



## **Petals on the River**

*Kathleen E. Woodiwiss*

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# Petals on the River

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## **Petals on the River** Kathleen E. Woodiwiss

A proud and spirited woman whose life was stolen from her. . . A man of secrets accused of a terrible crime. . . In a place of new beginnings their destinies are joined—in a gloriously romantic new work from the incomparable storyteller.

The fiery and outspoken adopted daughter of one of England's most formidable women, Shemaine O'Hearn has made powerful enemies. And now her adversaries have found a way to remove the hot-blooded beauty from her life of privilege: by falsely convicting Shemaine of thievery and sending her in shackles to America, where she is to be sold in indentured servitude to the highest bidder.

In a bustling port city in the colony of Virginia, she becomes the servant of Gage Thornton—a shipbuilder with a young child in need of a nanny. And despite whispered rumors condemning the handsome widower for the untimely death of his wife, Shemaine cannot ignore her desire for this caring, generous and enigmatic stranger who silently aches with his growing need for her—even as grave peril reaches out from across a vast ocean to threaten their flowering love. The fiery and outspoken adopted daughter of one of England's most formidable women, Shemaine O'Hearn has made powerful enemies. And now her adversaries have found a way to remove the hot-blooded beauty from her life of privilege: by falsely convicting Shemaine of thievery and sending her in shackles to America, where she is to be sold in indentured servitude to the highest bidder.

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## **Petals on the River Details**

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# From Reader Review *Petals on the River* for online ebook

## Kristi Hudecek-Ashwill says

It hurts my heart to give this book three stars because Kathleen Woodiwiss is my all-time favorite author. Hands down! I love her and she can do no wrong.

But this sort of pushed the envelope. The story dragged a lot toward the end and it became monotonous and cumbersome to read it. Gage and Shemaine were ga-ga over each other. I got that. I also got that Gage was a boob man.

The story was rolling along okay and then dragged and then suddenly all of these characters started showing up and they showed up all at once. Maurice, the O'Hearn's and their servants, Gage's dad, and then here comes the wicked old granny. Every time I turned a page, somebody was trying to kill Shemaine or Gage or both of them or Gage was groping her boobs again. Holy cow, Batman. But I have to give the author credit. She wrote it with style.

And another thing that kind of struck me badly, and Kathleen Woodiwiss has done this in all of her books, the women are always significantly younger than the men. Gage was fourteen years older than Shemaine who was just eighteen. Yeah, he was gorgeous and studly but he was too old for her. Times were different then, I know but for some reason I just couldn't get past it in this particular book.

I had another issue, too and unless you've read her other novels, you might not have even noticed. When Captain Beauchamp came to look at the ship that Gage was building, he had a guy with him by the name of Ruark and Captain Beauchamp were brothers (Nathaniel Beauchamp). Not a big thing only Ruark Beauchamp was Shanna Trahern's husband in the book "Shanna" which is a fantastic read by the way. I could be wrong about the last name on Ruark in "Shanna" because it's been years since I've read it but I'm very positive about Ruark being her husband in that novel. Ruark in this novel was a far different character. I don't know if that's a literary faux pas or not but being a wannabe writer myself, when I'm done writing a novel, I retire those names forever unless they come back in another novel as the same characters they've always been. I have Jared, Jack and Caine and none of them will ever meet and Jared and Jack are retired while Caine is still plugging along. Not that it matters, These guys are as different as the sun and the moon and none of them have anything to do with each others stories and I guess I look at it as sort of sacrilege to reuse their names without the characters I created with the names attached to them. Just saying...

I'm still a fan of Kathleen Woodiwiss, God rest her soul. I still think she's the best romance writer I've ever read and knew how to do it with style and finesse. I just didn't love this book. She wrote others that were so much better.

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## Jeanne says

It's been a while I haven't had so much trouble getting into a book as I did with *Petals on the River*. The fact that this romance exceeds 500 pages wasn't very encouraging, either. But because it's Woodiwiss, I ploughed on and waited for the magic to happen. Wise decision! I didn't regret it.

