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Stephen Kenyon, Duke of Ashburton, has always taken the duties of his rank seriously—until shocking news sends him running from his isolating world of wealth and privilege to roam the countryside as an ordinary man. When he meets the lovely Rosalind Jordan, a foundling who has grown into an enchanting, compassionate woman, she stirs the deepest desires of his heart. Yet how can Stephen declare his love when he is haunted by the knowledge that made him flee his old life? And how can Rosalind risk loving a man who fulfills her secret dreams but can never be hers?

One Perfect Rose Details

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From Reader Review One Perfect Rose for online ebook

Dangermousie says

I have found a romance novel that made me bawl for half the book. Seriously. Ugly, gross crying that requires a box of kleenex and hiding from your family. I think it might end up displacing Laura Kinsale's Flowers from the Storm as my favorite romance novel.

Set in the later 1810s, the hero of the book is Stephen Kenyon, Duke of Ashburton (the older brother of Michael Kenyon from Shattered Rainbows, glimpses of whom I loved in SR though reading SR is unnecessary to get the brunt of this book).

Stephen is quiet, reserved man who has always done his duty, the right thing, what was expected of him. He's dealt with his screwed-up family, uncaring parents, loveless marriage that ended in his wife's death, etc with quiet dignity and unremitting goodness and never asking more from life. And now, at 36, his doctor informs him that he has stomach cancer and 3-6 months left to live. And for the first time in his life, Stephen rebels - he looks at his life and realizes how bleak and empty and loveless it has been - all his goodness and propriety and duty have been for nothing. Angry and despairing, he decides to do the one selfish, impulsive thing in his life - to go traveling incognito for a few weeks he has left of semi-decent health before he has to come back and put his affairs in order. To enjoy life before he has to die.

A week into his travels he runs into a troupe of traveling actors and his eye is caught by Rosalind Jordan, the adopted daughter of the people who run the company. He ends up traveling with them for a bit, relishing the warmth and kindness and trying to fight his growing attraction to Rosalind - as a dying man, he knows there is no good outcome.

This book is amazing. It is beyond amazing. I have no words for how amazing it is. Even if I did spend half of it sobbing and sobbing some more. (view spoiler)

I love the relationship between Stephen and Rosalind - both are so grown-up, both have scars of the past (Rosalind is a widow whose marriage was not happy), and both are just such good, good people. And Rosalind has so much strength and steadiness and brightness to give. But it's really Stephen who makes the book for me. He just might be the most amazing romance novel hero - watching someone so full of courage and dignity try to process the fact that he is dying without having truly lived, dealing with anger and grief and denial and acceptance and yet remaining unswervingly good despite his terror - oh, it broke my heart. And his discovering love and happiness even as his body is slowly betraying him is such a bleak contrast that I wept and wept and wept.

OK, I am not convincing anyone but a masochist to read this one, am I? But seriously, it is so amazing and beautiful.

(view spoiler)

Debra says

I don't care much for Regency books unless they are really good. This one is.

Stephen Kenyon, Duke of Ashburdon, has always faithfully fulfilled his obligations. He even married a woman because that was his obligation. She died, and sometime later Stephen is given a death sentence of his own.

He decides it is time for him to do the things he would like to do for a change. One of the things he does, is to set off on an adventure across country where he runs into a family of stage actors.

As he becomes sicker, and closer to dying, this is where the story really begins.

LaFleurBleue says

I really enjoyed this book.

The overall writing is rather better than most of recently written books and that really makes it pleasant to read.

The plot with some secrets, some fool play, some adventure, came along very nicely, without ever dragging for too long. It supported the characters' development and change over time, especially regards their relationship which came unexpected but felt nonetheless true and strong enough to last a lifetime whatever came to them. I liked that the secrets are not kept for too long, that both characters learn to trust the other and treat him/her like an adult. Their feelings felt humane and not only ink on paper.

Following this book I decided to go on reading all the others I had from this author, and wondered why I left those aside for so long.

Megzy says

4.25

My absolute favorite one in the series. I am a sucker for terminal illness romance but this one was so much more. It can be read as a stand alone. I don't think there was a character that I didn't care for in this book except the old already dead Duke... but I already hated him from previous books.

Gilgamesha says

This book is amazing! The struggle to come to term with death....the haunting uncertainties of whether there is a life after here...the need for love and fulfillment...all universal things that humans have grappled with and tried to understand since the beginning of time! MJP is a master of human emotions and portraying the dichotomies of human strength and frailties in the face of catastrophe of personal or larger proportion.

So why not 5 stars?

