



The Pretender

Celeste Bradley

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Rule #1: Never fall in love.

Celeste Bradley captivated critics and readers alike with her unforgettable novel *Fallen*, which was nominated for the prestigious RITA Award from Romance Writers of America for Best First Book. Now, she brings us *The Lover*, the first book in the wildly fun, exciting, and sexy new Liar's Club series both featuring irresistible heroes who are out to steal their leading ladies hearts!

She had a secret she'd do anything to hide.

Agatha Cunningham, a headstrong beauty from the country, has come to London in search of her missing brother James. The only clue she has is a cryptic letter signed The Griffin. Agatha decides to disguise herself as a respectable married woman so that she can go about the city unnoticed. But for her charade to work she needs a suitable "husband," preferably someone tall, elegant, and rakish-someone like Simon Montague Rain.

He had a secret he'd do anything to hide.

Simon Montague Rain, also known as The Magician, is a member of The Liar's Club, a renegade group of rogues and thieves in the service of the Crown. When someone begins murdering members of the undercover cabal one by one, Simon is given the mission to bring in The Griffin, one of his comrades who is suspected of betraying his brothers. Simon goes undercover and infiltrates the home of "Mrs." Agatha Applequist who he believes is the Griffin's mistress. Before Simon knows what's happened, he finds himself irresistibly drawn to Agatha's soft, feminine charms-and he is tempted beyond reason to break the first rule of The Liar's Club: never fall in love.

The Pretender Details

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Author : Celeste Bradley

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HÜLYA says

Kitap Adı : Gönlünü Kimseye Kaptırmamı

Yazar : Celeste Bradley

Sayfa : 432

Yayın Evi : Epsilon Yayınları

Goodreads Puanı : 5/4

Puanı : 5/4

Celeste Bradley'in Gönlünü Kimseye Kaptırmamı romanı genel olarak çok beautiful..Yalancılar Kulübü Serisinin ilk romanı. Yazarın kalemi biraz Amanda Quick biraz Stephanie Laurens biraz Liz Carlyle Biraz Andre Kane'i andımsattı bana.

Fakat Celeste Bradley'in kalemi mizahi olarak daha kuvvetli.Kısa yazarın kalemini beautiful de backlarda hikayenin içine giremedi ilk 50 sayfasında tutuklu hikaye..Sonradan açıldı aman ne açıldı? aktı? hikaye..Hikayeden ve kitaptan backlardaki tutukluk ve koca arkadaşın kapak dı??nda çok memnun kaldı?...Kitabı okurken bazen çok duygusallaştım bazen de kahkahalar ile bazen de en sıkı casus hikayelerine nal toplatacak kurgu ile okuyorsunuz..Bir de bu Regency Dönemi yani 1813'lü yıllarda geçiyor..Hali hazırda Napolyon ile savaşları nın sürdürdü?ü yıllarda..

Kısa bence bu beautiful kitaplardı seri sık sık arkaya çırkınlı..Umarım yayın evi serinin diğer kitapları çok geciktirmez..Serinin ikinci kitabı da çok güzel ama ilk kitabı kadar çok beautiful enigmeli..Aldım mı bilgilere göre bu seri backımsız olarak da okunabiliyor mu?..Yine de seri okunmaya değer bir seri bence..Özellikler Historical severlerin çok beautiful enecekinden eminim..Ayrıca, Macera, polisiye, casusluk, savaş temaları ile süslü bu kitabı bence kaçırırmayı?..

Serinin ikinci kitabı Hayallere Kapılmış mı? da en güzel zaman da okumak istiyorum...

Konusuna Gelince :

Bu gerçekten bence güzel bir hikaye, güzel tempolu ile çekici karakter. Agatha ve Simon harika bir kardı?m alfa erkek ve yalancı hoşgörülü sevgilisi.

