



Great-Aunt Sophia's Lessons for Bombshells

Lisa Cach

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From national bestselling author Lisa Cach, a warm-hearted, entertaining novel about a Ph.D. student who experiences a life-changing summer while taking care of her great aunt, a 1940's movie star.

A Ph.D. in sex appeal ?

Grace Cavanaugh is hell-bent on proving her Women's Studies dissertation thesis that beauty only leads to misery. And what better research subject than her great-aunt Sophia, a former B-movie star? Now eighty-five and facing surgery, Sophia has asked Grace for company. . . .

Grace imagines a helpless, lonely old woman, forced to turn to a great-niece she barely knows. Instead she finds the aging diva holding court in a Pebble Beach mansion, oozing a bombshell-itude—arthritis and wrinkles be damned—that captivates every male in sight. To Grace's dismay, her great-aunt decides a perfect distraction would be transforming the frumpy feminist into a femme fatale who purrs for her suitors . . . or devours them. She ordains classes in everything from carb cutting to lingerie, culminating in a challenging final exam. The newly svelte Grace must test her wiles—on both devilishly handsome and morally corrupt Declan and sensitive but painfully awkward Dr. Andrew.

Newly unleashed desires—and the discovery of a closely held family secret—threaten the bookworm-turned-babe's entire feminist upbringing. Her thesis gone sadly awry, Grace wonders if her great-aunt is right: Will trusting her heart lead her to find beauty in the most unexpected places?

Great-Aunt Sophia's Lessons for Bombshells Details

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From Reader Review Great-Aunt Sophia's Lessons for Bombshells for online ebook

Tonya Mathis says

OMG, This was the best rom-com I've read in a LONG time. It had me giggling and laughing out loud. This is going to be one of those books that get read again and again.

Margaret says

I tried to read this book, but by the time I got to Chapter 5 I knew that it wasn't for me. I expected a witty and charming memoir of an 85 year old former "bombshell" and that is not what I got.

Grace is going to spend a summer in a beach cottage nursing her elderly great-aunt (whom she met only one time when she was 10 years old) with the intention of finishing her thesis for Women's Studies proving that outer beauty only brings misery to women. Great-Aunt Sophia, former B-movie star and many times married, will be the perfect example for her to prove her point. Ha! Great-Aunt Sophia has an ulterior motive for inviting this particular niece to stay with her and it isn't to be cared for after a hip surgery or to help out with a dissertation either. She's going to make Grace into a bombshell.

Right from the start, Grace encounters sexual tension with the dark, brooding Declan who is Sophia's financial manager and a possible spark between herself and Andrew, Sophia's doctor. Sophia offers Grace \$20,000 if she will allow Sophia to show her the advantages of using her outward beauty and her sex appeal. Grace folds. That's when I quit reading.

This could have been a cute story, but I didn't like any of the characters and I just didn't buy Grace's convictions of her thesis that when women get caught up in the media-hype of outward beauty and sexiness, they are headed for self-destruction. The sexual tension seemed too contrived, and frankly, ridiculous given Grace's own theory about sexual attraction based on physical appearances. She came across as weak and self-doubting and easily manipulated into becoming her aunt's clone. Instead of laughing and enjoying this story, I found myself gritting my teeth and rolling my eyes. Time to close the book and move on.

Ashley says

Grace Cavanaugh is a young, slightly overweight, insecure woman who is spending the summer in Pebble Beach, CA with her Great-Aunt Sophia, where she intends to research and write her dissertation for her Ph.D in Women's Studies. Her Great-Aunt Sophia is a former "B" movie-star and bombshell beauty who is on a mission to transform her Great-Niece into a younger version of herself.

There were so many times during the course of this book where I wanted to simply close it, put it away, and never pick it back up again. The plot was predictable. The characters were so stereotypical and some of the literary devices the author used were so awful it made me cringe to read them.

