



The Bittersweet Bride

Vanessa Riley

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Widow Theodosia Cecil needs a husband to help protect her son. The former flower seller turned estate owner posts an ad in the newspaper, and no one is more surprised than she when her first love, the man she thought dead, reappears.

Ewan Fitzwilliam has been at war for six years. Now, the second son of a powerful earl is back but his beloved Theo needs a husband and will not consider him. She believes Ewan left her—in desperate straits—so she denies the feelings she still harbors for the handsome, scarred soldier. Theo and playwright Ewan must overcome bitter lies and vengeful actions that ruined their youthful affair. Theo must reveal her deepest secret in order to reclaim the love that has long been denied.

The Bittersweet Bride Details

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Author : Vanessa Riley

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From Reader Review The Bittersweet Bride for online ebook

Krystal says

This captivating novel of historical fiction provided well developed characters attempting to navigate difficult situations where desperate pursuit of their dreams threaten the integrity they hold as dear!

Lovey Dovey Books says

Published on Lovey Dovey Books

In my experience, historical romance has never been as diverse as Vanessa Riley's *The Bittersweet Bride*. Theodosia Cecil is a widowed, former flower girl, now the owner of a successful flower farm. Because of her late husband, Matthew Cecil, Theo is left with a home and money to care for herself and her son for eternity. Still, she faces resentment and unfair treatment because of her background and skin color. This is especially so when it comes to Ewan Fitzwilliam.

Ewan and Theo fell in love, but his family were completely against the relationship. Off Ewan goes to war and a mix up sends false notification of his death. Theo was the only one who didn't know he actually survived, but she's still left with a baby on the way and no place to call home. Fast forward six years, Ewan and Theo are reunited and Theo is looking for another husband to stand as protection for her son.

The set up of the story is spectacular with bold characters and colorful landscape. The one thing that holds me back from absolutely loving this story is the slow build up and repetitious dialogue that never really evolves from Theo and Ewan talking about their past. It is a point of contention between them, but it's never taken further or explored in deeper context. On the other hand, Theo's friends offer enlightening conversation that paints a wide view of the society Theo lives in and her character.

Out of tragedy comes hope for a better future for Theo and her son. She is one fierce heroine who knows what she deserves and you'll be rooting for her all the way. Vanessa Riley offers readers a romance that will appeal to fans of Alyssa Cole and Beverly Jenkins!

ARC provided in consideration for review

Robin says

The H/H of this book both came with fascinating backstories that almost make me want to see prequels for both of them. Everything they went through, individually, made for a very interesting road to romance for them. The secondary characters were also interesting, and would make me pick up the next book in the series.

There were some repeated themes in the books (and phrases) that I thought were overused. You can hammer something home, and then you can over hammer...well, you get the point. Also, the villains in this book were all entirely believable and made sense, though one of them made me really sad.

Very entertaining. I enjoyed it.

Petula says

Widow Theodosia Cecil is so desperate to find a new husband, she is advertising for one in the paper. The reason is to protect her young son, and her home from her son's guardian. The man only wants control of her fortune and business. Because of her appearance and history, the man could easily take it all.

Ewan Fitzwilliam has returned home after his time in the army. He was once believed to have been killed and carries the scars.

The past has not been kind to our protagonists. Our hero made bad decisions and his family we're incredibly cruel. Our heroine loved her husband and felt safe with him. She needs to feel that again.

This is a historical romance with a big twist. The prejudice our heroine and her friends face must have been very difficult in those days, even in England.

An emotional and intense story that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Tqwana says

Originally posted on 80booksblog.com

The Bittersweet Bride is a fitting title for the romance that unfolds in this novel. It is full of conflict to get to that HEA. Maybe a little too much conflict. There's the heroine Theo vs. the hero Ewan's family over ownership of her home Tradewood. And Theo trying to do what's right for her son. And the unwanted advances of the villain Lester. And Ewan and Theo not trusting each other after a failed romance six years prior. The actual newspaper ad part of Advertisements for Love gets somewhat lost in all of this. There's also the class, social, economic, racial, and gender politics of the day to contend with. It feels a bit overwhelming.

