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Sherri Browning

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The Countess of Aberford is determined to make a match for her sister, Lady Alice Emerson, but each man she brings to Thornbrook Park only inflames Alice's improper interest in unsuitable Logan Winthrop, a rugged man once accused of murdering his great rival.

Logan's determined to shelter himself from the pain of unrequited love—he knows the feeling all too well—but something about Alice stirs his desire to start living again. Though they fight their urges, the pair can only resist for so long; eventually they must choose between bowing to society's rules or breaking them...

An Affair Downstairs Details

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From Reader Review An Affair Downstairs for online ebook

Tammy says

I received this book free through the Goodreads giveaway. I really enjoyed this book. It was a nice read. Thanks

♥?elody says

I don't know where to start with this or if I should even bother since there wasn't anything to write home about. But that WTF stunt near the end was crazy absurd and I'm surprised it wasn't even brought up in any other reviews. I'm gonna try to explain this as best I can without sounding long winded but given the convoluted plot, bear with me.

I'm honestly very tempted to give this a 1 star solely because of a secondary character who is so outrageously out of touch, insipid, self-absorbed, vile and selfish that I wanted to drop kick this book into outer space because of her. And no it's not the villain. I'm talking about the heroine's sister Sophia. She carries the herculean task of finding her sister a husband like a blind bat who won't take 'no' for an answer. And no not because she loves her sister and wants her happy but for the simple fact that their mother told her to and well...what's better than being married to a rich titled gentleman? Screw love! Enter charming rakehell earl, Lord Ralston who oozes charm, and flowery compliments and toothy grins. Of course big sister thinks he's perfect for the heroine Alice, and uses every opportunity to keep the two together including manipulating a situation that keeps the hero Logan and the heroine Alice apart thinking it's 'best' for everyone. If there is an overused obnoxious trope I hate above all? it's the secondary meddlesome character keeping the MC's apart.

The incident that leads to the brief separation between the h/hr is when Alice falls off a horse and loses consciousness for 2 days. She has a difficult time recovering once she wakes up and she can't figure out what's wrong with her. She keeps complaining of a fuzzy head, dizziness and not remembering things weeks after waking up but her sister and doting fiance say it's all in her head and continue to treat her like an invalid. Oh and look she's magically engaged with no memory of it and can't remember shit and the hero is nowhere to be found. See where I'm going here? The hero and heroine pretty much figure out who the culprit is behind Alice's foggy memory lapses once Logan returns but again her sister scoffs at her claims and still insists she's better off with her fiancé. So we are forced to endure 80 pages of the heroine putting up with the obvious tiring villain all because her sister guilts her into giving him another chance cause he's a titled earl and he's in love!

I mean...ok. But then her reaction to it all once she finds out that he was in fact drugging her sister:

"There was no malice intended!" Ralston raised his voice in his own defense. Perhaps, yes, I welcomed the fact that the laudanum made you agreeable. Secretly, I feared that you would turn me down. I only wanted so desperately for you to let me love you, Alice."

"That kind of love is rare to find," Sophia said, obviously touched by the scoundrel's words. "He did it all for love, Alice."

That kind of love? Girl, bye! Lord Ralston was indeed drugging her tea with laudanum for weeks for reasons that made no sense. He wanted to drag out her illness and make her vulnerable and weak so he could propose to her under duress. He claims that he loved her so much and just wanted her to say yes to his proposal but he clearly had a thing for her older sister. Uh....ok. But that doesn't explain the lengths he went to get the heroine to say yes to begin with? You're telling me he would willingly marry a woman he doesn't want in order to be closer to his wife's sister? Dafaq?

Some other things I wasn't crazy about....

There really wasn't much of a 'downstairs' to this saga. The hero Logan Winthrope, is the estate manager who comes from a privileged background but a scandal from his past has him laying low and accepting work as an estate manager at Thornbrook Park. You don't really see much of the downstairs life, it's just mentioned in passing by the hero who sometimes dines with the maids and footmen. But other than that he keeps to himself in his cottage and I just...I don't know, really didn't get the *feeling* of the high class v.s low class division in this. Or at least that wasn't the focus at all like the blurb and the title teased at. Everything is just barely touched on and characters and scenes move so fleetingly you don't really get the sense of the world building around the characters. And if there is one thing that drives me nuts it's flat world building. The heroine goes from sitting in the drawing room to 'twirling in the grass' in the next sentence. Magic I tell you!