But before I explain why in more details, once again let me add a little context for my friends who might be

new to romance. First of all, while people often like to mention Jane Austen or Georgette Heyer as the precursors of today's romance writers, Kathleen E. Woodiwiss is the one who, in the 70's, pioneered in the actual subgenre now known as "historical romance" (at the time distinct from the Regency subgenre). Her recipe? Rebellious heroines, lots of adventure, passion, violence and explicit sex in a 600-page format.

Woodiwiss wrote *Petals on the River* in the late 90's, yet she still writes like in the 70's. Meaning her sentences are convoluted, heavy with qualifiers, and everything is a pretext for a description and a bit of colourful dialogue. Mind you, it's well done. But it certainly isn't fast, efficient or straight to the point, and it takes some getting used to. By page 20, I had finally adapted to the novel's peculiar pace and was able to enjoy it till the end of the book. I can even say that, once you take it in stride, Ms. Woodiwiss's rich style turns out more captivating than many a modern, condensed and concise one, and the perfect tone for her fantastic stories, reminding one of the never-ending historical frescoes of old.

Shemaine O'Hearn, a respectable, if half-Irish young woman, is kidnapped from her home and wrongly imprisoned before ending up on a ship to the colonies, where she will be sold as an indentured servant along other criminals. Thank God, the man who buys her is even better than she'd hoped for. Gage Thornton, an honest cabinetmaker with dreams of building ships, is a widower and father to a toddler. As both Shemaine and Gage soon discover each other's good qualities, nothing could stop them from falling in love but 1) the mysterious death of Gage's first wife, and 2) the many enemies Shemaine has made, who will not rest until she is dead and buried...

William raised the sights of his pistol toward the man and began to squeeze the trigger, but before he could complete the motion, the roar of another flintlock echoed in resounding waves across the ship. Ever so slowly, the huge brigand's knees buckled, twisting oddly beneath him as his body began to collapse. Blood glistened wetly in the rosy shade of the coming dawn as it oozed from a large hole in his head and cascaded down over his ear.

In reality, though, this novel is much less somber than it sounds. In a way, maybe it is not enough so. There is practically no internal conflict preventing the heroine and hero to find happiness together, and though it is a refreshing change from the "love-hate relationship" cliché, it makes one wonder what, then, is taking so long to tell. And, indeed, the whole subplot feels quite artificial. It is ironical that what Woodiwiss is best known for, and what I was most expecting from her, is what I liked the least in *Petals on the River*: heightened emotions, hatred, revenge, jealousy, gunshots and blood. A strongly Manichean story, it wouldn't end until all the bad guys were defeated, and all the good ones happily settled.

She grew flushed and warm, while in the depths of her being there again sprouted that strange, insatiable longing that grew apace with her mindful meanderings, as if her young body desperately hungered for fulfillment from that particular entity whose face and form haunted her imaginings.

What I liked, then, was the positive, fluffy love story. Shemaine is just perfect for Gage; Gage is just perfect for Shemaine. They follow the perfect steps on the path to love, and find perfect love together. It sounds boring, yet it was the least boring part of the novel to me. It was, in fact, enchanting. Following Shemaine as she rediscovers the simple pleasures of life in a colonial's handmade cabin?and discovers more adult pleasures in the same colonial's arms?is very touching, fun, and entertaining. *Petals on the River* may not be as epic as Woodiwiss's more famous works, but it's a fully satisfying romance with a raw, genuine "back to nature" flavour.

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## **Lynsey A says**

This is one of my favorite Woodiwiss novels, although, I have many favorites by her. The fact that Shemaine and Gage don't spend the entire book hating each other is very refreshing. It's a good read and emotional.

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## **Julie says**

Recently NPR compiled a list of top one hundred romance novels. They posted a side article explaining why some books were intentionally left off that list. I could not believe they left Kathleen E. Woodiwiss off the list, deliberately, siting her work as no longer relative for today's reader, but included other authors on the list whose books were every bit as controversial, and at least once featured beatings, forced seduction and rape.