I loved learning about Blackamoors in England; this was my first encounter with even the term itself. It'll be great to explore that more with future books in the series. I'm especially curious about Theo's friend Frederica (and possibly Ewan's brother). Though Ester will probably surprise us. It's always the quiet types...

But, the strength and heart of the novel is Theo, who, as previously stated, faces an uncommon amount of odds - her race, her low birth, and the secret she must keep to protect her son. But, her strong will and determination shine brightly. Theodosia Cecil is actually too much woman for Ewan Fitzwilliam. That man was lucky to win her heart again, tbh.

And look at that beautiful updated cover! This is what Vanessa Riley deserved in the first place...

I received this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review

Bhriv says

The Bittersweet Bride, written by Vanessa Riley, is book 1 of the Advertisements for Love series.

I've read other books by Riley and I'm sure this is my favorite by far!

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I found it easy to follow and most engaging! My favorite characters were

Ewan and Theodosia. Ewan was from a wealthy family with a lot of money and too much pride. Theodosia was a woman who learned the hard way through everything in life starting with being born to a woman of lower standards and then falling in love with a man whose family thought they were better than others. In the midst of it, she found shelter for a time from a caring friend who defended her...until he passed away and then she was on her own against the world and with a son to protect.

I love the way Riley shows passion and romance in a controversial time and place while showing it in a classy clean read. Throughout *The Bittersweet Bride*, I saw many times how these characters kept looking back at all the mistakes made instead of finding forgiveness and hope in difficult situations...learning the hard way.

Strongly recommend reading this book. I received this book from NetGalley. All thoughts and comments are my own.

Michaelene says

DNF @ 35%. I loved the idea of this one, and I was disappointed I didn't love it as much as I had hoped.

My biggest issue with this book was that the male lead could not be redeemed, IMO. Ewan constantly puts Theo down. Calling her a gold digger and schemer simply because she married when she got word Ewan was presumed dead. Then, it seemed he just wanted to hurt her and do the most damage, deciding he was her judge and juror. It didn't make any sense why he would attack Theo in this manner. The toxicity of him as a character turned me off entirely.

Theo herself, however, was marvelous. Determined to succeed and stand up for herself, she wants to get remarried and puts an advertisement in the paper. There are secrets and worries and just trying to be herself...I admired her to pieces.

On the other side, my love for her only made me even more aware of how Ewan doesn't deserve her.

Honestly, Theo was the only reason I read as long as I did. While this was a miss for me, I did enjoy the author's writing style, the unique plot, and the amazing heroines. I definitely will look for more from this author.

I received an ARC via the publisher on NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Reviewed by Michaelene from The Librarian's Corner.

Kaelan Rhywiol says

*I received an ARC of this book courtesy of Netgalley and the publisher in return for an unbiased review.

This is a 3.5 star review, but goodreads only allows whole star ratings.

I really wanted to love this book, and parts of it, even most of it, I definitely adored. It hurt me though. One of the attitudes the author must hold, because it came through in her character, Theodosia, hurt me so much.

First. The things I loved.

This is a very well written book, the pacing, plot, twists, the turning points and the romance are all exactly where they should be. There isn't any sex in this book, so it's a safe read for ace readers trying to find romance without sex. There's a bit of teasing (nipping fingers) and some kisses, but that's it.

I loved the characters and really felt their conflict, most of their motivations and the history is almost spot on.

The description is lovely, but could be deepened a bit so that I felt the emotions more.

I loved the historical accuracy depicted. The types we so rarely see in historical novels of how prevalent black and mixed-race people were in the UK in the 1800s. That alone makes it worth reading if you can overlook its flaws.

I liked the interesting uniqueness to the premise of a newspaper bride in the UK. Usually we read stories like those set out west in America. The star-crossed romance, second chance romance and enemies to lovers tropes were carried out flawlessly, those aspects I really enjoyed.

It was definitely a good enough book to keep me up long past my bedtime.

Now, on to the content warnings and what I absolutely hated.