I don't mind flighty eccentric heroines, but I felt like here was another case of the cliched 'modern historical' heroine. Every stereotype you can think of for a modern HR heroine was applied here and I just found it forced and dishonest. The heroine Alice, is a 22 year old naive sheltered willful girl who acts and talks like she's twice her age and takes liberties like she has every right to and knows what she's doing, but she doesn't. She talks as if she's this worldly creature but she's not at all, she hasn't traveled the world, she's never slept with a man, everything is just tra la la fun for her. The author is trying to present her as something she's not simply because it's the 1900s and dammit! the heroine should rebel and *must* rebel in the most typical ways possible. I just found it hilarious how the inexperienced young girl was chasing the older jaded hero around an estate like a fox hunt trying to force his hand into seducing her like it was no big deal. Girl...simmer down.

All the back and forth foot dragging. Was this really necessary? The h/hr confess ILY yet we still have Alice referring to Logan as just her 'friend' for a good 100 pages afterwards and Logan anxious and questioning if she will call off her engagement to the slimy earl after she told him straight out she loved him and chooses him. Like...huh? What's with all the dramatic angst and back peddling? It just became so silly and endless regurgitated conversations. And the fact that Logan and Alice pretty much figure out what's causing her memory blackouts and who the culprit is behind it but readers have to sit through 80 pages of her putting up with the villain all to humor her sister was just a total waste of time and mind-numbingly boring. And I really didn't care for Alice playing the coquette using both guys to make the other jealous and acting like an insulted dingbat when someone questions her vanity or dared to suggest a man wouldn't pick her. RME. Get the hell off it girl and grow up. I found her really ridiculous and self-absorbed at times with some of the things she would say or do.

I honestly was thinking of giving the next book after this a try because I was initially curious about Sophia and her estranged husband Marcus. But given her behavior and cold aloofness in here and (view spoiler) I don't think I can overlook that. Like I said her characterization is horrible in here and really hard to empathize with or understand.

Cosette says

I loved this book. Having won this book through Goodreads First Reads Giveaway, and realizing this was second in a series I read Thornbrook Park first and really enjoyed it. Although this book is the second in the series it can stand alone, but it was so much more fun having read the first. I loved Alice and Logan and was cheering for them all along. I cannot wait for the next one The Great Estate, and I certainly have a new favorite historical romance writer in Sherri Browning.

Jonel Boyko says

Browning has developed a very intriguing storyline with this one. It was a unique story that had me pondering the who's what throughout. There were a few times when I found myself wondering what was going on, or the relevance of a certain scene, only to have it become apparent a few chapters later. Her descriptions bring this world to life, allowing readers to picture their surroundings. This was a sweet romance that definitely left me giggling at the end.

I quite enjoyed getting to know these characters. They were quite different individuals, each adding to the story in a different manner. I liked the Plato quotes and how they add to the persona of the characters who use them. I also had a riot with the Greek mythology. The characters relating themselves to the various gods and goddesses, and then realising what that would mean was priceless. I did find this story to be a bit convoluted in terms of characters at one point. I wanted to draw myself a diagram or flow chart as to who did what. It was as if Browning were attempting an air of mystery around certain character, but it came across as lack of character development at times.

Overall, this was a light-hearted, enjoyable novel. I appreciated the story and the characters that we got to know throughout. For me, it was simply missing that little something that engages you completely, making you unable to put the novel down.

Please note that I received a complimentary copy of this work in exchange for an honest review.

Jen Davis says

Lady Alice plans never to marry. She's worked out her plan for independence and a husband isn't part of the dream. That doesn't mean she isn't interested in men. To the contrary, the loss of her virtue is near the top of her to-do list. And she knows exactly the man she wants to do it with: estate manager Logan Winthrope. He's really the perfect candidate. Not only is she terribly attracted to him, but they are so socially mismatched, there wouldn't be a chance it could lead to a wedding. So she sets off on a mission to seduce him.

Logan has no intention of cooperating. He knows that anything between him and Alice would be completely inappropriate. He is too old for her and, even more importantly, he is damaged goods. Rumor has it that he killed a man, and he left behind his titled family years ago. But despite all of his best intentions, he can't quite ignore Alice's attentions. She wears him down slowly, until she becomes impossible to resist. But can they truly be satisfied with one night together?

Of course not!

I really liked Logan. He is sexy in his slightly gruff and quiet way. Alice was ok. She was a little myopic at times. She didn't always see beyond what she wanted and didn't always stop to think about how her plans would affect Logan. I liked watching her regard for him grow into something with more depth as she got to know him better. I loved, loved the forbidden element to their relationship. Both knew it wasn't right, but that only ratcheted up the sexual tension. I found myself rooting hard for these two to get together and the payoff was very good.

