



# Till Next We Meet

*Karen Ranney*

Download now

Read Online ➞

# Till Next We Meet

*Karen Ranney*

**Till Next We Meet** Karen Ranney

## WORDS OF LOVE

Catherine Dunnan is devastated when her beloved goes off to war - and only his promise to write often can sustain her in her loneliness. And what letters they are, filled with heartfelt emotions that move her to respond in kind. But then the unthinkable occurs. He is cruelly lost to her, and his beautiful words of passion and devotion cease forever.

When Moncrief agreed to write warm and loving missives in a fellow officer's name, he never expected he'd become so enamored of the incomparable lady who answered them, a woman he has never met. Returning to England to assume the unexpected title of duke, Moncrief is irresistibly drawn to the beauty who has unwittingly won his heart. More than anything, he yearns to ease Catherine's sadness with his tender kisses. But once she learns his secret, will his love be spurned?

## Till Next We Meet Details

Date : Published April 26th 2005 by Avon

ISBN : 9780060757373

Author : Karen Ranney

Format : Paperback 384 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Historical Fiction

 [Download Till Next We Meet ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Till Next We Meet ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Till Next We Meet Karen Ranney**

---

## From Reader Review Till Next We Meet for online ebook

### Jultri says

4.5/5. Another beautifully written book by this author. A wonderful tale of how a woman's darkest days of heartbreak, melancholy and isolation can be slowly banished by one man's single-minded application of patience, devotion and passion.

---

### Miranda Davis says

After *The Lass Wore Black* (5 stars easy peasy for me) I wrote: Have read review summaries of this and I will hold off until I've forgotten the first KR novel I just read and loved. The premises seem to have too many similarities, even though I'm sure the H/h are different. Still, the hero here saves/falls in love with a weak/sick/addicted/wounded woman who is the target of a murderer's plot. Authors doing the same thing BUG me. That said, or ranted, KR is a wonderful storyteller and once TLWB has dimmed in my sieve-like memory, I will return to this and read it with pleasure.

-----

Sept. 30, thank God for my shitty memory, I picked this up off my stack, remembered vaguely that I'd enjoyed another book of hers, title lost to the mists of my mind, and dove in.

GREAT gadzooks! I'm loving this and for very different reasons than the other book. I LOVE knowing up front what a mush the battle-hardened colonel is from his perspective, writing in the stead of a lout captain under his command, falling in love by letters with the Captain's heiress wife who is smart, caring and sensitive...we don't see what he looks like or have much sense of his physical presence, just what's in his heart. (Warmed, runny, manly marshmallow, yum.)

When the shit captain buys a well-deserved bullet (I assume), the colonel has to write one last letter, lying to this woman so dear to him, extolling her miserable husband as a soldier who died honorably.

Next we are shown the widow, now fallen deep into despair, and see how her rotten staff allows her descent and may be enabling her own slow suicide -- all over a man who wasn't what he seemed on paper.

Cut back to his POV: Unable to let her be, the colonel makes a condolence visit on his way to his ducal estate when he's returned to Scotland. (The dukedom was something as third son he never expected.) What and who he finds are nothing like he expected. She is not a small, fair beauty but a tall, wasted, gaunt woman dying by inches with a complicit and disloyal staff of servants allowing it to happen before their eyes.

So the new duke takes charge. He saves her from overdose, marries her and sweeps her off to his imposing castle with some of her staff in tow.

THEN, bless the author for this, we finally SEE him from HER perspective. He's nothing like her tender-hearted, now-sainted husband whom she mourns. But yowza, hero jackpot, IMO.

I LOVED THIS! I LOVED BEING LET INTO A MAN'S HEART BEFORE SEEING HIM -- and seeing him through her eyes. He's a bossy, big man with a cold manner and stare. I LOVE knowing he's the tender romantic she fell in love with, looks notwithstanding. I'm all awwwww and Siiigghhhhhh!

And i CANNOT wait to see how she realizes this brusque, hard-eyed man who forced her into marriage is the one she came to know and love by post.

AT the end:

Well...I did enjoy this pairing though one of the overarching themes apparently is 'don't ask, don't tell.' I did like the heroine, Catherine for getting a few things off her chest and clearing the ducal castle of the familial irritants the way she did. And I did like his playfulness and patience.