I needed content warnings on the language. Theodosia is mixed-race, and it would've been REALLY nice, as I'm also mixed-race, to have a heads up on slur words that have been thrown at me all my life.

Content warning on the early and frequent usage of mixed-race slur words in a way that was intentional, to make the reader feel the pain Theodosia feels about them.

Content warning on disability as a plot device, disability porn.

The slurs stung. They were meant to, so the words did their job, but I really needed a content warning on that. I still would've read the book, but it would've prepared me and they wouldn't have hurt so much.

I didn't like how Theo's eyes were described, 'almond-eyed' gods I get so sick of that term. Really, there are so many ways to describe eye shape that that phrase is just over-used and needs to be shoved down the coal-chute of writers everywhere.

It's also massively inaccurate as a method of describing East Asian eyes, which is usually what people are trying to do by using it.

Here... you can read more on the subject here. [Writing With Color-Describing Asian Eyes](#)

But the thing that I hated about this book was how Theo thought about her son.

SPOILERS

Phillip, Theo's son, is going deaf. There is SO MUCH guilt, shame, and wanting to fix her kid that I don't know how Theo can even be believed as loving her kid.

I hated this so much. I'm physically disabled and it absolutely hurt me to read that.

I guess, maybe for people who don't have a close and personal experience of physical disability it wouldn't bother them? There wasn't a miracle cure, so at least the author avoided that, but gahhhh.

Sign-language is officially credited as being invented in 1620. But we have written records referring to it dating back to the fifth century BC. History of sign language.

By 1720, the British manual alphabet had found close to its modern form, so I find it close to inexcusable that someone who obviously did their research with regards to history didn't mention Theo trying to have someone teach her son, who is depicted as going deaf quite rapidly, some form of sign language.

She has a doctor come in twice over the course of the book and doctors of the time period CERTAINLY would've known about sign language.

Instead, the focus is all on how Theo is going to 'fix' her kid. How she blames herself for what caused his injury (which wasn't even her fault? It was the actions of someone else? So just, editorially, that motivation makes absolutely no sense. It's much more believable that she'd be furious and out for revenge on the people who ACTUALLY hurt her kid.)

That hurt and took what could have been an absolutely amazing book down several notches. It also hurt to read.

I and my kids are autistic and I have never wanted to fix them. We live with the constant knowledge that society wants to 'fix' we autistics out of existence, and often? It's the 'autism mommies' who want to erase us.

Moms like Theo, who blames herself and vows to fix her kid. IE: (quoted from the book) "She'd never give up on trying to make her son whole."

Instead of giving him the tools he needed to get by in the world?

That's the worst sort of disability porn there is. It's a plot device.

Disability. Is. Not. A. Plot. Device.

I can't repeat how much I hated that part of the book.

It really could have been as close to perfect as a sex-free romance could ever be for me.

I do hope if the author chooses to depict disabled characters again that she takes a hard look at that ingrained issue that so badly exposed itself in this book.

Being disabled isn't a tragedy. We can and do live happy, fulfilling, wonderful lives.

Being born different also isn't a tragedy, I don't know of many adult autistics who would want to be 'fixed'.

And yes, absolutely, I'm very sensitive about this issue, but that's why we need to work so hard as authors to not do things like this that will hurt our readers.

With that all said, am I glad I read the book? Yes. It was more enjoyable than it was painful. It could've been

a LOT better if being disabled hadn't been used as a plot device and a great woe-is-me fest, but yes, it's a good book.

It could've been a GREAT one, and I think it's almost more painful when something that could have been phenomenal has such a massive case of the OMG whuts?

I'll be looking for more books by the author, I have a feeling the side characters in this one will be the heroines in the next two books, so I'll pick them up when I see them available.

The author is good at the storytelling peeps, she writes well and has a fascinating way of twisting the tropes in new and inventive ways that I don't see a lot of in historical romance.

So, do read it, just be aware that this is not what we should be doing with our disabled characters.

This would've been a 5 star review without that issue.