Romanı kadının kahramanı Agatha mı? sevdim..Cesur, iradeli bir genç kadın Ancak, o saf değerli kesinlikle...?natçı, ne istediğini bilen kesinlikle kül yutmayan bir karakter. Erkekleri büyülemek, bilgi almak hamurunda var..Başının çaresine bakmayı da çok güzel biliyor..Kimseye de muhtaç değildir kendilerine kalan mirası katlayarak zengin olmu?..Ama yüreği sevgi dolu ve sadık..Özellikle A. abeyi James Cunnington'a..ONDAN uzun zaman haber alamamı?ca Londra kazan o keşfe a. abeyini aramaya başı?yor..Elindeki tek delil a. abeyinden son gelen mektu

Simon Rain, gerçek ismi ile Simon Montague Raines atı?igan bir kahraman. Bazen de bir odun..Sevgi nedir görmemi?..Çok kötü bir çocuklu geçirmi?..Aç kalmış?..Fahi?elik yapan annesinin hayat stili yüzünden

sokaklarda peri?an olmu? ..Sonunda kendini asilzade bir Lordun kanatlar? alt?nda bulmu?..Ama san?ld??? gibi sevgi aile ortam?nda büyümemmi? aç kalmaktan kurtulmu?..O yüzden kendini kurtaran adam? hiç bilmedi?i,görmedi?i babas? yerine koymu?..Fakat bu adam ondan bir casus çelik iradeli duygusal olmayan kelimenin tam anlam? ile görev adam? yaratm??..

Simon Frans?z as?ll? ama ?ngiltere hükümeti ad?na çal???yor.Yalanc?lar Kulübu ad? alt?ndaki casus örgütünün beyni..Lakab? "Sihirbaz".."Agatha'n?n a?abeyi James'in amiri pozisyonunda..James'in kendilerine ihanet etti?ini dü?ünüyor..O yüzden onun tüm hayat?n? hesaplar?n? incelerken Agatha ile kar?la??yor..Onun kim oldu?unu bilmedi?i James'in dosyalar?nda da onunla ilgili bir bilgi olmad??? için AGatha'y? James'in metresi san?yor...

Agatha onu baca tamircisi san?yor ve i?ler kar???yor..Hem de fena halde..

K?saca yazar? Historical ile polisiye ve maceray? sevenler bence epeyce sevecekler..Bence bu güzel kitab? kesinlikle kaç?rmay?n...

Liar's Club

1. The Pretender (2003) Gönlünü Kapt?rma
2. The Impostor (2003) Hayallere Kap?lma
3. The Spy (2004)
4. The Charmer (2004)
5. The Rogue (2005)

<http://hulyami.blogspot.com/2013/08/c...>

Mojca says

Miss Agatha Cunningham is in dire need of a man. In search of her missing brother, James, she has ventured to London as Mrs. Applequist, but needless to say, her dear Mortimer does not exist. Now, with callers banging on her front door demanding to meet this elusive, adventurous Mortimer, Agatha snatches herself the first man available – a chimneysweep, Simon Rain. He's an immediate success and the newlyweds promptly receive a pile of invitation for social gatherings.

Agatha has no intention of declining the invitations. She might learn something about her brother's whereabouts from the military officers mingling among the *ton* and her uneducated, Cockney-accented, yet incredibly attractive chimneysweep will be her ticket. If she can teach him the intricate rules of the society, the right phrases to say and how to pronounce them, how to eat, and how to dance.

Little does she know her chimneysweep is in truth a master spy, Simon Montague Raines, working undercover to find a traitor in his organization, the Liar's Club. Due to his abrupt disappearance, James is on the top of Simon's list and Agatha, paying her bills from James Cunningham's account, is suspected to being his accomplice... and mistress.

Simon, in order to get closer to her, agrees to the scam of posing as her husband, but soon discovers her to be a huge distraction for his mission.

The Pretender is the first in Ms. Bradley's *Liars' Club* series. I decided to pick this up after the great experience of To Wed A Scandalous Spy. I was slightly disappointed, but it was still a good read.

The main plot, the mystery / suspense, was slow throughout the story and only picked up pace in the last few chapters. Instead of building on the suspense, Ms. Bradley forsook the mystery and concentrated on the intricacies of the romance between the two leads. Don't get me wrong, I so love the star-crossed-lovers ploy, but in my opinion that was laid a little too thick in this book.

