



The Real Deal

Lucy Monroe

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The most important thing in Amanda's life is negotiating a successful merger between her company and Brant Computers, a family-held competitor. Company president Eric Brant is on board with the idea, but when Amada arrives in Eric's office, it is his cousin Simon Brant who greets her—and Simon is anything but agreeable. Squaring off against the sexy, brilliant, sexy, obstinate, sexy, eccentric, not to mention sexy Simon is completely frustrating—and a total turn-on. Simon has never met a woman as driven as Amanda, or as devastatingly attractive. He can't decide if he wants to put her on the next plane home—in the cargo hold—or kidnap her and spend a long weekend showing her the kind of negotiating he likes best. But when intimacy leads to explosive passion, it might be time to think of a different, more permanent kind of merger...one that's less about business and all about pleasure.

The Real Deal Details

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From Reader Review The Real Deal for online ebook

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

Amanda Zachary came to Simon Brant's house to talk the reclusive, scientific genius into agreeing to a merger with her employing company, and ends up falling in love. Divorced for two years, and not desirous of marrying again after her husband destroyed every inch of her belief in herself as a woman, she doesn't expect for Simon Brant to inspire such powerful sexual feelings in her. Although he's absent-minded, prone to going off in his lab when she's in the middle of giving her presentation, he's really hot, with a great body and a great mind. Amanda gets the idea from Jacob, Simon's irascible valet to stay at his house, so she can be around when he *deigns* to come out of his lab. But then he does incomprehensible things like volunteering to spend time brushing her up on her Tai Kwon Do moves, getting very up close and personal, and spending time with her that has nothing to do with discussing the merger details. She's totally feeling him, but is he feeling her? After her husband, she can't trust her feminine instincts, and she doesn't want to get hurt. She can't risk a sexual affair, when she doesn't feel beautiful, and she's never been casual about sex in the first place. But it turns out she's not the only one with feelings in this strange relationship she finds herself in.

Simon Brant has his own insecurities. He was a prodigy who ended up in college at fifteen, surrounded by older girls who used him for his 'talents' and his prodigious endowments. He's had relationships with women, but they always leave him because he doesn't spend enough time with them, his focus always going back to his scientific projects. He's started to wonder if women are worth the trouble, if they will just leave him when they get tired of his ways. And Amanda comes along. She's sexy and beautiful, and doesn't seem to know it. He can't keep his hands off her, and he is starting to care for her. But will she leave him too, when she realizes that he's never going to be like everyone else?

Don't let the light-hearted, 'chick-lit'-like cover fool you. This book was not exactly like that. It's not particularly light, but wasn't dark, either. I expected more of a slapstick/snappy 40s romantic comedy vibe, but that wasn't there. Instead, the heavy focus is on the emotions that Amanda and Simon struggle through, each full of insecurities, and the powerful attraction between them. Lucy Monroe has a straightforward, easy reading style that made this book a quick read. I liked the sweetness of the romance, although the love scenes are very sensual.

Amanda is a very nice woman who really got screwed by her family and her husband. What he did, and what her family allowed him to do was criminal. She internalized all of that and decided that there must have been something about her that made her unlovable and undesirable. She is very slow on the uptake to believe that Simon might want her, and cannot conceive that he could love her. It takes some heavy wooing on Simon's part, but he is not a man to fail at anything. Simon is sometimes clueless about how to react to others, and spends a lot of time analyzing what Amanda says and does and what it means. But he is also a sensual, warm man, and was able to trust his instincts to guide him in coaxing Amanda into realizing how beautiful, sexy, and lovable she is. I liked his 'geeky' bent, although I feel that Ms. Monroe should have gave him a few more nerdy traits, because it seemed like the nerd thing was an afterthought. I think that internally he was a nerd, but maybe she was afraid it would turn off readers if he had some of the exterior trappings. Nerds can be sexy even if they seem awkward too (it's the whole 'still waters run deep' thing). He seemed to have a little too much confidence in himself to have had his experiences in life. I would have expected a bit more uncertainty and social awkwardness to come off in his personality for what he had experienced as a younger man. And how did he attract all these women who essentially used him for sex? Those kind of shallow women wouldn't go for an intellectual type who wasn't flattering them with constant attention. That didn't quite ring true for me, because I know pretty cute guys who are on the nerdy side, and they don't get that

kind of chick action.