When I read, "...sex appeal wafted off him like cologne off a hot lightbulb. He steamed with it." on page 10 I wanted to close it right there and give up. That was simply awful use of simile and I was afraid the entire book was going to be that horrid. It wasn't. After approximately page 50 the weak literary devices like that were pretty much over and Lisa Cach focused more on building the characters and the plot. The problem

remained however that both the characters and the plot were weak and stereotypical.

The characters are essentially a cantankerous personal assistant, a young hyper-active housemaid, a chauvinistic self-absorbed heartthrob, an environmentally conscious doctor, a lesbian best friend, and a hippie mother in addition to the main character, Grace, and her Great-Aunt Sophia (as described above). The plot was predictable and dreadfully boring. It was also slightly offensive. The story begins by implying that Grace will never attract, nor keep, a man unless she loses weight, wears make-up, dresses sexy, strokes their ego, and is all in very pleasant and never challenges their opinions or decisions. It embodies everything that is wrong with the way media is shaping the self-image of women everywhere. As the story progresses we learn that the man whose heart Grace was out to capture wished that she didn't lose the weight because he loved her curves, but the rest of her changes were for the best. It would make any single woman look in the mirror and wonder what was wrong with her and what changed she needed to make. I'm not a feminist by any means but this book definitely depicts feminist women in a negative light.

There were also two specific sex scenes which were more descript that I wanted to read. I could have done without them and they lent nothing to the story. It wasn't enough to warrant the book being described as erotica but it was beyond what I prefer to read. All in all it was a frivolous book that was quick to read and overall rather pointless. It is not memorable nor is there any true purpose or message to the story. It was simply a way to kill time, nothing more.

Michelle says

This book blew my mind. I loved everything about it. I loved Aunt Sophia's scheming, manipulative but obviously caring ways. I loved the sexy fun that oozed out of Declan, and my oh my did I love the transformation that Grace underwent. This is a sexy, fun romance that will make you wish you could have the kind of life changing summer that Grace has. I need to go find myself a long lost great aunt Sophia!

Grace is a practical, smart, independent PhD student that thinks she has all the answers. She prides herself on being an independent woman, and maybe even a feminist. She is certainly opinionated and as Declan will say, "firey". I loved Grace's fire. I also loved that while she was super stubborn at first, eventually she opened herself up to the idea of change and the fact that maybe she doesn't have all the answers. And as soon as she did that things started to change for Grace. The best part of this book, is that it is so realistic. I could actually picture the story unfolding and playing out right before my eyes. It was so well written and crafted. It was a delight to read.

And speaking of delights, mmm I loved me some Declan. He sure did know how to get uptight Grace to loosen up and let go of some of her iron clad control. I loved watching the two of them interact.

I can't say enough good things about Great Aunt Sophia's Lessons for Bombshells. It is smart, sassy, romantic fun that I could not put down. I need to read another Lisa Cach book ASAP. I can't think of a single thing that I didn't enjoy about this book, and that is really saying something!

K.R. Conway says

I simply couldn't put this down – read it cover to cover in one day. Lisa Cach is riotous. While it is entirely possible I understand the feminist humor in this because I am a fellow graduate of the oldest all women's college in the country (like Cach), I LOVED THIS BOOK. If I could buy a copy for each and every one of my gal pals I would! I was busting out laughing. If you want a taste of her dry-humored wit, pick up the book at the store and read from 79 to 81. LOL!!!!

So, premise: Grace, a 26-year-old graduate student, is working on her thesis for her PhD. In what? Women's studies. Her working title? "The Belle of the Ball Cries Alone: How Beauty Brings Unhappy Endings in the Emotional Lives of Women."

To help with her thesis, she decides to take up her ancient, B-movie actress of an Great Aunt (Sophia) on an invitation to stay with her at her beach house in Pebble Beach, CA. Beach house turns out to be a mansion and Sophia turns out to be loaded. Two men – Declan (drop-dead, movie star handsome MBA and Sophia's financial advisor) and Andrew (cute in a Birkenstock way and Sophia's personal physician) hang about the house. Declan immediately tries to put the moves on Grace, who is determined to prove that she is a feminist and, therefore, detests men like Declan. Only problem? She is somewhat attracted to him and she finds her most basic desires trying to overthrow her brain. But, DAMN IT! She SHOULD be attracted to the doctor who obviously thinks with his brain and not his

Anyway, to make matters FAR WORSE, Aunt Sophia is determined to prove that the thesis is a load of crap and challenges Grace to let her transform her into a bombshell over the course of the summer. Sophia believes that beauty = power and that a woman who believes she is beautiful, and acts like it, also becomes beautiful on the inside and strong as hell.

