



Dark Fires

Rosemary Rogers

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Dark Fires Details

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From Reader Review Dark Fires for online ebook

Karla says

Oh Steve and Ginny....you two totally demented and effed-up-codependent crazy kids. How I love you so!

As if my ratings haven't been obvious, I love Rosemary Rogers. She's the kind of author who throws you into the passenger seat of some big ol' land yacht of a 70s car, assumes the wheel fueled on some kind of alternate reality and suspect white powder, and decides to challenge Frank Bullitt to a road race. (And I'm pretty sure that it would be McQueen who would plow into that fuel stockpile and get blown up real good.)

At least that's what it feels like when I read her books. Periodically, I slump back - slackjawed and dopey from sensory overload and the roller coaster hate-lust of the characters - but I'm soon bitchslapped awake as Rosemary tromps on the gas and off we go again....wheeeeeee! She's relentless and unapologetic and I totally love that about her.

Despite the rape, gang rape, and the hero-whipped-into-a-piece-of-bloody-meat-and-branded-and-imprisoned scene in Sweet Savage Love - yes, *despite all that!* - it still surprised me with the lack of OTTWTF craziness that Dominic and Marisa had delivered in Wicked Loving Lies from stem to stern. But Dark Fires was a crazy train of a book, with moments aplenty that reminded me a lot of Dominic and Marisa's nasty and dysfunctional relationship. *Mean* and *naaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaasty* moments. And I ate it all up.

So what's this second installment in the Steve & Ginny saga all about? What are you doing for the next hour? Because, gentle Reader, it is **so** packed full of nasty meanness and old skool alpha bodice ripping abuse, mixed in with a plot that has so many twists and turns and "Holy shit, did I just read that?" moments that I ended up doing some spazzy recaps wherever I happened to be on this lovely site because it helped to keep things straight at the time. If I hadn't written it down somewhere, I'd have forgotten what went on. Lots of twists, lots of craziness. I'm still intimidated by it a little bit - by the tiny font (my eyes!), the huge page count, and - last but not least - the dag-nasty meanness that went on between our hero and heroine, who were supported by a crackerjack team of secondary characters that never failed to supply WTFs of their own.

The bare bones plot is that our hero and heroine have a Cotton Candy Cupid interlude of wedded bliss for all of the first 17 pages before he's off on army business for General Porfirio Diaz and Ginny's left alone to be a victim of circumstance and plotting by the devious Russian Prince Nikolai Sahrkanov, who informs her she is actually the love child of Tsar Alexander II and--

OK, screw it. I've just tried to type out a brief outline and got bogged down with so many details, all of which seem necessary. So I think it's time for a digestible list. It's the only way this isn't gonna hurt.

The plot....it's crazy. It doesn't matter what happens in it. You won't care after awhile. Honestly. And in a good way, too. Not the "Holy shit, am I bored!" way, but the "Shit, I'm just gonna turn off my brain and enjoy it" way. Or perhaps, your brain will completely fry and you will be rendered a puddle of uncomprehending goo.

So, what will you encounter in this book?

- * Rape of our heroine in a rat-infested basement by an obsessed loony (don't worry - she dispatches him)
- * Heroine repeatedly slapped/punched/restrained
- * Heroine whored out for money/power/influence
- * Hero suffers amnesia and becomes a killer without conscience or soul
- * Evil woman who gets off on abuse, rape, and murder (Antoinette Lassiter is one sick bitch)
- * Hero sleeping around with just about everything and everybody
- * Heroine drugged and manipulated every which way
- * Misunderstandings! With consequent vile hatred for one's perceived whorings! And a total double standard!!
- * Hero beaten to a pulp and nearly hanged
- * A saber duel with ninja action (You think I'm kidding?)

