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When Erica Murril married her boss she was under no illusions as to the nature of the marriage. She knew that for Oliver Leyne it was merely one of convenience, that he would never have considered her had he not lost the woman he really loved. All the same, Erica did love him, and she couldn't help hoping that with time and patience her marriage might turn into something deeper and more satisfying than a business arrangement. But Erica had managed to conceal from Oliver the fact that just before the wedding his old love had come back and tried to get in touch with him. Would he ever forgive her if he discovered how she had deceived him?

Except My Love Details

Date : Published 1969 by Mills & Boon (first published January 1st 1937)

ISBN : 9780263710373

Author : Mary Burchell

Format : Paperback

Genre : Category Romance, Harlequin, Romance, Contemporary Romance, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Except My Love for online ebook

Melanie♥ says

4.5 stars

I could really feel for Erica. I thought that despite her doormat tendencies early on, she made a very likeable heroine. I totally sympathized with her unrequited love for Oliver. Her inner musings added depth and angst to the story.

Oliver faired a bit lower on the likeability scale. Perhaps if we had anything from his point of view, it might have given his character more depth of understanding. The outward clues to his feelings were pretty telling, though.

This would have been a 5 star book for me, but lost that ½ star due to something missing with regard to Oliver. The ending just fell a bit flat for me.

Although originally published in the 1930s, there were just a few unobtrusive clues indicating the date of the book....the clothing references, the lack of technology, the accommodations for the single girl, lack of modern medical solutions for Oliver, OSHA where were you?, etc. However, I found they did not distract at all from the flow of the story.

A lovely book from a favorite author.

Mareli says

5 stars

I found this book had all the things I love most. A marriage without love (or not reciprocated), a secret child and the usual bad other woman!

I think Erica was not a doormat. She stood up for her opinions, she had some courage to go and face her love rival and she was always very dignified. He was marred (in his opinion) and I think he had some self-respect problem, but the fact the woman he loved left him after a bad incident, surely didn't help. But the real doormat was him, unable to fight for the woman (and the child) he loved. Stupid man!!

And I totally love her friend who loved her so much to go to another city to help her. The women here are the real strong characters of the story.

I love this kind of stories, I hope to read more of those in the future!

Julz says

Shew! This one put me through the wringer. It was just so SAD at times and the H made me see red in the worst way. Some of the things he said and did to the h was just awful. If she had dumped him and never looked back ever, I could've understood and he would've deserved it.

But I also felt for the H due to his injury and how insecure and human it made him (barely human, mind you). I wonder if this was real life, if that wasn't part of why he felt about the OW the way he did. He mixed in his feelings for the loss of her with those of his career and future. Ok, enough psychoanalyzing.

There were some things that happened that I didn't catch at first because I guess talking about sex was a big no-no when this was first written, apparently. If I had realized they had consummated their marriage, it would have been worse...and it was already pretty bad. So if you're not sure, they did it!, and *then* he ended up saying and doing what he did. Gah!

This is a queen mother of angsty-OW stories. If you love the heartache, but need your victim to finally make a stand and the H to suffer and wallow in his just deserts, then you should enjoy this one.

Fiona Marsden says

Another early Mary Burchell this is a heart breaker. A marriage of convenience between the hero Oliver and his secretary who has loved him all along. Oliver was on the rebound from a beautiful actress and turns to his secretary. It all looks like a possible happy ending until Oliver learns his wife kept a letter from the actress from him just before the wedding. Like many of Burchells heroes, Oliver has a little of the spoiled but lovable little boy in him. Unfortunately that spoiled little boy does all the wrong things when he learns of her deception and drives her away. The whole book is gut wrenchingly sad but the ending is extremely satisfying. This is another of Burchells I am happy to reread.

