



The Reluctant Widow

Georgette Heyer

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Georgette Heyer is best known for her witty and charming Regency romances, but she is also responsible for a handful of mystery novels. On occasion, mystery would find its way into her romances, embroiling her well-born heroes and heroines in adventures that were alternately chilling and hilarious. In *The Reluctant Widow*, Elinor Rochdale, a young woman of good birth but straitened circumstances, sets out to accept a position as a governess and ends up plunged into a tangle of foreign intrigue instead.

Elinor's adventure begins when she inadvertently mistakes the carriage waiting at the coach stop for one sent by her prospective employer, Mrs. Macclesfield. She finds herself carried to the estate of one Ned Carlyon, who Elinor mistakes for Mr. Macclesfield. Carlyon, meanwhile, believes Elinor to be the young woman he hired to marry his dying cousin, Eustace Cheviot, in order to avoid inheriting Cheviot's estate himself. Somehow, Elinor is talked into marrying Eustace on his deathbed and thus becomes a widow almost as soon as the ring is on her finger. What starts out as a simple business arrangement soon becomes much more complicated as housebreakers, uninvited guests, a shocking murder, missing government papers, and a dog named Bouncer all contribute to this lively, frequently hilarious tale of mistaken identities, foreign espionage, and unexpected love set during the Napoleonic Wars.

The Reluctant Widow Details

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From Reader Review The Reluctant Widow for online ebook

QNPoohBear says

Reread 5/2018 3.5+ stars

Georgette Heyer rating scale: 5 - BEST, funniest, favorite; 4-funny but one flaw; 3 funny or good but didn't really like the characters or all the situations; 2 or less - what was she thinking?

Miss Elinor Rochdale arrives in Sussex expecting to become governess to the spoiled little boy of the formidable seeming Mrs. Massingham. Dreading the experience but needing the income, Elinor is surprised to discover a coach waiting for her at the coaching inn. To be sure it is going farther than she thought and the manor house is gloomy... but she needs the money. Then she is met by a gentleman to learn about her charge (Elinor: "This is weird but OK... GOOD HEAVENS! An addiction to brandy! How bad IS this kid?"). Dun dun dun... Elinor is shocked when she discovers she is in the wrong home and has just been proposed to be proxy to become the bride of a man so far dissipated he is not expected to live much longer. Elinor tries to refuse but circumstances and the high-handed Lord Carlyon take over and Elinor finds herself stranded at Highnoons with a mystery on her hands!

This is a fun adventure. When I read it first about 10 years ago I was expected a romance. This time I knew what to expect but had forgotten the details so it was like reading it for the first time all over again. The plot is rather melodramatic but exciting. It takes a while to really get going and when it does, it keeps the reader guessing. I was surprised at the outcome. I had really forgotten what was actually going on. There's not really any romance here at all unless you enjoy constant verbal swordplay-which I do. The romance comes at the very end and isn't all that satisfactory. In this early book, Georgette Heyer borrows a few phrases and ideas from Jane Austen and others but as usual makes them her own. Her skill in seamlessly weaving in historical detail (and in this case, legalese) make her second to none. Not many writers can show off their research without stepping out of the story and many make the mistake of tossing in something irrelevant just because they found it interesting. Not so here. The opening scene does require some suspension of disbelief and the entanglements of inheritance are difficult to follow but showcase what can happen to an estate that has not been entailed. (Highnoons should have been to solve everyone's problems!)