You know, there's probably more - way more - but I can't recall anything else at the moment. The main thing that will forever stick with me about this middle child of the Steve and Ginny saga is the - and I think I've mentioned this before! - meanness. They are incredibly mean to each other. For instance, Steve - still an amnesiac - slips into Ginny's room in the middle of the night, ties her to the bed and rapes her. She then proceeds to put up a \$30,000 bounty for his head which might (or might not - I've forgotten, dammit) end up playing a part in him getting his head turned into a mushy prune by the main villains in the story. He then proceeds to stagger off to his opera singer mistress, which enrages Ginny more, and this ramping up of the bile and vitriol and lethal spite continues right until almost the very last page. Have you seen Duel in the Sun with Gregory Peck and Jennifer Jones crawling around the desert, attempting (and ultimately succeeding) to kill each other? Yeah, Steve and Ginny were totes Lewt and Pearl. All that was missing was the actual death, but the "I love you so much I hate your fucking guts" sentiment was the same.

So, in the end, you're looking at about 585 pages of separation and/or nasty antagonism between our two lovers, from when Steve first vanishes from Ginny's tender, loving arms to the final embrace after a newly-negotiated-and-yet-always-fragile truce. And I just know that it won't take long in Book 3 for them to be at each others' throats again and being a pain in the other's ass.

Oh and in the interest of factual accuracy vs. publisher mendacity, the back cover of my 22nd printing (and still many-typoed) edition **lied!** We only hear about Ginny's trip to Russia in the past tense and there are **no squalid fleshpots** and barely any action set in Paris. This is a Mexico-California-Texas romance.

One of these days I'll crack the code to review a Rosemary Rogers book with some degree of coherence, but until then, I'll stick with cowering in the passenger seat, keeping my head down, and trying to make it through each book alive.

MaryReadsRomance says

LOVED, LOVED Sweet Savage Love when it hit the book stands in the late 70's (yes, I was alive then LOL).

This book, and the follow up series, was shocking and HOT at that time and, like 50 Shades in recent years, revolutionized the entire romance genre then.

As much as I loved Sweet Savage Love, I really didn't like the follow up books as much as they put Ginny and Steve through too much continued melodrama and trauma and frankly it became somewhat absurd that they kept surviving and forgiving each other. They even had twin children which they virtually ignored! It just became a bit sordid and sad.

We fans had to beg for a happy ending and in the last book finally Steve and Ginny get one!

Still nostalgic about the whole series so giving it a 4 stars.

BURMA says

Better even than the first one in the series! Not many explanations in the end but still great! This no-explanation between them about the events which happened is completely alien to my personality. That's the reason why it is so surprising to me the happy end. Or maybe not so happy. Anyway, a very entertaining reading! Really original.

Terri Gostola says

This was a big one for me. "Sweet Savage Love" was the book that made me fall in love with reading romance novels and "Dark Fires" was the second book in that continuing series. I first read it in the early 70's. Before that I was a big fan of Gothic novels but "Sweet Savage Love" was so different. There was a heroine at odds with the hero. They were attracted and yet sometimes I thought they were enemies. So much chemistry, so much cruelty. I think if this book was the one that started the term "bodice ripper" it should have been. Feminism has come a long way since this book was published and it doesn't suit women but back in the day it was a page turner!

Nikz Westbrook says

The first romance novel I had read, which got me hooked into romance novels as a teenager and fell in love instantly...the characters, the history, the countries and the author. I couldn't put it down, and still to this day I go back to it and read my favourite parts even with my book falling apart...will always be one of my all time favourites....Ginny & Steve

Anne-Marie says

This is actually a 7. I have also read this one 2 times. Ginny and Steve married is even better than their previous adventures. I loved the locales: Mexico and Russia.

Michelle says

I love the entire Dominic Challenger series... it's so captivating and makes me want to keep reading more and more! 100% recommend it.

Sammy Loves Books says

The sequel to Sweet Savage Love started out great but by page 300 it began to drag and just became a bore. Once again Ginny and Steve waste more time and energy trying to prove that they do not love one another. Ginny flaunts other men in Steve's face to make him jealous.