Booklover says

I am conflicted between rating it as okay or good read, wanted to kick both Erica-Oliver, Oliver is one jerk whom i wanted to kick, as story progressed he realizes his mistake and comes to his senses but the reason was not good enough for me, Erica was too good and forgave easily. After the way Oliver cruelly threw her love back at her face still she fought for it and lost, i was really glad she made a life for herself. IMO Oliver had loads of grovelling to do for the things he said to his wife and way he hurted and humiliated Erica. Adored Carol very much her no nonsense attitude made her character much more adorable. Erica-Carol's friendship bond, way they were there for each other through thick and thin. The story progressed well and Erica's character grew more strong and mature which i liked but Oliver he did not grow much:(

Overall okay read for me
Ratings 3.5 stars

LIA Kh. says

first of all, it's poorly written, but nevertheless it's a good story that makes me shed a little tears.

and it's exactly like the title, the hero married the heroine for the sake of companion meanwhile he love another woman who love him back when he was perfect, when the hero experienced an accident and lost 2 of his finger the fiance left him.

hero take the heroine for granted, when his lost love sent him letter, heroine accidentally crumpled the letter

and the hero accidentally (again) burnt it down. and when the hero found out his ex fiancée sent letter and the heroine play role so he will never read it, he blamed all to the heroine also he had the audacity to paid the heroine to let the marriage off.

long story short, she left the hero, and tried to started a new life and fortunately she is expecting the hero's baby. they met again in 2 years and after a series of events, they reunited again.

what make me peeved is when the heroine left, the hero still have his ex fiancée in mind, and eventually he hated his ex fiancée because she humiliated him and make fun of his disability. imagine! not because he realized the heroine love and kindness. arrgh!!

LuvGirl says

*****POSSIBLE SPOILERS*****

An hp made me cry! This was a very emotional read which I enjoyed reading. I felt so hurt on the heroine's behalf. The hero treated her abominably and her love for him was so one sided. talk about unrequited love! Talk about me wanting to kill the OW that the hero was so foolishly in love with! This was a far cry from a fairy tale romance, but it was so engrossing. You will want to do physical damage to this beta male hero for being led on a string like a puppy dog by the OW. He wasn't getting it through his thick skull how lucky he was to have gotten away from the evil witch by marrying a woman that loved him unconditionally.

He certainly didn't do enough groveling in my opinion.

I wanted him to suffer much more for all the crap he put the heroine through. Did anyone else notice that he did not say he loved the heroine in the end?? Maybe it's because he really doesn't love her. Why did it have to take the OW embarrassing him for him to finally see that she was no good? I wanted him to get over the OW from seeing how wonderful the heroine was in contrast to that b@#\$%^&! I wanted him to put himself out out more for Erica. He should have chased her, go looking for her, and do anything in his power to get her back after she left instead of running around town with the evil witch. Hey, maybe if he did do that I wouldn't have enjoyed this book so much, lol, so all I can say is that this was a darn good book that will keep you glued to the pages.

I'm struggling with giving this book 4 stars or 3.5 stars. I think I will stick to 3.5 stars because after the heroine left the hero we had no idea what was going on with him and Dreda for a very long time. I wish I could have seen his POV in this instance. I think the reader needed that to find closure in the situation between him and Dreda. The ending seemed very unsatisfying to me with the telling and not showing of what happened.

Karla says

Ok, this is weird. I KNOW I had a review of this book here, and yet....no. Hmm.... At least I can copy/paste from Amazon.

This was a nice trip into romance nostalgia. Originally written in 1937, Harlequin reprinted it in the 70s, so it's truly a vintage romance. Overall, it has the feel of one of those "women's pictures" from the golden age of Hollywood (though the setting is British). As I read it, I could imagine the cast for it and saw it unfolding in good old black and white. Loretta Young as Erica, Tyrone Power as Oliver, and Lucille Ball or Alice Faye as

Erica's softie-under-the-cynical-wisecracks friend Carol.

The set-up is real simple: Secretary loves cold fish boss. Boss's dad wants son to produce an heir. Boss asks secretary for a marriage of convenience. Secretary agrees, and then no end of troubles result (old flame, baby, misunderstandings) until the final happy clinch.

As innocuous as it sounds, I really liked it. Erica was quite the drip at times, and I wanted to smack her once or twice, but she wasn't all that obnoxious. The catalyst to separate her and Oliver is cliched (view spoiler), but I could see myself in her position doing the exact same thing.

I haven't read many Harlequins, but the few I have had heroes of rather unlikeable ilk. I pretty much liked Oliver from beginning to end. He's cold, but not mean. He has genuine affection for his stellar secretary, and it makes his tenderness not be so sudden when it does happen. The honeymoon scene with her and Oliver was very touching. When Erica tells him that his gloved hand (a factory accident cost him two fingers) doesn't repel her at all, he pretty much crumbles with disbelief and we get a "scene fades" where their marriage-in-name-only moves into other territory. I felt sorry for the guy, who has been nursing a broken heart because his injury provoked the opposite reaction in someone else. Later on, when he thinks Erica deceived him, his hurt is pretty deep and real.

