



Romancing the Ugly Duckling

Clare London

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Is this the makeover of a lifetime?

Ambitious fashionista Perry Goodwood lands the project of his dreams—track down a celebrity family's missing brother in the Scottish Highlands and bring him back to London for a TV reality show. But first he must transform the rugged loner into a glamorous sophisticate.

Greg Ventura has no use for high fashion. He lives on the isolated island of North Uist to escape the reminder that he's nowhere near as handsome as his gorgeous brothers and avoid the painful childhood memories of being bullied.

Greg wants nothing to do with city life, and Perry's never been outside London. When Perry is stranded on North Uist, this conflict seems insurmountable. But Greg is captivated by the vivacious Perry, and Perry by both the island and his host. However, Perry's one heartfelt wish remains: that ugly duckling Greg fulfill his potential as a swan.

Romancing the Ugly Duckling Details

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From Reader Review Romancing the Ugly Duckling for online ebook

Sara says

5 Hearts

The month of June with the Dreamspun Desires series has been off the charts amazing. This book, once again, is what the line is all about. It gives you the fluff and the feels all rolled into one hell of a sexy package AND it is set partly in Scotland! Can you hear my squeals of excitement at that?

Goodness, prepare for a ramble because this book, these two men, this setting and the damn dog were perfect!

We meet Perry Goodwood, fashionista and make-over extraordinaire, as he is confronted by the well-known handsome brothers of the Ventura family, who are imploring and employing him through his PR Agency to bring their outsider brother home to London so that they can sign a media contract. You see this contract is for a high paying Kardashian-esque reality show and the Ventura brothers need all siblings present, or the show may be passed on to another high profile family. So while Greg, the brother who doesn't follow the norm or the flock, is off doing his own thing, they desperately need him back in London. Perry is happy to take on the job, though a bit reluctant as his boss seems to pass on all the lost causes to him when it comes to makeovers.

When the brothers produce an old photo of Greg, Perry is concerned on how to formulate a plan of action to make this brother, meld into and with suave and media perfected look of the others. Goodness, but the picture of Greg broke my heart. He's younger than his current 26 years in the picture but he just seemed to be so uncomfortable in his body which happens to many young men and women as they grow into maturity. But what does seem to suit Greg is where he lives and I was ready for Perry to accept the job and get this meet cute on!

Scotland here I, er um, we come!

I was happy to turn the page and get Greg's POV because with stories like this and honestly most stories, I love to see where each of our MC's are coming from and I really wanted Greg's thoughts on his brothers. We learn that Greg fled London and his family for the solitude of North Uist, on the Scottish Isles and to live in a cottage on the outskirts of the largest town, Lochmaddy. Greg is fine living alone with his Border Collie Rory, having the time to paint and having a pint with his mate Dougie at the local pub. He's not given us his reason for leaving London and eschewing his family while ignoring their constant requests for him to come home nor has he let his bachelorhood be linked to his sexuality in the small town, though Dougie lets him know he's aware of Greg's rainbow tartan in the closet. Greg is just happy to be living alone, doing what he wants with the ability to not answer to a family demand.

On a wet and windy night, we get the meet cute as the men come face to face when Dougie drops a sodden Perry at Greg's front door and Greg has no choice but the keep the man overnight. It's not much of a hardship as both men do find one another attractive on a basic level though they keep it to themselves. The fun and flirting begins when Dougie drops off Perry and then the next morning when Perry meets Rory and of course when Birdie and Lisa show up. The girls are nothing but forward with their want of Greg to be happy and now that there is another gay man in town, they are all set for the match-making. But how can

anyone be matched if Greg and Perry aren't on the same page with why Perry is there?

The chemistry between Greg and Perry was perfect. You could feel it the second the two are in the room together and really get a good look at who is in front of them. Greg sees that while Perry is slight in physical stature, he makes up for it with his strength of character and tenacity and Perry sees how handsome and virile Greg is behind his shaggy hair and country clothes. When the men decide that Perry can stay with Greg a few days, helping out with the chores etc. and Greg will take that time to formulate an answer about returning to London with Perry to sign the contract with his brothers... I was on edge waiting to see how this romance would unfold and all the "why's" Greg has about his family.