Though Steve loves her, he thinks the worse of her in all things. He assumes that any man she flirts with is a lover of hers. Any bad situation in which Ginny becomes a victim is perceived as orchestrated by her. After pushing Ginny away, Steve actually admitted to himself on page 335 that he had just not wanted her to know his weakness. That weakness being that he loved her. He was so prideful that he refused to tell her he loved her until the very last page of this long drawn out book.

Steve was a total jerk in Sweet Savage Love but I could never bring myself to hate him. However he and Ginny both drove me crazy in Dark Fires. I also grew tired of Steve's many lovers. More love scenes were spent with him and other women, than with him and Ginny (his wife).

Ginny drove me mad throughout this book. After Steve left her, she was brutally attacked and went into shock. She then spent over 200 pages as a victim and a drug addict carelessly floating through life in a daze. Oh the Angst! Since Steve had hurt her, she refused to let him in on her secret. That secret being that she loved him, but was too prideful to let him know.

I won't give anything more of the plot away because there was so much that took place, I felt as if this book could have been three separate books. There was just so much going on. Dark Fires was so well written and would have been a solid 5 star if Ginny and Steve could have put their energies together to fight as one against all the conflicts instead of fighting each other.

I would have loved it if Steve and Ginny had worked together to uncover the evil that was the Russian prince. Or if they had teamed together to take down the wicked Toni Lassiter. That would have been so much better than all of this angst.

I don't believe I will ever be able to read another book involving this couple. But they are so memorable that I will never forget them. And for that I thank Rosemary Rogers.

Korey says

Buddy read with Nenia :)

This is bug fuck crazy and I wouldn't have it any other way. My mouth literally hung open at some of the craziness Rogers conjures up here. The plot twists are so nuts and so many wacky things happen that I was in a continuous state of delighted shock. Steve and Ginny don't actually spend a lot of time together so don't go into this expecting much in the way of romance, but there is a lot of action and depravity and unhinged creativity. I'm giving this the same star rating as Sweet Savage Love and I enjoyed both books roughly equally but I think this book did one significant thing better than that book, and one significant thing worse. This book did a better job of avoiding bloat and filler. Sweet Savage Love bogs down in a way this book doesn't. However, Steve has charm as a character in Sweet Savage Love that is missing here. We don't get to see snarky, sarcastic, wise cracking cool guy Steve here which was a disappointment.

On the one hand, I'd love to lovingly catalog every crazy thing that happens here. On the other hand, I feel like I might be doing a disservice to anyone reading this review if I spoil every twisted surprise. So I'm going to provide a very abbreviated list of some of the special things that happen in text. Consider this your spoiler warning and don't read on if you wish to avoid spoilers.

Scheming Russian Prince and evil doctor sidekick. "Headache powder." Kung fu fighting. Rape. Murder. Typhus induced amnesia. Secret pregnancy. Assassin! Hate sex. Miscommunication. Mistaken Identity. Infidelity? Kidnapping. Evil Toni. Opera. Mystical Native American lady healer. Angry ballroom dancing. Bounty hunting.

Obviously don't go into this expecting realistic characters or a plot bound by the conventions of our Earth logic but if you're in the mood for wild spectacle you could do a lot worse. Let yourself have the fun of watching two hateful sex robots get tortured by the cruel hand of fate for 600 pages.

Julie says

not great

Frances says

this review is comprised of three tumblr posts I wrote during the reading of DARK FIRES. Contains Spoilers!!! you have been warned :)

so...since my sister finally finished FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC, I decided to get stuck back into DARK FIRES (the sequel to SWEET SAVAGE LOVE which I read last year) and OMG Rosemary Rogers!!! So far Ginny and Steve have parted ways (after a mere seventeen pages of married bliss), Ginny was captured by blonde!Carl (booo!!) and ravished repeatedly against her will in a dungeon before she killed him. Then she was told she is actually the daughter of the Tsar and tricked into marrying this russian prince guy who drugs her with '*'headache powders' while attempting to whore her out to multiple men. Of course nobody realises she is being drugged, despite the fact that she just blobs around like a spaced out hippy, not even Steve- who cant decide whether he wants to slap or screw her.