I really liked Elinor. At first I thought she should jump at the chance to marry a guy who is about to die on her. As a widow, even a penniless widow, she'd have more advantages than a penniless spinster. Let's see-dead husband or governess? However, the more I got to know Elinor, the more I realized she's a very modern woman. Yes Georgette Heyer did what we all hate from modern authors. Elinor is fiercely proud and independent. She refuses to be beholden to anyone (Jane Eyre anyone?) and prefers to be in charge of her own life. I too am fiercely independent but I choose dead husband! However, Elinor didn't really have a choice and didn't ask how the estate was situated. I'd make Carlyon pay to fix Highnoons, sell it and get the heck out of Sussex and pass myself off as a war widow. Some may find all her verbal exchanges with Carlyon rude and ungrateful. I didn't see it that way. Elinor has a sarcastic sense of humor. She disagrees with everything he suggests because she's scared of having her future out of her hands. She doesn't know him very well yet. Would you trust a strange man to handle your affairs? Elinor's father made a mess of her life and now she has learned to depend on none but herself. Here comes Mr. high and mighty arranging her life for her but not telling her everything, popping in and out of her home, saddling her burdens he doesn't know she will have. I happened to like their witty banter and can see myself responding to Carlyon the same way Elinor does.

Carlyon is high handed but not in the traditional alpha male way. He has a sense of humor and that makes all

the difference in his dialogue. If you read it as witty and Elinor's comments as sarcastic, the story makes more sense. He pushes her buttons on purpose just to get her to argue with him and then teases her. She responds with a sarcastic comment and he loves it and her. He can't help being managing. For some reason he is desperate NOT to inherit Highnoons and the situation is desperate. He tries to help Elinor all he can, especially with the mystery. I think he does his best and he tries. He's not my favorite hero but I do find a shared sense of humor so important and one of the things Heyer did best. She was starting to work that out here and would later master it in *Black Sheep*, *Frederica*, *Venetia* and other later romances.

Nicky is such a puppy! I think he has ADD. He's all over the place. He reminds me of my younger cousin when he was younger and my little nephew (who is a crazy ADHD 5 year old). Nicky means well but he gets distracted easily. He's young and eager to prove himself. His brothers are always on his case. I suspect he got along best with Harry and Georgy. I really like Nicky. He's brave, loyal and for all his attention deficit issues, he stays with Elinor and tries to help her. I think she likes him because she's a governess and he's still like a young boy. John is a bit too serious and straight laced for a younger son. The sense of humor gene seems to have skipped him. Of course he has more reason than any of them to worry.

Francis is nasty. I hated him as soon as he threatened Bouncer. He prefers CATS! What does that tell you? I sense a bromance between Francis and Louis. I didn't care for his dandy persona at all. He's just too over the top. His actions are annoying, rude, and horrific. He's so self-centered he can't think of anything except himself.

Bouncer is a major character. He is too too funny but oh so badly in need of more training. I can't imagine letting a dog like that in a house at that time with all those priceless antiques/heirlooms and not to mention lack of modern hygiene. Bouncer mirrors Nicky's behavior. They're both overgrown puppies, brave and loyal but still in need of maturing before they can truly be useful to society. Georgette Heyer was clearly a dog lover!

This was my first Heyer novel and I enjoyed it enough not to make it my last. I was glad to revisit it with the Georgette Heyer fans group.

Abigail Bok says

Lady of fashion turned governess Elinor Rochdale gets into the wrong carriage on her way to her next post. She finds herself pitched into high drama, with a fatal barroom fight, sinister housebreakers, and French spies. The story is delightfully absurd, and a lot of the humor of the book arises from the commonsense ordinariness of the characters when faced with such melodramatic events.

A number of Georgette Heyer's books feature what I would call an "angry" heroine, and usually I find those heroines rather tiresome. The knee-jerk tirades get on my nerves! But in *The Reluctant Widow*, Elinor has just enough justification for her ire to make it logical. I do enjoy the mystery aspect of it, and the twist at the end; and of course the minor characters are vividly drawn, as in most Heyer novels.

I suppose my one quibble would be that I don't find the hero very romantic. I could have done with a few more hints of his growing attachment—would have liked to see his heart at war with his matter-of-fact nature. He could be less perfect at stage-managing, too, especially when his emotions got entangled with his judgment. But for me that's less important than the fun of the plot and characters.

This is one of Georgette Heyer's shorter Regency romances, and not overburdened with Regency slang—a good starting point for someone wishing to try this author for the first time. It's at the top of my second rank of Heyer faves.