This story is so romantic and this hopeless romantic was in pure bliss reading it. I adored watching Perry find his way on the island with the locals and find his way with Greg. The whole talk about the selkie folklore was beyond adorable and added a bit of whimsy to the story that blended in so perfectly with the romance between Greg and Perry. Both men are wary of the others feelings and the classic "Why would you want me?" is there so the thought of a mythical creature you could keep just from hiding their pelt was doubly romantic for this story. Oh and of course, saving someone's life gives you the opportunity to be forthright with your feelings and while the situation was not ideal, I am more than glad with the outcome because of it.

Both Greg and Perry have been treated poorly by those they've trusted and loved. Greg's brothers and absent parents were outright bastards to him with his looks and all the bullying they did and Perry's ex-boyfriend dragged Perry down to depths he doesn't even share with his mother. But when the men allow themselves to talk, to get out the hurt done to them there is only comfort left and the comfort they offer is gorgeous.

These two were so much fun, so sweet and so damn sexy. Perry really took to the island and to being with Greg. I loved how he was unsure about Rory and then he and the Border collie become invested in one another just as Greg and Perry do. The men work so well together that they don't see what's right in front of them until London comes calling and declarations tumble unguarded and make me cry. Yup, this has those kind of heartbreak but amazing feelings that punched me in the feels more than once.

Romancing the Ugly Duckling is a true romantic winner with both series it's listed under. It's the classic story of seeing what beyond the surface and beauty truly being in the eye of the beholder. It's also a fantastic trip to the Scottish Isles that has me longing to cross a visit off my bucket list.

Aeren says

3.5 redondeando a 4 porque a pesar de que es un low angst, es una lectura muy agradable, los secundarios me parecen geniales y ellos dos juntos son amor. ?????

Serena Yates says

The tale of the ‘Ugly Duckling’ has fascinated me as long as I can remember. It combines the idea of a second chance (on a personal basis) with discovering who you really are a little later in life than your contemporaries – and both of those are wonderful tropes, at least in my opinion. In ‘Romancing the Ugly Duckling’, Clare London has taken the well-known children’s story of duck-to-swan-fame, added in elements of city mouse/country mouse, and braided those strands into a wonderfully entertaining, deeply touching, and very emotionally satisfying modern-day romance. Of course, as she usually does, she also adds a little personal twist to the plot – and that made this novel just that much more special to me. A big part of my enchantment came from the sense of humor Clare magically weaves into the telling throughout – I couldn’t help but laugh out loud more than once.

Please find my full review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

Lost in a Book says

This is one of those reads that makes you all warm and cozy and gooey inside. It's fluff at its finest and sometimes a girl just ~~wants~~ needs some grouchy-growly-beasty-hottie-with-a-side-of-twink kind of fluff.
shrug

If I get the chance in the future, I'll give the audio a shot.

Optimist ?King's Wench? says

Let's just nutshell this deal, k?

L O V E D ! ! ! !

I might have had little hearts floating around my head even. From the start to finish I loved it. I laughed out loud. I had some feels. I shouted at the fictional characters in my phone like they could hear me. But most unbelievable of all, I drove the speed limit! Well, for the most part. A lot more than I normally do so that's something.

Romancing the Ugly Duckling had so many things I love in my romance reads my head was spinning around on all the Cracky Fluff. If it had been kinky I would've thought Clare London was courting me. Alas, no kink. So I guess I should end my mailbox vigil waiting for all those wooing gifts I was hoping for. *sad face* Anyhoozit!

KILTS!!!

Size difference!

Cute Dog!

Sassy Twink!

Grouchy Bear!

Making a family out of friends!

Opposites Attract!

Couples who are good for each other!

