



A Passion for Pleasure

Nina Rowan

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Prelude to a Kiss

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A Passion for Pleasure Details

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Author : Nina Rowan

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From Reader Review A Passion for Pleasure for online ebook

Joy says

COLORFUL LOVE STORY!!

Sebastian Hall must find a wife: his father gave him an ultimatum or he would be cut off from his inheritance. Should he do what he told his older brother, Alexander to, "get a sweet young chit...." for himself now? A few months ago, he could defy his father, but not now that his life, his career as a pianist, is over, in ruins and in debt. Then his brother, Darius, showed up and offered him an opportunity to make some money, mysterious but easy enough, it seemed. Until Sebastian ran into Clara Whitmore, who's not only his former piano student, but also the niece of the man with the information Darius wants. He could use his charm with her to get what he wants. It shouldn't be any problem: after all, he'd done this many times before with other women when he was still famous and his musical performance was much sought after.

Clara Whitmore, now Mrs. Winter, is a widow and has been living with her uncle this past year while trying to find a way to get her son, Andrew back. It's been her only goal this past year since he was taken from her by her father. Then fate put Sebastian in Clara's path again... her former piano teacher, her old crush since she was seventeen, the man she was in love with for years. An idea's formed in her head: perhaps Sebastian could be the answer to her dilemma.

He needs to marry and make some money. She needs help to get her son back. Clara proposes with the marriage of convenience that would benefit them both. But Sebastian didn't want that kind of union, nothing would be 'convenient' about his marriage, he'd make sure of that. He wants a real marriage in every way. Clara decides it should be easy enough to marry Sebastian; she loved him once before, after all. But she won't let herself love him again, not now, it would distract her from her efforts to regain her son. As for Sebastian, it's easy to fall in love with Clara, but does she love him for who he is now, or is she still in love with the man he once was? The story will take you on an adventure of two people who come together for a purpose, joined efforts to meet their challenges. They also discovered something about each other and of themselves along the way while trying to overcome their obstacles.

This is another wonderful story from Nina Rowan. I like her witty storyline and her strong female protagonist. Clara is that character, she has plenty of wit and determination, bewitching beauty, and abundance of passion when it comes to intimacy and love. Sebastian, on the other hand, represents the persona of imperfection in an otherwise expected stereotype of male protagonist. Rowan aptly compensates his flaws with other endearing qualities.

I was very impressed with Rowan's clever way of describing and correlating music with colors, she masterfully composed them with such artistic flare: colors in emotion and senses, in kisses, in passion... love, indeed is a full rainbow of colors. In addition, her perceptive analogies of things around us: from sunrise to sunset, of light and sound... to desire and sensuous feeling gave vivid colors to one's imagination. "A Passion For Pleasure" is the second book in the sensual Daring Hearts series and a colorful love story of trust and determination, of meeting challenges and a testing of hearts. This book easily found its way to my favorite shelf to be reread again and again.

Lisarenee says

Notes: I read the ARC (Advance Reader Copy) version of the book. Quotes will need to be checked against the final copy.

My Synopsis:

She (Clara) needed a husband.

He (Sebastian) needed a wife and money.

His brother needed the plans to a cipher machine, and he was willing to pay handsomely for it.

Her uncle had the plans somewhere in his workshop, and she would be willing let him have them for a price...

"Sebastian, I wish to present you with a marriage proposition."

Luckily, they each have a passion for pleasure.

"In music, counterpoint involves independent melodic lines that harmonize when played together."
Sebastian explained. "As in our situation, we can now give each other what we desire."

My Thoughts:

This is the second book in the Daring Hearts series by Nina Rowan. I did not read the first book, but didn't even realize this was the second book of a series until I went to write the review. Needless to say, you won't feel lost if you start with this book, but it's always nice to start with the first book of a series.

This was an extremely fun book. I loved that Clara's uncle created mechanical toys. In the first chapter we're introduced to Millicent, AKA the Musical Lady, who is one of many inventions of Clara's uncle Granville. Millicent is an automaton who plays four tunes on the harpsichord. What a fun profession and what a great uncle. When Clara's father pretty much disowns her, her Uncle Granville takes her in.