The second bone to pick would be Agatha. I like the feisty, headstrong heroines that don't let their "hero" trample all over them, but Agatha was a little too headstrong for my taste. She should be slapped regularly every two hours and there is no wonder she received so many marriage proposals. The blokes knew they had to save her from her own stupidity.

At times she also appeared extremely selfish and self-centered. Granted, she repented later on, but still, it's the thought that counts.

What to say of Simon? Again, McDreamy, McSteamy, and McHorny combined. He's a stuff of dreams, too good to be true. While Agatha was like an average woman, a little on the plumpish side, he was perfect. Ms. Bradley could've made him a little less mouth-watering, but she did give him pretty insurmountable mental hurdles. I understood his need for brooding, but again, it took too much space and time, and once again drew the focus off the plot, slowing it even more.

Also, for a super spy, he was a little thick and rather slow on the uptake.

In general, everybody in this book was a little slow. I figured out who the baddie was the instant the villain appeared in the book. Agatha took a little longer, and once again we proved the male species to be a little thick and (always) thinking with the wrong head!

Despite it all, The Pretender is a greatly entertaining book. While most books are driven by their plots and subplots, the thing keeping this book breathing are the characters, especially the supporting cast filling the gaps with their antics. Mostly, it's an ode to love (brotherly and other) and patriotism.

Jess the Romanceaholic says

re-read July 2010

Oh how I love a good regency spy novel lol

This book was a true comedy of errors. Everyone has their own secrets and machinations and they all keep inadvertently mucking up everyone else's plans.

Simon and Agatha had such chemistry! Even when they were telling themselves to stay away from the other, the tension between the two simply sizzled.

A very light hearted, fun read with just enough angst to keep you from gagging ;)

5 Stars.

Angela says

77%. Meh. I got bored.

The writing is decent. The characters are decent. The storyline is decent. But I'm just over it. I think I'll try the author's newer stuff and see if it interests me more. There's definitely some dated stuff in here that irritates me, which is probably contributing to my lack of enthusiasm while reading.

I can't even be bothered to write a review.

Take this for what it's worth, because I remember really liking this series when I first read it several years ago.

Sevimli H?rs?z says

Gönlünü Kimseye Kapt?rma / Celeste Bradley(03.07.12)

Ah! Bu kitaba dolu dolu bir yorum yapmak istiyorum. Ama anlat?lmaz okunur cinsinden bir kitap oldu?u için fazla bir ?ey söylemek istemiyorum. Bu seneki favori 2. Hist. Kitab?m oldu. Okurken çok e?lendim, her sat?r her cümle beni kahkahalara bo?du. Yazar?n mizac? çok e?lenceliydi. Karakterlerini öyle güzel yaratm?? ki kitab?n konusunu kurguymu? gibi hissetmenizi imkans?z k?l?yor. Bir solukta bitebilecek bir kitap ama ben okurken gülmekten sürekli kitaptan koptum –tabi bununda ayr? bir tad? vard?- ama çok keyif alarak okudum. Simon'a bay?ld?m. Çok matrak bir karakterdi. Gerçek kitaptaki her karakter kendi ad?na çok e?lenceli bir ki?ili?e sahipti. Ama Simon'un o vurdum duymaz halleri beni gülmekten k?rd? geçirdi. Ama Agatha'y? da atlamamak laz?m. Ayakta k?rk yalan söyleyebilen ve söyledi?i yalanlara kendisi bile inan bir karakterdi! Simon'la çeki?melerine bay?ld?m. Adam? k?l?ktan k?l??a sokmas? da cabas?yd?. Ama en çok hayran kald??m yönü Simon için bir an kocam derken bir an kocam?n karde?i diyebilecek kadar ince zekas? oldu. Agatha'daki zekayla Simon'da ba?a ç?kamay?nca önünde sayg?yla e?ilir oldu. Ben çok e?lendim bu kitapta ?iddetle de tavsiye ederim.

