



My False Heart

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When Elliot Armstrong, the dissolute marquis of Rannoch, pursues a spiteful mistress into the wilds of Essex to sever their relationship, he is surprised to find himself hopelessly lost -- in more ways than one.

Inexplicably drawn to a warmly fit house along an isolated country lane, he is mistaken for an overdue guest -- but he dares not reveal his identity for fear of being tossed back out into the torrential rain, a fate he admittedly deserves. The loving family that innocently welcomes Rannoch into their midst soon challenges his cynical convictions, and ultimately, resurrects his shattered dreams.

Drawn by desire, Elliot and Evangeline discover a powerful love neither thought possible. But malevolent forces surround them, and soon their secrets will be exposed and their hearts tested to unthinkable limits. Only if they can forgive the past will they have a future....

My False Heart Details

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From Reader Review My False Heart for online ebook

Fiordiligi says

So beautiful. I just LOVE Elliot's and Evangeline's story. I have a weakness for broody moody Scottish noblemen. A+

Preeti ♥? (Romance She Reads) says

This began so beautifully - as the H puts it he feels he has slipped through the proverbial rabbit hole into a halcyon world so very alien to him - full of warmth, love, innocence and normalcy. For a cynical, raging and dark soul like him it's completely foreign but alluring as well. And the reader feels lured in as well!

With spoilers He's been mistaken for a gentleman from London who wants his portrait painted by the artist h. He doesn't correct them but accepts the hospitality of the h's family and stays for few days and not only falls for the atmosphere but also the h. The h also feel the attraction - unwanted but undeniable. While he has a tortured past turning him into a misogynist, she has duties and responsibility of her younger siblings and others weighing on her shoulders.

He returns again and again and they fall for each other. She fights it while he falls in headlong. He wants to marry and she just wants to roll in the proverbial hay. So role reversal is okay but the heart does go out to the person wearing his/her heart on the sleeve.

The two lose their connection in the later half. First as the h discovers his 'treachery' and boots him out and the h/H spend a lot of time apart. Even later when they do marry and live together, the author fails to recapture their special intimacy and I was left feeling wanting.

No H has grovelled or changed himself more than this guy here.

He wants to make her happy and give her back a girlhood unburdened by duty and obligations. While she's more concerned with not getting hurt or betrayed as she believes him incapable of fidelity.

A man who was boorish, self-centred and uncaring of others' feelings or opinions turns into a lost, penitent boy who does everything to woo his girl but at no point gets angry or blames her for not accepting his apologies. He was just amazingly sweet and endearing. Though I cannot judge the h for not being able to trust him again, I did resent her unbending reserve even after they wed. He lays his heart out for her to trample and she does it. He reveals his feelings to her again and again with actions and words but she's uninterested. Even when he lies there shot and dying, her reserve and lack of real warmth irks.

He so obviously loves her more. The power equation was way off and there were times I almost pitied him and that's not what I want to feel for a H.

So yeah, this went southwards for me.*sigh*

Sad as it has not only a wonderful world building and great secondary characters but some beautiful writing as well.

Mclaudia says

Unequivocal five stars for this sweet story of finding love and redemption even though you have a "false heart" and made a couple of wrong turns in life. Reminded me of Judith Ivory at her best.

Keri says

Loved this! I really enjoyed Elliot and Evangeline's story. Elliot decides one night that he is going to break it off with his mistress that night. Only problem is, she is in the country and it is pouring rain. No matter, he takes off on his horse after her. Once he realizes he is lost, he decides to stop and ask for directions. (This is where you know it is fiction, because as we know, men don't ask for directions, when they can drive around and waste gas instead.)

When the door is opened they have mistaken Elliot for someone else. So begins the rest of Elliot's life. He falls in love not only with Evie, but her life, the kids, the house and the paintings. He wants this life and begins to change in order to make it his. Of course his past keeps coming back to bash him over the head, but he keeps getting up and fighting for Evie. This was a sweet read and I loved Elliot from the beginning.

Kathy says

I tried. Really, I did. I am definitely not one to endure pages and pages of a character pondering all their conflicting thoughts. It's confusing. I definitely like to get into the head of a character to understand where they're coming from but this read didn't give me that. I was like "OK, already!!"

This was also one of those where the hero was huge, in all respects, and the heroine, a small wee thing, realized that if she were to get close, her head would match the place where his heart was and she could hear it beating. Maybe it's me but I got this vision of Bigfoot rutting around with a fairy sprite. Whatever. This one was ok, but perhaps my expectations were set too high.