Clara is a smart, virtuous, and pretty young widow with unusual violet eyes. When Clara's husband, Richard, died he designated that custody of their son would go to Clara's father, Lord Fairfax. Knowing her father was in debt, however, Richard set up his wife's and son's inheritances so that her father couldn't touch them. Since her husband's death, her father has cut off all contact and communications with Clara. He believes she played a role in her husband's death. As a result, Clara has no contact with her son, Andrew, and is desperate to gain custody of him once more. Clara re-inherited Whitfield House, her family's estate which had been part of her dowry, upon her husband death. Unfortunately, the will stipulated she couldn't sell it or give it away. Her hope had been to trade the estate to her father in exchange for her son. Since she can't sell it outright, she hopes to marry so her future husband can arrange the exchange. Her new husband would inherit the property upon their marriage, and not be bound by the will's stipulations and could, therefore, trade the estate.

Sebastian Hall is the second son of an Earl. He's charming, handsome, a lady's man, and a former concert pianist. His career recently came to a sudden halt due to either an injury or illness which affected his hand. He's told nobody and is trying to deal with what to do with his life. His father has recently given him two stipulations--one, he take a wife and two, she be the type to make him a better person. Marrying someone

like Clara does satisfy his father's conditions, but she really wasn't what the earl had in mind. Lord Rushton had given Sebastian a list of women he thought would be suitable prospects. Clara, a woman who works for her uncle, had not made the list. While her pedigree is acceptable, a working woman is frowned upon. While it may seem he's caving in to his father's demands, Sebastian never does anything he doesn't want to and there is no doubt he wants Clara.

Overall, I gave this book **4 out of 5 roses**. A fun and sweet story. I enjoyed seeing this relationship crescendo from a mutual adoration into a full-blown romance/love affair. Clara managed to intrigue and endear herself to Sebastian in a short period of time by being herself. Besides her straight forwardness, I think Sebastian admired her for her deep devotion to her son, something his own mother had lacked for her children. Also, I loved how Sebastian ends up proving over and over, that in choosing him, Clara made one of the best decisions of her life. On the Lisarenee Romance Rating Scale, this one gets a **STEAM** rating--too hot for a fan, but you still have a handle on things. You should use extreme caution when reading a book with this rating in public. People may inquire as to why you looked flustered and flushed.

Literati Literature Lovers says

Title: A Passion for Pleasure

Author: Nina Rowan

Rating: 4.5/5 Stars I don't downgrade a star.

Genre: Historical Romance

Publisher: Grand Central

Prelude to a Kiss

A brilliant pianist and notorious rake, Sebastian Hall indulges his passion for music and women with equal aplomb. But now that his elder brother has married, his father insists he pursue a more respectable path and find a suitable wife.

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Review:

Sizzle, spice, intrigue, and exceptional writing are what you'll encounter in A Passion for Pleasure by Nina Rowan. The second installment of The Daring Heart Series, set in London England during the Crimean War,

has the second oldest Hall brother Sebastian as the tormented hero. Tragedy as befallen Sebastian and the cultured Bon vivant of the Hall family is a broken man, gone is his jovial devil-may-care attitude; for he is a husk of his former self.

Enter Clara Winter née Whitmore, a former piano student of Sebastian's as well as a girl he didn't bother to notice at the age of sixteen despite the fact that he was only a few years older. Sebastian was then the elegant sought after musical genius. What did he need with a girl like Clara who swoons while hanging onto his every word? He in truth had not even noticed her when she was his student. Clara is in Sebastian's sight, as he is he now on a secret mission for his brother Darius, and he will stop at nothing to fulfill his familial obligation, and set his own life's course. Clara too has deep familial obligations that she will do anything to fulfill. Both Clara and Sebastian are dealing with tragedy and hardships, and how they weather them will either unite or destroy them. What will happen when these two cross paths, both looking to accomplish their goals? Guess you'll have to read the book to find out.

