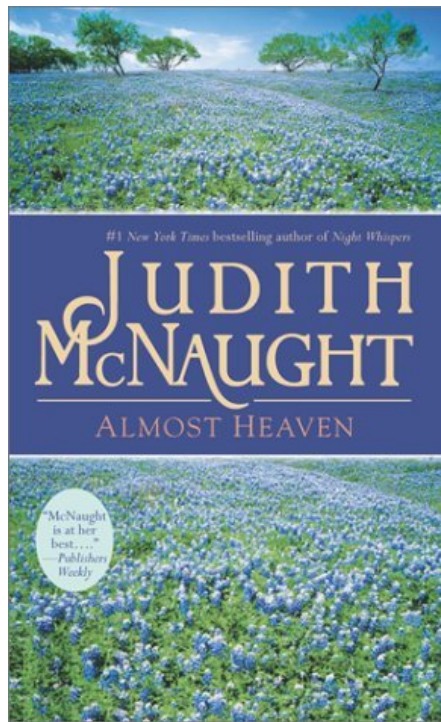




Almost Heaven

Judith McNaught

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Almost Heaven

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In this classic novel of two willful lovers caught in a breathless adventure of deception and betrayal, #1 New York Times bestselling author Judith McNaught has created a powerful and unforgettable masterpiece.

ELIZABETH CAMERON

The Countess of Havenhurst possessed a rare gentleness and fierce courage to match her exquisite beauty. But her reputation is shattered when she is discovered in the arms of Ian Thornton, a notorious gambler and social outcast.

IAN THORNTON

A dangerously handsome man of secret wealth and mysterious lineage, his voyage to Elizabeth's heart is fraught with intrigue, scandal, and a venomous revenge.

Destined for each other, yet wary of each other's motives, Elizabeth and Ian engage in a dance of suspicion and passion that tests the very soul of their star-crossed love. As a twisting path of secrets takes them from London's drawing rooms to the mysterious Scottish Highlands, Elizabeth must learn the truth: is Ian merely a ruthless fortune hunter at heart?

Almost Heaven Details

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Author : Judith McNaught

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From Reader Review Almost Heaven for online ebook

Zeek says

I needed an escape read/ go-to the other week, so I went straight to Dame McNaught. I'm sad that she doesn't write any more, but her oldies still do it for me. (although rumor has it... 2017?)

It's been awhile since I read Ian and Elizabeth's story, but the first sentence reeled me back in. There is something to be said about that.

Elizabeth, The Countess of Havenhurst, is practically destitute, despite her title. But she's okay with that. She loves managing the estate, which she's had to do since her half brother disappeared several years ago, even with a diminished staff and no money. She bargains like the shrewdest market trader, keeps the books and a budget, and loves her flower garden. She has no family left-just the staff who stayed behind. No family, but one- her uncle. And he wants her married and out of his hair.

So he does the unthinkable- he sends letters to any gentleman that previously offered their hand in marriage to Lady Cameron...even though they were summarily rejected. Because Elizabeth is quite the beauty, that number is pretty significant. One problem? The scandal that ruined all her prospects.

Now she must endure the shame of having her uncle practically selling her off to the lowest bidder. But this is why I love Elizabeth- she doesn't let such things settle on her. Nope, she figures out a way to outsmart him- well him and the three gentleman who actually agreed to the ludicrous request.

Now she must spend time with each and make her choice. And she's determined to be her very worst with each except one. Mr. Ian Thornton. The source of the scandal. Why this man agreed to the arrangement she'll never know, but she's about to find out.

Ian has no idea what prankster got it in their head to play such a cruel joke on him in the guise of a marriage offer to the empty headed beautiful young woman who nearly derailed him 3 years ago. But he wants none of it. Thinking he dismissed the offer with a resounding no, imagine his surprise at having her show up at his family homestead in Scotland.

Due to a miscommunication on his part however, he's unable to get rid of her and they settle in for the pre-requisite time. But it's just enough time to fall in love once again.

Despite the fact they seemed to be destined for each other, lies and secrets lie between them and with two equally willful people, it's bound to tear them apart.

I love these two. Ian because he's uber intelligent and broody and very like the Mr. Thornton of Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South. ::dreamy sigh:: Elizabeth because she's clever and so well read and mostly because she can hold her own with Ian while still remaining sweet and likeable. I want to be her friend.

There is more than one misunderstanding in this book. I know, I know- everyone hates the big misunderstanding plot twist, including me right about now, but McNaught is the reason everyone uses it- because when it's done right, like she always manages... it just *works*. There's many painful and beautiful moments in the this story, but for some reason, the one that remained with me through all these years since I first read Almost Heaven, was the epilogue. Ian Thorntan with his son. That little interaction never left me and I'm not sure why.

So 5 stars because... Judith McNaught.

Mo says

Another re-read. Another hit. Seriously, Ms McNaught is the Queen of Historical fiction ... well in this series anyway. I do think she left the best 'til last, even though I did love the first two in the series also. Ian. Ian, Ian, Ian ... I think I loved Ian more than Jordon and Jason (although while I was reading about them, I was totally in love with them) - maybe it is because Ian is a Commoner ... and he is Scottish, well, half-Scottish. I do love Scotland. I have already reviewed the book on first reading it, so won't bore you anymore. It's such a pity that this author doesn't write Historicals anymore.

And that Epilogue. I have said it before and I'll say it again, "every book should have an epilogue".

ORIGINAL REVIEW IS BELOW

Five Heavenly Stars. If I could give it more stars, I would.

**Elizabeth Cameron, with her angelic beauty, golden hair and shining green eyes, had taken London by storm.
She was not a rage She was *the* rage**

I could not put this book down. I am not sure if any review can do it justice. I think it might have become one of my favourite books ever.

"Look, Elizabeth, isn't he divine in a sort of mysterious, wicked way?"

Divine, divine you say. Ian, Ian, Ian, I loved you. Such a tortured hero. I felt for him.

I really don't want to say much about the storyline as it is a wonderfully woven tale that is best discovered by yourselves.