Gilgamesha says

3.5 stars. I loved Agatha...her character was whimsical, intelligent, pure, and very cunning and manipulative though completely harmless. I liked Simon too. The book was well written and the beginning was fresh and not at all contrived to fit the cliches of the genre....but midway through the writer I am assuming ran out of original ideas because she I guess inevitably gave in to pressures of using the same old boring plot lines of I can't marry her but let me enjoy my time etc etc and I love him therefore I must sacrifice everything for him blah blah....you get point. It was also a bit repetitive (I don't need it stated a million different ways that Agatha is looking for her brother) really how stupid do you think us readers are? To be reminded of the samething over and again in every chapter??? The novel is also very unrealistic and more theatrical and dramatic than necessary. But with a good editor it has a chance at redemption....if it ever is republished.

Kristal Kitap says

Bebekli bir ablay? ziyaret etmenin ve bir kaç günü onda geçirmenin faydalar? i?te. Ablam dinlenirken bebekte ayakta sallan?rken bo? bo? oturmamak ad?na yan?ma kendimi pek kapt?rmayaca?m? dü?ündü?üm ve ?ngalamalar?n aras?nda bile e?er okumak istersem ?uras?n? anlamad?m diye dert etmeyece?im bir kitap seçip ziyaretimi gerçekle?tirdim. Sonuç ise oldukça e?lenceli bir kitab?n uzun süredir kitapl???mda 'ald?m ama art?k ilgimi çekmiyor' bölümünde bekledi?ini ö?renmi? oldum.

Kad?n karakter çok enerjikti. Sürekli bir dü?ünce, sürekli bir hareket. Asla pes etmiyor ve istedi?ini alana kadar elinden geleni ard?na koymuyor. Seviyorum böyle kad?n karakterleri. :) Arada bir yazar i?in dozunu kaç?rm?? gerçi. Eh buda bir kitap yani diyece?iniz bir kaç sahne eklemi? fakat kitab?n seyrini pek etkilemiyor. Genel olarak epey e?lendiren bir kitapt? benim için.

Erkek karakterimiz ise... Offf. ?imdi sevdim illaki sevmedim de?il. Ama kendine ac?yan erkekler pek tercihim de?il. Okurken yine romantizmin dibine vuruyorsunuz ama e?lenceli veya bask?n erkek karakterler daha ilgimi çekiyor. Kendisine ac?yan ve geriye çekilen, s?rf bu yüzden k?za da kendine de i?kence eden erkek karakterleri bir güzel dövsek yeridir.

Tüm bunlar?n haricinde ne ekleyebilirim ba?ka? H?mm bakal?m. Ah evet. Kesinlikle kitab?n konusunu okumay?n. Spoiler bar?nd?r?yormu? ben de sonradan fark ettim. Size ?öyle özetleyecek olursam, Agatha'n?n sevgili abisi bir süredir kay?p. Ve asker. Simon'un da adamlar? teker teker ortadan kald?r?l?yor. Agatha abisini bulmak ad?na Londra'ya ta??n?yor ve evli oldu?unu söylüyor herkese. Simon'da Agatha'n?n, adamlar?n? ortadan kald?rd???n? ?üphelendi?i ki?inin metresi oldu?unu san?yor. Halbuki abisi i?te. Simon Agatha'y? ara?t?r?r, Agatha abisini. Yollar? bir ?ekilde kesi?ir ve Agatha'n?n türlü planlar?yla oldukça e?lenceli maceralar?n içine at?lmaya ba?larlar vs vs.. :)

Toparlayal?m. Okunulas?, e?lenceli, casuslu, içinde güçlü kad?n karakter ve kendini ezikleyen bir hergele bar?nd?ran güzel bir kitapt?. Sosyete balolar?yla çok fazla içli d??l? olmuyorsunuz. Amaç zaten geçmi?in o romantik anlar?n? size ya?atmak de?il, aksiyon dolu ve tehlikeli hayat?n? gün yüzüne ç?karmak. S?ra ikinci kitapta. :)

Zoe says

The book started great. The chimneysweep of a hero totally had my attention and I love Simon for a name for my hero, a close second to Harry, my all time favorite.

But I digress.

Then Agatha happened. Oh, overly bold, lying, plump, virgin-turned-harlot, love-being-on-top, Simon-jumping Agatha. Very early on in the book I realized that Agatha is what I know as.....crazy.

Agatha's brother disappeared. She wanted to investigate, decided on a scheme and went to London. In from the back of the house, comes Simon, the God, who saved her from her lie. Then more lies about her marital status, outragerous lies too, then spy master schemes blah blah blah and then, they had sex.