The best character in the story was Erica's friend Carol. I loved her dry comebacks and zingers, and she finds a romance of her own to make the story all the more tidy and sweet. (That this subplot is contained in the book rather than spawning a sequel is bonus points in my book. Wish more modern authors would do the same rather than making everything a series.)

Despite being written in 1937, there's no indication at all of world events, surprising since Oliver Leyne is in the iron and steel industry. Maybe there were references to pre-war tension and the 1973 reprint removed them to make the story feel more contemporary. Or maybe Burchell didn't put them in there in the first place. It'd be interesting to hunt down an original edition to find out.

If you like the old Harleys, you've probably already read it. But if you're curious about a vintage "Boss marries secretary" plot, this might be of interest.

sbf20112011 says

I almost wanted to give this one 5 stars, for holding my interest so well. I've never read a Harlequin this old (my oldest ones were in the 70s, maybe the 60s), and the lack of sex in it made it a very different read. I didn't realize it was so dated until halfway through it, and I realized I had totally missed the first time they had sex on their honeymoon because it was such a subtle hint (he basically asks if he can stay with her because "there's such comfort where you are" and then it describes him "sleeping against" her later, and that's it -- I assumed they were just sleeping together for comfort!). It was actually really interesting to have so little sex or even discussion of physical attraction (only chaste kisses were described, and not many of them) -- part of me was dying to hear about it because otherwise they spoke to each other pretty formally most of the time and the contrast would be interesting, but on the other hand maybe what made it interesting was wondering about it rather than knowing.

But the characters are pretty well-drawn and the plot was pretty gut-wrenching and angsty. I did wish Oliver seemed more in love with her, but it was satisfying enough at the end.

AgentScully says

Sorry, I just did not like the H or h. She's another uber-doormat. I want spunk! I'd rather she burned the letter herself and brazened it out, than "allowing" him to burn it and then wrestling with her conscience for pages. Gah! I perked up when she went to see the OW, ok that took guts but alas, I did not get the Dynastyesque hair-pulling fight I wanted. Still, I liked that scene when the H shows up - no man comes across well in those circumstances, does he? I had an absurd picture in my mind of Prince Charles wringing his hands and stuttering pompously as Diana and the rottweiler trade barbs over him. The h improved after that, blowing up at the H and eventually leaving him, but it was a little too late for me.

He's another jerk hero who offers marriage for money instead of love, and then disses the h for marrying him for money. Illogical much? She-bitch who left him when he got injured years ago now wags her tail at him and off he goes like a hound, loving wife be damned. I'm afraid that he really did sleep with the rottweiler, but even if he didn't he gets no points from me. As the h says "There are other ways of being unfaithful besides spending the night with a woman".

Speaking of the OW, she was satisfactorily nasty and selfish, and it's too bad really that she and H didn't end up together so she could make him as miserable as he deserved.

I liked the friend Carol. At least she had spunk. And some good lines. Why couldn't we have HER for the heroine?

Heroine: "it's just the fact of my being there which is forcing him into doing horrid, unhappy things which aren't really natural to him."

Carol: "Well, darling, I'm not really following the logic of this"

You and me both, sister!

There are some nice 30's touches - a rug for the car, going to the corner phone booth, the real fur coat (better not let PETA read this!)

The plot was ok, the writing was smooth, but I didn't like the pacing much. The hand thing I saw coming a mile off and it was resolved by page 70 or so. I guess I expected more of a Hitchcockian creeping dread about when and how the H would find out about the letter, but it came too early also and was kinda anti-climactic to me. The foreshadowing about the baby was ridiculously obvious. She's so tired! She feels sickly! She's so tired! We get it already, duh. There was some good drama and angst after that but I couldn't care enough because I just didn't like the H. And babydrama is just not my thang. The ending was unsatisfactory because he didn't grovel enough or even say ILY.

Favorite line:

"It was to ask her to stop trying to steal my husband— just as any woman would to to any man-catching bitch and try to to spike her guns."