Nick Imrie says

Heyer set herself a couple of really interesting challenges with this novel. This first is the opening drama. Elinor Rochdale accidentally arrives at the wrong house, and is met by Carlyon, who was expecting a woman to marry his evil cousin. His evil cousin is dying of a stab-wound and for various inheritance reasons Carlyon has to marry him off immediately so it's Elinor or never.

Of course, no Heyer heroine could be anything other than a gently-bred, honourable woman. And no gently-bred honourable woman would ever marry a dying stranger for his money. So how does Heyer resolve this problem? Well, partly by making the hero, Carlyon, incredibly masterful and utterly rational. Implacable like a glacier, he simply assumes that she'll do it and organises accordingly.

Now this raises the problem of making Elinor seem a bit weak, and Carlyon a bit of a bully. Heyer's solution for this is rather clever. She makes Elinor a bit of a contrarian, and a brave soul at heart, so whenever Carlyon offers her the chance to back out, she bristles up and insists on seeing it through. I rather like her for this.

Heyer's other trick to resolve this problem I like less. She makes Elinor 'feisty'. We've all met feisty heroines before. They're the ones who never seem to do anything proactive in a story, but they're always talking a good game. In Elinor's case, this is constant sarcasm and needling Carlyon for being an insensible brute. I can't really blame her for it, but it does get annoying.

Heyer also introduces Elinor's sweet old governess-companion, Miss Beccles. With Carlyon on one hand firmly guiding her actions, and Becky on the other insisting that his lordship is a good man and his plans are good plans, Elinor is free to protest exactly as much as a lady should while still going along with it. It does sound a bit like: *'Please don't throw me into the briar patch possession of a grand estate.'*

The second problem Heyer introduces is that a large part of the plot is a very jolly intrigue around international espionage, which has the characters acting like the Famous Five, hunting spies and secret documents, and mysterious intruders and whatnot. However, it means that the hero and the heroine spend hardly any time together. In fact, I'm sure she spends more time with the hero's younger brother's dog than with the hero!

Luckily, you know they'll end up together: he's the only man in the book who isn't too old, too young, too evil, or too dead. And he's sensible and practical. There's nothing a Heyer heroine likes better than a man who can take responsibility for the paperwork, and solve ones affairs with the minimum of fuss. *So comforting, you know.* But aside from that the romance is understated to say the least, some gentle banter, some moments of understanding as they discuss their pasts, and the future.

So whether or not you'll enjoy this novel probably depends on how much you enjoy Heyer tropes in general. There are some of the best ones here. The family bickering between Carlyon's brothers is hilarious: irrepressible Nicky running wild with his dog and pompous stuck up John nagging him. There's a whole cast of loyal servants to be managed and mollified. And one of the best evil dandies that Heyer has ever produced! There are some wonderful comedic scenes and set pieces (I won't spoil them for you, but I was laughing out loud). So while I think it's rather lacklustre as a romance, it's still a very jolly afternoon read.

Mela says

"it is my very ardent desire to be permitted to pay my addresses to you"

"Do you know, it has of late become an ambition of mine to hear my name on your lips instead of my title"

Yes, this is why we love Regency romances, don't we ladies? ;-)

"The Reluctant Widow" isn't typical / only romance. I would rather say it is first of all **a mystery book**, with spy, secret entrance, stolen document and so on. Secondly, it is **a funny story** where characters cope with extraordinary circumstances and events. Thirdly, we find here brilliant example of brotherhood (relationships between three different brothers). And fourthly, it is **Heyer's romance**.

I had fun reading how characters coped with mystery and I felt this sweet pleasure when the love story came to the end (through almost the whole book it only hung in the air, as I wrote it wasn't a main thread). **But most of all, in my opinion in this novel the most original and praiseworthy was (mentioned above) description of relationships between adult brothers.**

Ruth Turner says

Another of my least favourite Heyer books, with a bland romance being a side issue of the main story.