I really ended up liking this book, devouring it very quickly. It's sexy but sweet, and that is an irresistible combination for this reader. I'd recommend it to readers who want a sexier read, but like the Harlequin-type contemporary romance vibe. Overall rating: **4.5/5.0 stars**.

Thanks to Julie for encouraging me to pull this one out of my tbr pile!

Laura James says

The writing in this book was soooo cheesy... I read the first 50 cringe worthy pages, then started skimming, then just gave up altogether when I realized that I could care less about what happened between the characters.

Katie says

This book really surprised me. I had no idea how much I would enjoy it. I have read one or two other Monroe books I think, but this one was really good. I loved the relationship build up and the characters. The quirky Simon was a great character and I actually liked Amanda too. This book has made me want to read more Monroe books.

Cindy says

It's a romantic comedy with lots of sexual tension and the occasional sheet melting scene. The hero is a 'you go to the lab and the next time you notice it's Tuesday' genius - the heroine is a businesswoman with an emotionally abusive past. She is sent to talk him into agreeing to a corporate merger he doesn't want. He wants another type of merger entirely. Great characters, good plot, funny, sexy and witty.

Barbara ★ says

I greatly enjoyed reading this book. I liked Amanda and Simon both and liked them as a couple as well. This is a quick, entertaining read with an aloof genius hero, Simon and a career-minded heroine, Amanda. One lives in Washington and the other in California. The basic premise is that Amanda's company is trying to broker a peaceful merger with Simon's company. Unfortunately for Amanda, Simon wants no part of this deal. So Amanda spends weeks on his private island trying to convince him.

Kathy Davie says

As it precedes the action involving Jillian in Goddard Project, 2 who is best friends with Amanda in this particular story, I'd have to rate this as a Goddard Project, 1.5.

Sweet, cute romance. Very closely follows the story idea in Emma Holly's *Strange Attractions* but without the intense, kinky sex. This one involves Amanda's idea of a computer company merger with which Eric agrees but genius-lover Simon is vehemently against.

Clare O'Beara says

A merger between two firms is proposed and an executive from one - the potential takeover - is sent to deal with the smaller, family firm on the other side. This is a computer firm and the owners are worried about lost jobs.

Now it gets ludicrous as the lady executive is sent to make a presentation to the more reclusive of the owners at his rural home in the Puget Sound. Only he won't talk business when she arrives and she goes through a timewasting routine of eating lunch, watching a soap - as one does during a business meeting, I suppose - and hanging around mightily for days on end. The gentleman having made his name in computers, is now trying to design hydrogen power cells and he doesn't seem to have any security or any way to block industrial espionage. The lady puts up with him picking food off her clothes, calling her baby - a very bad sign in a man - and happening to collapse from tiredness so she has to drag him to a bed and have him fall on top of her, coincidentally, and somehow her blouse buttons have come undone.

If you think this is how the business deal would have proceeded if a male executive had been sent, raise your hand now.

Women need to present a better image of women in work. If this is how a female author presents a woman executive - and I haven't even gone into the mature scenes - is it any wonder there is a glass ceiling? "Send Amanda, she'll flutter her eyelashes and show her legs. Then send a lawyer to get the signature, male of course."

I downloaded an e-ARC when the author made it available on Smashwords. I have enjoyed books by the author previously. Other readers may enjoy the adult romance more than I did. This is an unbiased review.

Carinae L'etoile says

An easy read from Lucy Monroe.

This felt like an extended Harlequin Presents/Milla & Boone uncut. Given that Ms. Monroe is a writer for that particular category, it comes as no surprise.