Perry Goodwood, which is the cutest name ever, ain't it? Also, solid porn star name. I am just saying. Perry is a posh Londoner and bona fide city slicker. He gets tasked to reel in the other Ventura brother, the ugly duckling of the family full of swans, to come back for a reality show. Problem is Greg Ventura is on an island off the coast of Scotland called Uist. How beside himself Perry gets by this development had me laughing out loud whilst stuck in traffic hell. He acts like it's Siberia or something!

Greg Ventura HATES the city! He left home 5 yrs ago and he's not going back. Not now. Not ever. Those perfect brothers made his childhood hell and he's got no intention of subjecting himself to that nonsense again. He's perfectly happy in his little cottage on the croft, diving for scallops and going to the pub every now and then to meet his friends.

Their interplay starts off fun with Perry not backing down from Greg's gruffness but quickly turns sweet. Having both their perspectives showed just how much things evolved for the better for both. Perry makes Greg more approachable and brings order to the chaos that Greg perpetually lives in and Greg settles Perry's frenetic nature. They both buoy the other's self-image which shows in their interactions with others as the story unfolds.

Perry fits in on this island even though it has all that water that makes him want to flee to a nice safe highrise. So Greg teaches him how to swim. They just fit. Like old shoes. It was the stuff of the best Cracky Fluff high.

There were so many conversations and swoon worthy moments between Perry and Greg like how Perry takes to just sitting on the floor of Greg's studio with Rory to watch him paint. Rory, by the way, is smarter than all of the people combined. How he even got out of the cottage to alert Greg et al. about the Perry/Fiona emergency I don't even know but good dog is good. There were so many touching moments between them and their friends too. I literally didn't want it to end and stretched it out and will probably start listening to it again in the next few days. Whenever I need a comfort read Perry and Greg will be there.

As with all the Cracky Fluffs the sexy times are few but they have chemistry and their desire for one another really came through on that Isle of UST, I mean Uist.

Greg is bad with words. Words are not his friend but the grand gesture at the end...

This was another fantastic job by Joel Leslie with all the voices. He put emotion and feeling into his performance and made this cadre of characters shine. Clare London wrote a great story and Joel Leslie brought it to life. It was a joy to listen to.

I've squealed over a few of the Crackly Fluffs but this shot to the tippy-top of my fluffs faves list. I loved the characters, the relationship, the secondary characters, how the conflict came about, how their relationship strengthened each of these men and how it all worked out in the end. And Rory. I had a pretty wide range of emotions while listening to it which is always a good thing and it held my attention from start to finish which is saying something since I have the attention span of a hummingbird.

If you're looking for a comfort read that'll hit you in the feels and leave you wanting more, give *Romancing the Ugly Duckling* a try.

A review copy was provided.

Catherine says

Not as good as London's first in the series, but okay.

Shile says

So much better than book 1.

-I enjoyed the Opposites Attract trope.

- Joel Lelie's narration was so much better here and he nailed the Scottish Accent.

-The romance part was adorable and fluffy.

Overall it was an enjoyable book.

Cupcake's amazing review tells it all

Eli Easton says

This is a super cute, fast read. Just what I needed. I'm always attracted to fairy tale spins like Beauty and the Beast. The ugly duckling trope is less common and so I was interested to see what Clare did with it. In this case, the ugly duckling in question had been put down by his gorgeous brothers and of course, turns out not to be particularly ugly at all. I loved the Scottish setting and the bits of local lingo and flavor. Well done, Clare!

Susan says

Re-read June 2018.

I so needed this since it's simply too hot outside.

This was just so cute. Such a feel good romance with the added bonus of it taking place in the beautiful country of Scotland.

I got all this cozy autumn/winter feelings from reading this. I loved the descriptions of the beautiful lochs and the cold and wet weather. It made me want to bundle up in a blanket and drink hot chocolate.

Perry is a high maintenance kind of guy, with his carefully picked out clothes, his perfect hair and his desire to always look his best. But then he gets sent to Scotland for his work. The PR agency wants him to find Greg Ventura of *the Venturas*, give him a makeover and bring him back to London to star in a TV reality show with his highly successful brothers.