What I love the most about Nina Rowan's books is the tapestry of emotions that she weaves with her words. The emotions of the characters are palpable, and you'll experience the story with its twists and turns right along with the them. Her plots are written in bright technicolor with colors added that you didn't even know were part of the literary palette until she revealed them, and then you'll wonder why all books don't have the same depth of texture to them. She paints a setting with such vibrancy that you can not only imagine it in your mind's eye but almost reach out and touch it. Rowan is an author not to be missed, and even if you have never read a historical romance, this series should be on your "to be read list." You just might discover a new genre.

Romancing the Book says

Reviewed by Rachel

Book provided by the publisher for review

Review originally posted at Romancing the Book

Nina Rowen, where have you been all my life? And why haven't I read any of our books before?

It took me around two chapters to get into this book and follow the writing style, which isn't a bad thing, I knew it would be good, there were just so many details to start out with that I wasn't sure if it was going to be an easy read or one of those reads that made me go crosseyed half-way through.

Sebastian Hall is the epitome of male beauty and talent. After years of playing all over the continent, he now uses his spare time to bed women, lots and lots of women. He's a rake and totally unapologetic about it. His father however has different designs for Sebastian, he wants him to marry. But Sebastian, feeling like half a man because of the secret injury he refuses to tell anyone about, doesn't feel worthy of any woman, let alone the ghost of one from his past.

Clara has always been in love with Sebastian. He was her piano teacher as a girl and now that she's a grown woman, she can't help but set her sights on him. Clara is insistent that the only way for her to get out from underneath her evil fathers grasp as well as get her son—is to marry and take the protection only a husband can offer. Besides, Sebastian is a powerful man from a very wealthy family, if he can't help her, all hope is lost.

I always struggle with stories where a child and one or both of their parents are estranged. It's nothing against this author's writing—it's just personal preference, it seriously breaks my heart, so once the "plot" thickened in this story, I really had a hard time witnessing Clara's pain and Andrew being pulled away from her over and over again. Her character was brilliantly written, although at times, it was hard for me to watch her at times ignore Sebastian's part in everything—or be willing to abandon him to be with Andrew even after he offered to rescue them both. So maybe it was the fact that he bled for her and promised her the world and she still didn't believe him. Regardless, the story was tight and really sucked you in.

Sebastian is the perfect man. No, really. He's amazing. He's talented, rich, arrogant but not too arrogant, oh yeah and he basically gets Andrew to start talking again after the child refuses to speak anymore. Regardless of what Clara said to him or did to him (aka breaking his poor heart) he still rescued her, and still loved Andrew, a kid who he barely knew, with his whole heart. The love story between them as a family unit was beautiful.

The twists and turns the book takes are expected but necessary, especially the involvement with Sebastian's dad, that reconciliation was a good one. ;)

All in all it was a fantastic read, I would give it 4 lovely roses. I'm not sure I would read it again because as I said before I have issues when kids are involved. BUT, I think any lover of historical romance would LOVE this book and obsess over it. Well done Miss Rowen, I hope to read more of your books in the future!

Keri says

Very good 2nd book. Nina writes very different heroes and heroines, more complex. I am looking forward to her next offering. Longer review to come. ..

Elizabeth ?Smart Girls Love Trashy Books? says

-POTENTIAL SPOILERS-

I remember how earlier this year I read the first book in this series and was pleasantly surprised. It was my first time reading historical romance, and it was such a good experience that I knew I needed to finish this series as soon as possible. And of course, I ended up really liking this one too.

I liked how this book pretty much picks up where the last one left off and shows all of the drama and scandal of the Hall family and what the various members are doing about it and how they're reacting to it. It really makes me wish there was going to be a book about Nicholas, as all the other siblings got their own books aside from him.

I liked how this book focused on automatons, AKA early robotics. Even though I'm not interested in the topic itself, it was still fun to read about them in a book, and how they fit perfectly into the time period. I also liked the main character in this book, although I wasn't really a huge fan of Sebastian. Maybe it was just the name, but I didn't really think he was as interesting as Alexander in the last book was. Sure, the two have some great sex scenes, but I didn't really think they had great banter or chemistry like Lydia and Alexander

in the last book had.

As usual, this book also had a nice pace to it. Not too fast, not too slow. Though I did feel the climax showed up a bit too late into the book.

Overall, I really liked this book and I look forward to finishing up this series!