Toni Shiloh says

The Bittersweet Bride is aptly name. There is a lot of bitterness in Theodosia's life and I can't say I blame her. The struggles she went through broke my heart and endeared me to her. I wanted nothing but happiness for her, but I wasn't quite sure if Ewan was the answer.

Until I kept reading.

Poor Ewan! He went through just as much as Theodosia, although none of it was race centered. No, he had a father that wrecked havoc with his life. I felt sorry for him and eventually decided he was good enough for Theo. ?

If you enjoy historical romances, then you'll love this read. If historicals aren't your thing, please take a chance. You'll enjoy it.

Frankie Reviews says

This is such a sweet and tender story of not just love at first sight but second chances, I haven't read any of Ms Riley's work before, but I very enjoyed this new romance and she is definitely an author who I would read again.

It is so lovely watching as Ewan and Theo start to get reacquainted again their old passion for each other reignites. These are such a cute couple, as individuals and as a couple they have gone through a lot and they have many obstacles to get past before they can get their Happy Ever After.

It is such an interesting take on the Historical Romance genre, putting an ad in the paper to find a husband is such a modern concept and yet I do like how Riley has turned it and made it apart of the era. This book to me feels very modern and new, it has everything that your wanting in a historical romance but with freshness. It's a classy and enjoyable and it shows off the author's stylish writing and her love for this era.

It's a charming and well written book that takes you on an emotional journey, one that you are clinging to the hope that this journey will end in a very happy ending.

Natalya | TheIslandReader says

3.5 stars

The Bittersweet Bride is an apt title for this new historical romance by Vanessa Riley set in London that follows widow Theodosia Cecil and her one time love, Ewan Fitzwilliam.

Theo is recently widowed and needs a husband to not only protect her son but her fortune. She places an ad in the paper in hopes of finding a worthy candidate. Imagine her surprise when she walks out of a store after gathering her latest correspondence from potential husbands and sees her presumed dead lover, Ewan.

Theo and Ewan were together six years prior to the events in this book. Ewan thought Theo to be a golddigger after listening to his vengeful father. Theo thought he was dead and is shocked to see him after all these years.

These two obviously had a lot of love for each other despite all the lies and past hurt they both endured. They were very stubborn though and admittedly, I wasn't very fond of Ewan. He constantly put Theo down and never seemed to be able to fully forgive her. Many times throughout the book, I wanted to scream at him: "Either you forgive her or you don't, make up your mind!"

Theo was definitely the shining star in this novel and showed herself to be a strong and capable woman regardless of prior circumstances, hence why I thought the title was so fitting.

This was my first read by Vanessa Riley and I enjoyed her writing style and was interested in the plot with these solid characters. However, I thought it was a rather slow build up and became quite repetitive in the beginning. It wasn't until I got about halfway through the book that I felt the storyline really start to move.

Overall, The Bittersweet Bride was an engaging novel with characters you either love or love to hate.

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

books are love says

Received in exchange for a honest review.

this was a good book. I enjoyed seeing the sassiness in Theodosia. She was independent and loving but also smart and understanding. She knew that in her situation and where she was she needed to protect her son at all costs. She went through a lot to get where she was and now she is looking for a husband.

So she puts an ad in the paper and hopes she can find someone to help her and one she can get along with.

Never did she expect to see a ghost. Or who she thinks is a ghost. Once she gets over the shock she is angry. that is the one thing I didn't quite get. She is a smart women, why not think things through once you got home and see the bigger picture?

Ewan was a strong kind guy. He has a family life that is stressful to say the least. But he is also trying to make it on his own. He just got back and boy is he a little angry. He does seem to have a right but the whole picture again isn't being seen. He knows what his family is like and what Theodosia is like as well but time and hurt has blinded him as it did Theodosia. He though tries to get to know Theodosia. That starts as wanting to make peace between the families but ends because he loves her. there is also a secret that Theodosia has been keeping that affects him too. I loved how he didn't go nuts when he discovered it but accepts it and is decent about it.

