



# The Beloved

*Alison Rattle*

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## **The Beloved** Alison Rattle

Escape from a bullying mother takes one young woman to an even more dangerous place.

Alice Angel has known only a life of rules, restriction and punishments as she strays from the rigid path of Victorian propriety that her mother has set out for her. A constant disappointment to all but her doting father, she longs for the day that she might break free from the stifling atmosphere of her mother's rule.

After a chance encounter with a charming stranger, and a final incident with her family that sees her condemned to the madhouse, Alice sees her opportunity to run and grasps it with both hands. She escapes to join the Agapemonites in their Abode of Love, where ex-Reverend Henry Prince rules his isolated colony of women as their Beloved. Prince ignites a passion in Alice that she never knew existed, and she dares to think she might be free at last.

But as Alice becomes more deeply drawn into the life of Prince's strange religious sect, secrets are revealed that seem to hint at a darker nature lurking behind the man's charm. Instead of freedom, is Alice in fact more trapped, alone and in danger than ever before?

## **The Beloved Details**

Date : Published March 5th 2015 by Hot Key Books

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Author : Alison Rattle

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## From Reader Review The Beloved for online ebook

### Jo Sowerby says

I really enjoyed this new book of Alison's. I always enjoy the way she finds such interesting local historical events to use within her narrative. This time it is the story of Alice a sixteen year old daughter of the local mill owner. To say that she and her mother have a difficult relationship is an understatement. Alice's mother seems to truly despise her.

Alice spends much of her time locked in her room, sometimes she is bound to her bed and left for hours on end alone. Her mother, father and brother fear she is an hysteric, but Alice comes across as simply a young woman who knows what she wants and doesn't conform to social mores. Her attitude to wearing a corset would be in full agreement with mine.

How Alice manages to get away from this abusive homelife and find her way into the religious commune of The Beloved is a truly intriguing story. This commune actually existed in our local area and was a religious organisation until the 1950s in this country.

If you enjoy reading about young women's experiences in Victorian England, local history and a great story look no further

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### Jana says

I received a free copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

The Beloved is a YA historical fiction novel set in 1848 about a girl who doesn't have a loving home. Desperate, she is wishing for something better and ends up becoming one of the followers of The Beloved Henry Prince.

Okay, so this book was super creepy. Basically Alice, the protagonist, joined a sect, and it was really scary to read about in my opinion. But that was in a positive way because it seems very realistic, which is good. I also felt that a lot of research regarding the historical setting went into this, which I appreciated a lot.

But I have to give a trigger warning for rape for this book.

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### Ella says

WOW! The author actually managed to write an ending that was *almost* happy!

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### Vikki Patis says

A decent, thrilling historical fiction, but the ending let it down, sadly.

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## **Louise says**

I just didn't enjoy this book. The story was slow for me and really didn't care about the characters, I have read one of Alison Rattles books before and I loved that one but for some reason this one just didn't do it for me.

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## **Bookread2day says**

I am such a huge fan of Alison Rattle. I highly recommend The beloved to all readers. Alison writes beautifully. I read The Madness which I thoroughly enjoyed. After reading The Madness and enjoying it so much this led me to read The Beloved. I would now really like to read Alison's first novel The Quietness. The novel of The Beloved is set in 1848. Sixteen year old Alice Angel is unloved by her very cruel mother where she is locked in her room and strapped to her bed. Alice escapes but will this be for better or worse? And where will Alice Angel go? The Beloved is a perfect story that delivers escape, entrapment and friendship. I hope all readers enjoy reading this story as much as I have.

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## **Beth (bibliobeth) says**

This is Alison Rattle's third historical novel following the wonderful The Quietness and The Madness, both of which I thoroughly enjoyed and cemented her as one of my "auto buy" authors i.e. without even reading a synopsis I have faith that her books are going to move me in some way and she hasn't proved me wrong so far. As with her previous two novels, Alison features a strong young female heroine, in this case Alice, who lives with her emotionally abusive mother and her father and brother who she is closer to. Her mother is incredibly manipulative and seems to delight in punishing her daughter when she strays too far from what she thinks a young Victorian lady should be.