"I think," he said softly, "that you are magnificent."

Their love story is not a straightforward tale. There are trials and tribulations, misunderstandings, lies, mistrusts. It had it all.

But it was worth it. I swear I could literally start the book from the beginning straight away. I loved it that much.

“Elizabeth’s entire body started to tremble as his lips began descending to hers. and she sought to forestall what her heart knew was inevitable by reasoning with him. “A gently bred Englishwoman,” she shakily quoted Lucinda’s lecture. “feels nothing stronger than affection. We do not fall in love.”

His warm lips covered hers. “I’m a Scot,” he murmured huskily. “We do.”

”Dance with me, Elizabeth.”

And for this of you who think there are NO sex scenes in Historicals... there are. And very nice they are too.

“Because,” he said quietly as she stood up, “until you walked into it, this was an ordinary garden.”

Puzzled, Elizabeth tipped her head. “What is it now?”

“Heaven.”

I loved meeting with Jordan and Alex from the previous book... and the Dowager!

I wish Ms McNaught would write more Historicals. I know she has written contemporaries also but I think she shines in the Historical genre.

The sight that Ian beheld when he looked up made his grin fade as tenderness and awe shook through him. Spread out before him in colorful splendor were the most magnificent flower gardens I had ever beheld. The other heirs of Havenhurst might have added stone and mortar to the house, but Elizabeth had given it breathtaking beauty.”

**It was the longest three weeks of his life.
It was the shortest of hers**

I feel I could wax lyrical about this book for ages and ages but I'd better not. As I have said before to those of you who do NOT read historicals, please give them a try. The three books in this series have been solid FIVE stars, if not more for me.

And I got my Epilogue. And what a wonderful Epilogue it was. It was Heaven.

Dinjolina says

I loved the heroine so much I actually cried when Ian told her why he wanted a solicitor. I got sniffy about a book. I really did. Weird!

I can not write a review without it having spoils because I just want to rant on and on about all the things that happened.

I...I'm so in love with this book it hurts me that I finished it.

God...

Just...read it, ok?

One word about the plot and it would be one word too many. So...read it.

:snif:

Dina says

I absolutely LOVE this book! This is what I posted at the RF (Amazon) when I read it for the 1st time, and I'm simply copying my post here on GR because I'm lazy and don't feel like writing a full review...

Well, I've just finished reading *Almost Heaven* and I'm glad to say that I'm in love with Ian, Elizabeth, and everyone and everything else in the book. :) I especially loved Ian for having no fear admitting to himself he was in love with Elizabeth without knowing if she felt the same, and I adored Elizabeth for standing her ground and not cowering when Ian tried to send her away.

I thought the Big Misunderstanding issue would turn me off because I'm not a fan of this kind of plot device - and there were not only one, but two in this book -, but JM made it believable to me. Ian and Elizabeth were so much in love with each other that it rendered them defenseless, insecure and wary. The more you love someone, the more you're open to being hurt by them.

Quoting Elizabeth: *"I've hurt you terribly, my love, and I'll hurt you again during the next fifty years. And you are going to hurt me, Ian - never, I hope, as much as you are hurting me now. But if that's the way it has to be, then I'll endure it, because the only alternative is to live without you, and that is no life at all."* Oh my!

And I can't resist adding my favorite passage:

"If you would take one step forward, darling, you could cry in my arms. And while you do, I'll tell you how sorry I am for everything I've done -" Unable to wait, Ian caught her, pulling her tightly against him. "And when I'm finished," he whispered hoarsely as she wrapped her arms around him and wept brokenly, "you can help me find a way to forgive myself."

Tortured by her tears, he clasped her tighter and rubbed his jaw against her temple, his voice a ravaged whisper: "I'm sorry," he told her. He cupped her face between his palms, tipping it up and gazing into her eyes, his thumbs moving over her wet cheeks. "I'm sorry." Slowly, he bent his head, covering her mouth with his. "I'm so damned sorry."

OMG, I cried when I read that! And I'm not ashamed to say, my eyes are "suspiciously bright" right now, while I'm typing this...

I'll stop now. Otherwise, I'll just end up posting every single line of dialogue exchanged between Ian and Elizabeth. :)

Rane says

There's been many books I can say I couldn't put down, but I can truly say there's also been just a handful of books where it was sometimes physical impossible to stop reading, and putting the book away. Almost Heaven by Judith McNaught was one of those books. Through the hardships, tears and yes, misunderstandings I couldn't put this book down, I wanted, no *needed* to keep reading to find out what happen next to these two amazing leads.

Elizabeth Cameron was one of those heroine's you love on the spot, she was smart, beautiful but she had most of all courage and bountiful amounts of love to give. After having her uncle force her hand in an unwanted marriages, Elizabeth is face once again with her past, one where in order to save her home and her brother from debts she was to get married to a rich, kind man and she felt foolish enough to fall in love whom she thought was the wrong man and only wanted her for a quick tumble in the sheets, and with a vengeful friend out to destroy her, Elizabeth's reputation was in ruins. Elizabeth without her brother whom up and left and only her home to go back to, keeps moving on. Elizabeth may have been brought down to a low, but she was strong enough to face whatever came her way, and it's her strength that shows many of times, as she has to fight many battles along the way, but she stays strong and keeps hope in her heart.

Ian Thornton, Ian, how I adore thee. Ian was one of those men you wish you could meet in real life, he felt so real at times, I thought he just jump off the pages, where I could yell at him for being mule-headed but hold him when he was hurting. Ian was at times such a complex man and at times so simple. Ian's life hasn't been a bed of roses, the son of a disowned peer and a sister of a Scottish vicar, Ian's life was quickly turn to the worse when his family suddenly die in a fire. Ian goes through life making gambles and money hand over fist, but never truly happy, until he finds love and heartbreak with Elizabeth. Ian like Elizabeth get caught in a tangle of misunderstandings, but these misunderstandings bring them back together. Ian is very open about his passion and later his love of Elizabeth and shy about himself. Ian was at times heartbreaking sweet and mule-headed pain in the butt, but I loved learning about him every second, and I loved him deeply.