Anywho, insanity ensues, the thesis goes to hell and Grace learns that Aunt Sophia is one devious old lady . . . but also damn brilliant.

Go. Now. BUY. No way you can put it down. JUST TERRIFIC!

** reposted from my blog where I first posted this review **

Nancy says

With such a great cover and title, who would think this was such a dumb book? It was too much of a "romance" book for me. And the premise was just not believable, that a PhD candidate writing her Women's Studies thesis on how beauty makes a woman unhappy (huh?!), can be convinced by her bombshell great-aunt to try being beautiful, sexy, and alluring. Grace has the potential but has never had the desire, in fact she has led her life in the total opposite direction of dressing dowdy and wearing no make up to avoid male attention. She wants to be loved for her mind and not her body. So why would she agree to her aunt's plan? Nobody that serious would go along with it just for the money, or because she really secretly wants to change.

Mara says

This book.

I was intrigued by the cover and the title, expecting this to be more chick-lit-ty and less like a boring cliche of a romance. Alas, my expectations were rudely crushed by the author's anviliciousness and dumb-as-a-box-of-rocks heroine.

Meet Grace, a frumpy and dowdy overweight (but secretly hot) girl/woman. She is working on a PhD in Women's Studies, and I will let her tell you something about her thesis:

“Inviting her to Pebble Beach for the summer seemed a way to fulfill both our needs. Grace is getting her Ph.D. in—what was it, dear?”

Grace's shoulders slumped, dreading what was to come. No male reacted well to mention of her field, and mentioning it all but guaranteed a nasty discussion of its faults and dubious merits. “Women's Studies,” she said, and she felt the shift in atmosphere immediately. Andrew's expression turned uncertain, while the line of Declan's lips betrayed distaste. He took a sip from his glass as if to clean “Women's Studies” from his mouth.

She knew what they were thinking: she must be either a lesbian or a ballbuster. In either case, no one worth pursuing romantically. She'd had five years of defending her choice to potential dating partners, and had learned to accept romantic defeat before she began. Even math majors got more action than she did. “I hope to get most of my dissertation written while I'm here.”

“What's your thesis?” Declan asked, with the same tone used to ask if one knew what the mold-furred blob in the back of the fridge might be.

Grace squished a little lower into her chair. “The working title is 'The Belle of the Ball Cries Alone: How Beauty Brings Unhappy Endings in the Emotional Lives of Women.'”

Silence settled upon the tea party. A breeze soughed through the trees. A bird chirped and then flew away.

“Oh, dear,” Sophia said faintly.

No kidding. I swear, it's like this author has issues with the field of Women's Studies and/or the people who work in it, since there is no other explanation for the way it is treated in this story. Accidentally (or not), the heroine's best friend is also studying in the same field, and her thesis is much more interesting (something about power balance and violence in same-sex relationships), but then the author has to go and make the friend hopelessly in love with Grace, pining for scraps of Grace's affection. Heavens forbid we get a normal, well-adjusted female character in this story!

“So a straight person cannot be turned gay?”

“Of course not.”

“Then why, my dear, did you try to sleep with my niece?”

Andrew dropped his cup. Declan hit his knee on the underside of the table, making the dishes jump. Cat gasped and turned furious eyes on Grace.

“I never said a word to anyone! I swear it! Sophia took a shot in the dark.”

Catherine snarled. "This is why you don't want to spend the summer with me, isn't it? You're afraid I'll make another pass at you. Or were you afraid that you might give in and enjoy it this time?"

Grace said nothing, unable to deny it. She *had* been looking forward to being away from Catherine for a few months.