The final straw comes for Alice when her mother manages to convince the family that she is insane and should be committed to an asylum. After listening to a stranger preach and being passionately affected by it, Alice decides to run away and join his group, The Agapemonites which is a woman's only colony of a new religious order ruled over by Henry Prince known to the women who stay with him as their Beloved. At first, Alice is overwhelmed by a satisfied feeling of relief that she has finally figured out where she belongs and idolises Henry, looking for any opportunity to be closer to him and drink in his magical words.

Then things start to feel a bit wrong and certain practices which involve some of Alice's new friends seem slightly abhorrent. When Alice is chosen for a privileged position at Henry's right hand her worst fears may be about to be confirmed. Has she escaped one prison environment for another? More importantly, does she have the strength to disappear again and where would she go, estranged from her family as she is?

One of my favourite things about Alison Rattle's books is how she draws on factual events from history and interprets it in a new and exciting way. As the author mentions in her Historical Notes yes, there actually was an "Abode of Love," established by one Henry Prince in 1846 that he built in order to brain-wash a certain type of woman that he was the new Messiah. I hadn't heard of this before and was absolutely fascinated, inspired to carry out my own research on the subject.

The characterisation is magnificent, I loved the strong yet vulnerable and naive Alice, shook my head a few

times in disbelief at Alice's mother Temperance, became exasperated by the weakness of Alice's brother Eli and read mostly with my mouth (most unattractively) agog at the dealings of Henry Prince. The author has a real gift for pulling the reader right inside the novel and always manages to surprise me with the slickness and excitement of her plot. There is one particularly shocking scene which I won't spoil but I guarantee everyone who reads it will be moved in some manner. With this third novel, Alison Rattle has without a doubt made it onto my favourite authors list and I even feel slightly jealous that those of you who haven't read her yet have three fantastic novels to discover while I wait impatiently for the fourth!

For my full review please see my blog at <http://www.bibliobeth.com>

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## **AmandaEmma says**

### **I received a review copy from Hot Key Books in exchange for an honest review**

*This review was originally posted on my blog; Little Miss Reader*

I don't really have a reason for reading this book; I don't enjoy historical fiction and I don't find the summary intriguing - but I must have requested it for a reason. I think it had something to do with the word lunatic asylum - but The Beloved has absolutely nothing to do with a lunatic asylum.

I definitely had a love/hate relationship with the main character Alice. At times I found her strong and admirable but then the tables turned and I found her annoying. She sees her mother for who she really is; why not use that to her advantage instead of aggravating her? I wanted a stronger main character and I really thought Alice might be one but then she becomes weak again - every time she begins to seem strong she falls back - and I was tired of that dance in the end.

I feel quite bad saying that I didn't really like any of the characters when it comes down to it.. I hated the mother, the father was weak, the brother blind and ignorant and Alice stupid.

Henry Prince, the leader of the sect, is too manipulating and I was creeped out by him.

I have never understood why people join sects - I hoped this book would enlighten me; and it did a bit, but why people stay in sects is a whole other question. Alice joins the sect to get away from her mother and because she is drawn to Henry - why she doesn't see the warning signs until it's too late is beyond me.

I usually enjoy books that have a Victorian setting but this didn't do it for me. I liked the descriptions and I could picture most of it; but it wasn't that exciting.

The Beloved reminded me of Vivian versus the Apocalypse on many levels; the difference is that I liked Vivian versus the Apocalypse and I didn't actually like this one. Both have some form of religion that will set you free, both are actually a sect and the main characters escape. Vivian versus the Apocalypse was quite funny and I enjoyed reading it - The Beloved wasn't funny or enjoyable. I actually found it quite dull and I put it down loads of times.

To summarize; I found The Beloved quite dull, I didn't like the characters or the setting and I practically only finished it because it's so short.

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## Deanna says

quick read, ok

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## Sorrel says

[ got trapped in a cult (hide spoiler)]

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## Eugenia (Genie In A Book) says

3.5 stars

**\*This review also appears on my blog *Genie In A Book*\***

*Thank you to Five Mile Press for sending me a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review*

I have done some terrible things lately. I want to be forgiven. I want to be a good person, the person they all expect me to be. I have seen and I have heard you talk. I think you understand. Can you help me?