Ian and Elizabeth have a long road ahead of them, and it's their love and their forgiveness that heal their hearts and the sadly the wounds they inflicted on one another through things beyond their control, but their love was stronger and able to overcome their hundles and find peace and love in one another.

There was so many memorable characters plotted around the story, from Elizabeth's childhood friend Alex

to Ian old time friend Jack but my favorites were Lucy- Elizabeth's companion, who may have been stern but had a quick witted mind and knew how to handle a mean horse. And Ian's grandfather who knew his mistake and wanted to make it up not only to Ian's father, but to Ian himself, and was willing to let go of his pride in the end to do that.

Overall: This book was beautiful from start to finish and yes, I have I did cry buckets, but more often then not they were tears of joys as two great souls Ian and Elizabeth finding one another. This book wasn't Almost Heaven to read but truly Heavenly!

Esther says

Absolutely one of the most emotionally satisfying endings and epilogue in a historical romance (for me anyway).

I wish there where more books/authors that gave as much detail, closure, emotion to the ending of a love story's like JM.

Loved Ian and Elizabeth and their love story, so touching, moving, sad, affecting and poignant!!!!

Sabrina Jeffries says

The scene in the courtroom is a classic. McNaught is one of my favorite historical authors because she combines heart-wrenching emotion and subtle humor in all her books. This also contains one of my long-time favorite themes: the misunderstood heroine before whom the hero has to grovel when he realizes how badly he misjudged her.

Jana says

It's very typical Judith McNaught, still very different from the rest of her books. Ian for instance isn't English, but 'brutal Scot' and just because he's Scot seemed like McNaught saved all of her best words and emotions for this man. But like in most of her books, her dialogues are so beautifully written that are you pulled into her world, with this book even more because English ton doesn't approve showing public emotions, Ian approves them very much. Dialogues between him and Elisabeth who is a true gem as well left me in awe, because there is this special connection that I feel most of the time when I read McNaught's books and I don't know how she does it. She is so mature and effortless writer.

Ian is definitely the proudest man I have encountered in this genre, but he as well had something that I hadn't seen before: a happy and normal upbringing. Writing it like this black on white, it doesn't sound like something special, but in this genre where all men are dangerous alphas, he is alpha with irresistible signature. It's his awareness, bluntness, softness, emotional intelligence and how properly smart this man really is. His perceptions are flawless, he gets under your skin after a few pages because you don't expect some of the things that he does, but again that's why he's so different: his roots alienate him from the previous McNaught stories. I mean most of rouges in this genre are brain gifted, but I guess I liked him more than the rest was because he was so believable. His maturity was touching and this guy was normal,

considering the setting.

And his pace with Elisabeth was incredible.

I love the floatness of this story and how simple and understandable everything was. And it's actually the only book that I read so far that wrote against the British ton: that it's not as perfect as this genre wants us to see it, it gave me blacker vision of that society. It seemed very accurate, with its unbelievably cruel rules if you are not playing for the same team.

Yeah, definitely almost heaven experience.

Victoria says

Going back to other books I've read from this author I feel like I'm still holding grudges against Clayton, Jason, and Jordan. Their actions against their partners were horrible. I found them way too ruthless but their stories were compelling enough to enthrall me to the very end. Almost Heaven is a long book, 475 pages long, and I stopped reading it at page 370. The writing, as always with McNaught, was brilliant, and even though I found Elisabeth's character (unlike other McNaught's more interesting heroines) shallow and predictable, the story was interesting enough to keep me engaged. Sadly, the main character's immensely stupid action made me dislike her so terribly, and my annoyance with her idiocy was such, that I lost interest in a book in which I'd had invested so much of my time. Bah!!!!

Lana ❀❀Dirty Girl Romance❀❀ says

5 STARS

There are four steps separating us and a year and a half of wanting drawing us together," he said. Elisabeth swallowed. "Couldn't you meet me halfway?"

All.
Of.
The.
Swoons.

This. THIS is exactly why I love historical romances. And it's also why I'm currently kicking myself for only discovering this incredible author now. There's only one thing I love more than a good bastard in a romance, and that's a redeemable bastard that's not afraid to wear his heart on his sleeve when he finally sees the error of his ways. Even if that particular feat takes him the majority of the book to do.

Almost Heaven is the story of a young beauty just entering London society in search for a husband that will save her beloved estate, and a man that's always been the source of most gossip within it. Ian is known as a scoundrel, a gambler, anything but the titled husband Elisabeth needs. He's also a beautifully dangerous enigma that draws her like a moth to a flame. Until she gets too close and they both get burned.

This was a delicious tale of secrets and betrayal, of mistakes and forgiveness, but ultimately of a love that

prevails against all odds. It was WONDERFULLY swoony.

At first I was a little concerned because Elizabeth and Ian get together so quickly. I'm not usually a fan of quick coupling. I was yearning for angst and emotion. I shouldn't have been concerned, because their initial meeting was only the calm before the storm. And what a storm it was! Ian is a downright bastard to Elizabeth when they meet again two years after the fateful first time. GOD BUT I LOVED IT! But it's no secret that I love the bastards. Elizabeth was an incredible heroine. She's young and sheltered, but she's clever and smart and so endearing. I loved her strength and her sharp wit. She's not afraid to stand up for herself, but she also knows that sometimes the biggest fight requires a sacrifice. She was the perfect match to the broody and enigmatic Ian.

The story was phenomenal and kept me glued to the pages long into the night. I NEEDED to see how it all unveils and I couldn't be more satisfied. This is going down as one of my favorite historical romances. And that epilogue?! SWOON!!!!

Find me on:

Barbara says

Almost Heaven? No this book...WAS Heaven!

Sara says

GREAT BOOK!