My laugh out loud moments were to do with Bouncer, the dog, and the various conversations that were had with him.

Beautifully written, as always, and with interesting characters, except for our romantic couple.

And, for all those reviewers who noted the overuse of the word "odious", I counted them for you. It didn't overly bother me, but for those who wish to know it was used 27 times. Three times in two sentences!

Joanne says

What a charming addition to my Georgette Heyer collection!

The Reluctant Widow was a bit of a departure from the silly/sweet Regency-type romance Heyer is known for. Part gothic (crumbling old mansion, secret passage ways, intruders in the night), it delightfully reads like a Nancy Drew mystery for adults. Throw in a few suspicious and colorful characters who may or may not be spies for Wellington and Bonaparte, a lovable and slightly goofy mutt who provided lots of chuckles, and you have a real treat. I loved the banter between Lord Carlyon and Elinor (who by the way becomes the "reluctant widow" by accidentally getting into the wrong carriage on her way to apply for a position as governess). I did get a bit frustrated at the end as the pace slowed considerably and it took too long for the

unveiling of the "villain" with unnecessary chatter, but it all wrapped up nicely for a satisfying happy and hopeful future for Elinor.

Carol ?? says

[or did she? (hide spoiler)]

Hannah says

An absolutely charming Heyer regency romance, and now my personal favorite of those I've read (even better than The Corinthian and Friday's Child, IMO).

The fact that this book ticked off some of my favorite reader boxes probably has a lot to do with why this one was so appealing to me:

- An old Jacobean manor house, complete with hidden passages, paneled walls, and mullioned windows. *Be still, my crappy, apartment-bound heart....*
- An entirely lovable, undisciplined canine named "Bouncer", who was every bit the model of scrappy doghood, and provided much comic relief throughout the novel with his antics.
- A dry, droll hero, whose mode of wooing was perfectly offset by the still-lady-like sarcasm of the heroine. Ned and Elinor were a perfectly matched Heyer couple; mature in years as well as personality, not silly or foppish, and a couple you could still imagine being in love with each other 30 years down the road.
- Less romance, more gothic-y mystery (with a murder thrown in for extra brownie points!)
- A truly wonderful secondary character in the person of Nicky. Nicky is the teenage human equivalent to Bouncer, and every bit as scrappy and undisciplined as his canine counterpart. Heyer fleshed out the perfect foil for the more sober, mature older brother/hero. I adored him.
- Throw in some Napoleonic spies, a missing war strategy missive, a marriage of extremely short duration and a languid, foppish cousin who might be more sinister than he seems, and you've got the makings for one very entertaining novel by the queen of the regencies.

Sophia says

This was my second time through this story and I have to say this author's work stands the test of time and re-reading. I appreciated it more than I did in the first place.

I saw more humor and wit than I did the first time around. I saw the subtle hints of romance where I didn't see the evidence of it before and I was most struck by one of the more dubious characters in the story,

Frances Cheviot.

The story is most definitely old school Regency Romance at its best with a tinge of the Gothic to it. I wasn't that into the heroine the first time around, but found her more than tolerable this time. She has a stinging tongue, but I could see how the hero's laid back cool attitude in the face of the mayhem going on would drive her to it. They are quite the pair and I enjoyed their sparring.

The narrator did a fantastic job capturing the tone, pacing, and characters.

In summation, I was delighted by this re-read in the form of an audio version.

Seema Khan says

3.85* for this Georgette Heyer endeavour because I didn't get what I was expecting out of the book. Firstly, lets begin with the cover. I have an Arrow Publication edition which has a Charles Haigh-Wood painting titled 'Waiting'. I absolutely loved this cover, it is beautiful. Reminded me of my childhood days at my grandparents' home and gave me a nostalgic feel.

Coming to the story, its not an out and out romantic story, but rather a mystery and suspense story entwining romantic elements in the midst. Frankly I expected something more from this book. There could have been further elements added to enrich the story. It was different from all the earlier Georgette Heyer books I read but with a different storyline, but there were also some common elements like an independent heroine and a sauvé hero and differences of opinion amongst them.