The Window Seat says

Last year I had some difficulties getting completely swept away by Nina Rowan's debut novel *A Study in Seduction*, but there were enough good things about the book and her writing to make me curious about her sophomore effort. I'm glad that I did ask to read the second in the *Daring Hearts* series as *A Passion for Pleasure* improved upon the problems of the first, making this a very enjoyable read.

Sebastian Hall has returned to London in much lower circumstances than we had seen him previously. Sebastian was formerly the toast of the palaces and wealthiest homes in Europe, known far and wide for his musical gifts on the piano. But fate has seemingly robbed him of his gifts when he develops a weakness in the muscles of his right hand and arm, forcing him to abandon a respected position and return home. Having no income but for the allowance given to him by his father (with heavy strings attached), Sebastian accepts a job from his brother to retrieve the plans to an encoding device that were sent in secret to the home of a gentleman inventor. Sebastian isn't quite sure how exactly to approach the inventor for what he's looking for, but what he finds is the inventor's beautiful and somewhat familiar niece Clara Whitmore.

For the full review, please go to <http://www.thewindowseat13.com/2013/0...>

Mary - Buried Under Romance says

Mini review:

I loved the poignancy of this novel - Clara's fear of losing her current stability, paired with Sebastian's inward struggle with fulfilling his duty to his family and wanting to prolong his pursuit of music. Their respect positions in this novel with regard to Sebastian's spy mission make their acquaintance all the more dangerous, yet music, which was the tie between them, had brought them together once more. This was a bittersweet read replete with a great happily-ever-after.

*ARC via Netgalley for an honest review

Betty says

Sebastian Hall is a gifted pianist and a well known rake. He has a zest for life and a vitality that draws people to him. Unfortunately Sebastian is suffering from a disability that makes playing the piano impossible. He has agreed to help his brother find the plans for a machine that he wants to build and perhaps sell. Clara Whitmore knows Sebastian from her early teen years when she and her brother took piano lessons from him. The plans for the machine that Sebastian's brother has asked him to find could be in the possession

of Clara who helps her Uncle build some machines. When Sebastian approaches Clara and asks for her help, Clara sees a way that they can help each other. Clara proposes marriage to Sebastian.

I found the characters very likable and loved that they were having a nice love story. There was a lot of sexual tension between the two main characters. There were enough supporting characters to keep the story interesting and moving nicely. I enjoyed it and will watch for more from this author.

♥?elody says

Not really what I was expecting to get based on that blurb. Blah. The idea had potential but the execution left a lot to be desired for me. The pacing was soooooo incredibly slow. This could not hold my attention for more than 5 minutes every time I picked it up. Nothing happens just a whole lot of fretting and planning, planning and fretting, emotionless declarations, sounds and feelings that are described in color which just made for some clunky strange prose:

"he deepened the kiss to the color of emeralds."

The lack of passion and connection between the hero and heroine who act like friends rather than husband and wife did not help. And I found it odd how they didn't even share a bedroom after marrying wth? The author didn't even bother to explain why. The contrived back stories and side arcs that are riddled with plot holes didn't help either. Someone explain to me how unearthing a cipher machine has anything to do with the hero meeting up with his estranged mother?? This made no sense. Sebastian's brother could have easily set up the meeting between them without using the cypher machine nonsense as a cover up. So contrived. And where are the characters name titles? Sebastian's father is an Earl and his mother was a Countess so why is everyone addressing him as Mr. Hall? Same goes for his brothers. Inaccurate. Nothing is explained well. Everything is just touched on obscurely then brushed aside. The only 'highlight' was Clara's 7 year old son Andrew, his bonding moments with Sebastian and Clara were cute and decent but eh. I wish there was something I actually liked or enjoyed about this book. I felt completely detached to everything from the story to the characters. I just hate the feeling of wasting my time when reading. :(

Debra Taylor says

Ever think that a story is going in one direction....only to have the author do a complete turn around and completely blow you away ? That's exactly what A Passion for Pleasure does. I can usually guess how a story is heading by at least half-way through the book. Didn't happen that way with this one, and I really enjoyed the change.