I rolled my eyes and literally groaned (not the good kind) reading this novel. Agatha is outrageous. I believe some readers would like her. But she is too much for me. She is everywhere, with her lies, with Simon, with James, and everywhere. She has to be because oh she is so smart and has a mind of her own and no man can control her.

Simon is a much more likable character. I have to say him being jumped by Agatha multiple times in this book is a little pathetic but oh well, who am I to judge. I think 10% of the story had my full attention and it is usually when Simon and Agatha stole a few moments together knowing that they had no future. And it was all about Simon too. I cannot help but imagine Agatha as this danger-prone woman who sticks her head where it doesn't belong but gets offended when people tell her the fact to her face. Oh and did I mention that she is a country woman in London playing a married woman without a husband who attends social parties and volunteers at the hospital? All in all, I could work with Simon, but cannot stomach Agatha. I don't dislike her as a character but I find such heroines unattractive and annoying.

Then there is the writing. Sometimes I really wish I could write to these authors and ask them to please read what they wrote before they allow it to be turned into a book. Is this something that you would say to a man??? Woman is that is the case.....well..... I have nothing to say to you.....and that is woman to woman. Sometimes the conversations are so contrived and...I don't want to say idiotic, I guess it is probably.....I don't know, I have no adjectives for it, pathetic? Honestly, is this how some women talk??

Then there are the secondary characters. Man there are so many of them. I lost count. Who is the butler? Who is the valet? Who is the butler's nephew? Who works at the club doing what? Then Lord someone who is the hero for another book in the series, then the nephew of the Lord. Why is it necessary to have all these people who are not relevant for the romance? The villain is unimpressive, the "intriguing mystery" not so intriguing. This book is a real mess, no clear plot line, annoying and unnecessary characters. The only good thing is Simon, who is also not a strong male lead. But I will stop here. How do you describe a mess?

Szilvamag says

4.5 stars

kris says

Agatha Cunningham needs to find her dumbass brother James, so she goes to town and sets herself up as Mrs. Mortimer Applequist. Simon Rain (aka "The Magician" I can't with these ridiculous monikers) is also looking for her dumbass brother James but because he, too, is a dumbass, he thinks Agatha is actually James's sex-friend. LITERALLY THE MOMENT HIS DICK GETS INSIDE HER, JAMES ARRIVES TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT and then we have angst and hijinks and nonsense. MOST OF IT IS ACTUALLY RATHER DELIGHTFUL.

1. This was just a romp. I enjoyed it quite a lot. Agatha is wry and funny and absolutely Too Perfect but in a way that I honestly didn't care because I was too delighted. Simon was Too Handsome with silly man pain but he was so helplessly enraptured by Agatha that I honestly didn't care. I believed in their match and their ability to work together as fantastic spies and solve mysteries and be badasses.

2. I usually complain about how bad romance-land spies are at spying. And I'm by no means saying that the spies in this book are FANTASTIC but they absolutely have moments of ACTUAL COMPETENCY. IT BOGGLED ME.

3. It's by no means perfect: Agatha totally assaults Simon in his sleep a bunch because he refuses to sleep with her, and there's some gross characterization of a female villain, and it did a little soapy, but those all felt like minor complaints in the face of my mirth at its sheer entertainment.

(ETA 4. The POV swaps were slightly disconcerting, I should add. A little too willy-nilly for my tastes.)

Ultimately: 3.5 stars, rounded up.

Sombra says

No ha sido un mal libro, pero algunas situaciones y el que por más que leyera parecía que no se acababa nunca han echo que mi puntuación se quede en un aprobado raspado.

La historia que nos presenta esta serie es muy prometedora. Para empezar tenemos un Club de espías al servicio de la corona cuya tapadera de actividades es nada más y nada menos que un Club de juego regentado por Simon, el protagonista. Simon no es el típico lord inglés podrido en dinero, sino que se crió en un barrio pobre como carterista, su madre era una mujer de moral distraída y hasta que salvó la vida de un lord fue entre otras muchas cosas deshollinador.