HOWEVER,

I did not understand why he never told her he wrote the all-important letters. Time after perfectly appropriate time in the plot and in their developing relationship, he bites his tongue instead. No good reason is given until he's refrained way too many times for my patience and frankly his 'concerns' weren't very compelling, given his desire to win her heart. Instead, they begin to communicate via mind-blowing sex. He's not the only one holding back. She doesn't mention it when she finally pieces together that he wrote the letters until the end and it's an after thought. Why? Just to be annoying to the reader perhaps. (Worked like a charm.)

In other words, after that cracker jack opening, I was primed for a revelation that would up the ante between these strangers in love without knowing it, but instead they avoided the most obvious basis for their feelings for 200 more pages! That's not to say they don't fall in love or deserve to, that they don't face dangers and grow closer. They do. I guess by the time the author of the letters is revealed, the idea is, they love each other for more tangible reasons (mind-blowing sex) than just mind-blowing correspondence.

So, it began as a 5-star read and devolved to less than 4 because of the I-won't-tell-you-the-most-important-thing-to-us-ness of the story.

The pacing and the characters of *The Lass Wore Black* were much crisper, their motives more understandable and their choices more affecting to me. They just made more sense and their badinage was much wittier.

---

## **Pepa says**

Hay temas que quedan en mi opinión, demasiado rápidamente resueltos (vamos, que en dos hojas soluciona toda la intriga), pero en general, la historia entre ellos es muy bonita.

De esos libros en los que lo importante es la evolución de los sentimientos y de la relación entre ambos  
Una grata sorpresa

---

## **Caz says**

### **4.5 stars, rounded up**

I read this book in response to one of the prompts for the AAR Days of the Week Reading Challenge, which was for Wednesday - *Read an epistolary novel, or a book where letters, phone, text or email messages are relevant to the story.*

I like epistolary novels in general – I've read several classics like Fanny Burney's *Evelina* or Laclos' *Les*

Liaisons Dangereuses, but I haven't read too many when it comes to more recently written titles, so this was a prompt I was keen to take up. I had a few options on hand to choose from: Laura Kinsale's *My Sweet Folly* or Connie Brockway's *My Dearest Enemy* are both books in which letters exchanged by the central characters play an important part, but in the end, I went for Karen Ranney's **Till Next We Meet**, which has a flavour of *Cyrano de Bergerac* about it.

Moncrief (and I'm never sure whether that's his first or last name, as he's rarely referred to as anything else), a Colonel in the British army serving in Canada has, for some months, been writing to the wife of one of his officers – Captain Harry Dunnant – because the man can't be bothered to do so himself. It's not as though Moncrief makes a habit of doing such things, but the letter Harry laughingly tosses at him touches him deeply; Catherine Dunnant pours her heart and soul into her letters and Moncrief is able to discern the loneliness that often lies beneath her words. This speaks to something deep inside him: Moncrief is a respected officer and commander, but he has been in the army and away from home for fourteen years, doesn't have any strong family ties and is a very lonely man at heart. He tells himself at the outset that he will simply respond to Mrs Dunnant's letter in order to allay her fears about her husband, but when she writes in response, he is unable to resist the temptation to continue their correspondence, even though he knows it is ill-advised. Months pass, and Moncrief comes to realise that he has fallen in love with the witty, generous and loving woman who shines through in the letters. The correspondence has to come to an abrupt end with Harry Dunnant's death, and Moncrief believes that the letter he writes to Catherine, advising her of her husband's demise will be his last.

Some months later sees Moncrief travelling back to his home of Balidonough in Scotland as the newly minted Duke of Lymond. A third son, he had never expected to inherit lands and title, but his years in the army have most definitely prepared him for running a large estate and directing lots of servants as well as imbuing him with an air of authority and command. On his way home, he cannot resist paying a visit to Catherine Dunnant's home – and is shocked to find an unkempt and somewhat addled young woman still in the throes of deep grieving who is clearly being seriously neglected.