And that's how Perry finds himself soaking wet on Greg Ventura's doorstep. Hair ruined, clothes ruined, boots ruined. But he will convince this stubborn man to return to London with him.

Greg hasn't seen his brothers in 5 years. His brothers bullied him mercilessly throughout his teenage years, so that's why Greg thinks he really is an ugly duckling. Greg is happy with his solitary life in Scotland, and he sure does not need some London guy with amazing hair to tell him he is gorgeous and that his brothers need him...

I loved how sweet both Greg and Perry were. Perry started out as a bit of a snob, but he ended up fitting right into the country life of Scotland. And Greg really was convinced he was not worth looking at or deserving of love. These two slowly grew closer and when they finally got together, the relationship was sweet and without any angst (yay!).

As for the steam, there were a few smexy times, but not drawn out or very long. But I don't think that was really necessary for the story. It was just right the way it was.

Overall I really enjoyed this 'ugly duckling' story. I will especially re-read it when it's raining and cold outside and I'm on my couch with my blanket and a cup of tea.

This review has been cross-posted at Gay Book Reviews.

BWT (Belen) says

I love a good Opposites Attract trope! When it's mixed with a fun Fish out of Water trope, I'm in like Flynn.

Put it in Scotland and add Joel Leslie's narration? I could (and did!) listen all day.

What's to know? Perry Goodwood, who's never been outside of London, is given an impossible assignment of getting the wayward brother of a celebrity family to leave his home on the isolated island of North Uist and return to London to participate in a reality series.

Only thing is Greg Ventura has no use for London or his brothers - who used to tease and torment him terribly. When Perry arrives it's without any of the normal support he'd have from his firm and he's alone and has to try to convince Greg to do the show.

Greg, who was always called out as the "the ugly duckling" of the family, has grown up to be the best looking of the bunch, but is still largely unaware of it. Perry, now stranded on North Uist, sets out to convince him otherwise, and in the process falls in love with both Greg and North Uist.

This is a really enjoyable story. It's got a great setting, a wonderful cast of characters, a dual perspective from both Perry and Greg's POV, and not a lot of angst...but **what absolutely did it for me was the narration of the audiobook. I loved Joel Leslie's Scottish accents!** And while I don't know how accurate they may be - **it was a downright pleasure to listen to.**

Romancing the Ugly Duckling is the second book in the Romancing the...series, and it's the 36th book in the Harlequin Books-esque Dreamspun Desires series, but can absolutely be read as a standalone.

This is a sweet fish out of water/ opposites attract romance with terrific narration. I had a lot of fun listening to this and hope you will too!

Audio copy of Romancing the Ugly Duckling provided by Dreamspinner Press in exchange of an honest review.

This review has been cross-posted at Gay Book Reviews.

Tamika♥RBF MOOD♥ says

4.5 stars

Definitely one of my favorite books so far from this series!!! I didn't want it to end. I fell in love with Perry & Greg!

I am being a tad bit petty by only giving it 4.5 stars. Initially I was going straight for the 5 stars, but I wanted an epilogue. Why??? Why couldn't we see where Greg & Perry end up in 6 months or a year? Does Greg and his brothers end up mending the rift in their brotherhood? What becomes of Perry's business proposal with Aileen? Does Bridie and Lisa get married? I have so many questions and no answers.

I really enjoyed Perry as a character. Being who he is and what he stands for did not disappoint me. He didn't let anyone push him over, and his stood up for himself. We can see the moments between the two falling in love. We can see Greg thawing out to Perry. I really enjoyed their transition every step of the way. I don't want to give much away with the plot, but I really would have liked an epilogue. Or better yet, please give me a novella of such! I swear Clare London, I would love you forever and ever.

The writing was really good. It had just the amount of steamy scenes, but heavy on the sugary sweet goodness that I've come to expect from this series. I couldn't recommend a better book in the series to read and that's saying something. I definitely can see myself reading this and it becoming a comfort read for me!