Ohhh because I am a very very very impatient reader...and right from the very first chapter I guessed the foundation for the plot and climax! I wish MJP had done without it...because for me it detracted from the poignant and real emotional journey Stephen embarked on...because the issue kept tickling my thoughts instead of allowing it to enjoy the blossoming love between Stephen and Rose...and towards the end I started

skim reading the book just so I could see the truth revealed....it annoyed me a great deal. Also some of the spiritual scenes became almost comical for me....the reincarnation claim was really ill fitting explanation for Louisa's behavior.

But despite all that you have to read this book. I cried a great deal, but I definitely recommend this book!

Keri says

Wonderful story and wonderful ending to a great series. I loved how MJP kept us apprised of the other couples throughout the entire series without being intrusive about it. I would love to see a reunion book done, but that is just me never getting enough ending.

Krista (I remember you, Min) (Critical) says

Rosalind and Stephen worked well together. They were nicely developed and likable. It was very refreshing how the two actually LIKED each other through out the whole book, and never got mad at each other. Yay!

I loved Stephen! He was such a different romantic hero. He was kind and nice and not overbearing or bossy. He was genuinely a really good person. I felt SO protective of him. And I loved his brother, Michael. Their relationship was sweet.

Rosalind's sob story was a little silly and pointless and overdone. It was a bit too much for my tastes, but...wasn't bad enough to knock off a star. The whole thing just felt too overdramatic.

Cris says

This really hit the spot. I *liked* Rosalind and Stephen immediately, and I enjoyed watching them get to know each other and fall in love. They're good people. Both have experienced pain but neither is defined by their traumas. (It's a relief to read about some likable characters who like each other rather than another tragic hero rescued by a saintly heroine.)

My only quibble, and it's a small one, is that the ending is a little too neat and a little too sweet.

One Perfect Rose isn't the first in the series, but I didn't experience any difficulties because of that. In fact *One Perfect Rose* reminded me of what Putney can do and I intend to read more in this series.

Carrie Olguin says

This is what a romance novel should be, two people falling in love, facing hardship and adversity together (instead of bickering and arguing and hating each other into love) - with a multi-dimensional (human not inhuman) antagonist.

Spoliers follow!

The prologue covers the heroines childhood trama. Read it. Don't skip over it like some readers do.

Chapter one opens with the hero (an unmarried duke) receiving a diagnosis of death from his physician, only three to six months to live. To cope with the news, our hero decides to take off alone for a while, to live without the restrictions of being a duke.

He meets a traveling band of actors, and one actress in particular catches his attention. For various reasons, he stays with the company under a fictitious name. While with the troupe, he falls in love with the heroine and marries her. Not until after the vows are said does the troupe find out he's a Duke.

By this time in the story I'd figured out that the pain pills the doctor gave him (and told him to take at least once a day or more often if needed) contained some type of poison. As the story progressed I kept wanting to shout "It's the pills! Stop taking the pills!"

Well of course, that would have ended the story too soon.

The ending wasn't a surprise, but it was satisfying. Most importatnt, I will remember this story months or even years from now. What I will remember most is that the hero and heroine spoke to each other with respect and admiration, sliding through the various stages from attraction to happily ever after love.

Ash says

3.75 stars rounded up to 4

Jacqueline says

I'm really fond of this book. I like ones where the main character thinks he's dieing and goes about closing out his affairs and doing the things he feels he should do before he dies. Of course since I like happy endings, I only like these books if the character doesn't really die. Here the hero sets off to travel and discovers love. I really enjoyed Stephen and loved the travelling players he meets. Well drawn main characters and secondary characters.

Christine says

Intense. But in a good way. This was an amazingly romantic story, honest and heartbreaking, and it kept me riveted from page one.

Stephen, the Duke of Ashburton, has three months to live, six on the outside. After receiving the news, he fills two saddle bags with supplies and takes off alone to come to terms with his mortality. He might only have been gone a week, but when he saves the life of a boy who might have drowned into the river, he becomes a part of the boy's family -- a traveling theater troupe. He particularly stays for Rosalind, a foundling child rescued by Thomas and Maria Fitzgerald when she was 3 years old, roaming the streets of

London. Now she's 28, longs for a home of her own (as much as she loves her family, she is really no actress), and here is Stephen -- clearly a nobleman, but hiding from something.

I did guess part of the ending -- though I was pleasantly surprised to learn the why of it. But even if I had guessed at the whole thing, Stephen's pain was real....both physical and emotional. He was dying, and he didn't know how to deal with that. Neither did Rosalind, when she learned the truth.