Returning the following day, Moncrief finds Catherine near death from a laudanum overdose. It's touch and go but he saves her life – only to be accused by the local vicar of compromising her. Without stopping to question his motives too much, Moncrief marries her and removes her to Balidonough as soon as she is well enough.

Catherine is still in an agony of grief over Harry's death and doesn't remember her re-marriage or, in fact, remember much of anything. She immediately senses that Moncrief is a good man, and finds his assertion that he married her because she needed rescuing to be somewhat disconcerting – but is not ready to surrender her heartache and make a new life for herself.

**Till Next We Meet** is a terrific story, beautifully told. Moncrief is a hero to die for – he's already more than half in love with Catherine right from the start, and isn't afraid to admit it to himself. Outwardly, he's autocratic and severe, but we already know from his letters that inside, he's tender-hearted and rather romantic. His self-confidence and competence are immediately attractive, as is the fact that he takes his new responsibilities seriously, cares deeply about his land and dependents, and wants to make their lives better. One of the things I really enjoyed about the way the author portrays him is that we don't get a physical description of him until Catherine starts to see him clearly, and then after that, that each time we see him through her eyes, she notices more and more about his physical presence and how absolutely gorgeous he is. (He's the hero of a romance – it's a given he's gorgeous!) But of course, he's gorgeous on the inside, too, and that's the man Catherine fell in love with, sight unseen.

While Catherine starts out as rather a pathetic figure, a woman whose (misplaced) grief is so strong that she is careless of her own life, as she recovers and gains strength, both the reader and Moncrief begin to see once again the young woman who wrote those beautiful letters, so full of love and longing. I appreciate that the author doesn't have her railing against her marriage and accusing Moncrief of all sorts of iniquity – she accepts the situation, and realises that sooner or later, she is going to have to make something of it. She does, however, have her own, subtle ways of letting her new husband know that she's not ecstatic about their hasty marriage, such as continuing to wear her widow's weeds, and the fact that she sleeps with "Harry's" letters beneath her pillow. But as the story progresses, she begins to regain her spirit, and I was almost cheering at the point in the story when she finally snaps and tells some obnoxious guests and relatives where to get off.

There are hints throughout the story that perhaps Catherine's near-death from an overdose had not been an accident, and later, an incident at Balidonough seems to suggest that either Moncrief or Catherine is in danger, but the author has kept the mystery element of the story very low key, giving priority to the relationship developing between her central couple. So it comes as rather a surprise – and one which I enjoyed – to find the tension ramping up in the later chapters as the plot and culprit are revealed.

The relationship between Moncrief and Catherine is beautifully developed and presented, with Catherine gradually coming to appreciate Moncrief's sterling qualities and to value his company and his affection. The sexual tension between the couple builds slowly, and because Catherine has asked for time to get to know Moncrief better before consummating the marriage, it's fairly late in the story before things progress from heated looks and touches. But when it does, the passion between them is almost uncontrollable, and it's well worth the wait ;) My one criticism is that it took too long for Moncrief to own up to the fact that he is the author of "Harry's" letters; he is given several opportunities throughout the book to fess up, but each time, he shies away from it for no really compelling reason that I could fathom.

Fortunately however, this is a minor niggle, because the rest of the story really is excellent. The characterisation is strong all-round, with even the minor characters being fully-rounded, and the author has created an atmosphere that is sombre without being depressing or gloomy. The loneliness endured by both Moncrief and Catherine is vividly evoked, and their gradual coming together is a true delight to read; they are so deserving of happiness in their lives that the pleasure and contentment they eventually find with each other feels as though it has been fully earned.

---

## kris says

Moncrief, latest Duke of Lymond, visits the widowed Catherine Dunnan six months after her husband's death only to find her in the depths of sorrow and drugged out of her goddamned mind. So he does the logical thing: HE MARRIES HER. Except: he neglects to tell her that the man she's been corresponding with for the last however long is actually NOT her dead husband but MONCRIEF HIMSELF OH NOOOO.

1. YIKES. I'm going to get the grief-thing over with immediately because I do need to add my standard disclaimer that I have never experienced the loss of a spouse and so my language here is obviously mired in ignorance. That said: WHAT THE FUCK MONCRIEF YOU BASTARD??

