



## Purple Hearts

*Tess Wakefield*

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When a soldier with a troubled past and a struggling songwriter agree to a marriage of convenience for the military benefits, neither expects much after saying “I do.” Then tragedy strikes, and the line between what’s real and what’s pretend begins to blur in this smart and surprising romance perfect for fans of Nicholas Sparks and Jojo Moyes.

Cassie Salazar and Luke Morrow couldn’t be more different. Sharp-witted Cassie works nights at a bar in Austin, Texas to make ends meet while pursuing her dream of becoming a singer/songwriter. Luke is an Army trainee, about to ship out for duty, who finds comfort in the unwavering discipline of service. But a chance encounter at Cassie’s bar changes the course of both their lives

Cassie is drowning in medical bills after being diagnosed with diabetes. When she runs into her old friend Frankie, now enlisted in the Army, she proposes a deal: she’ll marry him in exchange for better medical insurance and they can split the increased paycheck that comes with having a “family.” When Frankie declines, his attractive but frustratingly intense friend Luke volunteers to marry Cassie instead. What she doesn’t know is that he has desperate reasons of his own to get married. In this unforgettable love story, Cassie and Luke must set aside their differences to make it look like a real marriage...unless, somewhere along the way, it becomes one...

## Purple Hearts Details

Date : Published April 25th 2017 by Atria/Emily Bestler Books/Alloy Entertainment

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Author : Tess Wakefield

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## From Reader Review Purple Hearts for online ebook

### Farrah says

Honestly, I have mixed feelings. Not sure I cared for Cassie. Actually, I did not like her most of the time. For most of the book she seemed a bit insensitive to others around her and most of the time all she cared about was herself. Yes, the marriage was one of convenience so she could get the finances to take care of her medical needs while pursuing her music dreams, but damn, once he gets hurt, he more or less becomes an inconvenience to her. Luke though, I liked him. I looked forward to his chapters as the author would switch from one character to the other throughout the story. He agreed to marry her because he has issues of his own that a marriage could financially help him with. He tried to get away from his dark past but unfortunately, it didn't want him to stay away for too long and it affects those around him again BUT, he still tries. Amazingly, at the end, I actually believed Cassie changed a bit and was curious if the two could really make it.

My rating? 3 out of 5 stars. But I'd definitely give Tess Wakefield another try and read another story. If you enjoy contemporary romance (without much romance), you might like PURPLE HEARTS. Go for it. :-)

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### Jasprit says

I always find myself gravitating towards books featuring fake relationships; I find myself fully immersed with these individuals' lives, wanting to find out how things will go and love watching the relationship evolve into something way more than either could have expected. With Purple Hearts I liked how believable the relationship became between Cassie and Luke, despite not knowing each other that long or well enough before they decided to marry one another and I liked how their feelings developed slowly over time. The situation that they found themselves in really did contribute I believe to them being able to take their relationship to the next level. Having nearly died and then relying on your fake wife to look after you really does test the depth of one's relationship. Despite enjoying Purple Hearts overall, it was kind of slow going for me at times, there was a lot of side stories going on to which sort of took my attention away at times, especially as I was more interested in how things would go down between Luke and Cassie. However slow pace aside, Purple Hearts was a book which I couldn't stop reading, as I mentioned before, I tend to find myself consumed with the lives of characters and that certainly was the case with Cassie and Luke.

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### Jessica (Angie & Jessica's Dreamy Reads) says

Edited: 2.5 - 3 STARS

I hesitated to rate this at first because I honestly didn't know how. I'd give it 5 stars for the writing, but 2 stars for the lack of chemistry I felt between the characters. I'd give it 4 stars for the plot and the potential it had to be a really memorable story, but 2 stars because of how selfish I found the heroine and how abrupt the ending felt.

I need to mention my appreciation for the honesty this author gave to the storyline, touching on real world issues like political disagreements, dissension over foreign conflict, the healthcare crisis, drug addiction,

illness, financial insecurity, the lack of support for veterans.

But I couldn't get past how self absorbed Cassie was throughout the entire book and I felt that her selfishness hindered any real build between her and Luke from becoming evident to the reader. I was just missing something, I guess. Or a lot of somethings. The writing in this book was really great and I immediately thought I'd found a gem when I started reading. Given that, I'm open to reading other work from this author, I just didn't come away feeling much for this particular story.