Denise says

This is Liz Carlyle's first book and one of my favorites. I read this first and am glad I did. Many of the characters appear in her later works. I loved the whole story of Elliot and Evangeline. You could feel the warmth that Elliot felt when he stumbled upon Evangeline's house. I found myself rooting for Elliot, that he would become part of this loving family, something he desperately needed.

Kathleen says

I remember LOVING the first part of this book, when the hero — wet, cold, hungry, and totally lost — sits on his horse looking at the glowing windows of a country estate. A portrait of yearning.

Dare he approach the strangers? Surely they might offer him directions, soup, and a bed for the night? Perhaps some space in the barn?

He's a lonely man, and when this warmhearted woman and her fun-loving family welcomes him wholeheartedly, (mistaking him for another) he cannot resist.

If memory serves, the first half of the book is better than the second half, but it's all good. Wonder if it's available on Audible?

Bubu says

This is what happens when I reread a book I could only vaguely remember. I thought it would be better. I was wrong.

Reading **My False Heart** was a chore. It started promisingly and there were some truly interesting moments, on Elliot's part. Evangeline, the heroine, too perfect to be true, the plot stuttering all over the place, Elliot a man in dire need of redemption of his dissolute life. A subplot that was unnecessary and took away quite a chunk of the actual story. That could have been used to show why Evangeline was such a speshul snowflake. But I guess that being simply perfect in every imaginable way is enough. B-b-b-b-boring!

Actually, Elliot was the only interesting character but even he got on my nerves. And the old-skool-ness of the characters was tiresome.

How dare she refuse to hear his explanations? Didn't she know that he loved her?

No, she didn't know because he hadn't told her yet. But yeah, she should have known, shouldn't she? Add to that moments of non-communication and I chewed my way through it.

Anyway, I'll continue to be wary of books I liked so many years ago.

Corduroy says

I should probably stop trying to read books about men with scandalous, dark pasts who fall in love and try to reform. That whole trope is really my catnip, but I find the execution often not what I want. I want the hero to actually be dissolute and scandalous and dark and I want him to actually be tortured by his past and how maybe that makes him unworthy for TWU LOVE. Instead very often the hero is not that dissolute or unworthy. Part of why I think this trope is potentially compelling is that you'd have to feel the lightning strike of Cupid's Arrow felling the guy when he meets and falls for the heroine. You really want to understand - why this lady, out of the many, many ladies this guy has known in all sense of the word? Instead I think it's often not really that specific or interesting. She's tiny and cute and he's huge and instead of getting the good angst and male moping and self-recrimination you get a lot of cutesy giant families and I just - ??? Not for me.

Julianna says

Reviewed for www.thcreviews.com

"4.5 stars" *My False Heart* was the first book Liz Carlyle wrote and the first book by her that I have read. All I could think of throughout the story and especially after finishing it was that if this is her debut novel, I can't wait to see what else she has to offer in her later works. Ms. Carlyle wrote two absolutely wonderful characters in Elliot and Evangeline, as well as a full complement of secondary characters from friends and relatives to servants. I loved watching Elliot change from a bitter, vengeful, unhappy man to one who had finally found his heart's desire, as well as watching Evie finally learn to rely on someone else instead of feeling like she was all alone in her responsibilities. Elliot was made even more appealing by the inclusion of his daughter, Zoe, and the fact that he loved her deeply, but didn't know how to show it until he met Evie. His interactions with Zoe after that were endearingly awkward, and full of humanity. I adored Evie's eclectic family unit. It was easy to see why Elliot's cold heart was so warmed by all of them. Ms. Carlyle's characterizations made me wish that such a place and family actually existed, so that I might become a member of it too. I found the children to be particularly delightful, and there were even a few adorable pets who played minor roles in helping to set the tone.

All the characters, including the secondary ones, were amazingly well fleshed out. The author makes liberal use of lengthy passages of prose to give readers thorough insights into the characters thoughts and feelings, and to explain their back stories. Ms. Carlyle is masterful at creating truly romantic situations and sexual tension. Even the simplest of kisses became a thoroughly sensual reading experience. The author gives a believable interpretation of two people slowly falling hopelessly and desperately in love. Ms. Carlyle is also masterful at writing completely beautiful and romantic love scenes. She gives the reader the sense that Elliot and Evangeline truly love one another and are not merely lusting after each other in a physical way, as is unfortunately the case with many romance novels. I felt that the characters gave their initial decision great care and consideration and truly gave more of themselves to each other than just their bodies when they made love.