Speaking of Steve...if Ginny would just communicate with him then nearly all their conflict would be over. He's always like 'you left me and hooked up with some russian dude and now you're rubbing it in my face you whooooore!' and then, instead of saying 'no steve i was drugged and married against my will and i love

you and only you' she just says stuff like 'why are you soo mean to meeee!!! WAAAHHH!' or 'believe what you want to believe, Steve...nothing I can say can change it'.....except, yes, Ginny you could TRY TELLING HIM THE TRUTH PROPERLY.

and I'm only halfway through...seriously...I am in anticipation for the amnesiac-assassin-Steve plotline which I heard about....

Honestly if you like books with lots of crazy shit, a breakneck pace, and just general 'WHAT DID I JUST READ' -ness...you should try Rosemary Rogers!

* (edit) turns out it was opium...which Steve realised all along and kept supplying her with while still berating her about her evil russian husband even though he knew that the guy was SECRETLY TURNING HER INTO AN OPIUM ADDICT. And Steve's just like 'Hah hah haaa...now that you've let me use your body for the zillionth time while still maintaining that you hate me...I HATE YOU WHOOORE...and BTW you're addicted to OPIUM, BITCH!'

which, of course, Ginny doesn't believe

Apparently Steve & Ginny's marriage was never annulled, so she's not actually married to the russian dude (its so hard to keep track) so although Ginny knows Evil Russian Prince! has been drugging her, she still hates Steve more so she decides to run away with the prince to Russia and they go by boat and at one point the prince is like 'you must be starting to like me, I can tell because I haven't had to rape you for the past two weeks' (i'm paraphrasing but he seriously says that). Anyway, she thinks she's getting away with no hassle, and starts dreaming of balls and dances and bats called Bartok, when a strange ship pulls up alongside theirs. GUESS WHO? Yeah it's Steve (and Ginny's dad, who has now decided he likes Steve after all) and he's come to get Ginny back because although he hates her whore guts, he can't bear to let her go. But Ginny's all 'Nuh uh, am gonna stay with the russian dude, because even though he drugs me and rapes me he STILL RESPECTS ME!! and calls me PRINCESSA!!!'

But Steve is like 'You're leaving with me bitch!"

And the prince is like 'FUCK OFF'

and the random crew-members are like 'WTF'

So Steve and the Prince end up having a swordfight to the death and Ginny's eyes well up with reluctant tears because she thinks Steve is going to lose because the Prince is like mad-skilled but then Steve wins. So they go back to the mainland and announce to society that they are married (and the book hits the halfway mark) and then Ginny fucks off to europe while Steve stays in the USA to simmer with rage and receive cryptic letters informing him that Ginny is bedding dudes left right and center.

And now this Opera singer named Francesca has been introduced and she is desperate to get into Steve's pants and you know he ain't gonna resist.

So, three days ago, I finally finished DARK FIRES - the 604 page sequel to Rosemary Rogers' SWEET SAVAGE LOVE. Unfortunately a lot (and I mean A LOT) of shit went down in the last 300 or so pages that I will most likely not be able to re-cap it all.

Okay, so Steve takes up with this opera singer named Francesca and decides to head south with her for some reason and then ditches her halfway through their journey because she was asking him too many questions or something. Well he learns that this guy who was in the chain gang/prison with him in the first book has been (MURDERED?) and his wife is now an ashamed prostitute, so Steve heads down to find out what's up but unfortunately he contracts some disease (can remember what so lets just say SWAMP DISEASE) and he

loses his memory. Fortunately he is nursed back to health by a native american woman (who is nanny to an outspoken red-haired teen named Missy - more on her in a mo) who, in order to protect him, tells Steve (and everyone else) that he is her husband MANOLO. Yeah, well....

Life is sweet in the southern swamps for a while until Billy-Boy Dozier, the foreman of a local plantation, decides to rape and murder Steve's new wife. Although Steve is now Warrior!MANOLO, he is still Steve, and so vows revenge and breaks into Billy-Boy's bedroom where he is screwing the lady-of-the-house Antoinette (Toni) Lassiter. After watching him stab and SCALP Billy-Boy, Toni reacts like any normal crazed villainess and begs Steve to rape her over her lover's dead body. yeah.....