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### **? Jeri's Book Attic ? the Romance Bibliophile ? says**

Purple Hearts by Tess Wakefield wasn't a bad story – no – not at all, but I am afraid that its aim was to high or in the wrong direction. The Blurb praises this book as perfect for fans of Nicholas Sparks or Jojo Moyes, yet having read both authors I am afraid that I can not agree with that statement.

I could not feel the intensity that is very prominent in both of the above mention authors' books. It is indeed dangerous to compare books like that as every experience is different.

From my very personal experience sofar 100% books that mentioned such a comparison in their Blurb fail to fulfill that promise. On the other hand I could agree with maybe about 80% of the comparisons I read in reviews.

The difference I think is that when you read that comparison in a Blurb it is what the author and publisher were “aiming” for. But when you read it in a review it is what a reader really felt as a result after / during reading.

Luke and Cassie were strangers when they met and to me they remaind that until the very end. I liked their story and I could relate to their struggels but the most important thing was missing when I read.

And that was the feeling.

To me it was just a relationship of convenience until almost the very end when it at least became a little more concrete. But still it was not enough for me to live up to the expectations that blurb raised in me.

There was no gut-wrenching or heartbreaking inside of me during reading so – even though it was not a bad story by all means – my expectations were not met.

I can not say for sure if my rating would be different if the blurb had left out that author comparison, because as it is I read it and I can not change the expectations it evoked in me.

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## Megan • Reading Books Like a Boss (book blog) says

Tess Wakefield pens a modern day love story in PURPLE HEARTS, highlighting many of the problems Americans face today—access to healthcare, cost of medical care, issues with veterans benefits, mental health, and addiction. While her efforts to draw from real-life issues are admirable, Purple Hearts is fraught with quality issues in terms of the writing, character development, believability, and pacing.

Cassie is diagnosed with Type II Diabetes towards the beginning of the novel. The medical bills that she amassed as a result are so crippling that she decides the only way she can overcome them is not to get a second job, despite being college educated and an experienced paralegal, but to defraud the U.S. Government and marry a soldier for his health insurance and extra spousal benefits. Luke has his own financial woes as a result of pissing off his former friends who are drug dealers and decides this is a marvelous idea.

When I read the synopsis and saw that diabetes was the culprit of the heroine's medical costs, I envisioned that maybe this person went into diabetic coma and was hospitalized for a long period of time, while doctors worked to get her diabetes under control. (I had a client who had to be placed in a medically-induced coma as a result of complications from type II diabetes) A health problem in this realm of severity would have made the case for the cost of medical bills from diabetes to be "unmanageable." This, however, was not what happened.

It's noted that the author did consult with people who suffered from type II diabetes, so as to portray the illness in a real way. But I didn't find this particular choice of illness to make a whole lot of sense. There are so many other illnesses the author (or rather Alloy Entertainment since this company came up with the concept of this novel) could have chosen to use in this novel to make this a little bit more believable, especially in the area of cost.

I can't imagine that Cassie's medical bills were in the arena of completely debilitating. I'm positive my student loans are more burdensome than this. Cassie's medical bills are as follows: an ambulance bill, medical testing for diabetes (this is a blood test), a short hospital stay, medications, and diabetes testing supplies. In America, these bills are extremely costly but couldn't she have made payment arrangements? Well yes, but Cassie refuses to get a second job so that she can fulfill her dream of becoming a successful singer.

Cassie is not very sympathetic or likable character. She and Luke are on opposite ends of the spectrum here. Luke is the more conservative and traditional guy, while Cassie is much more progressive a self-described feminist. But doesn't marrying a guy solely for his monetary support go against her feminist principles? Aside from that point, her choices alone made her come across as selfish and lazy.

As if readers could forgot that Cassie has diabetes (because she brings it up all the time) there is a large portion of an entire chapter during which Cassie shares all the food that she's eating. Even when Luke is meeting with someone about his medical problems, she makes it a point to tell the other person that she has diabetes for no reason.

One thing I noticed right away is the poor writing quality. I believe the author wanted to create a quirky heroine who was unapologetically herself but her inner dialogue was terrible. In an attempt to, I guess, foreshadow the impending diabetes diagnosis, the author has Cassie talking about her relationship with her

"gut" throughout the whole book.

