



Rough Around the Edges

Susan Johnson, Stephanie Laurens, Dee Holmes, Eileen Wilks

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Four extraordinary romance authors pen scintillating stories of the most dangerous rogues-and the fiery women who can soften their hardened hearts...

Playing with Fire by Susan Johnson

Once Burned by Dee Holmes

Melting Ice by Stephanie Laurens

Simple Sins by Eileen Wilks

Rough Around the Edges Details

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Jessi says

Playing with Fire by Susan Johnson

The first story opens with a duke who is woken up, still drunk, for his wedding day. He didn't want to get married but his father's debts meant that he was bought for a healthy price. Neither is excited about the marriage but they manage to find some common ground. Both hate their fathers and the sex isn't bad. A nice story.

Four stars.

Simple Sins by Eileen Wilks

Damon doesn't want to come back to the house where his grandmother made him miserable but he goes anyway. Felicity is at the house, during a raging storm, under false pretenses, to find whatever it was that Damon's grandmother was using to blackmail her mother.

Didn't love this story. And it felt so dated. Not just in terms of technology but in attitudes.

Two and a half stars.

Once Burned by Dee Holmes

Mariah Thornton once loved Deke Laslo. But he left her, dumping her unceremoniously. Now they're driving in a small car up to her father's (his boss) retirement party over the course of two days.

This story confused me. Mariah had a boyfriend she was considering moving in with but dumped him for Deke? Or were they really together at the end? Meh.

Two stars

Melting Ice by Stephanie Laurens

I totally didn't realize that this was a Laurens work until I started writing this review. But it makes sense. A historical with a little cheeky fun? Vintage Laurens, at her best.

Dyan St. Laurent has reluctantly become a duke. He is being hounded by his family to marry quickly. So he runs away to the home of his childhood friends. The same home where his childhood sweetheart has shown up, mistakenly believing that the wife of the house is not happy about the orgies that have been happening there. Luckily, Dyan is there to not only whisk her away from the action, but to introduce her to some pleasures as well.

Alicia says

Surprisingly good to be a collection of short stories. The stories didn't feel too rushed as a lot of short stories i've read has which I liked. Playing with Fire was ok, Simple Sins was good, Once Burned was even better. Melting Ice was good but it would have been even better if the author told some of what was going on at the party instead of just hinting at the activity.

Maria says

Only read Stephanie Laurens novella, "Melting Ice."

Maura says

2.5 - I'm rounding up a bit.

Playing with Fire - Susan Johnson - 1 /5 - Rupert, the derelict Duke of Ware, is strapped for cash and arranges to buy a wife, Olivia, who he marries drunk and on the same morning he wakes up with a married countess. He resents the hell out of having to marry for money and feels it's a state of bondage. Olivia, doesn't feel much better about being sold into marriage, especially to such an ass. And as an addendum to their marriage bargain, he gets more money when she gets pregnant, so he's all in for the marriage of convenience sex, even if she's not completely willing. He gets all rapey on his new wife, but she really loves his "lurving" even if she doesn't want it and for some reason, probably because they have great sex, she falls in love with him. But he's done with bondage and with marriage and hies off to London, where he realizes he can't have sex with other women like he wants to and he maybe actually loves his wife.

This was a bit too rapey, without the long drawn out fall into love that might balance something like that out. I don't like rape in my historical romance, but I can get past it, as a thing in historical romance that we just sometimes see, if there's a turn around for the hero or there's some true remorse or something to make him redeemable. Nothing like that existed here. He rapes her, she cries that she hates him, she hates him, she hates him. And five minutes later, he's looking at the mess he just made of his wife's coiffure and her decolletage and he's all turned on at the fact that he just raped her. And she's over her little fit and loving his seductive little smile and all ready to actually give it to him willingly this time. I just couldn't fathom that. And even worse is that these guys "fall in love" off page, but the only thing they've got going for them is hot times in the bedroom (when he's not raping her). And this is pretty much proven when she didn't really seem all that broken up at the idea of him meeting up with other ladies in London. These two were definitely not in love to my way of seeing things and so this was definitely not very romantic.

Simple Sins - Eileen Wilks - 3 /5 - Felicity hasn't seen Damon in 13 years, so she doesn't expect him to recognize her when she tries to lie her way into the house he inherited from his grandmother. She's after whatever Damon's grandmother was using to blackmail her mother, while he's just trying to find the will so he can prove the house isn't his and be on his merry way. He's surprised to find himself attracted to Felicity and sets out to seduce her, even knowing he has plans to leave. Felicity has always had a crush on Damon and despite the tough guy persona and the callous way he seems to treat her, still wants him for however long she can get him.