Sebastian Hall feels like his life is out of control. His brilliant musical career is over and he's drowning in debt from medical expenses. The guys got his pride and he doesn't want the family to know. So he took a job from his brother to retrieve an item of interest. No, that's not where the mystery comes into play here, but it does allow Sebastian to meet Clara, his heroine.

Years ago, Clara was a music student of Sebastian's. No, there was no great love affair, although Clara did admire him from afar. He went on to greater things, and Clara married another man. Now, she's a widow trying desperately to reclaim the one thing she loves most.

The romance part of the story was fantastic. It began as a story of one how they can help each other only to turn into a love match . He wants something from her, she wants something from him. Oh, I knew they

would fall in love along the way. The good part was how they came to realize it themselves. I admired how the writer had them both admit their secrets to each other early on in the story. And how they were willing to sacrifice to give what the other needed to be happy. Sebastian needed to make his own choices and he wanted what was best for his family. And I felt that he would have been pleased with some respect from his uptight father. Clara wanted something very important to her. She was desperate to regain custody of her young son from her abusive father. They were both prepared to sacrifice anything for the other. This is a beautiful love story, but there was a sinister mystery that was at play. That part of the plot was very well developed and it took me by complete surprise.

My thoughts: I really enjoyed this story. The author kept changing it up and that kept me engaged in the story from start to finish.

I received a complimentary copy from the publisher in return for my honest opinion.

Lisa says

Another refreshing, unique, smart and sexy romance for them talents of Nina Rowan! It is refreshing and unique in the aspect that our widow, Clara Whitmore, is living with her uncle and helping him with his automaton museum. I loved seeing the bits and pieces that went into making these 'new' automatons. When she runs into her piano teacher from her youth, Sebastian Hall, she sees a chance to get her son back from her father. Sebastian is in need of some plans that he believes Clara's uncle has so he agrees to her marriage bargain never realizing how fast his life was going to turn upside down. Her vengeful father is hiding a secret (though I thought it was fairly obvious) and he promises to drag Sebastian's family through the mud...his family which has already had to deal with the scandal of adultery and divorce. Clara refuses to put Sebastian through any more pain in his family but Sebastian finds himself caring very deeply for Clara and is determined to help her...even if it drives a wedge between himself and his father.

Watching the love grow and deepen between Sebastian and Clara was such a treat. Sebastian was so easy to love; he kept his pain of his hand being damaged, making it unable for him to perform his music, his passion, very close to himself but Clara sees this pain and helps him heal. She allows Sebastian to see the light again and find a way to express himself through his music again. I loved how quickly he became Clara's champion for her son. Sebastian follows his heart and instincts regardless of what other people think. He is kind, generous, loyal and would do anything to help those he cares about. Now there were times I wanted to shake Clara for her refusal to tell Sebastian her plans regarding her son but I know she did it out of her love for Sebastian, her desire to keep him and his family out of scandals reach. Passion, tenderness, sorrow and the healing power of love are all wrapped together in this heartfelt romance. 4 stars

Review copy provided by Grand Central Publishing, Forever.

Lily (Night Owl Book Cafe) says

** E-ARC provided by the publisher Grand Central Forever through Netgalley in exchange of an honest review!

A beautifully written heart touching story about two very broken people who find a way to save each other.

When Clara Whitmore lost her husband, she didn't expect to lose her son Andrew as well to her cold father who has a belief that Clara is unfit to be a mother.

But Clara isn't the only one that lost something....

A brilliant and talent Pianist Sebastian Hall has developed a condition that prevents him from playing the piano and therefor pursuing his passion. With nothing left to lose Sebastian Hall lives a reckless lifestyle and is now in debt. His father is willing to forth him some money, as long as Sebastian marries.

When Sebastian's brother asks him to find the plans to a cipher machine for which he will pay Sebastian a substantial amount of money, it brings Sebastian and Clara together in a whirlwind of events.

I absolutely enjoyed this book and it's storyline. I loved how strong Clara was and that she would do anything and everything to save her son Andrew. It was both heartbreaking and kind of beautiful to see this side of a woman so strong that she would sacrifice everything she loved just to have her son back and safe to her. The story of Clara and her husbands death bought a whole kind of interesting mystery to the book because it left me wondering what exactly had happened.