I did have some issues. There were times Alice grated on me with her immaturity. There were points I felt like she toyed with her suitors in order to feel good about herself. But far worse was her horrible big sister. Throughout the book, she is trying to snag Alice a proper husband. But she is so selfish and self-absorbed, I can't believe that her true colors have never shown themselves before. I hated Sophie. I also thought that Alice's overzealous suitor was a caricature of a villain. The whole storyline surrounding him was over the top. What he was doing was totally obvious –and why he was doing it was flat ridiculous. The author should have stuck with the romance side of the plot; it worked far better than the external conflicts.

I did like the book overall, thanks to the relationship between Alice and Logan.... Or perhaps I should say, thanks to Logan and the super-awesome sexual tension he has with Alice. (His backstory is pretty good too.) It also delivers a satisfying conclusion.

Rating: B/B-

**ARC provided by publisher*

Farrah says

Sweet and charming, *An Affair Downstairs* was a lovely read. It was an enjoyable book and I really liked it.

Alice was a good heroine, for the most part. She was strong-willed, spirited, and vivacious. She definitely knew to fight for what she wanted. There were a few brief moments where she came off as somewhat shallow and selfish. It wasn't to the point that it took down her character but it was enough to make me question her a bit. Otherwise, I thought she was great.

Logan was simply wonderful. He was so sweet and honorable and such a gentleman. He loved deeply and would do anything to protect those he cared about. He was just adorable and I really liked him.

The romance was lovely. Alice and Logan were obviously infatuated with each other from the start. Alice knew what she wanted and went after Logan, who was a little more hesitant. They were sweet together and definitely had some heat as well.

The plot was fast paced and I was kept interested the entire way through. There were a few surprises along the way, particularly about Alice's persistent suitor. I enjoyed the story and the ending was great.

An Affair Downstairs was a wonderful historical romance that I really enjoyed. Romance lovers, this is a book worth checking out.

*I received a complimentary copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review

Angelc says

3.5 Stars

As a Downton Abbey addict, I really wanted to love this book. However, it was just ho-hum for me. Logan was likable, but Alice came across as a little bit spoiled in my opinion. I think I was also a little bummed that the story doesn't fully commit to an affair 'downstairs.' Logan is the manager of Thornbrook Park, hardly a lowly position, and he is from a titled background. I was hoping for some actual conflict between the classes, but it didn't really seem to be that way. I really wanted to see more about the servants' side of life and how two people might be able to make a relationship work between classes.

Sometimes a slow read can be fun and a great escape, and I did feel like I was having a lazy day rambling around a huge estate as I was reading. So the overall mood and tone of the book was enjoyable. I think I just wanted a little more excitement.

I know I'm not the only reader starved for more books similar to Downton Abbey, so please, publishers and writers, keep this type of book coming! But this one just need a bit more intrigue and excitement for me, and more of a look at life 'downstairs.'

reviewed for <http://inthehammockblog.blogspot.com>

eARC sent by publisher in exchange for an honest review

Lucy Dosch says

I got tired of Alice's naive girlish nonsense right away. Her decision to seduce Logan was completely selfish and not thought out. She was self-centered and reminded me of a more likable Lydia Bennett (Pride and Prejudice). She is playful and sweet. It was nice that she engaged Logan and was able to draw him out of his solitary life. She is too young and inexperienced to take into account the consequences that sleeping with Logan would bring for both her and Logan.

Lady Alice has decided she wants to follow in the footsteps of her maiden aunt, Agatha. She doesn't want to marry but she is a girl with a sense of adventure. She wants to have a wild affair and the man she has chosen is the Estate Manager of her sister's home, Mr. Logan Winthrop.

Logan is good at keeping people at arms length but Alice's ability to talk anyone into submission has finally worn down Logan. She used to follow him around asking questions about just about everything. It seems Logan doesn't mind her bothersome questions quite so much anymore. I liked that Alice had broken through

and engaged the stoic Logan. It is the rest of the story that is frustrating.

This is not a story of Alice falling in love with an older man who her family doesn't approve of. Alice wants to have an adventure. She wants to have sex and Logan is an attractive man who works at her sister and her husband's estate who as Estate Manager is elevated above a servant position, so Alice decides he is a good choice to seduce to her whims.

Alice is completely overlooking the fact that although Logan wasn't the heir to his own family title, he left his town due to the fact that he is rumored to have killed a man. Yes, he did. Yes, it was an accident. Yes, there were extenuating circumstances. But none of this was even a concern to Alice that she might have been seducing a murderer who was avoiding conviction. Everyone likes Logan, so it must not be true.