I thought this was an utterly amazing romance novel. Don't read it if you're in the mood for something light and fluffy, but do read it if you're looking for raw emotion and powerful themes -- life, death, love, and forgiveness.

www.christineamsden.com

Sue says

Those of you who know me, know I rarely give out 5 star ratings. So take that as a sign of a great novel, I laughed, cried and smiled until my cheeks hurt. Touching is to soft a word but I can't seem to select another. Unfortunately this is not on audio, definitely an oversight... I would have gladly purchased it and listened to it immediately if that was the case. A great voice would have had me bawl I know. Definitely a HEA ending so have no fear... and that's the only spoiler you'll get from me.

BTW - I'm actually surprised I haven't read this type of plot in the past... in some ways it's an obvious one if your going for angst in your writing.

Corrine says

MJP definitely saved the best for last in the Fallen Angels series. Had I known that this one could most likely be read as a standalone (maybe reading Shattered Rainbows first, but not necessarily), I probably would have read it first, but at least I got to know a lot about the secondary characters on my journey.

Stephen Kenyon, Duke of Ashburton, is dying. His doctor warns him that he has 3-6 months to live, but probably will not make it all the way to 6. So Stephen - desperate to live what little life he has left - gives himself 90 days to live and begins a backwards countdown while he sets out by himself to find peace with his untimely death. A week into the journey, he stops to watch a troupe of strolling players, and is intrigued by Mrs. Rosalind Jordan, a minor character actress. However, he knows that beginning an affair, if the lady is even willing, isn't fair to either of them, and he continues his journey. Until he comes across Rosalind and her family, The Fitzgerald Theater Troupe, in trouble. After saving the youngest son, he is hailed as a hero, but due to a head injury, he accidentally leads them to believe he is Mr. Stephen Ashe, an itinerant gentleman. As he travels with him, first to recuperate and then because he is having fun, he and Rosalind form a tentative friendship that soon leads to something much more. When Rosalind finds out that Stephen is terminally ill, comfort turns to passion, and soon they are planning to be married. Luckily, the truth of Stephen's identity comes out easily, and the Fitzgeralds - including Rosalind - are accepting, although she is somewhat bemused to have gone from foundling orphan widow to the Duchess of Ashburton. She enters her marriage knowing Stephen is not long for this life, and though the thought grieves her, she is determined to make the best of what time she has left with Stephen, and she succeeds in doing just that.

There are a few quibbles (I figured out what was wrong with Stephen on page 8, and the resolution of Rosalind's origins is one of my all time Romancelandia pet peeves) and until I hit the last leg of this book, I knew I was going to give this "only" four and a half stars. But as I sobbed through the last 60 pages, and then finished it and continued to sob, I knew that this book deserves no less than five stars for a WONDERFUL conclusion to this series. A **must-read** for anyone who loves sweet but heartwrenching historical romance.

A+

Lois Bujold says

I followed this up from *The Bargain*. It's not quite the same trope but has resonances -- the dying hero -- I picked it out from its fellows in its series from the descriptions on Amazon, so it must be what I was (still) in the mood for. A staid duke (why must it always be dukes, these days? Isn't the lesser aristocracy sufficient? Rank inflation...?) gets bad medical news (happily for the rest of the tale, not the pox), and rides out alone to deal with it; he encounters a group of traveling players, and angst romance ensues. I quite liked the first half; the second seemed a bit overcrowded, and the ending slightly rushed.

It also worked quite well as a standalone, despite being a mid-series book. I very much liked that our male protag wasn't another Bad Boy type, a sort for which I have less and less tolerance with age. (My impression is that Heyer's heroes grew more sensible as their writer aged, too. It may be a common trend, as female writers get older and wiser.)

So... are there any romance novels with a dying *heroine*? Or is that role reserved for the guys, and if so, why?

Also, hurt/comfort -- why do (some of) we women readers and writers like it so much? Male writers are also quite willing to bang up their heroes, but it doesn't have the same tone -- demonstrating invulnerability rather than vulnerability, perhaps? What's up with that?

Mary Jo, by the way, wrote a very nice piece about the Vorkosiverse a while back, which may still be floating about somewhere on the Net, as well as being a chapter in *The Vorkosigan Companion*. And I had some musings about the genres in my Denvention speech, later partly recycled for the intro to *Love & Rockets* (not to be confused with the comic of the same title). Upon which the Bujold Dire Cover Curse still fell even tho' I only wrote the intro, sigh.

<http://www.dendarii.com/denver08.html>

Ta, L.