MEANWHILE...in Europe, Ginny reveals that she wasn't really sleeping with all those dudes she's been hanging around with and that she is in fact surprise! pregnant with Steve's babies. Her stepmother Sonya implores her to return to America and Ginny does so - giving birth to twins at Steve's grandfather's home. Some guy arrives to tell her that Steve (who is now Toni Lassiter's new foreman/lover) has been causing trouble down south and can Ginny please go and sort him out.

It turns out Toni Lassiter is possibly the sickest bitch ever - a perverted, sadistic, manipulative stuck-up southern-belle hiding behind angelic blonde hair and blue eyes. She turns the amnesiac Steve into her own personal assassin in a bid to take over all the land in the south. Her cousin Nicholas Benoit is just as bad. Although the teenage Missy tries to convince Steve that he is not the man he has become (while daydreaming about his strong arms and dark eyes) he resists her, angered because she reminds him of another red-haired lady...and the mere thought of red hair and slanted green eyes PISSES HIM THE FUCK OFF...even when he can't remember who the hell Ginny is.

When Ginny arrives she soon realises that Steve has no idea who he is (and yet still gets pissed off when he doesn't recognise her). Befriending Missy by giving her a makeover, she throws a ball and has a bitchy exchange with Toni - who is both threatened and excited by Ginny's beauty. Nicholas, meanwhile, wants to bang her. Sulky because Steve is paying more attention to Missy than to her, Ginny does what she always does at parties- dances like a whore - and gets Steve to make out with her against a wall in full view of all the guests. BUT HE STILL HAS NO IDEA WHO SHE IS. So he thinks she's just some random whore and, egged on by Toni, he sneaks stealthily into her bedroom one night and rapes her. Just for shits and giggles you know. But he was nice about it...so that's okay.

In retaliation Ginny puts out a warrant on his head - citing cattle stealing or something, because she doesn't want to admit that her own amnesiac husband raped her. Some stuff happens and Toni, Steve and Nicholas travel somewhere where Steve randomly kills some dudes in a bar and then Toni and Nicholas decide to beat him almost to death and drag him by a rope through the town. Just for fun, you know. But Steve escapes and runs into FRANCESCA! who shelters him and restores his memory with her mere existence. They have sex for a while until he decides that he wants revenge on GINNY (WTF).

Back home, Toni seduces Missy's brother Matt who has always had a crush on her, and gets him to kidnap Ginny and frame Steve for it. Once she has Ginny chained in her dungeon, she and Nicholas decide to rape her (of course) but sadly Steve shows up and kills Nicholas...yet only knocks Toni out. He drags Ginny off into the swamps, berating her for being a whore (because apparently being kidnapped and raped is somehow HER fault) and making her walk around naked. They argue and insult each other in circles until Ginny suddenly thinks fondly back to the first time he abducted her, when she was just an innocent girl, and remembers that she loves him after all. One glance into Steve's eyes confirms that he too feels this way, despite the fact every word he has uttered in the past 600 pages confirms the opposite.

Well anyway, Toni and Matt somehow find them and Toni is all 'LOL BABE I WAS TOTALLY JOKING WHEN I BEAT YOU HALF TO DEATH AND TRIED TO KILL YOU. SRSLY I LOVE YOU. LETS KILL GINNY AND MAKE LOVE ON HER CORPSE. BTW MATT SUCKS I WAS JUST USING HIM BECAUSE YOU DISAPPEARED!' Well Matt is justifiably pissed over this speech and socks Toni one in the face, causing her to fall, moaning in pain, into the swamp (this scene is actually very well written - I was wincing, and actually felt horror over Toni's fate - despite the fact that she is a despicable character) Ginny & Steve leave her fate to Matt, despite Ginny's reservations and walk hand in hand into the sunset. Oh yeah, and Missy marries Steve's nice, kind, attractive cousin Renaldo.