Alice is also not concerned about the fact that Logan has rebuilt his life here at the Estate, regardless of his guilt or innocence back home. He works hard to get where he was and is admired by the Lord of the house and the staff. The fact that if Alice gets what she wants from Logan and it is found out, Logan will be out of a job with no references and now not only will there be a question of murder, but he won't be trusted to be around young women wherever he tries to go. Alice puts no thought into how this great affair might ruin Logan's future.

She also puts no concern to pregnancy. Maybe no one told her where babies come from, but if she knows enough about sex, you would think she has some inkling about that as well.

The more intriguing part of the story is what happened with Logan in the past and what happens when he returns to his family's home when his brother gets sick. Even though he wins the heart of Alice at the end, you might want to feel sorry for him instead of happy.

THOUGHTS:

My biggest problem here was that although this was a romance, Alice picked Logan to be her future lover because he was a single, attractive man who was available to Alice since he worked for Alice's sister and Alice spent a lot of time there. This wasn't a story about a lovesick Alice fawning over her one true love who was considered beneath her. She wanted a lover and he was the best choice of the men available. She also went after him with no thought to any consequences to herself, to her newly married sister and her husband or to Logan himself.

Alice's sister does see that Alice is a little too focused on Logan and tries to get her an appropriate suitor. The neighbor's also want the same suitor for their daughter so at first he comes off as maybe having another motive to be spending time with the less financially advantageous Alice, like maybe he got the idea that Alice is loose since he saw her kissing Logan in the garden. It did turn out that he truly liked Alice. But again, in Alice's childish and selfish thoughts, once she gets Logan to have sex with her, and Logan is trying to do the honorable thing and convince her to marry him, Alice's next thought is do I want to sleep with Logan again or maybe I should try to seduce this other guy and try another lover to compare them.

Eventually she realizes her feelings for Logan and he succeeds and getting her to accept his proposal, but overall, I disliked Alice that even her attempt to grow up couldn't win me over.

Received an ARC from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Julie says

Look for my review of An Affair Downstairs at Romancing the Book Blog - coming soon- January 2015.

Betty says

Review can be seen at Fresh Fiction.

<http://freshfiction.com/review.php?id...>

Romancing the Book says

Reviewed by Julie

Book provided by NetGalley

Originally posted at Romancing the Book

The set up was initially the same as many other historical romances released these days and I had to stifle a groan when it seemed this book would be no different. A young lady trying to hold on to her independence, avoid marriage, and live life freely is constantly being shoved in front of potential suitors by her over zealous sister. Been there, done that. Right? Well.... maybe not.

Alice is an independent girl, way ahead of her time, wishing for a life of adventure, which did not include marriage. However, she does find herself attracted to Logan Wintrop, a fallen man once suspected of murder, who now works for Alice's family.

However, Alice's sister, Sophia, is determined to see Alice married and her reasons are just a little selfish. But, Alice has managed to dodge all the suitors pushed her way so far. However, when an old and boring suitor, who is a little more persistent than the others, arrives, Alice will need Logan's help to send him packing.

Despite Alice's unwanted attentions toward him, Logan begins to realize he actually likes the young lady and continually reminds himself they can not become involved. But, that may be easier said than done. Just as Logan begins to give in to Alice and her unconventional ways, a horrible turn of events will stop the budding romance in it's tracks.

This is where the formulaic romance suddenly becomes quite interesting indeed. Alice finds herself in a most vulnerable way and Logan seems to have left her in her time of need. From this point on, the book was simply impossible to put down. The truth is revealed about Logan's past, and Alice begins to piece together a sinister plot. However, it's going to take some doing to prove her theory and free herself once and for all.

Logan and Alice make a wonderful pair. I loved Alice's spirit and Logan's sense of honor toward the women in his life , but also the respect he had for Alice made him quite appealing. He loved her, but never forced his will upon her like so many others in her life were trying to do.

There are characters you will love, like Aunt Agatha, and characters you will want to slap and others you will despise. The suspense is palpable and the last quarter of the book is shocking and clever all at once. I am

glad I stuck with this one because I ended up really enjoying it after all.

The Lit Bitch says

I was pleasantly surprised by the story. Most of the harlequin romances I've read have been more bodice rippers which lacked any plausible plot.

This book did have a story line—though at times cliche—it was entertaining and fun. There were times that I was like what in the world does this have to do with anything? Though those moments were not frequent.