There's this looming sensation that because Moncrief knew Harry (the dead husband) was an assbat, that his knowledge somehow invalidates the very real grief of those who lost him, most specifically Catherine. It's

implied several times that she needs to just "move on" and get over him; that she shouldn't be wearing her widow's weeds anymore (NEVER MIND THAT HER HUSBAND HAS BEEN DEAD FOR ONLY SIX MONTHS), and that—most egregious of all, to my jaded eyes—she is a fool for clinging to the letters she believes are from Harry.

I find this goddamned despicable. Grief is not a one-sized fits all burlap sack, and while there's that ever present "historical accuracy" gnat buzzing around, I don't feel its healthy to idealize the actions of a man who treats a woman who—in her eyes—has just lost the man she spent *months* connecting with via very personal, very romantic letters. Nor is it romantic to belittle and insist that a person in the throes of grief should act or resolve or *feel* their grief in a certain way. ABSOLUTELY there are unhealthy avenues of grief, but for starters: MONCRIEF HAS A VESTED INTEREST BECAUSE HE WANTS TO GET IN CATHERINE'S SKIRTS. It has very little to do with what she *needs* to grieve in a healthy fashion: it has everything to do with seeing her 'better' so she can get on with her wifely duties to Moncrief.

What Moncrief is, and what he fails to acknowledge in any explicit way, is jealous.

And this is obvious once he finally has a conversation with Catherine about her former husband and she reveals that she fell in love with him via the letters. And he keeps taking that thought out to coddle it because he wants Catherine to love *him*. If not for the absolutely shitty way he treats her grief earlier in the novel, I would honestly be unbothered by any of this. Or if he at least *apologized* BUT HE DOES NOT.

So, ultimately, my reading of Moncrief was spoiled by this very real sensation of raging horror because a man who can't understand *why* Catherine might be sad is just...not my kind of hero.

2. IN ADDITION: the marriage between Moncrief and Catherine takes place the night she nearly dies from what appears to be a laudanum overdose. She is insensate for the ceremony.

So then, OF COURSE, within 48 hours once they're firmly ensconced in the Ducal Estates, Moncrief tells her she will have to resign herself to the marriage and OH YEAH he'll be needing heirs like ASAP and sure he'll give her a month but THAT'S IT then it's SEX TIME BABY.

I MEAN WHAT THE FUCK. He basically kidnapped this poor woman OUT OF *HER* HOUSE, married her without her explicit and sober consent, and then tells her SHE HAS TO JUST DEAL WITH IT? I DONT. I CAN'T.

THIS ISN'T ROMANCE.

3. There's also this plot that puts our heroes in ~danger which is semi-ridiculous.

3. All my raging against Moncrief aside, I do feel some frustration for Catherine as well? In a less toxic way, I feel, but in a way where I never fully felt like she was an understandable or relatable heroine. I was super down with her figuring out the letter thing because I need more heroines resolving the outstanding mysteries that surround them. GET IT, CURIOUS GIRLS.

4. The sex was: sex? IDK. It was, perhaps, not my favorite element to the novel (not that there were many favorite elements....): the act was mechanical and I read the word 'nipples' so many times that it lost all meaning.

---

## Juliana Philippa says

**Reread in 2018:** *updated rating from 5 stars to 4 stars; still a great read!*

---

*Till Next We Meet* is a beautiful Scottish historical romance with a Cyrano twist. The two main characters are excellent - by themselves and for each other - and interestingly complex; their romance is really one that slowly builds, making it completely believable and that much more precious - and the chemistry between the two is fantastic ;-). There were also a few well-executed plot twists and I only really guessed - or rather suspected - one of them before it was revealed, which was a nice change from the books where the villain is so painstakingly obvious.