When the story began I really was hooked onto it and was very excited with the happenings. Lord Carlyon steals the show hands down and that's what caught my fancy. But later on the developments became a bit tedious and I was starting to getting bored.

The star of the show is no doubt Lord Carlyon. His impeccable cool, calm, undeterred and persistent nature is superior in quality. Plus his views on any matter are really very interesting. I really like his personality, it is intriguing and superlative. Again, he enlists in my favourite Georgette Heyer heroes list!

Miss Elinor Rochdale is sweet and real. She is very natural and unimposing. I liked her as well as Lord Carlyon. Her sarcasm and wit is fab and in many places I had to re-read many dialogues to understand the parallel meanings! But her agitations were beautifully complementary to Lord Carlyon's cool views and made them a couple that was not a bore!

Nicky and John are also necessary for the story and do capture interest. Out of the secondary characters the one of Francis Cheviot was remarkable! A really scary character, very deceptive and it is worth great appreciation that such a character was penned at the hands of Georgette Heyer.

The only thing was there was something lacking, it felt like something else should also have been there in the story. More importance was given to the memorandum and its mystery and that stole the romance's thunder to my utter disappointment! I loved the starting bit though. Enjoyed some parts heartily I must say!

Nonetheless, as I always state, my view that any Georgette Heyer book is worth a read at least once, I maintain the same this time as well. Enjoy the read!

Wealhtheow says

Impoverished governess Elinor accidentally boards not the carriage sent by her employer, but one that takes her to an isolated mansion. There, a high-handed but handsome man named Lord Carlyon requests her help:

to assure that scandal does not attach to his family, he needs a woman to marry his dying cousin and receive his estate. Elinor agrees, and by the next morning finds that she is a widow and the sole owner of a dilapidated house and her late husband's debts. Lord Carlyon assures her that the debts will be taken care of, but he needs her to remain in possession of the house, because somewhere within its walls lies a document that could destroy all of England's hopes against Napoleon. Shaken, Elinor agrees to do so and faces a steady stream of male visitors, each of whom could be a French spy.

This is a strange book from Heyer; she tries to incorporate a thrilling spy plot into her romance, but it is utterly unconvincing. Her usual character types are all here, but are off-kilter and passive. The sensible heroine with no hopes or expectation of marriage is here, and her retorts to the hero are as delightfully sarcastic as ever, but she does nothing to influence the plot. Time and time again Elinor wants something down (to lock up a secret door, or summon help, or kick out a suspected spy) and every time a man refuses to help and she just...gives up. No further attempts, no argument, just gives up every time. At the very end of the novel she finally refuses to take no for an answer and rides for help herself, only to find that the problem has already been taken care of and her heroic ride was for nothing. The hero who strikes all characters with awe (so handsome! such perfect horsemanship! so well dressed! so perceptive! etc) is here, but he strides on page for just a moment every few chapters, then vanishes again. Carlyon hardly interacts with Elinor at all, and his marriage proposal at the end of the novel (no spoilers needed; this is a Heyer Regency Romance after all) comes out of nowhere. The scatter-brained young relatives are here, but Lady Flint only gets a few pages and Nick comes across as deeply disturbed rather than amusing. He bursts onto a tete-a-tete between Carlyon and Elinor in the first chapter with a "blinding" smile of relief and "'I'm excessively sorry, but I have killed Eustace Cheviot!' Upon being asked for explanation for how he came to kill his cousin, he commences on a FOUR PAGE babbling session concerning dancing bears, eating ham with friends, his stage-coach journey, and finally how annoying he finds another brother's "sermons" about good behavior. Finally he mentions that while drinking, Eustace fell upon the knife he was holding and says "And it is not that I am sorry he's dead, because I'm not, but I never thought it would have been so horrid!...I can tell you, Ned, it almost makes me wish I had not been rusticated at all!" After this appalling statement, it still takes him several more pages to finally mention that Eustace is not actually dead yet. Holy crap! Nick is either so stupid that I'm surprised he can breathe on his own, or basically a sociopath. The only character I could bear to read about was Bouncer, Nick's energetic bulldog. Heyer describes him with verve and fun, and so the insipidity is broken by passages like this:

He pranced ahead of her down the long stone-paved corridor that led to the kitchens. Nothing could have exceeded his affability there, but only Elinor's persuasion induced Mrs. Barrow to bestow a plate of scraps on him. She said that he had already had a shoulder of mutton designed for Elinor's own dinner. But the sagacious hound listened to Elinor's reproaches with an expression compounded by innocence and such gnawing hunger that she found it hard to believe such a thing of him, and insisted that he should be fed. There was nothing in the manner in which he disposed of his portion to lend the least colour to the allegation made against his character.

Then Francis Cheviot arrives, and accidentally takes over the whole novel. He's introduced like this:

Barking like a fiend, [Bouncer] launched himself upon the intruder. The exquisite gentleman whirled about at the first bark, and as Bouncer came at full-tilt across the ill-kept lawn, his ungloved right hand grasped the ivory top of his cane, deftly twisted it, and drew a thin, wicked blade hissing from the ebony stick that formed its sheath.

Upon checking the dog's attack, he then embarks upon a running commentary of such foppish flippancy that Sir Percy Blakeney himself would be impressed. He is beautifully, captivatingly in control of every situation thence. The entire second-to-last chapter is basically his monologue, in which he tells Carlyon (view spoiler) Francis feels like he slithered in from some other, more exciting novel.

Andrea says

This is one of the Heyers that both works and doesn't work for me. I like the story I think Heyer is trying to convey, but think that her intention and what appears on the page doesn't quite match up. Elinor is clearly meant to be frequently sarcastic, and equal to the challenges that come her way, but she is so tangled up in how she is expected to behave (proper and full of sensibility and completely unable to show any hint of self-worth) that she comes across a good deal more flustered than she perhaps really is.

This is exacerbated by the narrator of this particular audiobook who (like many men attempting a female voice) produces something rather affected and hen-like for Elinor.

The result, at any point, is someone constantly anxious and upset, and then facing Carlyon's almost Gaslighting tendency to play down everything that's happening, and having (forever perfectly good) reasons not to tell her important bits of information.

There are some very funny bits, though (particularly the first conversation with Elinor and Carlyon), and if only Elinor had come across as a bit more redoubtable I would like the book thoroughly for its almost farce-like silliness.

CatBookMom says

Very enjoyable. Cornelius Garrett has excellent accents and voices for the different characters.

As a fan of Terry Pratchett, I found it amusing that the accent used for the local doctor, he who tended the dying Eustace Cheviot and our boy Nicky, sounded almost exactly like the Feegles, as performed by Stephen Briggs in the Tiffany Aching books (begin with *The Wee Free Men*, and sequels).

Barb says

Odious, odious, odious!

I had such high expectations for this book, I am so disappointed. I really didn't like anything about it. I read some really glowing reviews and was so excited to find a book that seemed like it was something I would love.

I didn't care for the writing, the mystery, the characters, or the so-called love interest or romance portion of the story. In fact I thought the whole story was ridiculous. And the repetition of the word odious was very annoying.

I so wished this had been something like Kate Ross's Julian Kestrel Mysteries which I loved. Sadly it was not at all like that and I wasn't able to find anything to love about this one

Andrea (Catsos Person) is a Compulsive eBook Hoarder says

This was probably a 3-star read and not comparable those of Georgette Heyer's romances that are now among my favorites such as Sylvester, Cotillion, or Devil's Cub and others.

However, the marriage proposal/declaration of love scene (that I've marked in my kindle) is one of the sweetest I've ever read in recent memory.