For example, when Alice bought the cuff links for Logan, I was like is this really relevant or necessary to the overall story? I didn't think it was necessary at all. The story would have moved along without it.

Over all though, the plot was adequate. As for the characters, Alice was everything a typical romantic heroine should be. She was headstrong, independent, and modern for the historic period. So clearly she was 'different' than the typical woman in the book.

As for the romantic interest, Logan was equally as perfect. I loved that he was so conflicted about his feelings for Alice. I liked that he was honorable and respectable. He was easy to like and easy for readers to fall for.

Now here's the big question....was it steamy? Yes and no. There was only one real sex scene and it was well written and tasteful. And yes it did register on the steamy scale, but then that was it. More time was spent building up the relationship between Alice and Logan.

There were a few stolen kisses and make out sessions here and there but that was about it....it seemed wanting. I don't know maybe my expectations were high but I guess I just expected more since I thought it was going to be a bodice ripper.

Even though it lacked a lot of salacious activities, it was an adequate story and I enjoyed the characters and plot. I was a little disappointed that the time period wasn't more relevant to the story.

For me, I like the period to add something to the story. In romances often the period only serves as a catalyst for the presence of Dukes, Earls, and Duchesses. But I think that one can still have a romance novel with those types of characters in a modern novel....I had hoped that the period would add something to the plot but in this case it didn't.

Overall though, it was an entertaining read and satisfied my need to read something carefree and sexy.

See my full review [here](#)

Jackson D'Lynne says

This review is for a book I was glad to receive through NetGalley (I LOVE the opportunity to read books from new to me authors).

(DISCLAIMER) I was excited when I first got my claws on this book because it was written by someone I know through RWA networking, and I know her to be a pretty fabulous lady. That being said, I always give honest reviews because, as an author, I appreciate honest feedback. A writer can't improve their craft if no one tells them they need improvement.

I gave this book 3 out of 5 stars. I wanted to LOVE this book because the premise was very Downton Abbey (which I stopped watching after the second season), and I just love the idea of two people from different worlds (supposedly) falling for one another despite the gaping chasm between them. That was NOT what this book offered me.

It has a promising start; witty, charming internal dialogue and conversation between the hero and heroine that left me smiling and eager to read more.

“On her list of great things to accomplish...travel the world, to climb a mountain, to ride a camel, to captain, a pirate ship...getting drunk on whiskey, and having a wild affair.”

“Hunting? You look like you’ve been cornered, trapped, and devoured by Lord Averford’s closet.”

These were two of the best lines in the WHOLE book, which I didn’t know at the time, but I continued reading the book because these lines promised me a book filled with lines just as good or even better. I will say the pages between those two lines sagged with eye-rolling storyline, but I overlooked it because my optimism continued to chug along. After those literary gems, disappointment settled in. I hoped it would be a short visit, but the disappointment dragged three large suitcases onto my porch, and quickly took over the spare bedroom.

After those bright, beautiful, witty lines, a steady downhill roll soon followed; the book turned from promising to peevish, from charming to choking, from witty to: “when does the good stuff come back?”, and soon after: “when the hell is this book over?”

What I liked about the book:

As I said before, the premise of the book was phenomenal. I couldn’t WAIT to crack this baby open and dig right in. The lady of the manor falls for the lowly, hardworking estate manager, and they must hide their love for one another from the disapproving uppity-ups who could tear them apart forever. Unfortunately, that’s not the story I read. Sure, Lady Alice and Logan have a love affair, if you can call a quickie in an abandoned farmhouse an affair, and they must keep it secret, but NOT because he’s a lowly estate manager. The man is a well-to-do baron’s son who fell into scandal and left his family behind to start over at Thornbrook Park.

I LOVED, LOVED, LOVED the setting. The way Ms. Browning described the landscape and the homes in this book made me want to crawl inside and lounge in the conservatory beneath the fragrant boughs of the lemon trees. Also, who doesn’t like the idea of pristine ponds surrounded by verdant woods—perfect for secret meetings with your forbidden lover, or a quiet, picturesque getaway?

Agatha, Alice’s aunt, was a hoot! Her ‘aura’ reading, her belief in ghost cats and cross dressing poltergeists made me smile. Also, she was so open and unashamed of her affairs—the elderly aunt with the closet full of hot, heavy, sexual experience, LOL! Agatha owned every scene Ms. Browning wrote her in, and I wanted more of Agatha and less of Alice, but I’ll get to that later in this review.

What I disliked about the book:

Where to begin...