These two are firecrackers apart but together they are fireworks. The banter is awesome. She keeps him in check and he pushes her buttons. The love and respect is there though. And as they figure out what exactly happened in the past we see Ewan morph into more of what Theodosia needs. He proves over and over how understanding and smart he is. Theodosia proves her pride and independence but also her capacity to love.

their journey to one another is strife with emotion and misunderstandings. As the make their way through all the anger, pain and deceit they emerge stronger and as a family. A good story that has you smile and laugh and hope they figure it all out and come together. It is great to see such sassiness and banter in a historical romance.

Xan West says

Note: I do not recommend this book for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, disfigured, or disabled readers.

2.5 stars

I have a bunch of mixed and conflicting feelings about this book.

The Bittersweet Bride is a tightly plotted, rather intense, deeply characterized, complex historical romance. I liked that although Theo is definitely justifiably bitter about what has happened to her, and is fighting for her survival, its a story that focuses on how she is taking action for herself to make her life better, despite rather considerable obstacles and restraints. Riley is a new to me author, and I will definitely be trying her backlist because this was so well paced, and unfolded beautifully.

For the rest of the review, please visit my site.

Bec_BookMagicReviews says

Theodosia 'Theo' Cecil will do anything to protect her son from those that wish to take him away from her. But the only way she knows she can protect him is to find a man to marry that can stand up for her rights. However, when Ewan Fitzwilliam, a man she thought was dead re-enters her life, Theo finds it hard not to think about the past and how good Ewan made her. Will Theo and Ewan get a second chance at happy ever

after, or will the vengeful actions of people they thought they could trust keep them apart again?

What a fascinating read Ms. Riley has delivered in this first story of her Advertisements of Love series where the main characters had me loving their back stories and had me hoping that Theo would give Ewan another chance; the dialogue was riveting, as most of Ewan's family are a piece of work and I could understand why he doesn't want anything to do with them; and the obstacles these two face on their journey to happy ever after had me hoping that Ewan would win Theo over because he still loves her.

Both the main characters were riveting due to their past, their back stories and their growing relationship, as Theo does her best to resist Ewan, but it seems she can't because he's always been 'The One'. Moreover, the heroine is strong and brave in dealing with everything she has including the horribleness of Ewan's family and how they treated her in the past. I also liked how determined she was to do anything she can to protect her son, which is proven by her need to marry someone that can help her. Will Ewan be the man she needs or will she end up marrying someone else? Will Theo be able to protect her son without immediately marrying? Yet, what I liked most of all about the heroine is the tight bond she shares with her son. He's her whole world and there's nothing she won't do to protect him, even if it means sacrificing her own happiness.

While Ewan, he's a wonderful hero and I couldn't help but sympathize with him when it comes to his family. He has a father that doesn't respect him and a mother that will do anything to make sure he doesn't end up with what she belongs to the wrong woman, even though Theo is the woman he loves and wants forever. I also liked the decisions he ended up making because there's nothing more important than love, family and happiness and Theo will always be home for him. Yet, what I liked most of all about the hero was how protective he was of the heroine and how determined he was to right the wrongs he made with the heroine in the past, which is proven by the huge choice he makes towards the end.

Overall, Ms. Riley has delivered a splendid read in this book where the chemistry between this couple was strong; the romance was sweet and heart-warming and showed how these two have never gotten over each other; and the ending left me completely satisfied by what the hero does to show the heroine that she means everything to him. I would recommend *The Bittersweet Bride* by Vanessa Riley, if you enjoy historical romances, the second chance romance trope, or books by authors Rose Lerner, Alyssa Cole, Beverly Jenkins and Cat Sebastian.

K.J. Charles says

This has such great historical detail and premise. But it's a "hero blames heroine for things not actually her fault" book, and I literally can't read those, to the point that if I did therapy I would want to spend time talking about it--this trope actually makes me *physically* uncomfortable and I honestly don't know why. Total "it's not you it's me".

If you don't totally freak out at unjust blame as a trope, this is that rare and precious thing, a historical that actually reflects the racial diversity to be found in Regency England, and was really well written where I got to. Will definitely grab the next.