This book was intense. I admit that Steve and Ginny's constant headbutting can be grating, but I do root for them as a couple. The story is crazy, but enthralling, and the villain is one you won't forget - and it's rare for me to get behind a female villain like this, but Toni is really a great introduction past the halfway mark. Although I didn't really cover it, Missy & Renaldo's romance is slow, sweet and provides good relief from the tempestuous saga of the two leads. There are two more books chronicling the story of Ginny and Steve - the third being *LOST LOVE, LAST LOVE*, which I'll get around to at some point...but right now I need a time out on Rosemary Rogers! Steve, Ginny...it's been real...

Rabbit {Paint me like one of your 19th century gothic heroines!} says

Pre-Read (3/21/15): I just got this from PBS. I'm so excited. I need to get the first book in this series before I read this one, but let me be happy that this came in. It's in EXCELLENT condition for an older copy. SO HAPPY.

It's Rosemary Rogers, the Queen of bodice rippers.

Anne-marie Chandler says

Read 2 times. LOVE IT -read in high school and college.

Kerrie says

The **Rosemary Rogers Reading Experience™** is a phenomena that can't be conveyed with words.

The euphoric reader's journey of Yours Truly

The opening scene of Steve and Ginny in constant kissy-kissy morning-afterglow had me scratching my head. Huh? Does...not...compute...

Oh, I should never have doubted Rosemary! This is **Steve and Ginny** after all, and soon **WE'RE OFF!!!!**

Steve takes off yet again on another of those "secret missions" of his, leaving Ginny vulnerable to the oh-so- nefarious designs of one Prince Ivan Sahrkanov and his unwitting accomplice Dr. Count Chernikoff, who tempt her away from Mexico with the story that she's actually Tsar Alexander's long-lost illegitimate daughter (that little plot thread is never fully resolved, btw) and she needs to go to Russia *pronto!* and fulfill her obvious potential of being a Princess.

Poor Ginny. She pines for Steve, who is nowhere in sight and hasn't bothered to write. Well, she'll show **him** she won't just wait around for whenever he decides to come back! She'll prove she can take care of herself! So before she knows it she has become a docile apathetic little thing with the help of a constant supply of Chernikoff's magical headache powders. In a drugged haze she finds herself married to the Prince. **You GO, girl!**

Next stop: San Francisco. Prince Ivan immediately starts whoring out his wife for money and influence, and Ginny, in a constant fog of opiates, just shrugs her way through her miserable existence. At this point **Steve!** appears under another identity and of course the Love/Hate relationship starts all over again because:

Steve: I can't leave you alone for 5 minutes before you start spreading them for another man, you slut.

Ginny: (thinking) Well if you **told me you loved me**, things would be totally different!

Ginny: *shrug*

Steve: I'll make you respond, you ice-cold bitch!

Ginny: I hate you! Die in a fire!

(Seconds later)

Ginny: Curse my traitorous body!

*It was here where Steve! let the **Aura of AlphaBastard**™ slip somewhat and he showed some real tenderness toward Ginny. He knows she's a raging opium addict and it's killing him to see his wildcat Ginny have all the emotion and energy of a year-old moldy dishrag. So he does what any Awesome Co-dependent Husband would do: "You're an addict! Here's some more headache powders, they're just not as strong."*

Finally, in the first real WTF moment, the evil Prince is removed from the goings-on with a piratey duel mixed with kung fu and our Crazy Couple are reunited. But once again, it doesn't last long...

*The next part opens with Steve shagging the Italian prima donna Francesca di Paoli while Ginny is traipsing around Europe and making tongues wag. This of course pisses Mr. Double-Standard AlphaRatBastard to **no end**. But these co-dependent drama queens were at each others' throats toot sweet and a separation was considered wise. Steve is now a millionaire, business deals are going on left and right and soon he must go on another one of those "secret missions" but he catches typhus and sets the stage for the **Certifiably Batshit INSANE** last half of the book. I shit you not.*

*Amnesiac Steve, now known as Manolo, ends up in Louisiana and hired by the crazed deviant giggly Trampslut Toni Lassiter, who has hooked her claws into a plantation and driven the previous family into a life in the swamps. The **Rosemary Magic**™ had been rolling along at a low boil but at this point it simply*

exploded and the shit hit the proverbial fan from all 360 degrees.