- No tension
- Too much napping
- Ralston is a flamboyant dumbass
- Alice and Logan leave me bored and royally annoyed at the same time

Alright, let's get to the brass tacks and develop this list into a full on shit storm, complete with acid rain and black lightning.

This book seriously LACKED in the tension department.

This storyline dragged on for pages with little to no apprehension, sensual anticipation, or suspense. Even with the suspicious eye on Ralston, I didn't FEEL the heaviness and dread I should've felt. The sexual/love tension between the H/H was non-existent. Come on, even the ONE TIME Logan's physical attributes are described it's a lackluster side note to the idiotic thoughts in Alice's head. I couldn't even picture Logan. There were plenty descriptions of Alice; auburn hair, a bump on her nose, a smattering of freckles, and eyes that fluctuate between greens and golden browns. Logan...um...he has brown (?) hair and blue (?) eyes...I'm not even sure. I feel Ms. Browning just glossed over Logan and his potential to be a sexy, sensual, desirable hero. More on Logan later.

Some of the lacking tension can be attributed to the slow pace. I don't think anything drove the plot until we get to the ball and Ralston's introduction. Up to that point, it's like I'm reading the day-to-day life of a wealthy Edwardian family; Downton Abbey on Valium. There's a REASON they script REALITY shows. No one wants to watch (read) reality without the occasional bitch fight or narrow-eyed stare down between two protagonists. Even when Alice skips down to Logan's house (I can easily picture her wearing pig tails, and singing tra-la-la all the way there) at the crack of dawn and is stuck at his house, the fear of discovery by her family, and the tension born of their precarious situation wasn't there.

Also, there's a lot of napping. I think everyone, save Ralston, declared "I am going to take a nap..." at least ONCE. With all that napping, I should've been reading a book about a retirement facility in Baton Rouge.

Next up...Ralston. The Earl of Ralston was over the top from the very first word out of his too pretty mouth (Ms. Browning spent more time describing the antagonist than she did the hero). His words of adoration and admiration weren't believable because they were just too much. I'm not going into everything surrounding him, his plots and motivations, but I will say they were dumb, hard to swallow, and done to death.

"I can't have your sister, the woman I really love, so I'll settle for the next best thing—you..."

Now, on to the two I've really wanted to lay into throughout this review...

Oh, pushy, immature Alice...

Lady Alice was a pushy, thoughtless, selfish, immature snob. Early in the book we discover she's been following the hero around like a bitch in heat, pushing his buttons, making him trip over her as she darts between his legs, eager to lap at his face. Does the really BOTHER Logan? He's supposedly frustrated by her for being constantly underfoot, but he really thinks her childish grasps for his attention are delightful? I don't buy it. The guy is 32 years old, I'd think he was past the age of finding the antics of toddlers delightful.

She wanted to seduce Logan? For real? Then why did she act like a dumbass idiot ON PURPOSE? Apparently, she didn't know dressing like a boy and loping down to an unmarried employee's house in the dark hours before dawn was a bad idea. Apparently, she thinks pestering a grown man like a petulant 9 year old for his attentions is sexy. Apparently, she thinks pushing and pushing and pushing against his totally understandable concerns and admirable morals is going to win her the affections and sexual loving from Logan. Well, according to Ms. Browning, this is a totally believable idea. Alice only ever thought of what she wanted, how things affected her, and what she could gain. She never thought of how her actions (like with the early morning dash to Logan's house) would negatively affect others, how her stringing her suitors along would make them feel, or how her flippant attitude about marriage would adversely affect her own chances for love in the future.

Her insistence on losing her virginity to Logan led to an anti-climactic coupling in a drafty farmhouse. Not. Sexy. There was no sexual tension in this book at all. No heat. No physical descriptions; "the skin along his rugged, defined abs felt like velvet stretched taunt over slabs of rock..." (I wrote that). The writer barely covered visual perception of the hero and heroine, and totally left out the other senses. What did Logan smell like? What did it feel like to stand beside him, for him to look at her, to touch her? If it was mentioned, it wasn't written well enough to remember.

Alice was annoying, and her persistence in seducing Logan bordered on sexual harassment.

Dear, doormat Logan...

Logan is the typical beta, which isn't an issue in the least. The problem arises when Ms. Browning writes her beta as a weak-willed doormat. Logan was a grown ass man but he let an immature girl-child push him into sex. I KNOW we're supposed to think Logan finds Alice's personality and actions delightful, adorable, and refreshing but what man in his right mind would find those attributes sexy?

Throughout Logan's internal monologue, I couldn't find a logical transition of Alice changing from lady of the manor to object of his affection. One second she's following him around the gardens like a mosquito buzzing at his ear, and the next he can't live without her. It was a weak, boring, flat, lukewarm emotional progression.