La historia comienza cuando Simon decide ir en busca y captura de su mejor amigo y mano derecha del Club de los mentirosos, James, del que se sospecha es un traidor a la corona y ha desaparecido del mapa sin dejar rastro. Es durante su investigación que conocerá a Agatha, la hermana de James y de la que comenzará a sospechar tan pronto como conoce que es ella la que maneja el dinero de su desertor amigo. Agatha también ha abandonado su hogar en el campo para buscar a James mediante una tapadera bastante original y cuando ve aparecer a Simon, ve en él la salvación a su misión sin saber que ella misma es una sospechosa de alta traición

Por lo que se inicia una relación entre ambos de intereses, mentiras y desconfianzas que poco a poco se irá solucionando a medida que todas las piezas del puzzle van encajando.

La trama está bastante bien hilada; sobre todo la relacionada con el espionaje y sobre la culpabilidad o inocencia de determinados personajes que van saliendo a lo largo del libro. Lo que no me ha terminado de cuajar muchas veces es el carácter de la protagonista y por ende su historia de amor con Simon, ya que había muchas situaciones inverosímiles.

Aunque la autora nos la presenta como una mujer decidida, inteligente y valiente, en ocasiones (muchas), más que decisión, yo veía puro egoísmo, sobre todo a medida que su amor por Simon iba siendo cada vez más obvio. Y cuando hacia la mitad del libro decide hacer un acto puramente egoísta, me dejó de caer bien la pareja y me dio hasta pena el pobre de Simon.

Aún así, ha sido un buen comienzo de serie y casi segura que leeré el siguiente muy pronto.

Catherine says

This book was alright. It didn't blow me away but it kept me entertained. I'll look for the other books in the Liar's Club and see if any of them do better for me.

I had a problem with Simon's spy business right away. He thought that Agatha was her brother's mistress (which I can believe) and that she might be a spy too. He kept remarking that she put everything together too well to be anything but a spy. I really started to doubt his intelligence. Agatha's logic didn't really strike me as anything special and it really made Simon seem incompetent when he kept being so impressed by her information.

I really liked the dynamic that Agatha and Simon had between them. I really felt their love and passion for each other. They seemed like they just fit. The scenes where Agatha keeps trying to seduce Simon and he keeps throwing her out made me laugh. I loved Agatha's determination to have Simon. Nothing I like better than a woman who knows her own mind. I did have a problem with her belief that it was okay to "steal" a baby from Simon and never let him know. That really dropped her character in my eyes.

I found it hard to believe that Agatha would be so naïve as to invite some random stranger to live with her for a couple weeks. It really made her seem stupid. Also, I know the fake husband thing gets used a lot in historical romance, but was it really all that common? Maybe I'm just critical of this trope because it has been done to death.

I found the ending with the Prince to be an eye rolling event. It all just seemed faintly unbelievable. I really did like the humor in this book though. The brother seemed interesting although his "whatever" attitude toward Agatha and Simon didn't ring true. I think that this author has the potential to be a keeper for me so I'm going to check out more of her work.

Fani *loves angst* says

4.5 stars

A great book that I thoroughly enjoyed even though light romances are not really my kind of thing. Still, Bradley's humor works for me just right. Plus, I just adored the hero and heroine; they were perfect for each other and had great chemistry. And the secondary characters, from the butler and the valet to the enigmatic lord Etheridge were all incredibly intriguing. Had me laughing and had me emotionally invested. What more could I ask?

Still, I had a problem near the ending that luckily, the writer soon twisted to my liking. So, everything's well that ends well:-) Heading straight for the second book since the hero is one of my favorite characters in this one.

Kusanagi says

J'hésite à mettre même 4 ... y'a quand même un petit côté n'importe quoi même dans les péripéties qui me font hésiter....