I liked that the happy, perky cover belied an angst ridden tale. Don't be fooled into thinking this would be light hearted chick lit that would gloss over the heroine's emotions. No, this is an in-depth prodding that gets you to understand the Hero and heroine.

It's a good, satisfying read.

Connie N. says

I didn't really know what to expect from this one, but it was recommended to me, so I picked it up. What fun! It was a pleasant, very fast-moving romance with great characters. Amanda has been emotionally abused, but she has built a strong career and is now working on her biggest deal. Unfortunately, Simon is opposing the proposed merger. Their interactions become closer and closer as she presses. Their feelings become involved, and they find that their attraction outweighs the situation. It was somewhat tiresome that Amanda kept feeling so downtrodden despite Simon's desire for her, but I can see where that would happen after years of neglect. Simon is a great hero--strong, silent, eccentric genius, but gentle. He has his own emotional issues to overcome. Their connection is warm and nice. Jacob, the irascible housekeeper/cook is a fun sideline, as is Jill, Amanda's soap-opera-actress best friend. Typical predictable romance, with some humor and lightness. Very nice. I will look for more from this author.

Eastofoz says

I'm wavering between a 3-3.5 star rating for this one because I didn't really like it. There's too much repetition (especially with the hero's "gunmetal grey eyes"—total overkill with that description) and too many "extremes" —so beautiful, so perfect, so incredible—which gets repeated over and over again as if the author didn't really know what else to say.

Simon was too weird to be likeable for me. Yes he was supposed to be "different" from other guys because he's a genius but he's totally lacking basic "social skills" even when he fell in love with Amanda and that bugged me. He's missing something "human" about him. He doesn't have enough "emotion" to the point of being almost robotic. I didn't really know why Amanda wanted to stay with him.

I liked the seedy ex-husband Lance in terms of being a jerk villain --he was a great character! His sex scene at the start of the story was quite the eye opener and when you find out who the partners were, well that was a shocker!

I guess this "romance" just wasn't all that romantic for my taste :(

Tammy says

I spent the weekend trying to wrap my mind around this one. Then I over-analyzed it until I had one whopper of a throbbing headache. (You'll see below why I had such a hard time with this one.)

Like East, I am still wavering between 3 and 3.5 stars.

Excuse me as I dive right in ...

I like Simon. I can relate to Simon. In fact, my hubby IS a Simon. Whenever Simon got a brilliant idea and then absentmindedly left a conversation or meeting to work on said idea, I would giggle. Do you have any idea how many times my husband has disappeared while we were hosting a pool party or BBQ or holiday event? We always find him later, sitting in front of his computer, completely oblivious to the fact that he just

blew off his hosting duties.(Thankfully most of our guests are understanding and think it is even entertaining. Whew!)

I have to give the author kudos for having Simon's character down pat. Even her geek speak was right on.

The only thing about Simon that didn't jive with me was his perfectly groomed shoulder-length hair and preference to walking around shirtless. All the time. Apparently even in his lab. Is this even safe?

And then there were his "gunmetal grey eyes". No other descriptions. Just "gunmetal grey". Over and over and over again. OK - I get it! I don't need to read it 30 times and have it beat into my brain. TOTAL OVERKILL.

Simon was a nerd, but a really sweet guy with good intentions.

Moving on ...

I didn't like Amanda's character. However, before you decide to lynch me (I know this book is a popular one!), here is the reason why her character didn't ring true to me...

Eons ago - back in another life - I went through an experience very similar to Amanda's. Some may say that my experience was worse considering my ex-husband knocked up the young employee he was having the affair with. How did I find out? (Besides the obvious?) I was the one answered the front door to a process server when the paternity papers were served. Like Amanda, my family was not supportive. (Baptist preacher daddies do not believe in divorce under any circumstances.) Unlike Amanda, I was a mommy to two toddlers and hadn't yet finished college. Horrible experience to say the least.

But did I go on a self-imposed strike of any real relationships?

Whine?

Obsess for a couple of years?

Complain?

Close myself off to everyone and throw myself into work?