"We had to be on the same team, my gut and I, because for the past few months it'd been off, cranky. I pictured it as a wise, old, talking anthropomorphized object, like a character in an animated movie. What my gut communicated was usually limited to things like *I do not care for these Flamin' Hot Cheetos, or Good effort with the bean soup, I'm going to expand and sit with this for a while.*"

"My gut flared again, and I avoided hitting the bumper of the Honda in front of me by an inch. I wanted to slam my head against the steering wheel."

"The mass had spread through my whole body, throbbing dizzying me. This happened a lot. Like, twice a day, thereabouts. Hence the gut intimacy."

Luke has his own narrative quirks when he talks about being on Oxycontin versus being sober, "cloud head" and "regular head" respectively. I get where the author was going with this, but this was just another example of the awkward writing style.

"I called it 'cloud head.' My cloud head was carefree, dumb, sweet, like a kid. Cloud head didn't want too many details. Cloud head knew that everything was going to be okay. My regular head couldn't do that. My regular head would get caught up in everything that could go wrong, and lash out. I needed cloud head for the tough times, so that they looked more simple and nice than they actually were..."

The dialogue in this novel is perhaps some of the most stilted and unnatural dialogue I have ever read. Some of it made me cringe.

"Wanna get turnt?"

Or my favorite line.

"I want to get sloppy."  
"Chyeah," Davies said. "I'm in."

Since the author addresses so many hot topics in this novel, she has a lot of ground to cover in a short amount of time. There are several passages that are pure information dumping sections in the middle of the story and that read like a public service announcement.

For those curious about whether the love story makes up for the writing quality, let me tell you that it does not. These characters are barely together romantically in this novel. Even when Luke comes back from Afghanistan, Cassie is dating someone else. The author doesn't spend page time building the relationship between Cassie and Luke in a way that translates to the reader. There is so much telling instead of showing that it prevents the reader from developing any strong feelings towards the characters or their "love story" at all. With Luke coming back from war in the way that he did, that plot point alone could have been used in a great way to beautifully shape a foundation for their relationship. Instead, the author gives us no build-up at all, and at the very end both mysteriously decide they love each other and then the novel ends.

The publisher has categorized this book as Women's Fiction but honestly it reads more as a contemporary romance. Cassie doesn't go through any metamorphosis of the heart or a huge character change. The only thing that changed is the fact that she fell in love with Luke and therefore, is no longer committing fraud on the government.

*\* Thanks to Emily Bestler books for providing me with an early copy for review.*

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### **★★UPCOMING BOOK RELEASES★★**

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#### **MichellemyBelle says**

\*\*\*ARC provided in exchange for an honest review.\*\*\*

We have a fiver! One of the best books I have read this year. It looks as if this is this author's debut novel, and I have become an instant fan. Purple Hearts is a marriage of convenience romance. Cass, recently fired, is in desperate need for life saving medication for her recently diagnosed diabetes. With no regular job and no insurance, Cassie boldly concucts a plan to marry Luke, an Army trainee solely for his benefits. Including health insurance.

Luke doesn't hesitate with this 'business arrangement', seeing this as a financial opportunity for himself. Leaving the reasons unknown to Cassie, Luke accepts. Of course nothing goes according to plan.

I was so impressed with the writing. Luke's demons were real and raw, undesguised. I learned from Luke's journey. My heart melted for these two. Cassies' drive was gritty and unrelenting. What strong character development! Yes this is a love story. But it's gritty, passionate and intense. A love story with depth, written with unrestrained honesty. A must read!

Thank you Simon and Schuster for the ARC.

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#### **Celeste says**

This review was originally posted on The Book Hookup [here](#) .

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#### **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

In "Purple Hearts," Luke is trying to keep old demons at bay and wants to do something with his life. Cassie is reeling after getting a medical diagnosis that threatens to break her financially. On a whim, they join in an

agreement where they'll get married so Cassie can use Luke's health benefits from the military. It's an agreement of convenience. Neither of them can imagine how much more than convenience this arrangement will become.

This book takes a very real situation and turns it into a story that explores the emotional implications of going off to war, coming back home again, and what it is like to be struck with something manageable that threatens your way of life nonetheless. I liked how real the author made this feel. In light of some of the questions in our political system recently, I thought it was interesting how the author gave a face to people who struggle with medical insurance coverage. It certainly made this book feel timely.