Mais j'ai bien aimé. L'héroïne, Agatha est ... pleine d'entrain mais pas stupide. Et elle ne se laisse pas dicter sa conduite (et elle n'attend pas tant que ça qu'on la sauve ^^). Bon elle est un peu comme Loki dans Thor, elle se perd un peu dans ses plans, mais elle a quand même une sacré réactivité (et un don pour trouver des faux noms à la con.... n'est ce pas Simon "Mortimer Ethelbert"XD)

Simon Rain est un héros un peu plus classique.... bon il n'est pas duc (déjà) même pas noble en fait.... mais il est espion. Après voilà, il est grand il est (très) beau.... non ce n'est pas Christian Grey, parce que lui il est fun, il fini par être blasé des invention de sa dulcinée ... mais voilà, il lui manque un petit truc pour être un héros ++

Après je me rends compte que c'est le premier livre de l'auteure (et ouais, pour une fois je commence par le début \o/)donc ça laisse plutôt bien augurer pour la suite ^^

Anita says

Actual Rating: 3.5 Stars

The Pretender started off really rocky, and I'll have to admit that there were moments in the beginning that I thought I'd end up frustrated with the book. Our couple, as is typical of most romance novels, move from initial surprise meeting to insta-lust so quickly that I sort of got whiplash. And then the lust continued to dominate most of their interactions and conversations and thoughts for a time.

Needless to say, I was definitely feeling a bit irritated with it.

But then, I can't quite pinpoint when, the story started getting interesting when things began to balance out. Agatha started working *with* Simon in a strange little spy and investigation partnership rather than just issuing him his orders. Simon started taking Agatha's abilities a little more seriously and the two sort of, unofficially accepted their strange partnership.

It was only all the more intriguing that Simon had false impressions about Agatha, and that Agatha was working under false impressions of Simon.

And while I would have loved for this weird tango of deceit and secrets to continue, I have to admit that the reveals and the twists in the middle of the book worked out quite well. Nothing else seemed to change between the two save for a better understanding of each others' roles.

And as I was fully invested in both character's stories by then, I didn't care to nitpick too much more about the book as a whole. Though I must admit that there were some moments (such as Agatha's multiple attempts to seduce Simon) that actually came out more comical, even in spite of the more serious tone of her own thought processes. In creating these scenes however, I actually came to admire some of the more inelegant behaviors and actions of our two main characters (the scene where Agatha is unceremoniously thrust out of Simon's room in the nude is quite unforgettable, as I think about her having to make a stumbling sprint back to her own bedroom to avoid awkward discovery).

On a side note, Simon's attempts at evading seduction (a la the aforementioned scene where he extricates Agatha from his immediate quarters) were commendable. But really, with Agatha's head-strong

determination, the poor guy really didn't have a chance in the world of resistance.

I think this is what sort of made the book a bit more enticing to me--not the seduction process, no. The characters were unique and interesting in their own ways, but their actions and antics were quite entertaining to follow. Well, okay, it was really Agatha's antics I really enjoyed the most, what with her managing to make so much headway into ferreting out secrets and investigating her brother's disappearance within days, while Simon admits that it had taken him and his men much longer to even come up with some inkling of what *might* have happened to James Cunningham.

Agatha was a study in contradictions, really. She believes herself to be ordinary and not a beauty. But during her investigations, she tactfully uses her larger than average bosom size (a not so ordinary trait) to extract information from many of the salivating lords and gentlemen she interacts with. She's written as a character who doesn't really have a deceitful bone in her body... and yet all of her behaviors are contradictory because she begins the book as a liar who creates a fake marriage and husband as part of her investigation strategy.

And yet, she's a readily likable character. In contrast, Simon was rather ordinary and standard for a romance novel.

Other characters in *The Pretender* were also wonderfully crafted as well, and I can't wait to see if any of them play a role in following books.

Meanwhile, there *were* a few things about this book that didn't quite work out for me, thus the rather mediocre to blah rating. But I can't deny that I enjoyed myself enough to want to continue on with the series.

The Pretender isn't the best book in the world, and definitely didn't start off all that well. Others who would expect a great book within the first few chapters might get impatient, but I'm quite satisfied that it felt like our author seemed to find a direction and better footing in her writing process as the book itself progressed. Though, to be honest, I can't help but note that the book DOES seem to feel like it could have been two, or maybe even three, different anecdotes when you get to the second half, even while the ending manages to tie things together well enough.

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Roll #30: "Read a book where a main character is in STEM, or where the author's first and last name contain all of the letters in 'Tesla'."

Authors first and last name = Celeste Bradley

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