After all, I am of the opinion that one cannot help falling in love; one cannot help feeling emotions but can only control one's actions relating to those emotions.

So, he falls in love with beautiful Joyce, a chimera, yes, but as he says himself, "Very likely I shall find

reality far better than the dream, but I have to forget the dream first."

I think that in spite of his emotional state, he did notice little things about Joyce that were "off." Then after he and Laura are married and she is so genuine and unselfish, he sees the difference between them, which leads to him beginning to love - genuinely love - Laura. And in the face of this real love, his emotional love - infatuation, as Uncle Wim calls it - quickly fades painlessly away.

And so, I think that Reilof may be the most human of all our RDDs. Yes, many of those have had similar pasts with their mostly-dead-FFWs, but all the anguish is off-stage.