Not sure I'll read MB again unless someone tells me there's a spunky h :-)

Megzy says

Although I did not care for the male lead character AT ALL, I did feel the despair of the main female character. I did not necessarily agree with her choices and could not understand as to why she continued to strongly love her pathetic excuse of a husband... but I could see and feel the story happening. I wasn't just reading words that didn't effect me, it made me have some strong emotion and that is why I am giving this book a three star. The OW is just the way I love them to be, a real mean, conniving, selfish B****.

Leona says

Wow..This was different. The story felt rather dated. That actually helped me to feel some compassion for the situation. I cut the characters some slack given that people had different moral standards back in the 30's. Otherwise, I think this would have been a one star.

Issues I had with the book...in order of priority.

1) The hero, was an absolute idiot and a sniveling coward...There was absolutely nothing sexy about him. At one point, I wanted to scream "Oliver, just grow up and put on your big boy pants" People lose their whole hands, feet, arms, eyes. Please, just stop whining over two lost fingers. To top it off, he wasn't very smart when he missed the fact that his lovely Deidra only decided to show up AFTER his Father died and left him beaucoup \$\$\$\$\$. How convenient was that? I also detested that he decided to divorce his wife over one measly letter from Deidra. For heaven's sake Oliver, your wife, isn't a pair of shoes you can return to Macy's when you find another pair you like better. What a shallow creep.

2) The heroine was beyond redemption. Crying for someone as unworthy as Oliver, was pitiful. Even her poor friend, Carol, couldn't figure out how she could waste one nanosecond on the jerk. She tries to get tough by going to see Deidra to demand that she stop chasing her husband. However, she even blows that when Oliver comes in and chastises her. She should have just handed him over with no regrets. Frankly, I thought Deidra and Oliver deserved one another.

3) The secret baby plot....just weakened the whole HEA. I couldn't buy into his love for her. It felt more like he took the mother so he could get the child..

4) There was absolutely no groveling from the hero. Since it was clear that he could not make a relationship work with Deidra, he just settled for the heroine. But, why not?....If you can have someone that will take the nasty crap you dish out every day and still idolize you, that's a good deal.

Dianna says

Secret baby by a vintage author! Oh how times have changed and samed.

Erica is secretary to Oliver, who runs a steel works company. She's loved him for two years, and she finally gets a chance to make a move when Oliver's cranky dad becomes more insistent that he marry.

He doesn't want to, because he doesn't like doing anything someone tells him to. Oh you totally should, Erica tells him. I think you're lonely.

Much struck, Oliver goes away and has a little ponder and returns the next day with a marriage proposal.

At first, I thought Erica's whole rationale for loving Oliver was cute. She thought he was a big grumpy cuddle bear and was confident she could bring him around to proper human decency if given half the chance. She wasn't expecting he'd ever love her half as much as she loved him, but was confident she could make it all work. She was very sweet and very optimistic.

I was prepared to go along with Oliver as a wounded soul. He'd been in an industrial accident and lost two fingers from his right hand. He's really sensitive about it, and I loved the way it was used in the interactions between Erica and Oliver, and Oliver and the other woman.

Oliver's background is that he wanted to be a concert pianist but had reluctantly given his father two years of his time in the family business. Then the accident happened, his dream was shattered and he lost the love of his life.

Beautiful redhead Dreda (perfect name), also a professional pianist, rejected Oliver after the accident. He's been waiting seven long years for her to return.

I could never quite work out Oliver's age. I'd placed him at 30 because I assumed he'd finished some relevant education at around 21, was injured at 23 and then had his 7 years in lonely hell. But 30 is really young for a vintage hero and he's going grey by the end. I've noticed in my not very vast experience with Mary Burchell and Sara Seale that both consider grey, silver or white hair a powerfully sexy quality in a hero. I'm not sold, but sure I'll keep an open mind about any fetish.

What finally struck him out for me, though, is that he's bad beta. He's a beta between 2 alpha ladies and he's really bad at it. He turns into a miserable whiny baby who wouldn't do anything for himself. He was such a wet blanket and I couldn't stand him.

The major conflict point in this book is that the letter from Dreda that Oliver has anticipated for 7 years finally arrives and Erica succumbs to temptation and doesn't own that it's happened. She's already had a slightly nervous turn, because Oliver's dad dies, which takes away any immediate urgency to marry if the point was to please the dad. Oliver assures Erica that he still wants to marry her, because Oliver believes that he makes his own decisions. He's wrong.