"There's no need to blame Grace for spilling your secret," Sophia said. "It was clear for anyone with eyes to see. You're in love with her, but she won't have you."

Catherine's lower lip began to tremble.

"Don't blame yourself," Sophia soothed. "Grace is beautiful. She can't help it if the thought of touching you makes her stomach turn."

"What do you know of love, you sadistic old bitch?" Catherine spit. "I don't see anyone here who loves *you*!" Catherine shoved back her chair and ran for the house, her sobs carrying on the breeze.

"Cat!" Grace called, shoving back her own chair.

"Don't bother, darling. She'll be fine. You'll only encourage her if you chase after her. It's what she wants."

Grace shook her head. "You deliberately humiliated her."

"She humiliated herself by mooning over someone who had rejected her. She'll be better off for facing the truth." Sophia took a sip of tea. "Don't go after her."

"No matter what she feels, she's my *friend*." Grace turned on her heel and followed Catherine.

Yeah, 'cause with friends like these, who needs enemies?

Grace is a ridiculous character. The author keeps telling us how Grace is smart and secretly sexy, yet never shows either of those things. For nearly the half of the story, Grace is this whiny, immature, woe-is-me, beautiful-women-suck b*atch. She is a hypocrite, as well.

It had been a long evening of consolation and argument, Catherine's dramatic distress pushing Grace further and further away until she felt like an actor pretending to care. At this moment, it was beyond her how women could stand to fall in love with each other.

She didn't know how men put up with them, either. Really, why would any guy bother? Was the sex really worth it?

She felt guilty sometimes for feeling a kinship with men who complained that women talked too much about their feelings. There were times she wanted to yell, "Just get over it, for criminy's sake! Let it go!"

[and then, a few pages later, Grace thinks the following:]

Declan obviously had no respect for women, or interest in their thoughts. He'd probably marry someone with implants and a Botox addiction.

That's Grace for you, crusader for women's rights and dignity. And this is supposedly a woman who is soon to get a PhD, when her very (fictional) existence offends women everywhere.

The story itself is boring and of the stock- romance variety.

Not recommended.

Cocktails and Books says

Who wouldn't want to be thought of as a bombshell?! Well, in the beginning of this story Grace doesn't. She is a women's studies major and believes that women need to be valued for their intelligence and other qualities beyond their looks.

Fortunately, her great aunt Sophia was a bombshell in her time (and continues to be like no octogenarian I've ever met) and Grace gets to spend the whole summer with her--in her glorious mansion at Pebble Beach no less. Sophia has the best of intentions in trying to help Grace improve her appearance. Sophia also teaches Grace (and the readers) that being a TRUE bombshell takes more than good looks. By the end of the story, I think Grace sees that looking your best and using feminine wiles actually make a woman stronger and takes a lot of intelligence.

Without giving too much away, Sophia gives Grace many incentives for becoming a bombshell. She even provides access to two men for her to practice her bombshell skills on. Should Grace pursue Sophia's doctor, Andrew? He is intelligent, caring, safe and seems to appreciate Grace's women's studies background...but then there's Declan. He is everything Dr. Andrew is not and helps release Grace's inner-bombshell!

I liked this book. I appreciated Sophia--I love old movies and all the glamor that surrounded them and the stars. I love stories about transformations and Grace undergoes a big one. I loved Declan too! I don't know if I were Grace who I would've chosen in the end, but I'd like to think I had the guts to choose him over Dr. Andrew! Indulge yourself and read it!

Reviewed by Joelle for Cocktails and Books.

Charlotte says

Great-Aunt Sophia's Lessons for Bombshells takes the reader along for a summer in sunny Pebble Beach, California. Grace, a young woman navigating the swamps of graduate school, is looking forward to spending a summer with her elderly great-aunt who she's met once. What she finds in Pebble Beach is not the quaint beach house and kindly great-aunt she expected, but a seaside estate overseen by the grand dame that is Great-Aunt Sophia. Grace quickly finds herself in the middle of a possible love triangle and challenged to reexamine her assumptions on how beauty impacts the lives of women.