Overall, this book was a spoonful of 'meh' topped with a drop of 'blah', and I wish I hadn't swallowed that mouthful of flavorless 'ho-hum'.

Gaele says

The second in the series I have read, I will warn those who are expecting a Downton Abbey like storyline that this is decidedly not that: the comparable elements are the location of the stories in Yorkshire, and a similar time frame of the Edwardian period. Take a chance on your historic romance that is not 'influenced' by other titles, works or authors: it's how you find gems.

In this book we have a few recurring meetings with characters from book one, but this does stand-alone well, with plenty of moments to make you smile. While not as laden with tension from the various machinations of the characters on their way to love, nor as straightforward in characterization as I normally seek out, this is a fun read that will entertain even as you may look to whack a couple of characters with a solidly aimed riding crop.

Again the beauty and unique landscape peculiar to Yorkshire is front and center as Browning sets the story with plenty of moments to admire the scenery as the world in which the characters exist is described. And that world very much expects that Alice Emerson will marry. But, Alice has her own thoughts on the matter, and those approach scandalous.

Alice was interesting: alternating between complete airhead or masterminding manipulator, the overall impression is one of a fairly heedless to consequences young woman with a sharp tongue and determination to get what she wants. I had moments where I wasn't able to believe Alice was as stupid as she appeared, and then, she'd almost prove me right. Or wrong. Occurring equally.

Logan is the 'unsuitable' man, son of a baron and a bit of a doormat – quite apologetic about both his reduced circumstances and his own limited prospects. I couldn't find a ton to like or dislike about him: he's the Charlie Brown of the cast without the continual self-investigative moments. And, his seeming inability to say "no" to Alice, or to even work up any strong emotion about her behavior, subtle or ridiculously over the top leaves his moments reliant nearly entirely on how others relate to him. It was an interesting proposition to take a decidedly beta male as a hero, but not make Alice particularly alpha in their relationship. They both felt rather clueless about it all – and that worked to their favor, much to my surprise.

Other characters do appear to 'insert' themselves into the romance, but I didn't find that I felt the tension as much as I would have expected. Lord Ralston is SO over the top in his effusive praise of Alice and her 'delights' that it borders on obsequious and desperate: even Alice sees the wrong in his approach. Brought in by Alice's sister Sophie, a wholly dislikeable and bossy character, most certainly responsible for Alice's inability or unwillingness to make her own carefully considered choices.

Overall, the story was enjoyable, if lacking in some needed tension: either between Logan and Alice in a sexual sense, or from the characters who are sure to mark this match 'unsuitable'. And let's be clear: Logan's unsuitability is merely his history: he's done much in this quiet removed life as the Estate Manager. There was a touch of tension both from the forbidden of their relationship, but I didn't find this a particularly angst-filled read – more a slow grower without great tension, most notable for the twists and turns in Alice's behavior as readers try to puzzle out the great question: spoilt airhead or headstrong calculating genius?

I received an eArc copy of the title from the publisher via NetGalley for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

YankeeCountess says

sigh I wanted to love this book, I really, really did. When I saw it on the shelf for the first time, I snatched it up because A) I'm a sucker for cross-class romances, B) I'm an even BIGGER sucker when said cross-class romance involves rich/titled!Heroine and servant/workingclass!Hero, and C) as a person with a love/hate relationship for *Downton Abbey* (and a big-time Sybil/Branson shipper), I WAS SO READY.

...And then I read it.

siiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiigh

****Argh, here there be spoilers, matey****

This is Browning's second book in her *Thornbrook Park* trilogy. We briefly met the main characters (Alice

and Logan) in the first book (Alice more so). Alice is the younger sister of Sophia, the Countess of Averford (the one who actually lives at Thornbrook Park). In the first book, Sophia was hoping to match Alice up with Marcus (the first book's hero) but that didn't come to pass. Sophia apparently has this *need* to get Alice married and fast, and to keep her close. Alice, however, would much rather spend her time exploring the world, going off on adventures, and has no plans to marry AT ALL if she can help it. She does, however, want to experience sex, and would prefer to have an "affair" with someone she knows and trusts--enter Logan Winthrop.

Logan is the estate agent for Thornbrook Park. Apparently (we didn't really see this happen on the page, in either the first book or this one) but we are told that Alice is a bit of a "nuisance" as far as Logan is concerned; following him everywhere and asking him all sorts of questions. At first, Logan appears to be annoyed with Alice, but apparently that's all an act, because in truth, he's *very* taken by her and desires her greatly, but knows that the match would never be accepted, and so believes it best to try and "convince her" to set her sights elsewhere, and therefore suggests to Lord and Lady Averford to host a grand ball, which will bring in many potential suitors for Alice.