### Summary (from back cover).

*Catherine Dunnan is devastated when her beloved goes off to war - and only his promise to write often can sustain her in her loneliness. And what letters they are, filled with heartfelt emotions that move her to respond in kind. But then the unthinkable occurs. He is cruelly lost to her, and his beautiful words of passion and devotion cease forever.*

*When Moncrief agreed to write warm and loving missives in a fellow officer's name, he never expected he'd become so enamored of the incomparable lady who answered them, a woman he has never met. Returning to England to assume the unexpected title of duke, Moncrief is irresistibly drawn to the beauty who has unwittingly won his heart. More than anything, he yearns to ease Catherine's sadness with his tender kisses. But once she learns his secret, will his love be spurned?*

**Main Characters.** The main characters of Catherine and Moncrief are wonderfully written and extremely vivid and the excerpts of their letters to each other throughout the book really add to the novel. This is only my second Ranney book, but in both this one and *An Unlikely Governess*, there is a real loneliness to the H&H and to the story itself - secondary characters exist and are always interesting and three-dimensional, however the main characters and their relationship always seems very isolated, as if her stories take place in a somewhat cold and harsh world. I'm not saying this as a criticism, but rather just an observation. I will say that either way, it serves to truly highlight the main relationship and to really focus on its development.

**Other Characters.** I did not like the character of Glynneth (Catherine's companion) and definitely think she should have been changed. Oddly enough, for most of the book when we're supposed to be unsure of her I actually was fond of her, but how she was in the end towards Catherine, which I think is actually supposed to make the reader feel better - or at least like things are resolved - only made me feel worse.

The evil Dowager Duchess Juliana is an odd add-in because she makes all sorts of trouble at the beginning and then kind of just disappears from the story. (And P.S. out of all the historical romances I have read, the name "Juliana" has rarely been used, however in the instances that it has, the character is always mean/evil/bad ... wouldn't mind reading a HR where my name is used for the heroine or at least a likable secondary character!!!)

**Criticism.** The final scene wasn't as satisfying as I would have liked, though it's hard to pinpoint why - maybe too much sentimentality, not enough drama, no epilogue to follow-up ... I really don't know.



**Bottom Line.** This book is absolutely wonderful and it will definitely be a reread and recommend for me!!

*June 2009*

---

### **Linda says**

I am sincerely doing my best at trying to avoid spoilers so I will tell you the best part of TILL NEXT WE MEET: the letters. I found some wonderfully-written correspondence with deep emotional thoughts that travelled between a recently married lady and the man *she thought* was her husband. Catherine Dunnan was barely married a month when her husband left her to serve in a war on another continent. The historical romance started off with this misunderstanding *but because the reader knew it from the beginning* it was easy to accept; the letters and this issue drove the plot.

Moncrief was Harry Dunnan's superior. When he gave Dunnan his wife's first letter, Harry let him know that he was **not** going to respond. Instead, he inferred that Moncrief could write Catherine if he chose to. Lonely but with the best of intentions, Moncrief did but he signed each letter as Harry, her devoted husband. And so the ball started to roll with those little white lies. Then Harry died, Moncrief returned home and when he visited Catherine, he found her in deep despair.

*All of this occurred in the first few chapters.*

Now to those finicky details. (view spoiler)

The ending of the story did not come soon enough for me. And that was a shame because TILL NEXT WE MEET could have been an awesome romance.

---

### **✿ Minesha ✿ says**

No matter how many times I read this story, it's never enough.

*Sigh*

So poignant.

So so beautiful.

---

## **Joanna Loves Reading says**

4.5 Stars. This was an heartfelt and emotional read. This is a story where the heroine and hero fall in love through letters, and I am a fan of the theme. Maybe it's because so many romances' conflict comes in the form of a lack of communication, but the letters theme is one way for open communication. When well done, you get beautifully-worded sentences that are exchanged between the main characters. Ranney certainly delivers on that front.

Moncrief is a colonel in Canada during the 1760s, and when a soldier under his command ignores letters from his wife, he takes on the task to respond to her. Catherine thinks she is corresponding with her husband and pours her heart out, and Moncrief does the same. Catherine is informed of her scapegrace husband's death, and she falls into a deep depression. When Moncrief calls to check in on her, he saves her from a nearly deadly dose of laudanum and is caught in a completely innocent but compromising position, causing their hasty marriage.

This story has sadness and joy. It has characters and love that grows and don't feel artificial. It also has many twists and surprises, many of which are very unexpected. Perhaps too unexpected or unnecessary at times, which is my only complaint. Overall, a lovely, well-written book.