Probably a little bit (to be truthful), but I also went to counseling. Got help. Learned to deal with the hurt. Learned to forgive. Embraced my new life. Eventually I even learned how to laugh and joke about the old, horrible memories.

Reading Amanda's thoughts and how she handled her husband's affair really irritated me. This is a new century. Women have so many opportunities and resources available to them. I wanted to scream "Be strong. Get with the program! Get a life!" I would have been more understanding if Amanda's angst was only obvious in the beginning of the book, but it carried on into years later. And it was all over a man she admitted she didn't really love. And he was verbally abusive to her. And she had only been married to him for TWO YEARS. No real love lost there IMO.

With that said, I've worked on several divorce cases as a paralegal. The rare "Amanda's" that I've worked with over the years are not only few and far between, but they are also miserable, bitter women who would

never attract someone like Simon. In real life, Simon would have been terrified of Amanda. Some may say that Simon helped "heal" Amanda and took away the pain, but in all honesty the healing and pain should take place before one jumps into a new relationship. Or that's my opinion anyway (and I believe the divorce statistics on 2nd marriages help evidence that!)

But for the most part, I enjoyed the book. I liked the author's writing style. I liked her descriptions of the State of Washington (not of "gunmetal grey eyes") and I will definitely be looking into her backlist.

KimKirt says

I'd say I'm wavering in between 3 and 3.5 stars. Good romance, hunky hero. Never knew a computer geek could be that hot. Great premise of man being buried in his work and forgetting about the world around him . . . so much so that he lives on an island. My taking away of stars is due to the fact that the way they get together is a little out there. I mean, moving into his house to convince him of a business merger? That kind of insulted my intelligence. The heroine is huge, and I mean HUGE on women getting ahead because of their smarts, yet she moves into his house because she can never get him to meet with her. Uh, yeah, no so smart. Anyway, aside from that, I really enjoyed the romance and characters.

Saly says

When I first started reading romances and to be specific HP's, a lot of this author's work starred on my favourites list. However for some reason her contemporaries have been epic failures for me. The sex scenes feel weird, clunky & I don't like the words she uses. Plus this book had a way too insecure h for my liking. For a kick-ass career woman she claimed to be she seemed to insecure and stupid. H is some genius too much in his head. h obviously approaches him for a merger of his family company he is opposed to. I didn't feel the pull between them, there was too much push & pull and I don't know how these two would work as a couple. I mean the hero lives in his head & physically on a faraway island, how is the h supposed to carry on her career?

SB*needs low angst books* says

I couldn't get passed the sample.

Julianna says

Reviewed for www.thcreviews.com

"4.5 stars" *The Real Deal* was a sweet, engaging love story that was imbued with a healthy dose of realism, but still managed to stay within the bounds of romantic fantasy that all readers of the genre seem to love. I really enjoyed how Lucy Monroe took two people with low self-esteem, due in part to failed relationships of the past, and helped them to grow and change by finding the perfect mate in each other. Although I don't believe I have previously read any romance novels that primarily take place in the corporate business world, I have to say that this type of setting along with all of its attendant politics would not normally be of interest to me. However, since my husband works in a similar environment and frequently deals with such things, I found that I knew enough about the topic for it to actually be quite interesting. I loved the peaceful, serene setting of Simon's island home off the coast of Washington. Until recently I had thought Washington to be a unique backdrop for a romance novel, but over the last few months I have read several stories that take place there. Ms. Monroe still managed to make it seem a little out of the ordinary though. I really enjoyed the love scenes which I thought were hot, sensuous, and tastefully creative, while still being laden with plenty of emotion. In addition to a great hero and heroine, each of the secondary characters were very well rendered. I was particularly taken with Simon's housekeeper cum security expert, Jacob, and Amanda's one true friend, Jillian. Jacob was a crusty retired Secret Service agent with seemingly hundreds of different personas and Jillian was a flamboyant soap opera actress. Both added a lot of wisdom, levity, and humor to the two more serious main characters, and everyone was woven seamlessly into a tale that was a pleasure to read from start to finish.