I got so caught up in this book! I couldn't put it down! My husband even made the comment, "You're gonna be reading that one all day, I can tell." lol

It was a wonderful story. My heart was hurting, beating, crying, and shouting for joy! hahaha

Thanks Judith McNaught for creating another 5 star story.

jade says

I'm not keen on romance novels. They are more of a filler to me when I'm too preoccupied to commit to reading. Maybe it's the repetitive plots or the all too familiar faces and personalities, they all seem to blend together and numb me. Well, not this book. It's not the first Judith McNaught book I read, but it's the first that had me glued to the pages. After reading it all night and finishing it, I started to re-read it the next day, and that had not been my expectation at all.

What really hooked me were not the romantic scenes (those are okay), but the twists and turns of the story and the frequent humor in the dialogue and description of characters. The opening chapters read more like a standard romance book, where we get to know the history between the two main characters. After that, the story takes a very hilarious turn when Elizabeth tries - in her own intelligent and entertaining way - to "dissuade" Sir Francis and Lord Marchman from marrying her. Those scenes had me laugh uncontrollably.

The characters in the book are very distinct, most of them with strong and believable personalities. Ian and Elizabeth are both proud, but in a different way. Lucinda, the ever proper chaperon, is a real treasure. Every scene with her in it is hilarious. Although I had known the book would end like every other romance novel, a HEA, the "how" still managed to intrigue and delight me.

4.5 stars

Tash says

Judith McNaught is an excellent writer and one of my favourites. No one writes romance like she does but. I decided to stop being biased and vent a little. After reading four Judith McNaught books I'm quite tired of the similar plots and characters she has in every book. It's the same characters with the same misunderstandings and same stupidity and the same sex scenes. The similar sex scenes are a little creepy sometimes. For example, everytime the hero's fingers go near the 'triangle' every heroine has, they always try to clamp their legs shut and all the heroes say the same two magic words - 'Don't, darling'. And it worked everytime for Royce Westmoreland, Clayton Westmoreland, Ian Thornton and I'm sure all the other McNaught heroes too that I have yet to read. Maybe I just need to take a break from my McNaught reading marathon lol.

'Almost heaven' is not a bad book by any means, and I would have enjoyed it too like the other reviewers if I it was my first McNaught romance. The best part of this book was probably the little mention of His grace and my darling - The Duke of Claymore, Clayton Westmoreland, who was still an eligible bachelor then.

Patry Fernandez says

Le doy un 4,5*

ayyy me ha encantado, que bonito todo por favor. Aun que con sus momentos de sufrimiento y en ocasiones he querido pegar a los protas pero me han parecido tan bonitos los dos <3

Danielle says

I'm pretty sure - but not positive - that Judith McNaught is actually a god-like being who writes romance from the sky, just for me.

Now, maybe that's a little presumptuous of me, but eh, how else could she know how to make me love every one of her books?

You have another idea? Didn't think so.

Just like Whitney, My Love or A Kingdom of Dreams, **Almost Heaven** is deeply developed, with dimensional characters full of sizzling chemistry - whose romance grows on you until it burns into your

heart.

This hero. *Lord have mercy.*

I'm not one for sweet heroes, and I was unsure - even though he had an intoxicating presence about him - how much I was going to love a hero who immediately proposes to the heroine, while professing to her that's she "magnificent." Well, I should have known right away (this is Judith McNaught folks, Queen of Conflict) that their amicable relationship wouldn't last long, and that their short 'tryst' actually became a nightmare for the heroine.

I don't particularly like to read about couples who have already met before - at least in a romantic way - and neither do I like flashbacks to show the scene we weren't there to witness. But McNaught does it in a way that makes it feel like it's the present, and the first meeting between Ian and Elizabeth was electric - Ian, a more handsome than sin scoundrel without a title nor fortune to keep him in the ton's good graces.

If it wouldn't come off strange, I would write this entire review swooning over just how hot this hero actually is. But, alas, that might make me come off as a lonely creeper.

Confidence. Intelligence. An electric sex appeal. Ian had it all. He went from poor to riches. There is nothing more attractive than an ambitious man - and that is exactly what he was. At one point he was aspiring to marry a stunning, intelligent debutante who he met briefly during a weekend party, until he found out she was cuckolding her fiance by looking for a fling with him - or so he thought.

Two years later, Elizabeth's in dire straights, about to lose her home she has spent the past years stringing pennies along to keep. She's a social outcast from being caught up in the scandal with Ian, and she wants nothing more than to never see him again. But little does she know her uncle has written her past suitors to try to marry her off again. Ian being one of them, but only because his incompetent servant agreed to the wrong letter.

Elizabeth was a fierce, intelligent heroine. Her hatred of Ian is greatly returned, and when she shows up on his doorstep in rural Scotland, they both didn't think they'd be pulled together like they had that very first time two years past.

Almost Heaven was so much fun. I found myself trying to quell my laughter so my husband didn't wake up - and yes, I stayed up way too late to finish it. The chemistry between the couple was electric - hell, Ian was electric himself, and there was an abundance of conflict to keep me stuck to the pages. A fantastic tale by JM going straight to my favorites' shelf.

Karen says

[image error]

Andrea says

The story immediately sucked me in. It was intriguing and interesting and it got me curious about her and about him, and why her uncle was sending out letters to all 15 men who had offered for her. That part was well told and hooked me, and 1st pages rarely interest me as much. Then we get to the men themselves, and

1 is aging and has nvr ben married but is with his whore, and details like that just go hand in hand with Judith McNaught. This is why I didn't want to read her novels, bcuz of the slutty, classless details. Wen he 1st read the letter and immediately turned it away, I was very curious to learn about their history.

The scene in the past just kept going on and on, and I wondered when we'd be back at the present time. It seemed like it was going to go on and on. I didn't like how she blamed the entire thing on him, saying he was the monster that had ruined her life, and thrust all of the blame on him, when she was certainly not blameless. I didn't like her so much.

Because Thornton thinks she's conceited and spoiled, she's actually nice to her servants, pinches pennies, rides her horse in plain, outdated clothes, and buys food at the market. Of course. Of course she would be the exact opposite. It just makes me roll my eyes because it's so contrived. I want to naturally like a character, not feel like the author is forcing me to. And this whole theme of being penniless, in debt, and having to do away with servants is getting really old. You can't do the same theme in every book. The charming, quirky characters that serve her and choose to stay on and they're loyal to her when they're not to her parents or uncle or something is getting old. You can only do that so much without people getting tired of it.