Meh. I didn't love Damon and his cold, unfeeling ways, nor did I love Felicity who believed that the fact that he'd suffered as a kid and was still hurting under it all, excused that cold, unfeeling behavior. I didn't hate them, but I didn't love them. And I didn't really buy into Felicity's conclusion that Damon must be able to love her if he can act in order to keep from hurting her...not when he was making the argument that he knew he'd just mess up her life and that if he cared for her he'd get away from her...because he didn't do that. I just wasn't completely sold on their love. Their passion and attraction, yes - their love, not so much. Probably a byproduct of a short story where most of the "falling in love" happens off page.

Once Burned - Dee Holmes - 3 /5 - Deke and Mariah used to be lovers, but Deke, a mercenary, broke things off with her a year earlier, breaking Mariah's heart. Now, Mariah is determined to show Deke she's over him by traveling from Florida to Rhode Island with him in his car. But Mariah isn't over him and Deke didn't end things because he didn't want her. He was trying to protect her from himself, and pushed her away out of his

own fears as well. Mariah realizes that she still loves Deke and tries to tempt him into getting back together, but this backfires and Mariah ends up broken hearted again. Now, Deke is going to have to overcome his fears and show Mariah how much she means to him.

Eh. I'm not sure second chance romance can be pulled off successfully in a novella of this length. I liked the chemistry between them and the fact that Mariah isn't all butthurt angry with Deke, but trying to prove that she'd moved on. Then when she changes her mind, she's gung ho about that. But there's plenty about their relationship that didn't make sense to me....like Mariah's surprise that Deke was faithful to her while they were together, or her relief that he'd only slept with "2" people since they'd separated and how this must be proof that he loved her, or why she totally forgot that she was nearly engaged to Andy back in Florida. I also wanted a bit more grovel on Deke's part...and maybe a little less of a sudden acceptance of commitment. I mean, Deke was all anti-commitment and love for years and in the span of few seconds he's completely over all his fears and asking Mariah to marry him. A bit farfetched for me. But this probably could have worked better if these elements had been drawn out and time had been dedicated to resolving them.

Melting Ice - Stephanie Laurens - 3 /5 - 15 years ago, a misunderstanding about a kiss led best friends Dyan, Duke of Darke and Fiona to abandon their friendship and their pursuit of a romance together. This broke Fiona's heart, especially when Dyan turned to other women and it broke Dyan's heart, when she was about to marry, which prompted him to head for India for ten years. Now, Dyan encounters Fiona at their friends' house party, which unbeknownst to Fiona, is actually an orgy. Dyan is determined to protect her, but also to seduce her, for he knows she is the only woman he's ever loved and the solution to his restless ways.

This was easily my favorite of the anthology, and definitely had the most sex. In fact, the major sex scene here kinda reminded me of a porn video the way they kept switching positions and prolonging things. Very sexy. I'd say this walks the line of erotica...it would be if the language was more graphic and straightforward. I'm not sure if she still does this, but this author has a very large sex-romance ratio. And although I liked the second chance aspect, especially as they started coming to the realization that they were both pretty much at fault and had wasted 15 years, this story fizzled when the sex became the focus and this aspect of the story was basically dropped. So there was very little resolution regarding their past. And then they jump into negotiations for marriage, which Fiona is reluctant to enter into when Dyan still hasn't admitted he loves her. He has however told her that he'd been with other women before her (and after) as practice for the sex he'd have with her...which, ew. Not romantic. Better off not even mentioning it. Which takes it back to their past history, which they never really resolved satisfactorily. So I felt like that was a bit plot hole for me. Also, it's never really clear why Harriet deceived Fiona to get her to the party and then hid from her...what was that all about and why didn't that get explained?

Karen Desmond says

4

Dawn ♥ romance says

seemed like forever to get through these four steamy stories ... 1st - disliked each other until last few pages, 2nd - too much time pondering feelings, 3rd - he fought against his feelings until last couple pages, 4th - too

much time describing things

Shelley says

Melting Ice by Stephanie Laurens - 4.5 stars

I just loved this novella in the Rough Around the Edges anthology. More risque and carnal than some of the full length novels by Stephanie Laurens written around the same time, which made this all the more enjoyable.

Playing With Fire by Susan Johnson - 3.5 stars