Note to self: Francis Cheviot is introduced in ch 13. Ha

Kelly says

The pairing: Older Supposedly Sensible Heroine/Masterful All-Knowing Calm As You Please Hero

Supporting Cast: High Spirited Younger Brother, The Deceptively Weak Dandy that one "cannot quite like", Romantic Older Friend of Heroine, Motivationlessly Evil Relative, Exposition Providing Brother

The Plot: Supposedly Sensible Heroine marries Motivationlessly Evil Relative on his death bed (which he's brought to after an accidental wound in a fight with High Spirited Young Relative) because All Knowing Hero does not want to be suspected of wanting to inherit his estate. It turns out Motivationlessly Evil Relative was involved with French spies! A missing document brought up by Exposition Providing Brother was thought to be in his hands when he died! Housebreakers! Secret passageways! But where is that document??

... it falls out pretty much as you would imagine.

I found the heroine's endless whining about the "outrageous" situations she finds herself in really annoying-- especially as it seems that that is 90% of her lines, and therefore found it really unbelievable that the hero would fall for her. The only person I liked was the High Spirited Younger Brother, and I've seen Heyer write that character better elsewhere. I've also seen her do the gothic-esque mystery thing better elsewhere.

Give this one a pass. Read *The Talisman Ring* instead.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

3.5 stars. Elinor, our genteel-but-fallen-on-hard-times heroine, is on her way to a dubious governessing job when she accidentally gets into the carriage of Lord Carlyon, a man expecting a woman for a very different job: to marry his dissolute and dying cousin Eustace. His reasons are barely plausible, but this is one of those cases where you just have to roll with it. Elinor doesn't think this sounds like a great idea, but when Eustace gets mortally injured in a fight with Carlyon's reckless young brother, Carlyon's timetable for getting Eustace married off is accelerated -- he needs to get married TONIGHT, before he kicks the bucket -- and Carlyon

sweeps Elinor along with his plans despite her increasingly feeble objections.

Eustace obligingly marries her and dies a few hours later, but this is only the beginning of Elinor's problems: there's a large and rundown estate to try to fix up, a mansion with secret passageways, dislikeable relatives of her late husband showing up to search for ... something. And Carlyon, administering the will of Eustace and smiling and brushing off all of Elinor's concerns and complaints.

This is a lightweight mystery that seemed a little scattershot to me, with an improbable setup and a barely-there romance... But hey, it's Heyer, and it's lively and filled with witty repartee that carried me along effortlessly to the end, and left me smiling. And even though Carlyon was a little (or a lot) too high-handed and Elinor spent too much time and breath complaining to and about him -- with complete justice, I might add -- I still liked the main characters, and the secondary ones were delightful. Especially Bouncer the dog, a hilarious mastiff cross-breed.

'Dear old fellow!' said Miss Beccles, fondly regarding the faithful hound, who had followed her into the room, and now sat on his haunches, with his ears laid flat, and an expression on his face of vacuous amiability. 'I am sure he is not a nasty fierce dog, are you, Bouncer?' Bouncer at once assumed the mien of a foolishly sentimental spaniel, and began to pant.

A fun and light mystery.

Carol ?? says

4.5*

This fast paced yarn full of wonderfully engaging characters only just fell short of 5 stars, because the original premise was so unlikely. But once you get over that the story moves along at a cracking pace, with GH's trademark witty dialogue. & another dog as an entertaining minor character. Why are her dogs dull in her mysteries but full of life in her historicals? & I love young Nicky so much!

As usual, highly recommended!

Nina {????s ??? ?????} says

Re-read 31st Oct. Originally read in 2011.

"I must not listen to you!" Elinor said, much shaken. "Oh, it is the most ridiculous thing! You only met me a week ago, and then you constrained me to marry your horrid cousin!"

"It is a fortunate thing that I did

not know you better, for if I had I
should certainly never have done so."
She uttered a laugh that broke in
the middle; "Odious, odious man!"
"I depend on you to teach me to
be less odious. I shall be very happy
to learn of you."