Clara's father was just downright mean, cruel and kind of a monster. He took Andrew away from Clara, and I never fully understood why her late husband would leave the custody of his child to her father. I guess I am not fully familiar with the laws of that day and age, because it gave Clara like no power and she didn't sign off on any papers – so that part was confusing. He also refused to let Clara see Andrew and made sure that he was aware that Clara was responsible for her fathers death.

Sebastian's story was just as big and interesting. He has mother issues, ever since she walked out on her family while he was young. Which added to the depth of the story and his character. His charming, dark, reckless and rakish, which makes him that much more appealing. His deal with Clara brings sparks and fireworks between the two and you cannot help but admire them both as a couple and people who try and get Andrew back. I loved Sebastian's heart towards the boy and how he too was willing to sacrifice a lot for someone he didn't know. The scenes between Sebastian and Andrew where heartwarming!

I loved the chemistry between Sebastian and Clara from the very first time he met her carrying a head of an automaton. That scene kind of made me giggle. It was sweet and touching and fun. I love that Sebastian went for the bargain that Clara struck with him in return that she actually becomes his wife and not a marriage of convenience.

I am looking forward to the next book in the series!

Vânia Nunes says

Another story of marriage of convenience.

Clara and Sebastian know each other for a long time because he was her piano teacher. Then he left to the world using his talent and became famous. Only now, affected by a neurological disease in his right hand, Sebastian has to give up his career.

Proud, he does not want to tell to the family the truth about his return. And carrying the fame of libertine, his father urges him to settle down and get a wife.

Clara had a crush for her piano teacher since she was a girl, but as fate did not allow them to be together, she married another man. Now she is a widow and because ulterior reasons she lost custody of her only child. Living with an uncle inventor, she comes into contact with Sebastian. The flame comes to alive, but her primary purpose is to regain custody of her son, and so the best way would marrying.

It's when she proposes to Sebastian wedding.

Marrying a libertine would not be very good, but he was too famous and had his own reasons for marrying - because of his health problem he was full of medical debt.

What was to be a wedding facade eventually becomes something explosive, and they eventually admit their feelings for each other.

Secrets kept away from their families came to light and only by truly feeling they may have a chance to save what they bravely built before.

A beautiful love story full of secrets, dormant passions, a forced marriage, a love discovered.

Music to Sebastian was the first love of his life and admit that he could no longer live by it consumed him.

Clara worked brilliantly showing him that music can be more than success.

In Clara's case, is well known that at that time the woman had no rights, and a defamation could ruin the life of a woman without any way to compensation. Her father proved to be a monster to do everything to keep her away from her son.

It's beautiful to see how each helps the other to heal their tormented souls.

The sex scenes are not so hot, but it is the romance that speaks louder in history.

A story that explains about the need to overcome and never give up.

The pace of the story is good.

The characters are attractive and each one shows just the sort what they are, if it's the female main character, it's good, if it's a villain, it is hateful.

Positive point: The dynamic between the two main characters. There is no delay they come to their senses about what they feel and need to remain united to conquer their goals.

Negative point: maybe the parts where the story was directed to Sebastian's family (???) ... I felt no connection in these parts, even if they were important in explaining the behavior of the main character.

Beautiful cover.

3.5 STARS

Caz says

With a title like A Passion for Pleasure one could be forgiven for thinking that this is a story about a dissolute rake and his reluctance to give up his thoroughly enjoyable debauched lifestyle – until, of course, he meets the love of his life and realises it's time to abandon his bachelor ways and settle down.

Yes?

No. Once again – and I seem to have read several books recently about which I've said the same – the title of

the book fails completely to give the potential reader any clue as to its content. As it happened, the story was certainly none the worse for turning out to bear no relation to the title. But it's something which I find annoying nonetheless.

The hero of *A Passion for Pleasure* is Sebastian Hall, renowned concert pianist and composer who has recently returned, under a cloud, from his position at the Weimar court, whence he was invited by none other than Franz Liszt. Ostensibly, his reason for leaving is because of artistic differences, but in reality, he has lost the use of his right hand – possibly due to an arthritic condition, although this is not explicitly stated – and has come home with his tail between his legs and full of self-pity.