I absolutely loved Simon. The only complaint I have about him is the author's repeated use of the phrase "gunmetal gray" to describe his eyes. In my opinion, it was a bit overused, but in the grand scheme of things it was merely a minor detractor to an otherwise great character. Having a techno-geek husband (and on occasion having been accused of being a geek myself), I can definitely say that Ms. Monroe's characterization of Simon was quite accurate, from his reclusive nature, to his frequent and lengthy forays into his lab, to his feelings of simply not fitting in with the rest of the world. I also liked Simon's *katana* collection and his choice of workout methods, both of which are typical geeky interests. The one thing I found a bit odd though, was his lack of electronic equipment (he didn't even have a TV), as in my experience most geeks tend to be rather enamored of almost any technical device, but maybe Simon got all the technical stimulation he needed in his lab. Since brains and beauty rarely come in the same package, I also thought that Simon's drop dead gorgeous looks were highly unusual, but certainly not outside the realm of possibility. I did think it was very sweet and endearing that Simon was rather self-conscious about being so well-endowed, due to past lovers telling him he was too big. Since my research seems to indicate that this is a more common phenomena than most romance novelists would lead readers to believe, I really enjoyed Ms. Monroe's very different and more realistic take on Simon's impressive male attribute. I thought that Simon also exhibited a bit more confidence and social skills than the average geek, but again, social ineptness is a stereotype that is not always accurate. All in all, Simon was a wonderful hero who was kind and caring, a true gentleman, and an all-around great guy to anyone who took the time to get to know and understand him.

Fortunately for Simon, Amanda had plenty of time, and in the interests of a successful corporate merger, it was her job to understand how his mind worked. She was instantly attracted to him on a physical level, but she never realized how appealing the man inside would be as well. Amanda had plenty of hang-ups of her own after a failed first marriage to an unfaithful man who was a lousy lover and constantly berated her appearance. It was difficult for her to believe that someone like Simon could even be attracted to her, much less want anything more, but ultimately they both had to have a lot of patience and persistence to rebuild each other's confidence. While some readers may disagree, I actually liked that Amanda was a modern woman who had chosen not to sleep around, and that the only man she had ever been with prior to Simon was her first husband. I imagine that the issues Amanda faced in her work environment were probably not unlike what many women deal with in the corporate business world every day. It was interesting to watch her struggling with the realization that her career might not be the most important thing in her life after all, and

that some of the things she had thought lost to her were actually within reach again. In the end, I felt a sense of pride in Amanda for making a difficult but gutsy decision about her job based on her personal ethics and values, and also for her having discovered a new confidence in herself that was not tied to her work.

The process Simon and Amanda went through, growing and changing and learning to love and believe in each other was a lovely and emotional one to read, but there were a few times I found myself wishing they would just tell each other what they were thinking and feeling. They trusted each other on some things right from the start, but other things took a little longer. Each of their stories came out in bits and pieces as they learned to trust a little more each day, which in hindsight was probably more realistic. I'm also grateful that even though Simon could be a little clueless at times and Amanda a bit stubborn due to her past hurts, no serious misunderstandings ever took place. Even though the revealing of their true selves to each other seemed a bit slow at times, without that pace, the final act of faith that Simon shows Amanda wouldn't have been half as sweet. Looking back, I think it might have been nice if these two had connected a little more on an intellectual level, as it didn't seem like they had a great deal in common. However, their emotional and physical relationship was so palpable that I didn't even think about this until the story was finished, so I guess I can't say that it really detracted from my enjoyment of the book. *The Real Deal* was an extremely well-written novel that hit very close to home for me, and also hit a home-run right onto my keeper shelf. This was my first read by Lucy Monroe, but after such a wonderful experience I am excitedly looking forward to checking out her backlist. While *The Real Deal* is a stand-alone novel with no apparent storyline connection to any of Ms. Monroe's other books, Amanda's friend, Jillian, does become the heroine of *Deal With This*, book #2 in *The Goddard Project* series. Lucy Monroe has also written inspirational romances as L.C. Monroe.