While I admit I understand how the list was compiled, after I calmed down, I could see where they were coming from. However, perhaps this author should get an honorary status of some sort. Before you start judging me, remember, if not for KEW , the historical romance genre would not be here and many other ground breaking authors have earned their success riding on the coattails of Kathleen E. Woodiwiss.

So, I got to thinking about re-reading some of these old titles and perhaps doing a series of articles for my blog. I was surprised that I have only rated one of her books here on Goodreads!!! Really? Well, the truth is, before I saw that list the other day, I had not given this author a thought in a while. So, I guess I'm going to have to fix that.

I read this book for the first time, not all that long ago. I found it in a bargain bin at a used book store and couldn't remember ever having read it. It sat on my shelf for a long time before I picked it out on whim one day. It had been many years since I had read anything by this author, so I was 'just curious'.

Sadly, this book is not the best representation of this author's work. The story is much tamer than many of her other novels, but certainly a pleasant enough read.

Hopefully in the months to come I will be able to find time to read some of these classics, provided I can still read them with an open mind, which I'm probably more capable of than most, and will report on how I feel about these novels today and how they stack up against modern historical romance.

So, wish me luck. I may not make it too far before I cry foul and start begging for polite regency romance again. LOL! But, either way, I think it will make for some interesting comparisons. This one was kind of timid and is not the one I want to start with, it was an OK read though- 3 stars

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## **Ellen Shannon says**

I really enjoyed this book. This is my first time that I have read this author and can't wait to read some more of her work. The story had a few twists that I did not see coming.

Shemaine O'Hearn is a falsely accused convict on her way to the American colonies to become an indentured servant. Gage Thornton is a master carpenter and shipbuilder who is looking for someone to take care of his home and child. Gage buys Shemaine on the ship saving her from far worst situations. Shemaine discovers somethings about herself that she never knew while Gage realizes how much he cares for her and how much of a family they have become.

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### **KatieV says**

ETA: Ya, know - I just realized I listened to an abridged version, which definitely may account for my issues with lack of tension and easy resolutions. Think I'll check out the unabridged some day. Hopefully before I die I'll get through all my to-reads

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I normally avoid Woodiwiss' later novels, which is sad, because I loved her early ones. This was okay. I have no real issues with it, but there was no tension. The plot of the h being bought as an indentured servent by the H has so much potential for tension. In these plots, I expect an H who is, at the least, tempted to take advantage of/flaunt his position as the h's owner (huge potential for \*ahem\* naughtiness). I also expect the h to be very resistnt of her new position. In this the h calmly accepted her lot as a servent even though she was a lady and not a criminal. The H was essentially the perfect gentleman and they got married and fell in love with very little drama. All the tension centers on the h's family and betrothed coming to find her and the H being falsely accused of murdering his first wife. \*yawn\*

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### **Heather says**

i read this years ago and I don't remember exactly how I felt about it, but I think it was ok.

I do remember things I didn't like though. like how he was married before and how he has a kid. I really don't like that in a book. I like the main characters to have never been married before they meet each other. &same with the children thing.

I remember this one scene where the MC's were making love in this pond, and the guy's ex-mistress, or just some woman in town who liked him, was watching them. I believe that scene was in this book.

I also remember the MC's in his bed, and then the kid comes running in the room. Seriously annoying. One of the many reasons why kids are annoying. It just ruined the romantic scenes.

The hero's wife died on a ship, I think, and I believe there was one scene where the heroine was on a ship, and he worried she would be hurt.

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### **Oleta Blaylock says**

This is another very good book by a master story teller that is no longer with us. The story is set in colonial Virginia when indentured servants were sent to colonies to clear out the prisons of England. The story follows Shemaine, a rich young lady, whe has been framed for a crime she didn't commit. She decides she has a better chance of surviving as an indentured servant than staying in Newgate. She has already had several attempts to her life while find bars. Ms. Woodiwiss shows the harshness of the wilderness and the

things that people did to just live one day to the next. The book is a wonderful glimpse into colonial life and the area around Williamsburg. I have read this story more times than I want to count and it was enjoyable this time as it was the first time.