My main beef with An Affair Downstairs is that for a fairly "simple" book, it's confusing. I say simple, because this is the second time I've read something by Browning, and I don't find her writing style or plot devices to be all that complicated--yet she does seem to *try* to make things complicated, and unnecessarily so.

For example, Logan is in his early thirties (32 roughly) and Alice is ten years younger. Now ten years is a noteworthy age gap, however, Logan is often referred (by both himself and others) as an "old man". There's a potential suitor who comes to see Alice and we are told that he and Logan went to the same school, and are about the same age. Yet this suitor comes across as someone in their forties or even their fifties--yet he's not deemed to be "too old" for Alice? And then to add more confusion, Logan is also referred to as being "young", in terms of an estate agent and then later, his brother's heir. So he's too old *and* too young? And the same is said for Alice--she's "too young" for Logan, but she's over 21 and is viewed as "dangerously" becoming an "old maid", and therefore she must marry ASAP! And the problem is, this back and forth tug of war over "too old/too young" happens almost constantly throughout the book and quickly became extremely annoying.

Also, as I mentioned in my review to Thornbrook Park, Browning suffers from a terrible case of "tell, don't show". We are *told* that Alice has been tagging along behind Logan for at least a year if not more, we are *told* Logan has pent-up feelings of passion for Alice, we are *told* about Alice's grand scheme to thwart the story's villain, but...we're not shown these things very well. Pages or paragraphs of dialogue with little to show of the characters inner emotions as they declare their feelings, and...well, as I mentioned before, it's extremely annoying! It's not like that all the time, but Browning did it more often than not, that I must confess, after a while I thought "*I'm reading mediocre DA fanfic*" (and that's not a knock against fanfic--trust me, if you read DA fanfic, you know there is some REALLY GOOD stuff out there, and sorry Ms. Browning, but it's written better than this)

Oh, and then the title and premise of the story is also a bit misleading. First of all, while yes, an estate agent does indeed work for owner of the estate, he's not like a butler or footman or gardener--he's a "high-ranking servant", and I'd be reluctant to use the term "servant"; at the very least, he's nothing like those other servants who work in the house. Also, turns out that Logan is the younger brother to a baron, and his brother's heir, so...someday *he* will be a baron. Which made me wonder...why is this match deemed "unsuitable" again? He comes from money, will one day inherit a house and a title, and he's no older than any of the other suitors being thrown at Alice, so...what's the problem?

Well, it turns out there's a bit of a scandal attached to Logan's name (although it turns out that most people think he's completely innocent of said scandal)--this is one of the book's redeeming factors, the "mystery" surrounding Logan's past, which Browning reveals bit by bit, rather than have one massive "reveal".

Of the characters, Logan is likable for the most part, and Alice, well she can be a bit silly and there were times when I rolled my eyes at her for her behavior, but there were other times when I thought she was incredibly mature and level-headed, and while she was far from perfect, she showed growth and great potential for progress, rather than "character regression". And the reason, despite all the grumblings I've had for this book, that I'm giving it **3 stars** (although I should add it's just **barely** 3 stars) is because I did feel that Logan and Alice were well-suited for each other, and did have good chemistry together (when they were allowed). (view spoiler)

Oh, and something "shocking" happens at the end of the story. Something that sets everything up for third book, The Great Estate which is Sophia and Gabriel's story. Quite frankly, I'm not sure if have it in me to read it. I was let down by this one, not liking it more than I had hoped, and the character of Sophia is one that is **very** difficult, I feel, to like. She was quite the bitch to Eve in the first story, and while her bitchiness was watered down in this one, she was never really all that likable and again, I didn't understand her **obsession** in *needing* to see her sister married to a so-called "proper" gentleman that lived close-by. Maybe all that will be explained in the third book? I don't know; at least as of right now, I just don't know if I will ever go and read it (and not to lay all the hate on Sophia; quite frankly, I don't think Gabriel is much to crow about either, which shows that they are evenly matched, I suppose).

Anyway, Logan and Alice, together, as a couple, do manage to save this story and help it just barely earn that 3 star rating, however, I would not recommend it to someone who was looking for a decent cross-class servant!Hero/titled!Heroine romance. And I would also sooner point someone to ff.net for some good DA-inspired writing, rather than this as well. **shrugs**