The comment about if Elizabeth hadn't been so alarmed by his proposal to meet her she would have stopped to wonder how and when Ian had become so familiar with Charise's property and all its secluded haunts really rubbed me the wrong way. I really love how Judith McNaught always has the past mistresses meet up with the woman he gets with. It's so romantic. This is why I don't read McNaught's books. She always hammers in that the man has slept with plenty of women and just thoroughly enjoyed it and I can't stand it. I don't know why you would want to just fawn over his sex life like it's something to be happy about. It's really twisted. Like who wants to know your husband had sex with countless women before you, and talk about it. I don't wanna read about that crap. Just like Brenda Joyce, Christine Feehan, Sherrilyn Kenyon, and countless others, she's just fascinated with his sex life, like it's a hobby of his she can admire. It's absolutely disgusting.

I don't know what is up with McNaught and the italicization but I couldn't go a page without something being italicized, and usually inappropriately so. That is way too much emphasis.

"She did not *know* this man at all."

"I *wish* society felt that way."

"You cannot imagine awful it is to mouth platitudes to people when you're *longing* to ask them about things they've seen and things they know."

Why are those italicized? Not 1 of those needed to be. It's annoying and I'm getting exhausted from it all.

When they go to the cabin, which is the 2nd day they've seen each other, he's saying they're half in love with each other and says she's going to marry him. What is the rush? It just ruined everything that she rushed the love in that soon.

As always, Judith McNaught knows just how to add humor to historical novels, which is what you rarely find. She comes up with historically accurate and hilarious, charming scenarios that you would never think to have happen. It was so funny when she's deliberately turning the guys away by being the exact opposite of them.

She always has a significant age difference, and I really don't like that. She's 17 when she meets him, and he's 27. That is way too old. Also, in here I feel like Lord Marchman was better suited for her. They both liked fishing, hunting and country life, and he was so sweet and endearing. It was cute how he stuttered and blushed when he talked to her, and said he wasn't comfortable around women in courtship situations. That type of character is never created, and it would be nice to see them as a main character, but McNaught can only add them in as side characters, because her men always have to be man whores. I've also encountered this in another 1 of her books, where I thought another man was better suited for her, and I liked the side

character more than the guy she actually gets with. That should not happen.

“Can’t say as I ever noticed you took the petticoat set in aversion,” he remarked, thinking of the women who’d warmed Ian’s bed in the last two years—some with titles of their own.”

WTF? This is why I don’t read her shit. She’s always gotta throw out comments like this and it raises my blood pressure to a dangerous level. I get so pissed off when women throw out comments about his past like this. And McNaught has no reservations whatsoever with the man sleeping with multiple women *after* he’s met her, and claimed he’s “half in love with her,” and she has no reservations with the man, who is married to her, going out and meeting his mistress for a little liaison. Thankfully, that doesn’t happen in here. Thanks for small favors. But WTF must you be thinking to have him sleep with God only knows how many women after he’s met her. That makes everything he said, did, or thought about her when they were together mean NOTHING. Way to freakin go. Now I hate him, I don’t like her, and I don’t even want them together. This is prime writing here, really romantic, sweet stuff. What a bunch of freakin shit.

Then Lucinda Throckmorton-Jones listens to the conversation between Jake and Ian, obviously hearing the part about Ian’s bed being warmed by women, which is plural, but not even commenting on it, choosing instead to focus on the part that Ian was tempted by Elizabeth. Also, she’s lured in by the knowledge that Ian is rightfully a marquis, so she wants Elizabeth to be with him because of that title. And the strict, prim and proper duenna endeavors to get them alone together for a few hours so Elizabeth will tempt him. Wow. Just wow. What kind of person overlooks the fact that the man has been with many women outside of marriage, is a rake and obviously has indulged in many liaisons with women *after* he claims to have wanted to marry someone. That’s really shitty. What kind of guardian wants their charge with a titled man so badly that she overlooks the fact that he’s slutting it up with women? God, what kind of crap is this? And another thing that gets on my nerves is the illegitimacy questions surrounding his birth. That has happened in every single one of her books that I’ve read. Would it kill u to come up with some different material? In here he’s not illegitimate, but he is a rightful heir to a dukedom. How nice. I guess that shows that the only good men are dukes, and anyone below that status is just scum.

Their moods ran hot and cold the entire time she was at his home in Scotland, and it was really setting me on edge. My nerves couldn’t take it the way they went from passionate and happy to mad and sarcastic. One second they would be laughing and getting on, the next he would get mad and walk off. She would either go after him or talk to him later as if nothing had happened, being nice to him after he’d treated her like crap.

“He was about to wed a beautiful, sensual woman who wanted him and who suited him perfectly.”

“He was technically betrothed, and to a beautiful woman who deserved better from him than this stupid preoccupation with Elizabeth Cameron.”

Wtf. WtF. WTF?! This is just rich. Not only did he sleep with women after her, he went and asked 1 to marry him, and he probably slept with her, hence the term sensual. God, I want to string together every cuss word I’ve ever heard of and yell it out.

I also hated the comment from Ian’s uncle about consoling “weeping young ladies who’d cast out lures in hopes Ian would come up to scratch.” Because I can just imagine what he did with all of them. And Elizabeth, like the idiot that she is, just laughs about it, like the idea of him with other women isn’t painful in the slightest. She just accepts the dalliances and flirtations he’s so skilled at and chalks it up to his age. She even tries to emulate his casual attitude about it all.

“Women found Ian almost irresistibly attractive, and as the vicar well knew, Ian had never felt morally compelled to decline what was freely and fragrantly offered to him. In the past, however, Ian had always treated the women who fell into his arms with a combination of amused tolerance and relaxed indulgence. To his credit, even after he lost interest in the female, he continued to treat her with unfailing charm and courtesy, regardless of whether she was a village maid or an earl’s daughter.”