I have some mixed feelings about *The Beloved* which I'll go into further, but overall I can say that it was quite a fascinating read, if somewhat disturbing in places. I was quite surprised to find out in the historical notes that this is based on factual events, which does in hindsight make Alice's experiences in the 'Abode of Love' even more chilling.

Now, onto what I liked and didn't so much:

**Things I wasn't so impressed by:**

## Dual POV's

This isn't something I'd usually comment on, since generally I find having two perspectives on a story's events as a great narrative device. However, in this case it didn't flow as well as it could have. Alice's sections in first person, then going into third person from her mother Temperance and brother Eli's take on things did in some ways slow the pace in the middle. While the plot thickened once Alice had escaped her oppressive environment to the enigmatic 'Abode of Love' and I liked the immediacy of her first person account, the interjections from Eli in trying to find her weren't always the most interesting to read about.

Alice...sometimes?

Our protagonist Alice may be a little mad (it is hard to tell), but in any case she has some issues and makes some questionable decisions which were quite stupid.

Though I did find her naivety at times irritating, it's this characteristic which placed her in the volatile situation she ended up in - and without that, there would be no story. So while she wasn't the most likable main character, it's these imperfections which did make her perceptive at least at the beginning, before being blinded by the promises of a 'better' life.

## **What I liked:**

### Family dynamics

This was more in the early stages of the book, but it was interesting to see how Alice's family worked. There were some stereotypes: The evil, vain mother, the doting 'golden child' as Alice's brother Eli, and the kinder more understanding father who seemed to understand Alice better than anyone. However, despite the tropes being there, it nonetheless makes a story a whole lot more juicier when there are these underlying dynamics

at play.

## Character development

Yes, I did find Alice annoying at the start, and in the middle I was going 'Can't you tell this is weird?! Do something, run away!', she did eventually get a backbone and took charge of her own fate.

Finally.

How blind I have been. I thought there were only two choices, but there is a world of choice out there and it's time to find my way now.

## Turning facts into dynamic fiction

The 'Abode of Love' was an actual religious sect founded in 1846 by Henry Prince, which did cause quite a scandal. In the story it's clear that there is indeed trouble in 'Paradise', and things certainly aren't what they seem. The beauty of historical fiction is that you can take these elements from the past and recreate them with a backstory of a fictional character who experiences something not too far off from what could have actually occurred.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Though I did have my few qualms with it, *The Beloved* was a satisfactory read which intrigued me with its interpretation of actual events. Where manipulative corruption can be masked by such wholesome promises, this story shows how difficult it can be to really find the light among the lies.

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### Chrissi says

Alison Rattle can do no wrong in my eyes. I've absolutely loved and devoured every single one of her books so far. Her writing just draws me in. I don't want to ramble on and on and get all incoherent so just believe me when I say she is a superb writer who I think every YA lover should read, especially those who are into historical fiction. Alison writes historical fiction so very well.

The Beloved tells the story of Alice Angel who is treated awfully by her mother. All Alice has ever known is a life of misery, punishment and a very regimented lifestyle. Alice's mother insists that Alice needs to be institutionalised to deal with her behaviour... after an incident at home and an encounter with a stranger, Alice escapes the family home and joins Henry Prince in his Abode of Love. Henry Prince is known as The Beloved, he rules a colony of isolated women who go to him for guidance. Alice believes that she will have freedom with Henry, but in fact she's moved from one prison to another and is possibly in more trouble than she was before!

I couldn't put this book down, I nearly missed my stop on my commute to university. I was just wrapped up in the world that Alison has created. I felt for Alice, and hated those that got in her way. The Beloved is a dark piece of historical fiction. It's creepy and atmospheric. Another excellent book from Alison Rattle!