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### **Kay Smith says**

Woodiwiss is a talented author. But if you aren't aware of the burgeoning social pressures of the clash between the historical colonial age and a regency-dominated old-world during the 1740s; the situations and scenarios are going to send you into a new world tizzy.

The writing is elegant, the characters are unique in that during the discourse of the book they all evolve and shape into unique individuals. While this book may be classified by many as being bland and unassuming; when viewed as a whole the plot line, red herrings, and intelligent vocabulary are enough to keep an equally open-minded and intelligent being quite satisfied in the flow of the story.

I greatly enjoyed the turn of phrase in this book, however I don't encourage someone to purchase it for their personal library. My recommendation? Check it out from a library, as the plot might not be spectacular enough to warrant a second read.

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### **Kim says**

Nope. Just. I just can't do it anymore. I'm 300 pages into this monster and I just can't keep reading. Nice hero, nice heroine, even a cute kid and I just don't care. Though that may have something to do with the fact that *I'm 300 pages in and still nothing is really happening*. (But when you write with such flowery, redundant language, I guess you're probably not getting anywhere anytime soon.)

This might scrape together a two-star rating if I could bring myself to finish it, but...nope. Not gonna. I am declaring myself *free*, dammit.

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### **Lucy Qhuay says**

I'm starting to see that with Miss Woodiwiss, it's either a bullseye or a complete miss, as it is the case with this book.

*Petals On The River* disappointed me at several levels and that's why I rated this one with mere 2 stars.

First of all, the length of the book was one of the major flaws.

I don't feel like the book had to be so long to tell the story of our heroine, Shemaine O'Hearn and how she constantly found herself in serious trouble.

In fact, I would have thought the same thing if the book had only half the pages. I think we could have learned the same throughout 300 pages or so.



As it is, I think most of what I read was unnecessary and could have been easily cut out.

Nothing relevant or interesting ever seemed to happen and I had to go through endless descriptions of Shemaine's household chores and how much Gage unsettled her 'freshly awakened woman senses' and all that jazz, which, as you know, was extremely boring.

The only time something somewhat important happened was when our heroine found her life threatened.

Now, come on, how many enemies is it humanly possible for someone to have?

Shemaine had a bunch of them, all eagerly waiting for an opportunity to put her in a wooden pajama.

Let's count them: Mrs Fitch, the London Pride's captain's wife, Jacob Potts, one of the sailors, Morrisa Hatcher, the whore, Roxanne Corbin, who spent years lusting after Gage before Shemaine arrived on the scene and Lady Edith du Mercer, who preferred her dead rather than face the possibility she could marry her grandson and sully the family's precious aristocratic blood with her Irish blood.

And I'm just talking about the ones who actually tried to kill her, direct or indirectly. She had way more, like Mrs Pettycomb, the gossipmonger.

Really, it came to a point that this entire situation became ridiculous and the only thing I could do was sigh with dread and skip pages.

Besides that, I had other issues with the book, like the fact that Shemaine, who although not a lady came from a family with money and possessions, slipped too easily into the role of a slave and servant.

I don't think that's believable. First of all, someone used to that level of comfort would surely notice the difference in circumstances and there's the fact Shemaine was supposed to be a fiery woman.

I would surely expect her to actively fight against her new circumstances and everyone involved, like Gage, the hero and the man who bought and ended up marrying her.

But no. She had a privileged life in England, was surreptitiously taken away from all that comfort and thrown into prison and a life of slavery, but she's okay with that. She's only grateful she was bought by an honorable man who didn't try to rape her at his first opportunity.

That's not right at all in my point of view.

Plus, the fact Gage bought her as an indentured servant took a lot away from what the romance could have been. Things just felt strained and forced and I didn't like that at all.

I need things to develop at a normal pace and to feel natural. Also, I need to feel that the people that are supposed to fall in love with each other are someone on the same level and that certainly didn't happen.

Shemaine was already reduced to a mere servant and she kept humiliating herself to Gage, not even showing a single drop of her combative Irish temperament.

I hope that what I just referred doesn't make you think the author is worthless, because that isn't true. She is very talented, but sometimes she just doesn't create the right situations for a read to enjoy.