Aw, well isn’t that just sweet. The poor guy gets hounded by women throwing themselves at him for his irresistible good looks but takes it all in stride. He uses them and he’s not discriminate; he sleeps with

everyone and anyone and never says no, and once he's done he's still nice to them. Gosh, that is just so sweet! You're right; that is to his credit. Wtf.

I hate how all the men in her books have these sad-sack pasts that are designed to make us pity him. His parents die and he bottles up his emotions and sends his dog cruelly away, which is another black mark against him for how he treated that poor thing. Like aw, he had a sad past but found solace and companionship with hoards of women who liked his handsome looks.

I'm sure it was supposed to be sweet when he said the weekend in England had never been forgotten, and that he remembered her all this time, but it wasn't, not in any stretch of the imagination. You don't have someone meet someone "special and rare," someone they claim they're half in love with, someone they propose marriage to, then have them sleep with God only knows how many women, then have him propose to someone else, and then have him say a dumb line like that, because it means absolutely nothing. Sorry, but you ruined your own story. It's not sweet; it's a freakin tragedy.

Another overused theme of hers is that the woman is forgiving to a fault, accepting and pretty much a mercenary. I'm so sick of that. She forgives him everything he does, chalks it up to being his fault, and overlooks his barbs and insults and just takes it. Her women are like doormats, letting the man step on her and walk all over her and just say down for more.

Another thing that is a common theme of hers is to have the man be verbally abusive. She puts her down purposely, insults her, mocks her, and shoots her down, and the woman just puts up with it, not even standing up for herself, or barely at all, instead acting like forgiving angels whose solemn duty is to forgive people of all sins. Also, the women are always disagreeable to the marriage. There's always a problem that happens to make the woman not want to marry him, yet she does anyway, like she has no backbone whatsoever.

McNaught just loves the naïve, stupid virgin, and I can't stand it. In here Elizabeth thinks she knows how to make children, that the husband kisses the wife in bed and it hurts the first time. So she's saying Ian kisses were bruising at times. And when he suggests they retire to their rooms for the wedding night she thinks he's sleepy and suggests he go up without her. Funny? No. Not even close. Naiveté is never a good quality. It's just stupid, and I can't take a stupid character. It's not funny; it's not cute; it's annoying.

I don't know if McNaught was off her game or what, but the romance was completely lacking. Their wedding night was over in a few seconds, and there were barely any details at all. It was a rushed job in my opinion. Then every time after that it was brushed over, like "he made love to her all throughout the night," or "over the next week he showed her how much he loved her" or something like that. In a romance book I do not want the actual romance to be bypassed.

McNaught seems to have to prove something in every one of her characters. She has her women be forgiving, "witty," intelligent, rare, whatever that means, and her men are smart, rich, and good at reading and calculating, like they have to be this way in order to be acceptable. And how *cool*. They have this totally inane scene where Elizabeth learns that Ian can read really fast and he can add long figures in his head. How, what was the word Ian used about Elizabeth? Thrifty. Why is that even in here? Just because he can add large sums in his head and read quickly doesn't make me like him.

In the end there's always something to break the characters apart, some fight, some deception and lie and betrayal, and the man turns cold and angry and turns to drinking, thing she left him. And in here, just like the other books, McNaught switches things around to where instead of her being hurt and betrayed, he is. Even though he shipped her brother off to another country and didn't tell her, it's him that feels betrayed. So then she's the one that has to apologize and beg for forgiveness. Okayy. So everything he did is suddenly forgiven and forgotten just because she ran away from a liar? That's messed up. And Elizabeth is just distraught

thinking he believes she cheated on him. HELLO, he's in the wrong here!

Ian seems to have forgotten all about him fearing she would learn the truth about what he'd done to her brother. He's acting the angry husband, thinking his wife cheated on him. And I got really annoyed with the cold, angry looks he kept giving her. Did he forget that there was a possibility she learned the truth? God, that was so irritating. Her men always turn cold and angry and turn to drinking. Come up with something new.

At the council to determine Ian's fate for the "murder" of her and her brother, Elizabeth pretends to be the vain, materialistic wife, and while funny, it was just ridiculous. She tried this stupid act to help Ian once before when he was accused of cheating. It was ridiculous then and it's even more ridiculous now. Do you expect me to believe that an entire roomful of educated men are falling for her insipid act? That's unrealistic and stupid. You can't fall back on the "witty and amusing" act every time.

Elizabeth is a freaking idiot. She's stammering and pleading, saying she'll do anything to atone for it and he tells her to shut up. There goes that verbal abuse I was talking about. He threatens her by saying he'll claim adultery, and she says she hasn't done that, and he says "maybe not, but you'll have a hell of a time proving you *haven't* done something. I've had some experience in that area." Yeah, remind me of his past sex lie, cuz that's just making me hate him more. Idk what she's trying to do with injecting those sordid comments; it's like she wants her audience to dislike him.

The book was so long and dragged out I just wanted to be rid of it by the last hundred pages or so. The epilogue was fast-forwarded about 6 years, and I hate when authors have too much time pass. This book just sucked, and that's all I can really say about it. It would have been a good, sweet story had all the bullcrap been left out, but sadly Judith McNaught has to slam his sexual past in there to where I just hate the guy and don't think he's good for her. And I don't know why she would choose to have Ian engaged to someone else, and have Elizabeth not find out about it. She never learned that he had asked *sum1* else to marry him, and she never knew she had kissed him and everything when he was engaged to that person. That's so wrong it isn't even funny. I will never read another one of her novels.

There were quite a few phrases that were historically inaccurate, such as warning bells were going off in her head.

"Oh my god."

"ax-murderer." Really? You think the reference to an ax murderer was out in the 1800s?

Cold-blooded murderer.