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### Moonlight says

\*Received from the Publisher in exchange for an honest review\*

**I was incredibly intrigued to read this novel, as it was a theme I had never really read about before... but sadly I had to DNF it with 80 pages to go after consistently trying to finish it across a whole month. I do like the cover though, it is very mysterious and sombre.**

Ever since she was a child, Alice's mother hated her in favour for her older brother. And because of this, Alice suffered horrible abuse from her. Though her father loved her dearly, his love for her drove her mother's jealousy to constant disappointment and attack towards Alice. But then she meets The Beloved, a man worshipped by all. And this love she thought she felt from him, is what got her trapped, again.

The main character of this novel I sort-of liked. Alice was an interesting protagonist who had obviously gone through a lot of pain and unimaginable abuse, and so therefore I strongly admired her strength. Additionally it was sad to see her consistent belief that she was a bad and horrible person, that she was the cause for everything and anything that went wrong. Alongside this it was sad the way her own mother treated her, and the heartbreak Alice felt that because her brother was mother's favourite, he would not believe a word Alice would say against her. One of the key factors though I did not like about Alice was that she was rather naive, though I can understand she had become this way because of her isolation from the real world, she has not

had the experience of interaction with other people and so in comparison to her mother everyone outside their home is like an Angel; but this naivety is what caused most of her problems when The Beloved was concerned.

The plot of this novel was very interesting, however I felt it was the execution that really let it down. It was incredibly slow, especially in the first 100 pages where the same thing happened over and over again, so it therefore became incredibly repetitive and boring, losing its powerful emotion. It was when Alice arrived at Henry Prince's 'abode of love' that I could no longer stand it. I just could not believe they were unable to see what was really going on before them, and I just could not stand him; Henry was just creepy. But the fact that they would cry and become moody if they were not picked was what really frustrated me and caused me to give up, especially because of the way he spoke to them.

Therefore I sadly felt the execution of this novel let it down, which meant I had to DNF this novel at 206 pages.

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## **Sal says**

Edge-of-your-seat kind of creepy and super thrilling! Madness, crazy adults and women in a historical setting. A really unique protagonist. So good. Full review to come.

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## **Laura says**

Originally posted on:> <http://lauraslittlebookblog.blogspot....>

I was instantly drawn to the cover of this book. It has that mystery element about it with the dark and light colours and the ominous door. The synopsis as well is so intriguing and I just knew I had to read this one.

Alison Rattle has written two historical fiction books before this called The Madness and The Quietness. Although I have unfortunately not read this yet, I have heard nothing but praise for them, so was looking forward to starting this.

The Beloved tells the story of Alice set in the time of Victorian England. Alice comes from a really unloving home. Her Mother Temperance is nothing short of cruel to her and seems to relish in finding any opportunity to make Alice suffer. The opening scene of Alice tied to the bed so that she will not take off her stays during the night is just some of the lengths Temperance will go to to make Alice obey her. You of course instantly dislike her and wonder how a Mother can be so cruel. Alice's brother and her Father do nothing to save her and it is so frustrating to read when her brother Eli does not believe Alice when she tells him how her Mother treats her. I really wanted to shake him. In fact there were a fair few dislikable characters in this story and Alison has really written them in a way to make you instantly see their flaws, even if they seem good from the outside. When Alice gets a chance of escape she looks for the stranger she saw in the town who claimed that he could release her of her sins. Henry Prince is the leader of Agapemonites and what is called The Abode of Love which has a large following of women. Alice finally believes that she is loved and wanted and is happy there. However she soon finds that the religious sect of the Abode of Love is more imprisoning than her home life and she may be in more danger than she was before.

I did get frustrated with Alice a few times as some of the decisions she made were rash and it was infuriating to read that she could not see what was right in front of her. At the same time though, you do feel desperately sorry for her as she just wants to be good so that someone will love her.

The backdrop of 1840's Victorian England was written so well. Alison has clearly done her research into the life of that time and it actually helped give the story a dark atmosphere. I think what I found most shocking about this is that Henry Prince was a real person and the Agapemonites was a real religious sect that had women giving up their riches so that they could be with the Lord. Alison has written the story in a way that truly makes it believable and with the historical aspect to back it up, you can truly imagine that is exactly what happened.

An intriguing and disturbing historical read from Alison Rattle.

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