Another sleep deprived day I foresee later! However, of course I couldn't put this down!! How can I when I'm on a role?? Heyer for all her adorable regency romances, knows how to keep me hooked!

The reluctant widow is one of the few Regency Romances that have a strong mystery subplot that has more focus than the romance! But the chemistry and romance is still there! Not strong and overbearing but still present, with the interactions between Elinor (known as Mrs Cheviot for most of the novel) and Ned/Edward (known by his title Carlyon for most of the book) are very amusing! And I love how they met in the most extraordinary circumstances which led to Elinor getting married to Carlyon's odious cousin who left her widowed by dawn.

What was humourous throughout the novel were the references between Elinor and Carlyon of Mrs Macclesfield! The woman who was supposed to employ Elinor as a governess in her home...a home which she never reached because she had been mistaken and conveyed to Carlyon's property instead, and to which the events unravelled.

Personality wise, Carlyon is very dry humoured, constantly in a state to bemusement, and rarely capable of having his feathers ruffled. He's so calm and unaffected even with the events that take place at Highnoons! Contrasted with Elinor's sarcasm and speech filled with the self deprecating humour of her feat, they make such a wonderful pair getting along really well!

I also liked that Elinor made light of the situation even with so many horrific things (in a mild Heyer way of course) happening in the house! It's amusing to read because of the familiar cast of classic side characters who support the main pair. I mean really Nick...in the effort to catch a night intruder just had to get himself shot in the arm because he accidentally stumbled upon a suit of armour and firing by accident!

Another great enjoyable read by Georgette Heyer!

**written while half asleep=typos most likely in abundance, sorry!

Amy says

2018 - 4 Stars

My! I really did not care for this one when I first read it. However, as per usual with Heyer, I love her work with a blinding love that disguises almost all flaws.

Almost all, that is. This book starts off slow. The heroine also lacks the gumption of an older Heyer heroine (like Sophy or Frederica) but misses the sweet innocence of a younger one (such as Arabella). She comes from a similar background as the heroine from Cousin Kate but without that lady's fortitude.

Still, her personality did improve by the end.

I found the hero much more tolerable this read through. He does behave a little high handed, but I like his uncertainty with the heroine. That proposal scene was a lot sweeter than I remembered.

I don't know why I liked John. If anything, he is the dull brother. Nicky is a fairly standard younger Heyer brother. I wish we got to see the sisters more!

Overall, it was a pleasant re-read and I bumped it up one star for the neat little mystery. I like that twist. I had forgotten about it.

Not my favorite Heyer book but still wonderful because it was written by *her*.

2011 Review - 3 Stars

Really! Quite *odious*. Odious!

I'm so sick of that word! Odious. I declare, the main character REALLY needs to broaden her vocabulary. She says it fifty times if she says it once!

Three stars because it is Heyer, but really! Disappointing. I had high hopes for this book but it doesn't really live up to any of them. I found the main character obnoxious and kind of pathetic. The hero had potential but ended up being more of a boring stiff. Maybe he deserved the term odious.

With the exception of the bad guy, most of the characters aren't anything special. John wasn't bad but Nicky annoyed me. Really, I think the term *boyish enthusiasm* could be used to describe his entire character!

To be honest, the plot is pretty cool. Elinor Rochdale is a prospective governess who accidentally gets in the wrong coach at the station, and instead of going to her new employers house, ends up at the home of a man at death's door, and is mistaken for the young lady supposed to marry him! Sir Carlyon is deterred to see his cousin married, and persuades Elinor to marry the dying man! Suddenly she finds herself a widow with considerable property and many debts to be dealt with...but even now things don't calm down, as she finds herself surrounded by housebreakers, bungling spies, and the suddenly pressing as to *what* sort of business her deceased husband was into....

Cool plot, not Heyer's best.

On a side note, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0KZjm...> *that* song kept running through my head as I reads the ending.

Not sure if that is significant....but somehow it seems to fit well.