Grace is not a particularly memorable or relatable as a protagonist. She isn't bad, but the reader can come out feeling as if there is just not quite enough there to hold on to. I came away with the impression that this is a

woman that things happen to, not a woman who takes action.

Some of the most enjoyable parts of the novel are the romance scenes. A few of these scenes are a little more steamy than I would have expected from the description, but it isn't enough to deserve the label of "erotica."

This novel seems like it might be a fun beach read, but there are much more solid novels out there. Unless you want to read in agonizing detail about how to drive a stick shift, you might want to pass on this novel.

You can read a (slightly) longer review at my blog.

Akhila says

3 Stars: I'm still trying to decide whether I loved the book or not. It's not what I expected. It's very hard to describe to people without them looking at you like you've lost your mind. And yet, it won me over at the end, stressing and delighting me in turn. I like the concept even though I didn't like how the characters changed over time. I'm happy about the ending but it was a strange path to get there. But in the end, I'm happy I read it and not ashamed at all for having enjoyed it.

A M says

I quite enjoyed this book. It was fun joining Grace on her journey of discovery.. It was a little disappointing that Grace's transformation involved her losing weight to be seen as sexy though.

Great-Aunt Sophia was a wonderful character. At 85 she was sprightly, intelligent, crafty, and somebody I would love to know. She had plans for Grace and nothing was going to stop her. Yes she made Grace over in her own image but what an image! Grace had been brought up in a very alternative environment by parents who believed in substance over style. Part of Grace's journey was finding the happy medium.

Sophia sets Grace the task of trying to get the two men in her life, her doctor, Andrew and the young man she has taken under her wing, Declan to fall in love with her. They are totally different men – Andrew is quite and unassuming whilst Declan is all charm and a bit of a player. Grace, with Sophia's advice, decides to play one off against the other. Unfortunately I felt that the outcome of this competition was telegraphed. We get to know Declan quite well but Dr Andrew is a mystery and what we do find out about him is not that flattering. Sophia's big secret is revealed right towards the end of the book and it helps to crystallise Grace's decision.

I liked Grace as a character. She genuinely struggles with the ideals she's always held and is pursuing for her doctoral dissertation and what Sophia is teaching her. In the end Grace manages to find a balance she's happy with. I felt the characterisations of Declan and Andrew were lacking. Andrew was a bit of a placeholder for me. We hardly see him and what we do is one-dimensional. Declan was better drawn but coloured by Grace's initial impressions of him. We did get some of Declan's point-of-view so we got more of an insight into him, but I still felt they were a bit thin.

Like I said, I did enjoy this book. If you're looking for a light read that will leave a smile on your face and you like some nostalgia, then this is for you.

Sara Palacios says

Great Aunt Sophia's Lessons for Bombshells by Lisa Cach follows Grace Cavanaugh, who is bound and determined to prove that beauty only leads to misery through research for her thesis. She is knee deep in research when she receives a call that her great aunt Sophia is havnig surgery, and that she would love it if Grace could accompany her during her recovery. Despite her misgivings, Grace caves once she realizes that this would be a perfect opportunity to do some much needed research. She arrives in Pebble Beach completely expecting to find a old, lonely and ragged old woman ... but instead finds a well aged diva, still ozzing of va-va-voom. Grace realizes that she is the perfect specimen for her thesis but soon may change her train of thought once her great aunt takes her under her wing and completely transforms her into a bombshell, delivering her to test her new skills on two men who are only inches away from becoming her prey. Newly unleashed power threatens everything that Grace has ever stood for and leaves her wondering if she should trust her heart and look for beauty in unexpected places, instead of what is obvious.

I absolutely loved this book! Great- Aunt Sophia's Lessons for Bombshells is a fabulous and hilarious read filled with lots of wonderful tips and insight on how to keep (or get back) what you've been missing in your life. Full of surprises and laughs, I was highly entertained throughout, and especially loved it when naive Grace is pitted against sexy Declan and the always handsome Dr. Andrew. I had a really hard time putting this one down and it was perfect for lounging by the pool. Overall, a really fun read and definitely something different. Loved every second of it.