Often, stories that rely on secrets and misunderstandings to create conflict between the hero and heroine can become tedious and annoying, but I found that Ms. Carlyle does such a wonderful job with these elements that they became a believable part of the plot. I like the way that the author slowly feeds the reader bits and pieces of back story as well as the mystery element. It made me keep wanting to come back to the story to find out more about the characters and what happened next. The mystery was done so well that I did not figure it out until shortly before it was revealed in the story and even then, I wasn't sure I had it right until I actually read it. I loved the way that Ms. Carlyle intricately wove many of the secondary characters into the plot, much the way that a spider weaves her web. This made the story much more interesting, as they would often pop up in unexpected places, sometimes adding to the mystery. I really appreciated the author's use of intelligent, as well as historical, words and phrases. I like a story that makes me think, and this one certainly kept me on my toes, with not only it's rich vocabulary, but also it's extensive cast of characters and intricate plot. Ms. Carlyle's use of lush descriptive details transported me to another time and place, making me feel like I was right there watching the events unfold and could feel every emotion that each of the characters felt. Occasionally, I thought that some of the detailed prose could have been pared down just a bit for the sake of conciseness and to pick up the pacing just a little, but overall, I enjoyed the languid nature of the story. I think it really helped to build a believable illusion of the hero and heroine falling in love instead of rushing into it.

While Ms. Carlyle does not seem to officially consider her books to be a series, many of her stories, not

surprisingly, have interconnected characters. *My False Heart* introduces us to Frederica d' Avillez, Evangeline's cousin, who is just a little girl in this story, but who grows up to become the heroine of her own novel, *The Devil You Know*. It also introduces readers to George Kemble, Elliot's intriguing multi-talented valet, who has such a vast network of acquaintances that he can find out almost any piece of information his employer or anyone else might want to know. Kem currently appears in five more of Ms. Carlyle's novels including *A Woman of Virtue*, *No True Gentleman*, *The Devil You Know*, *A Deal with the Devil*, and *The Devil to Pay*. *My False Heart* was a wonderful book about which I can find little to criticize. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it, and am anxiously looking forward to reading more of Ms. Carlyle's books as soon as possible. This story was a truly phenomenal first effort from a writer who is clearly incredibly talented, and the book has definitely earned a place on my keeper shelf.

Note: While none of Ms. Carlyle's earlier books seem to be officially considered a series and each seems to stand well on it's own story-wise, I would caution that reading her later books first may give away spoilers to her earlier books. Such is the case when I skipped one book and was left wishing that I had read it first. My suggestion for readers like myself who don't like any spoilers would be to begin with *My False Heart* and continue reading the books in the chronological order in which she wrote them. It is also my opinion that the reading experience would be greatly enhanced by doing this, because Ms. Carlyle's character web is so complex. The entire backlist, in order, can be found on her website.

Crista says

I have heard raves about this book and this author. I bought this book and several others by Carlyle "knowing" that I had found another gem author. Boy I tried to like this book...I struggled through each chapter hoping the next would get better...it didn't. I read for enjoyment and the words "struggle" and "tried" should not be on my radar when I am reading for an escape!

I love this book premise. Reformed Rake stories are my favorite and the premise of a disillusioned Lord finding a family is a notion that appealed to me greatly! Here are some of the things that I couldn't get passed:

1. The writing in this book seemed overly complicated to me. Long drawn out descriptions and "thoughts" that failed to help move the story along quickly enough. The story seemed to get "bogged down" and the pacing never really recovered.
2. I had trouble connecting with any of the characters.....none seemed "real" to me.
3. The plot was very slow to develop and I think there were to many people introduced in too short a time. It became very distracting!

I'm wondering if Carlyle's writing isn't to my taste of if I just had an isolated disappointment. I'm hoping is it's the latter. I still have several more Carlyle books in my TBR pile!

For an EXCELLENT book with a similar plot try
Red Roses Mean Love by Jacquie D'Alessandro

Dangermousie says

I am growing quite attached to Carlyle's stuff. This one involves the Earl of Rannoch, a bitter and disillusioned man with an awful reputation who accidentally stumbles over the rambling, warm, loving house of Evangeline, a portrait painter (and her eccentric family), is mistaken for a client, and cannot help but want to be drawn into all that warmth. It's just so darling and lovely and I love the hero and heroine and want them to be happy so desperately. It's really good!

Melissa says

One of the worst feelings in the world has to be believing you've made so many mistakes and taken so many wrong turns in life that you've irrevocably destroyed any chance for happiness you might've had. Elliot Armstrong, the Marquess of Rannoch, finds himself in just this situation in *My False Heart*, and watching him find his way out of the darkness and into the light is at the center of this really lovely book by Liz Carlyle.