The second son of an earl, Sebastian receives a modest allowance – but now that he has lost his income from performing and composing, his allowance is not enough to cover the medical bills he has incurred in seeking treatments for his hand. He does not want anyone to know of his infirmity and will not therefore approach his father or brothers for the money; instead, he accepts a paid commission from his brother Darius (whose story will presumably be told in a future book, but who, from the sounds of it, is some kind of spy or secret agent) to find the plans for a mechanical telegraphy device which could be of use in the war in the Crimea.

Sebastian is given to understand that these plans are in the possession of Mr. Granville Blake, a renowned British maker of automata who is exhibiting many of his mechanical creations in London in the hope of attracting a wealthy sponsor who will enable him to continue with his work. Blake's niece, Mrs Clara Winter, a widow with a young son, is surprised to encounter Sebastian, cynical and dishevelled, during the preparation of the exhibits. She had been a pupil of his a decade earlier and recalls a kindly, handsome young man of sunny disposition with whom she was more than half in love – and though she senses something bad must have happened to him, she does not press him further, for she has serious troubles of her own to contend with.

When her husband died, he left the custody of their son, Andrew, to Clara's father, the Earl of Fairfax and not to Clara. The earl swiftly removed the boy from Clara's care and now refuses to let her have any contact with him and naturally, she is desperate to find a way to get him back. She has only one possible recourse; to trade a property her father has long coveted for Andrew, but there is a problem. The only way she can legally dispose of the property is for her to transfer it to her husband who can then sell it on. So she needs a husband – and offers to help Sebastian find the plans he's after if he will accept her proposal of marriage.

I thought the best thing about the story was the way in which the relationship between Sebastian and Clara was rooted in honesty. Even though they have not known each other very long before entering into marriage, there was a strong current of attraction between them from the outset, and they are both open with each other as to their reasons for marrying – Clara needs to get her son back, and Sebastian needs to get married in order to continue to receive his allowance. But theirs is to be no marriage of convenience – Sebastian makes it clear from the outset that he expects Clara to be a wife to him in every sense, which it's already clear is going to be no hardship for either of them. The thing that didn't work though, was Clara's rather odd belief that allowing herself to fall irrevocably in love with Sebastian would mean that she would forget how much her son meant to her.

Otherwise, I thought the story worked very well, and I liked that it was somewhat of a departure from the normal historical romance plot. Sebastian and Clara marry early on in the story, and embark on a mutually satisfying sexual relationship, but they still have things to learn from and about each other. I especially enjoyed the relationship that developed between Sebastian and Clara's son. Sebastian is able to allow Andrew to have some personal space in a way that his mother isn't (due to her overwhelming concern for him) and Andrew's interest in the piano helps Sebastian to find his way back to the music that he so loves.

The only other false note struck in the story was Clara's inability or unwillingness to trust Sebastian completely in the latter part of the book, when she devised her plan to recapture Andrew before her father could take him out of the country. After everything they had already been through together, and the way that Sebastian had proved his devotion and trustworthiness several times over, it didn't make sense to me that Clara could still be prepared to throw aside his love for her – and hers for him – and shut him out of her life.

There are a number of secondary plot strands running alongside the main one, one of which features Sebastian's reconciliation with his mother (who ran off with a young lover some years before), and another which is to do with the death of Clara's husband. I imagine some of the other plot elements – such as what Darius is really up to, and the mystery surrounding Sebastian's other brother, Nicholas, will be addressed in future books as this is only the second in this particular series, but there are no real loose ends left at the end of this one, so it can be read as a standalone.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *A Passion for Pleasure* and would certainly consider reading more by this author. The story is well-paced and unusual for the genre; and the romance, while it does develop quickly, feels genuine and surprisingly unhurried. Sebastian is a very sympathetic hero who, while his life has been turned upside down by his disability, is still able to find it in him to want to help someone else and to be upfront about his problems and emotions. I found Clara a little more problematic due to the fact that she seemed to think her capacity for love was somehow 'compartmentalized', and that loving Sebastian would mean not loving her son as much as before or vice versa, and as I've said above, her actions towards the end of the book felt rather out of character.

Those small reservations apart however, there is much to enjoy in the book and I'm giving it a solid B.