Liz says

Aunt Sophia's Lessons for Bombshells

Grace Cavanaugh's Great-Aunt Sophia is going to have hip surgery, so she contacts Grace with an offer: come spend the summer at my beachside home as a companion/helper. Grace jumps at the chance to be able to live rent-free and have time to work on her dissertation while helping out a feeble old woman in her eighties.

Except Aunt Sophia is not the white-haired geriatric that Grace expected. Her beachside house is actually a mansion with servants. Aunt Sophia may be old, but she's aged well (with the help of plastic surgery), she's as sharp as a tack, and she is still beautiful. She's still wrapping men of all ages around her little finger and manipulating people to her will.

Grace, on the other hand, is thirty pounds overweight, a poor dresser, was raised by activist parents, and is majoring in women's studies. She is the opposite of Sophia in almost every way.

Aunt Sophia is visibly distressed when she learns that Grace's dissertation is about how beauty makes women miserable. In exchange for Aunt Sophia's input about how being beautiful has affected her life, Grace has to agree to take some lessons in becoming a bombshell.

It is interesting to note that initially, Sophia doesn't give Grace a makeover. The early lessons are more about having confidence; Sophia tries to teach her that the key to being perceived as a beautiful woman is to

believe you are. Unfortunately, Grace is too stubborn to go this route and Sophia starts her on the path to physical beauty.

The novel follows a familiar path of an ugly duckling becoming a swan, but it is still immensely enjoyable. The story is told primarily from Grace's point of view, so the reader gets to see her inner thoughts regarding her transformation, how she's thrilled at the attention she's now receiving, but also ashamed that she likes it. She sees how she has been locking herself in the ivory tower of academia without seeing how the rest of the world actually works. It may not be fair that beauty helps, but provides a lot of opportunity.

Bottom-line: This novel teetered between chick-lit & romance novel, with the romance side just slightly more weighted. I really enjoyed it and feel it was definitely worth the money. I would recommend it.

Noemie | allmybookthoughts says

This was a fun & easy to read contemporary book. Grace considers herself a feminist & is writing her dissertation on beauty only leading to misery. She spends the summer with her Aunt Sophia, a former actress, and realizes that there may be other viewpoints than hers. I loved the aspect of her being a strong woman, with some good romance mixed in. It was cute!

WTF Are You Reading? says

Say Goodnight Gracie

Grace Cavanaugh is a woman that has spent so much time in her head, that she has forgotten that there is a body attached. She wants the fairytale, complete with tall dark stranger; but has no idea that she has the goods needed to snag him. Let alone a clue about how to sell said goods.

Grace is a very deep pool, and all she needs is a man that is brave enough to tread her waters.

The thing that makes Grace readable is the fact that she is open to the changes that are set before her.

She may be insecure and shaking in her boots, but she is going to tackle whatever challenges come her way with spirit, conviction, humor, and (true to her name) GRACE.

Sophia...Sophia...Sophia

This is one classy broad. That said, she has more tricks up her sleeve than Chris Angel. She is like the Professor Higgins to Grace's Eliza Dolittle. It is so much fun to watch her manipulate the players in this little drama; all the while appearing "as harmless as a little lamb". It quickly becomes crystal clear that this beauty has more than enough brains to challenge Grace's views on male-female relationship dynamics and about herself. The question remains however...

Will Grace pass the test?

The Good Guy vs. The Badd Boy

The handsome and charismatic Declan O'Brien has no problem getting into the pants any woman that he wants.

What Declan does have a problem with however, is that Grace Cavanaugh is not just any woman. As he watches the rose of her womanhood bloom before him; he finds that he is drawn to her as a bee to honey.

Can she see through the wrapping through the true gift within?
Can he?

Dr. Andrew is the quiet, caring, shy, (ooooh he's a doctor for the love of....)
He's also the other player in this game of hearts.
The thing to remember about the "good doctor"?
If something appears too good to be true...

This is a true feel good read and proof that "beauty is in the eyes and heart of the beholder".

If you like Sophie Kinsella, you are sure to love this book.

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