Ten years before the story begins, Elliot was a naive young man from Scotland, come to London for his first Season in order to find a wife. He swiftly fell in love with and proposed to a young woman who deceived him into thinking she loved him too, but who was in fact looking for a quick marriage due to being pregnant by another man. Her deception snowballs into a scandal that leaves Elliot without the woman he foolishly loved and blamed by society for her downfall. Humiliated, angry, and disillusioned, he sets out on a path of dissipation and dishonorable behavior for a decade. Mistresses, dueling, gambling, cruelty to servants -- he becomes a genuinely nasty person. He has an 8-year-old daughter, his illegitimate child with one of his mistresses, and though she lives with him and he loves her, he neglects her upbringing and leaves her to live a lonely life with a string of governesses while he gallivants around wreaking havoc on the ton.

One rainy day, while traveling through the countryside in an angry search for his latest mistress, who has skipped town, Elliot stops for directions at a house belonging to Evangeline Stone. Evangeline is a half English, half Dutch artist who came to England from the Continent ten years before, fleeing the Napoleonic wars. Her parents are dead, and she's responsible for her younger siblings and a houseful of other relatives who live with her. She assumes Elliot is the man who had an appointment that day to sit for a portrait painting, so she brings him into the hectic whirl of her household before he has a chance to get a word in edgewise. Elliot finds himself so charmed by her, and by the warm, loving, relaxed atmosphere so different from his own wearying and unhappy existence that he can't bring himself to correct Evangeline about who he is. What harm can one night of being plain Mr. Elliot Roberts do, after all? He stays to dinner and spends the night, getting to know Evangeline as she begins painting his portrait. The attraction between them is strong, and when she invites him to come back soon to continue sitting for the portrait he agrees to return, setting in motion a months-long deception he'll come to regret.

Over the course of his visits as Mr. Roberts, Elliot finds himself not only falling for Evangeline, but rediscovering parts of himself he thought had disappeared - his kindness, decency, and ability to care for other people. Being around Evangeline's family inspires him to make more of an effort with his own daughter, Zoe, and to try and build his relationship with her before it's too late. He begins to treat his servants better, and to be less of a jerk in general when he's back at home in London. All the time he's enjoying these visits and falling more and more deeply for Evie, the truth is always hanging over his head. One day Evie is sure to find out that he's the infamous Marquess of Rannoch, and then his idyll of warm family life will end, and he'll surely lose her forever.

Evangeline has her own secrets. Her younger brother is the heir to an English title and estate, and her powerful English relatives are trying to take him out of her custody. She's been responsible for her family since she was nothing but a teenager herself, and she's given up any hope of one day finding a husband and having children of her own. Elliot's appearance in her life stirs up those buried feelings, although she believes she can never marry - her duty is to her siblings. Little does she know that plain Mr. Roberts is really a powerful aristocrat who could actually help her protect her brother. Of course she also doesn't know that the man who seems so kind and loving is the same man she is appalled and revolted by when she reads the gossip pages.

Inevitably, the truth does eventually come out, and it leads to heartbreak and loads of angst. Will Evie ever be able to forgive and trust Elliot again? Will he be able to truly turn over a new leaf and become the better man he wants to be?

I really appreciated the slow-burn of this book, especially in the first half when we're getting to know Evie and Elliot, and the cast of characters around them. This is a very character-driven story, and it spends a lot of time inside the hero and heroine's heads. Some people may not like that, but that kind of introspective writing is very much my cup of tea. I was reminded of Judith Ivory, Cecilia Grant, and other authors who take their time to get inside characters' heads and hearts as they tell their stories. Liz Carlyle's writing is insightful and really well done. Not only does she bring the characters to life, she brings the world they inhabit to life with well-chosen details and beautiful descriptions of people and places. Reading the book was a nicely immersive experience.

I was really impressed with this novel, and genuinely moved by the characters' plight and their search for happiness. This was the first book by Liz Carlyle that I've read, and I'm looking forward to reading others.

Bianca says

I really liked the beginning of this book. But by the middle I just started skimming whole pages. There was way too much time spent in characters' heads. Sometimes the characters would get so lost in their own thoughts that I would forget they were in the middle of a conversation and what that conversation was about! I did really like all the characters and I wanted to see them all happy! It was just a little (or a lot) boring in parts!

Sonia189 says

It's good but there's too much time spent on things that could have been summarized. Some parts were a little bit boring.