---

## **Mahak says**

In love with each word of this book! Beautifully written, full of emotion , gripping plot & deep characters. Catherine fall deeply in love with her husband through their letters exchange...news of his death shattered her world. Moncrief-the Duke who did the sin on writing behalf of Henry(her husband-a very bad man) went to have just one look of her. Her pathetic condition & his honor (well his heart too) made him marry her. And the delicious war of confusing emotions began.

**How do I battle a ghost, especially when that ghost is me.**

I can paste the whole book here. This is my 1 attempt by this author. Realy she has such away with words. Enjoy hereitung so much. Going to check other books by her.

---

## **Sombra says**

En realidad, no le he podido continuar, así que le he dejado por imposible por ahora. Y mira que me da rabia, porque nunca he dejado ninguno sin terminar!

No sé si es que no he logrado conectar con la historia o que la verdadera aventura empieza más adelante y la primera parte es más "lineal" por así decirlo, pero lo cierto es que ha habido momentos en el libro que me han chocado muchísimo y que han hecho que no vea el libro con muchas ganas. Es posible que la culpa sea mía, porque hay muchos libros que he leído con situaciones en histórica más inverosímiles, pero en esta ocasión, antes de rechazar el libro por completo, he decidido relegarlo para más adelante. Tal vez le coja con más ganas.

---

## Natalie says

You know the song Dust to Dust by The Civil Wars? This book kind of captures that song, for both the hero and heroine.

You're like a mirror, reflecting me  
Takes one to know one, so take it from me  
You've been lonely  
You've been lonely too long  
We've been lonely  
We've been lonely too long

This was kind of a reverse Love in the Afternoon (by Lisa Kleypas) situation. Catherine Dunnan is in Scotland and she writes to her husband who is off fighting a war in Quebec... except she's not. Because her husband is kind of an asshole and doesn't care for her letters. Moncrief, our hero, is the one who takes it upon herself to write in his name to assure her that Harry Dunnan is alive and well. But then the letters keep coming and going, and both Catherine and Moncrief have developed feelings for each other, except that of course Catherine thinks she's in love with her husband. Then Harry dies, and the war is over and Moncrief comes back to Scotland, and takes it upon himself to visit the grieving widow and also really, he's curious to see the woman he fell for. And she is a WRECK. There's more to this than just grief, but that's plot stuff.

Anyway add in a marriage of convenience and you have a bunch of tropes that I ADORE. Catherine is uprooted from her family town to Moncrief's ducal estate that he's inherited after his dad and brothers died. Self-sufficient, stoic and inherently good hearted and caring but probably emotionally more reserved because of a very austere upbringing. Catherine I think has had a rather loving upbringing, but she naturally has a reserved temperament, but that doesn't mean she isn't assertive, which she is when she comes out of her grief. So this was a very interesting dynamic because i felt that both Catherine and Moncrief were well suited because they had very similar temperaments.

Of course there's the whole secret about the letters hanging over Moncrief, and he actually doesn't angst as much about it, but enough for me--- I liked that he wasn't over the top brooding and angry and lashed out of Catherine. I really liked how mature Moncrief was in that sense... But his beautiful angst gave me internal monologues like this:

"Dearest Catherine, I am home again in a place I dreamed of for so many years. And I've brought you here, a woman who confuses, irritates, and charms me. You love with such fervor that I wonder if you will ever surrender Harry, life is for the living, Catherine, and I wonder if time will teach you that essential lesson.

How do I battle a ghost, especially when that ghost is me?

The world Ranney created was rather vivid to me, I could see the halls of Balidonough and imagine the landscape well enough, and that somewhat harsh Scottish landscape really added to the melancholic beauty of the love story in this book.

---

## **Lady Wesley says**

When my friend Moss puts an HR book on her "clutched-to-my-bosom" shelf, attention must be paid. And so, I enthusiastically turned to this inspired-by-Cyrano book, even though I had not before heard of the author.