Ariana says

3,5 stars

Despite some unrealistic details and plot developments I really enjoyed this light and fluffy romance. Great summer and holiday read!

Joyfully Jay says

Updated for audiobook review:

Read Jay's audio review in its entirety here.

A Joyfully Jay review.

5 stars

This is an adorable, cheerful, charming little book that's a perfect combination of fish out of water and city mouse/country mouse. Perry and Greg have a solid, honest connection that feels sincere and sweet in equal parts.

While Perry is a fashion follower from London who pays attention to celebrity culture and clothing styles, he's not a shallow person. He's an extrovert to Greg's introvert nature, but he never tries to force Greg to come out of his shell. He's willing to be patient and wait for Greg. Greg, for his part, may be closed-off and uninterested in being on television — and even less interested in reconnecting with his brothers — but he's not rude enough to be a jerk to Greg.

When they finally settle down to have the talk about what it is Perry and his brothers want from him, Greg is willing to hear him out, but when Greg needs to drop the conversation to get away from unhappy memories, Perry doesn't push. They're respectful of each other and they communicate. There's none of the "if only they'd talk to each other" plot, which I appreciate so very much.

I adored these two as a couple — the way they complimented each other and supported each other. Their coming together felt easy and natural; it wasn't love or lust at first sight. It was organic and fun and there

was always laughter to go along with their romance. But as much as I enjoyed their relationship, I also enjoyed the world they lived in. The island of Northern Uist is as much a character in this book as Perry or Greg (or Rory). The people, the weather, the peat bog, even the lochs.

Read Elizabeth's review in its entirety [here](#).

~◊~**Doxi(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~◊~ says**

This book was a nice surprise. The blurb and friends' reviews drew me in, even though I've never read anything by Clare London before. But I'm happy to report this won't be my last book by this author.

I adored:

the small town Scottish setting;
the cast of secondary characters (Dougie, Birdie, and Lisa added so much to the story);
the authentic dialogue (I LOVE it when authors stay true to regional accents, and I've long been a fan of the Scottish brogue);
the enemies-to-lovers and opposites-attract themes;
the lovable MCs;
and the really cool and brave dog (and if anyone doubts the rescue, they've clearly never been around a Border Collie; those dogs are smarter than your average human).

This book was very, very funny and also insanely adorable.

Greg was so awkward and insecure, I just wanted to hug him all the time, even when he was being a belligerent idiot (maybe especially then). Perry was a total sweetheart, not even remotely ashamed to be himself.

I wish there had been more steam, though. There's really only one steamy scene. The story alludes to the many sexy times Perry and Greg enjoyed, but it's not the same as witnessing the passion.

Even so, I wouldn't have minded (much) were it not for the rather weak ending. Perry and Greg had only known each other a couple weeks at that point, and various loose ends were left dangling. Somehow I didn't see Perry taking kindly to relying on Greg for money.

An epilogue was sorely needed. I know I say that all the time, but it was really, really true in this case.
The story didn't feel complete.

Ami says

3.75 stars rounded up

Oooh, this is another favorite from the *Dreamspinner Dreamspun* series. While it plays around the trope of *ugly duckling* but what pulls me into it is more around the whole "city boy being plucked into the wilderness" theme. Oh, plus opposite attracts!

Although the 'real' time-span that Perry spends in the company of gruff ragged Greg (and his lovely dog, Rory) at the isolated island of North Uist, Scotland, is only for a couple of weeks, but I didn't feel like it at all! I loved the slow-burn romance that happens between the two. I LOVED the time they spend together there at North Uist. The secondary characters rounds up the marvelous 'small town' setting for me.

There is a bit of an 'action' reaching towards climax -- and I could actually imagine it as a movie setting, which is always a sign of a great read. Considering that I'm not a visual person, when I can imagine a book being transformed into the silver screen, that is always a big plus.

I was only a bit annoyed that things get patched rather easily between Greg and the brothers. Since I thought that they were jerks when it came to bullying Greg during his teenager years, I wanted more blood to spill *grin*.

All in all, this is a joy to read