I really liked the realistic way that this book was written. The author has a knack for writing conversation. The book is narrated by both Cassie and Luke. I loved getting to see both sides of the story. You get a lot of insight into what makes the characters tick. I loved their relationship. Even though you see the ending coming from far away, because you get to know the characters so well, you are still cheering.

Overall, this is a good, romantic take on some very modern challenges!

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### **Jamie says**

2.5 rounded. Review to come

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### **The Blonde Bookworm says**

I'm really on the fence about my review of Purple Hearts. I really enjoyed it, but I wanted so much more from the characters. The storyline felt like a Nicholas Sparks classic, but it lacked the chemistry and romance that I was craving. The characters were fun and interesting, but I just wanted them to connect more and show a little more emotion.

The writing style was fast paced and light hearted, and I found myself reading through the novel very quickly. I loved how easily the novel flowed from one page to the next, but when I had about 20 pages left in the book I started to panic a little because it seemed like so much more needed to happen. As much as I enjoyed the first portion of the book, the last bit seemed rushed and cut short.

Purple Hearts is a fun, fast paced book filled with relatable characters and real life issues. I found myself constantly wondering what I would do if put in the situations that the main characters faced. I laughed and I cried (just a little!), and I found myself not wanting this novel to end. I would definitely recommend this novel to readers who enjoy Nicholas Sparks, JoJo Moyes and other contemporary romance novels.

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### **Christine (Shh Moms Reading) says**

No rating DNF at 52%

I have never read this author before but the blurb caught my attention so I wanted to give it a try. Unfortunately this book was very boring and I couldn't get into the story at all. At times the back and forth was confusing too.

It was Cassie's idea to get married to help out with her insurance for medication for her newfound illness while Luke is shipped out to Afghanistan to protect our country. While trying to pretend to be a happily married couple, it was just awkward and for her to keep a boyfriend through it all didn't sit right with me. Unfortunately I lost interest and have too many books on my tbr for the blog to continue :(

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### **Ginger at GReadsBooks.com says**

When this book was recommended to me, I thought, yeah okay, this sounds pretty good. After devouring it in a few days time, I completely understood why a friend said I needed to read it. This was beautiful. These characters & their voices came alive from the page. Their raw emotions infiltrated my own to the point where I know I'll still be thinking about them for a long time to come.

Add this book to your TBR & trust me as I am now telling you, you need to read this novel.

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### **Melissa says**

I am so disappointed, so upset.

I expected to love this. The moment I read the description, I was desperate to have it. It sounded so interesting, and *The Memory Book* was one of my favorite reads of 2016.

But wow, what a waste of time. The only thing I liked about it was the character of Luke. But the first 40% is boring, there is an unnecessary love triangle, and Cassie is one of the most unintentionally unsympathetic characters I've read in a long time. Luke is barely hanging on--struggling with his addiction and his injury--and she makes taunts him repeatedly. How awful can one be?

I was surprised that I made it through this. I considered DNFing it several times, and scoffed approximately every three pages when something dumb happened again. It's not like it horrible; it's just disappointing and not good. So if you decide to read this, don't get your hopes up.

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### **Jenny - Book Sojourner says**

I hit 44% and I had to set this aside. I was intrigued by this book because of the premise - two practical strangers marry for army medical benefits since both are in financial holes for different reasons. Sounds good to me! Unfortunately, I don't love the writing style and the dialogue is a bit wonky for me. I could forgive that if not for another reason. The real problem is that I just do not like Cassie. I've been trying to give her a chance, but she just rubs me the wrong way. Especially when she (view spoiler). I kept reading because I wanted to know what happens with Luke. His story is really compelling, and I want to see how things turn out for him. But Cassie is a real turn-off. I'm setting this aside in hopes of picking it up again later. (Edit to say, I did try resuming my reading. But I just couldn't get into the story and Cassie.)

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### **Malou says**

I have read some of the reviews on GR and it seems like Cassie, our lead is not a popular cookie. Now, I think she is great and through better and worse in the book, she was the one that kept me interesting. She is not afraid to take and the impulsive ideas and strong passions makes her very human to me.. and she has an amazing music taste and is not afraid of her sexuality! Id like more Cassie's in my YA book world.

Even though it was really well written and roped me in without struggle, there is a few things that dragged down my stars. For one, I felt it was to many obstacles for Cassie and Luke to overcome and she could easily have cut down on the music and record deal parts. Maybe a bit less of the bad guys too, as this felt just a bit too much removed from reality.

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