Namby-pamby

Hoity-toity

heaping more fuel on the situation—rewording "adding more fuel to the fire" doesn't make it suitable for the time

calling the horse a piece of living glue

gaze boring holes in her back

water under the bridge

made a mental note

falling head over heels

slip of a girl

reading between the lines

freak

loose screw (as in crazy person)

the grapevine (being a method of talking among the servants)

Pavlina Read more sleep less blog♥♥ says

4 stars

This is my first and for sure not my last book from this author! I loved Almost Heaven, so many things happening in this story that you'll never get bored! What I liked most about it, is that we get the whole story about the characters and how they fall in love and what happened between them.

Both Elizabeth and Ian are very likeable characters. They are well developed and I enjoyed their romance. They have some really intense and sweet moments between them. Ian intrigued me a lot and I was excited to learn more about him! He is smart and sweet with Elizabeth.

Overall it was a great historical romance. I can't wait to read more books from this series.

Ivy H says

Every lover of romance novels has got that **one special story** that's #1 in her eyes; it's the novel that always tops all others with MC's who are a head and shoulders above all the other favourites. Well, Judith McNaught is my favourite romance novelist of all time and this novel is my special #1. I've read this about 4 or 5 times (perhaps even more) ever since I first borrowed a copy from my aunt almost a decade or so ago. It was perfect and heart wrenchingly romantic. It's as much a timeless classic as this wonderful old song, whose lyrics are perhaps most suitable for the tale that McNaught unfolds in this novel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnUMz...>

Each time I re-read this novel, I am captivated by the absolute romantic splendor that's filled with angst, comedy, tragedy, drama that befits a soap opera and most of all: a second chance tale of love lost and found again. And, each time I read this again, I'm always in a rush to finish whatever chores I'm doing, just so that I can get back to the tale of Ian and Elizabeth:

Ian Thornton, the H, is my #1 H of all time. In my mind, he's the H to top all others:

Ian's the grandson of the Duke of Stanhope but he has relinquished his claim to that legacy because his grandfather had disowned Ian's family after the H's father chose to marry an ordinary Scottish girl. Ian doesn't need his grandfather's money or title, though, because he's a genius who has far more wealth than most of the Ton can begin to imagine. The H met the heroine Elizabeth at a country house party years ago during her debutante season and he was filled with insta-love for the beautiful young noblewoman:

Elizabeth is the belle of her Season and she received many marriage proposals from her adoring admirers, but there was only one whom her mercenary brother favoured: Viscount Moundevale. But, there was a viper in residence at the house party and that creature went by the name of Valerie. Valerie was also a plain debutante who pretended to be the heroine's friend and was jealous of all the attention that Viscount Moundevale gave to Elizabeth. This led the jealous young woman to engineer a scheme that would ensure Elizabeth's fall from grace. It was one of the saddest part of the story because it involved a pair of forged notes that led the MC's to meet each other at a cosy cottage out in the back of the estate, bordering the woods by the lake. It all blows up in their faces, Elizabeth is ruined, Ian offers to marry her because he's in love but her nasty brother challenges him to a duel. The story begins a few years after all this drama went down and the heroine's brother has "disappeared". Her guardian is now her miserly, wicked uncle who's determined to marry her off to the highest bidder. One of the men on her uncle's list is an obese, old pervert called Sir Francis Belhaven and this horrid old man has got his ugly sights set on the heroine. His intentions are nefarious, scary and gross. Elizabeth is horrified !

I loved how the MC's are brought together again in a simple cottage way up in the highlands of Scotland. The H is a perfect cad who thinks Elizabeth is a flirty gold digger, so he is mean and nasty. I don't know why I still love Ian above all other H's. I think if I'd read this novel for the first time as an adult, my perceptions might be slightly different. Perhaps it's sentimentality that makes me warm to him so much even though he behaves like an ass to the heroine while they're in the secluded cottage in Scotland. I think it's all due to the magic of McNaught's writing. She has a special way with words and is the queen of heart wrenching and wrecky drama. She also manages to infuse lots of humour into situations that should be depressing. I admired the spunky heroine for the way she persevered and fought to hold on her beloved home, Havenhurst. Elizabeth was a proud, compassionate and strong character but she did have her TSTL moments too. Ian's proud and filled the need for revenge because he thinks that Elizabeth had spurned his offer of marriage all those years ago. When they meet again in Scotland, Ian's on the verge of proposing a marriage of convenience to some boring daughter of an Earl.

McNaught is one of the few authors who also manages to create some wonderfully unforgettable minor characters who are crafted with such care that one can help but love them. Two of these are: Lucinda Throckmorton-Jones (Elizabeth's eccentric, grouchy, sourpuss but loving chaperone) and Ian's uncle Duncan (a priest who plays the central role in reconciling the MC's). The MC's attraction for each other is as strong as it ever was but each is still filled with bitterness based on the lies and misconceptions from the past. It's only after Elizabeth leaves Scotland that Ian's uncle Duncan tells him the truth. Lucinda Throckmorton-Jones had been injured and in her laudanum filled state she managed to reveal everything about Elizabeth's past and current problems. Ian was shocked and desperate to make it up to the woman he loved. That's the part of the novel that I loved the most. Ian's grovelling was epic !

Ian does what many other H's never have to do: he lowers his pride for her sake and sacrifices his integrity by reconciling with the grandfather he hates. He does this because he has to save Elizabeth from a forced marriage to the nasty Sir Francis Belhaven and because the heroine's uncle would only give her to the man with the highest title. Ian therefore resigns himself to accepting his legacy as the marquess heir of the Duke of Stanhope:

“That title is within your power, Ian. I realize how deep your hatred for your grandfather goes, but it no longer signifies. Either you let Elizabeth wed this despicable man Belhaven, or you reconcile with the Duke of Stanhope. It’s one or the other, and you know it.”

Ian tensed, his mind locked in furious combat against the idea of reconciling with his grandfather. Duncan

watched him, knowing the battle raging inside him, and he waited in an agony of suspense for Ian to make his decision. He saw Ian bend his dark head, saw him clench his hands into fists. When at last he spoke, his infuriated curse was aimed at his grandfather:

“That miserable son of a bitch!” he bit out between clenched teeth. “After eleven years he’s going to have it his way. And all because I couldn’t keep my hands off her.”