My quasi-spoilers stop here, but lemme give a visual approximation of my face for these last 220 pages:

Especially when 2 pages from the end of the book they're both on the run from the sheriff's posse and yet they still can't help bonking like bunnies while out in the Louisiana swamps.

Some choice quotes from our Loving Couple:

"Did you stab him in the neck before or after you hit him with the bottle? It seems to have become quite a habit with you, hasn't it--stabbing the men who have ravished you, but only after they've had you over and over again! You tried that on me once, remember? Is that how you get rid of the lovers you've tired of?"

"I hate you! I'm sorry that Ivan didn't have you killed after all!"

Ginny--damn her slanty green eyes and her too-easily yielding body--she had always been the only woman capable of making him fly into a jealous rage that could blind him to everything else, even caution or reason. He should have done what he had threatened to do far too often and never carried out--beaten her a few times, to show her he meant business.

I enjoyed this book more than Sweet Savage Love, but only barely. Really, this one is off-the-charts Pure Crazy Fun. If you're an Old Skool Bodice Ripper Fan. Bring your Big Girl Panties for this one and just roll with it. You'll be glad you did.

Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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? I read this for the Unapologetic Romance Readers' **New Years 2018 Reading Challenge**, for the category of: *Bodice Ripper*. For more info on this challenge, click [here](#). ?

After doing the first book, SWEET SAVAGE LOVE, as a buddy read extravaganza, with Heather and Korey, Korey joined me for a read of the sequel, DARK FIRES. And can I just say that Rosemary Rogers is swiftly becoming one of my favorite bodice ripper authors? Every subgenre has its own reigning queen, and RR is Queen of the Bodice Rippers the way V.C. Andrews was queen of smutty teen fiction.

That said, this is my least favorite book of hers so far.

SWEET SAVAGE LOVE was almost a five star read for me. I loved the nonstop action, the love-hate relationship between the hero and heroine, the lush descriptions of the American West, and of course, Steve Morgan, who could so, so easily be the cover model for one of those pulpy men's adventure magazines that were popular in the mid 20th century. With his cheating, murderous, rapey ways, he is basically the absolute opposite of what I like in romance heroes, but he just oozes raw masculinity. He may be Satan incarnate but I was picturing him as Scott Eastwood.

(Dear Hollywood: if you ever make this series into a TV show/movie, please cast Scott Eastwood.)

The sequel starts out with nauseating marital bliss, but since this is Steve and Ginny we're talking about, it goes from Good Housekeeping to Apocalypse Now pretty quickly, and it starts to feel like Rosemary Rogers is trying to out-WTF herself in the prequel with a plot that involves the following incidents: rape, duels to the death, opium addiction, blackmail, whipping, torture, carpetbagging, typhus-induced amnesia, cheating, more cheating, still more cheating, wtf still more cheating, public affairs, sadists, secret pregnancies, and scalping. Because Rosemary Rogers has a big vocabulary, but "overkill" doesn't appear to be one of them.

My favorite scene was probably the sword fight duel, because I am trash, and occasionally raw displays of masculine douchery work for me. (Especially in puffy shirts whilst aboard pirate ships.) However, I felt pretty frustrated for most of the book because the hero and heroine are separated for huge portions of it and Steve spends it with like 5+ women who aren't Ginny (and I really, really don't like infidelity in romances, especially not wanton infidelity where the hero has no "off" button). Ginny also lost a lot of her spitfire nature that made her so easy to root for in the first book. I guess maybe it was PTSD after all the horrors she endured in the last act, but still: it made me really sad.

I'm kind of curious where the book is going to go from here. These two are pretty much the last people in the world who should be parents, so obviously, that means the sequels should be interesting.

3 stars