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## Melody says

[(le premier baiser n'arrive qu'à la page 268) (hide spoiler)]

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## Chanel Sharp says

What a delightful treat. Mom and I loved the detail put into the book. The pacing is beautiful. Sometimes we are dealing with high pace antics of the villains and other times we are sitting in the cabin dealing with day to day problems. It was just so fun and relaxing to read. Mom likes reading about the mundane.

The heroine Shemaine is full of great morals and will not turn her back on someone in need. Watching her take on the many antagonist in the book was a delight. To add to her 3 dimensional personality she also is very caring to those she loves. Her relationship with Gages son is very sweet. As for Gage, the hero, he has a very sweet and caring nature and shows it to Shemaine. He was also very happy to teach her how to shoot a gun. The back and forth of them saving each other is really beautiful.

Now for the catnip opinions. Mom loved that not all the villains were woman and that Shemaine did have great female friends.

On the downside mom (Spoiler Warnig) did not like when Shemaine parents came and blamed Gage and the only excuse Shemaine could come up with was that she believe Gage was a decent man, though mom does not believe that to be a bad thing she does wonder why Shemaine did not bring up that people had excused her of being a thief and worse. It is some what straightened it by the end but mom wishes it was said through characters instead of through monologue and other characters. Seriously she would have given anything for the main characters to unmask the bad guy instead of the side character who did the unmasking only with himself and the villain.

Over all it was an awesome book.

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## Liz says

This book caught my attention years ago on the library shelves, but until now I'd never check it out. It's an old-fashion romance novel set during the colonial times of America. And by old-fashion I mean the hero and heroine are practically perfect in every way, from their looks to their modern thinking despite the times.

The heroine is Shemaine O'Hearn, an ultra-beautiful 18-year-old who has been unjustly convicted of crime in England and sent to the colonies on a prison ship to be sold as an indentured servant. While her beauty had gained her a betrothal to a marquis in England, here it serves to incite men to lusty plans and women to jealousy. Lucky for Shemaine, she is bought by Gage Thornton, a furniture and ship builder. He's a widow looking for a nanny for his toddler who can read, write, and cook. He also is a suspect in his first wife's death (da da dunnnnnnnnn).

Not to fear, he has many opportunities to prove what a good man he really is as he defends Shemaine both physically and verbally from the townspeople and the people from the ship, many of whom want her dead. Along the way they fall in love, fight bad, protect the innocent, and solve a murder mystery.

I finished it, though I debated not doing so. The characterizations were over-wrought and silly, but from

what I understand, that's the author's style.

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## **Lover of Romance says**

When Shemaine O Hearn finds herself engaged, and falling in love with a wonderful man she thinks nothing could go wrong, everything is going right, but she has one person that doesn't approve of the match, his grandmother. So before Shemaine knows it, she has been falsely accused of thievery and is sent to America and sold into servitude for seven years. The ride on the ship was hard enough and she doesn't know what is in her future. Then she is surprised when she is sold to a Gage Thornton, who is a shipbuilder and in need of someone to care for his son and to cool and clean....Shemaine figures it couldn't get any worse now. Shemaine is surprised by how well Gage treats her, with courtesy and respect and kindness something no one has treated her since she was taken. So even though Shemaine misses her old life, she is prepared to start a new life with Gage and his son, and in Gage's arms finds "Home". Petals On The River would have to be one of my all time favorite books from this author...one that I have probably read over and over....but its been a while since I have read it, and when I saw it in the library I just wanted to read this old favorite of mine. Petals On The River is such a sweet and charming story, and both Gage and Shemaine are such endearing characters you can't help but love them. Also one thing that I love about this story is how there is much more to this story than a mere love story, it has some difficult conflicts that both Shemaine and Gage have to go through, and there some suspenseful scenes that kept the story going...and I just loved the blossoming romance that developed between these two. And I just thought Gage's little boy Andrew was just charming and adorable.....Overall a loveable story filled with a charming characters, a exciting plot, and a love story that will make you cry, written by a Legend.....A Sensational Romance!!!!

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