Catherine Dunnan pines away at her Scots estate for her husband of one month Harry, who is fighting the wars in North America (the French and Indian War as it's called in the U.S.). Harry is a bounder in every way, and he cruelly ignores the heartfelt letters she constantly sends. Harry's commander Moncrief takes up Harry's offhand suggestion that he should respond to them, and thus begins a correspondence between the lonely bride and the even lonelier colonel, posing as Harry.

Fortunately for everyone, Harry is killed. Moncrief unexpectedly inherits a dukedom from his elder brother, and upon his return to Scotland pays a visit to the widow. He finds her near death from laudanum and saves her life. When the obsequious vicar suggests that Moncrief has compromised the lady, Moncrief impulsively marries her on the spot and carries her away to his fabulous castle, Balidonough. Will Catherine, still overwhelmed with grief for Harry, ever accept Moncrief as her husband? What will happen when she discovers -- and we *know* she will -- that Moncrief wrote all of the beautiful letters that she clings to?

## **What I Liked**

- Moncrief! Not a tortured hero, but certainly a sad one. As a third son, he never expected to inherit a dukedom, so he made the army his career. Although never close to his father or elder brother, he nevertheless regrets not having reconciled with them. He takes his new duties seriously and wants to improve the lives of his servants and tenants. He loves the Catherine he discovered in her letters, and he burns with desire for the Catherine he has married. (And, of course, like all the best HR heroes, he's tall, muscular, handsome, and blessed with a big beautiful wang. Prim, proper Catherine can't take her eyes off of him, and we begin to wish that this book came with full-color illustrations.)

- Catherine and Moncrief together. It takes a long time for the two of them to come together, but when they do -- wow! Have patience, because it's worth it. (And as Moss said, "I think if there's a nut to crack in HR, it's that you want to keep the squirrels apart and looking for it for as long as you can.")

- Surprise! About two-thirds into the book, we learn that there's a villain, and I was totally blindsided. Very well done, Ms. Ranney.

## **What I Didn't Like**

- There's nothing not to like, with one possible exception. Balidonough sounds like a fantastic place, but there was way more description of the rooms, hallways, keeps and secret passages than we need.

- The shrewish Juliana and the retiring Hortensia practically disappear, which was really too bad, as they added a touch of variety to the story.

- The ending was a bit abrupt, and I would have enjoyed learning a bit more about the fates of the secondary

characters.

### **What Bugged Me**

The writing is excellent, but here's where I vent about those little things that good editors should catch:

- The author refers to Catherine's ever-present ache for Harry as a "succubus," which is a *female* demon believed to have sex with sleeping *men*. Huh? Perhaps she meant incubus?
- Moncrief is colonel of the Lowland Scots Fusiliers, yet Catherine recalls first seeing him in his Highlands Regimental uniform. Now I don't care about the difference, but those touchy Scots would run their claymores through anyone who confused the Highlands with the Lowlands.

### **Overall**

A totally five-star read.

---

### **Brandy says**

I really enjoyed this one. Both the hero and heroine act maturely (which can be rare in this genre). The heroine is overcome with grief for her husband when she ends up married to the hero. The hero had written her acting as her husband and fallen in love with her. This couple has a lot to overcome - the hero's deceit, the heroine's grief, annoying family members, and a plot to kill the heroine.

I did find the hero's initial descriptions of the housekeeper as an angel and so attractive etc to be off putting. I even reread the description to make sure he the heroine wasn't the housekeeper. Regardless, after that initial weirdness with the housekeeper, the hero behaves as one dreams a hero will, and it's easy to fall for such a strong, loving man.

I really enjoyed the slow burn romance and the mystery. Everything worked well together and this was a very solid story. I did suspect we'd learn more of the Jacobites, but we didn't, and I liked that it wasn't predictable.

4.5.

---

### **Mei says**

A truly touching love story.

I loved the hero, Moncrief! He was such a fantastic man! He's not totally alpha, he has no caveman tendencies, but he's still deliciously commanding! But he's also very tender and very honorable! Loved,

loved him!!!

Also the heroine, Kate, was great! She started like a grief stricken woman: she was suffering the death of her love. That he was not her love was beside the point. That I'll discover only later on. I didn't liked how much self-destructive her grief was, but still I found it very touching.

The letters were very poetic and very old-fashion romantic!

A different, but very, very good historical romance!

---