Erica and Oliver marry and then Dreda turns up right after and is all hi did you get my letter? Oliver's all 'no, what was it about, btw meet my wife.' There's a heavy implication that Dreda's made contact because Oliver's dad's death was published in the papers, with plenty of detail about how rich Oliver is right now. Anyway, doom is sort of averted, and off the lovers go on their honeymoon.

Where they have sex! In Verona! It's raunchy too, and Erica is not a virgin and Oliver is totally fine with that.

So that doesn't happen on the page, it's all fade to black. But fade to black means I can insert whatever I want into their sexy times, and I choose to insert non-virgin Erica teaching Oliver how to pleasure a woman. If you, in reading this book, choose to insert some kinky wot-wot, I invite you to do so. Not that you need anyone's permission. Fight the patriarchy! Down with virginity as the default!

Anyway, there is sexy time once more, before the deceit around the letter is revealed, and Oliver has an attack of the melodrama. Betrayal, angst, they're through! At some decent interval, there will be a divorce. Erica can continue to be his secretary and live in his house and spend his money. But Oliver does not believe that she loves him. He'll never love her; he'll only ever love Dreda. And there will be no snuggles, ever again!

Poor Erica. But she's alpha, and when she discovers Oliver is planning to go to London for a dirty weekend of seeing Dreda play piano, she goes to see Dreda to ask that she leave Oliver the hell alone. She says her piece, works out that Dreda is in fact the psychopath Erica had suspected her of being, and it's all made a 1000 times worse when Oliver turns up. 'Erica what are you doing here?' Oliver gasps.

See, he just emasculates himself. He does himself no favours by stamping his foot and insisting that he's the man and gets to do whatever he wants, and as the man if he wants to go to London and watch piano, he will.

Erica however, has had quite enough. She also, and this is totally awesome, has an incredible BFF in Carol. Carol has never been a great fan of Oliver and does everything you could possibly wish a BFF would do when you turn up sobbing at her door because your marriage is over. Carol is NOT going to meddle and aid Oliver because her widdle pal doesn't know her own mind, and she's certain that Erica and Oliver are made for each other.

Oh no, Carol and Erica head off to London, no forwarding address, and set themselves up as single ladies with jobs and a sexy bachelorette pad. I couldn't get over how awesome Carol was. She goes back to their home town to sort out moving their furniture. When Carol gets back Erica is all 'so did you see Oliver.' Carol did. 'And did he ask about me?' Oh yes, Carol says, and I lied straight to his face and told him I knew nothing. 'But, but,' Erica dribbles, 'I mean he looked sad, right? You didn't even give him a hint about me?' Carol her looks her right in the eye and says 'you know what you can do if you want to find out what Oliver's thinking? Pick up the damn phone and give him a call.'

Carol is perfect.

Erica is pregnant. The amount of matter-of-fact support she gets as a single mother estranged from her husband, and her level of confidence that she and Carol can manage is lovely. It seems so progressive, particularly when you read 21st century romances. This part of the book drags, and veers into a sub-plot of finding Carol a nice man (which is sweet), but it is cute to watch them together, raising Erica's son.

The book is far too long, with another set of characters thrown in whose star-crossed romance probably didn't need as much page time as it received. Oliver and Erica's reunion is a bit implausible, and I never really got over my contempt for Oliver. To be fair, he doesn't cheat. Analytically, it's interesting to see a hero without agency, but my preference isn't a straight gender swap, I want both characters to make an effort to be interesting.

Tia says

One of the best books that I've read EVER! The emotions, highs and lows, the freely given love, it was beautiful!

Kay says

4 1/2 Stars! ~ This is such a poignant story of a hopeless love. Marrying for companionship not love seemed to be a good situation, and our couple were actually quite happy together. Of course, Erica does love her husband and has high hopes that he'll be able to return that love one day. These hopes prove to be impossible and Erica is compelled to end what has become an unbearable marriage. Ms. Burchell had me in tears several times and I was unable to put this book down until the HEA. What a masterful writer. Though written almost

50 years ago, this is a timeless story that I know I'll be reading again and again.