Judith McNaught. *Almost Heaven* (Kindle Locations 4315-4321). Pocket Books. Kindle Edition.

The hero bent over backwards to ensure that all the wrongs done to Elizabeth in the past had been righted. He even ensured that the jealous junior hagwitch Valerie got her comeuppance when he gave her the social **cut** at a ball by telling her that she'd misspelled the word "greenhouse" in the notes she'd sent to him and Elizabeth all those years ago. I also laughed at Valerie because after all these years, and all her conniving, she's still single and salivating after Viscount Mondevale who doesn't seem interested in her. Ian also proves his love for Elizabeth by protecting her from her horrible uncle Julius:

“Certainly,” Julius said, his face reddening with anger. “I have it, but you’re not changing one word, and I’m not giving back one shilling.” Rounding on Elizabeth, he continued, “He paid a fortune for you, you conceited little slut –”

*Ian’s savage voice cracked like a whiplash.
“Get out!”*

“Get out?” Julius repeated furiously, “I own this house. You didn’t buy it when you bought her.”

Without looking at Elizabeth, Ian snapped a question at her, “Do you want it?” Although Julius didn’t yet recognize the depth of Ian’s fury, Elizabeth saw the taut rage emanating from every line of his powerful frame, and fear raced up her spine.

“Do I-I want what?”

“The house!”

Elizabeth didn’t know what he wanted her to say, and in the mood he was in, she was actually terrified of saying the wrong thing. Lucinda’s voice turned every head but Ian’s as she eyed him with cool challenge.

“Yes,” she said. “She does.” Ian accepted that as if the woman spoke for Elizabeth, his gaze still boring through Julius.

“See my banker in the morning,” he clipped murderously. “Now get out!” Belatedly, Julius seemed to realize that his life was in genuine jeopardy, and he picked up his hat and started for the door.

Judith McNaught. *Almost Heaven* (Kindle Locations 5626-5638). Pocket Books. Kindle Edition.

I do admit that there was one part of the novel that was filled with some unwelcome drama. The MC's got married and were finally happy when the old specter of her evil brother Robert returned to destroy things for them. I disliked Elizabeth in this part of the story because her idiocy and inability to trust the man she loved almost ruined her marriage. There was some OTT drama where she faked her death, Ian was the suspect in her "murder", she returned to clear his name, he punished her by ignoring her for a few weeks etc. I felt that part was a bit too much and ordinarily it would have made me reduce my rating for the novel. However, McNaught managed to get back into my good books by the very beautiful reconciliation scene that she

wrote. In this scene, it was the heroine's turn to grovel and I loved seeing how turnabout was great fair play. I think that's what made the novel so splendid for me: in the space of one story, I got to see instances where each MC had to bend over backwards to prove how much he/she loved the other. That's what's stood out for me in this story because true love is one in which both partners are willing to do whatever it takes to make amends and right the wrongs that have been committed. The reconciliation scene occurs in the Scottish cottage once again and the author's ability to craft pure romance out of mere words is once again obvious:

Stroking her hair, he swallowed and spoke, but his voice was shattered. "I love you," he said, telling her what she had told him that terrible day in his study. "I never stopped loving you." She raised her face to his, and her answer made his chest ache. "I know."

"How did you know, sweetheart?" he asked, trying to smile.

"Because," she said, "I wanted it so badly to be true, and you've always given me everything I wanted. I couldn't believe you wouldn't do it, just one more time. Just once more." She moved slightly and Ian checked her, tightening his arms.

"Stay still, darling," he whispered tenderly, and seeing her confusion, he told her, "because our child is being conceived."

Her eyes searched his. "Why do you think so?"

"Because," he said, slowly smoothing her hair off her cheek, "I want it so badly to be true, and you've always given me everything I wanted." A lump of emotion swelled in Ian's chest as she pressed closer against him, cradled in his arms, not moving. She was willing it to be true; he knew it as surely as he knew that, somehow, it was.

Judith McNaught. *Almost Heaven* (Kindle Locations 8179-8189). Pocket Books. Kindle Edition.

That scene and those words might be a bit cheesy but it's cheesy wonderful ! It appeals to the my romantic side and makes me sigh with wonder whenever I read this novel. McNaught also added a grand cast of characters like the MC's (and their relatives) from her other great love story *Something Wonderful*, who made cameo appearances. It was splendid to see Jordan, Alexandra, the sour dowager duchess and cousin Tony again. This novel also has one of the best epilogues that I've ever come across in a romance novel. In this novel, the author creates her magic by highlighting why the title of her novel is so significant to the story. Ian is having a conversation with his 6 yr old genius son Jonathan about the definition of *heaven*:

Crouching down, he put his arm around the little boy's shoulders and gestured toward the garden. As if Elizabeth and Caroline sensed that they were being observed, they both looked up at the terrace, and then they smiled and waved – two green-eyed girls with gilded hair and love shining in their eyes. "In my opinion," Ian solemnly confided to his son, "that is heaven, right there."

"There are no angels," Jon noted.

"I see two of them," his father quietly replied, then he glanced at his son and amended with a grin, "three of them." The little boy nodded slowly, a smile of comprehension drifting across his face. Turning to look up at the tall man beside him, he said,

"You think heaven will have whatever a person most wants it to have, is that it?"

"I think it's very possible."

“So do I,” Jon agreed after another moment’s thought. He started to turn, saw his tutor and his relatives looking expectantly in his direction, then he turned back to his father and said with a helpless smile,

“They’re going to ask what you said. And if I tell Mr. Twindell you said heaven will be like this, he’ll be very disappointed. He’s counting, you know, on gold streets and angels and horses with wings.”

“I see where that could be a problem,” Ian agreed, and he tenderly laid his hand against his son’s cheek.

*“In that case, you can tell him I said this is **almost heaven**.”*

Judith McNaught. Almost Heaven (Kindle Locations 8384-8392). Pocket Books. Kindle Edition.
