



# The Surgeon's Lady

*Carla Kelly*

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## The Surgeon's Lady Carla Kelly

As a surgeon in the Royal Navy, Lieutenant Philemon Brittle has proved his bravery countless times. But he's never known the thrill that comes with falling in love. Until he meets the beautiful Lady Laura Taunton, who has turned to nursing the wounded as solace from her unhappy past.

Philemon will need to draw upon every bit of his strength and determination to convince the marriage-shy Laura that establishing a life together is the truest path to love and happiness....

## The Surgeon's Lady Details

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# From Reader Review The Surgeon's Lady for online ebook

## Cheesecake says

I should probably give this one 3 stars because the prose is good and it is a nicely crafted story... But I just didn't enjoy it, especially towards the end.

Lieutenant Philemon Brittle.. oddest H name yet, but I like it!

I didn't realize these were the sister and husband from "I married a Royal Marine". I didn't like Laura in that book, she was so judgemental. But here she is pretty cool except with a bit of a low self-esteem problem. Nothing OTT.

There's not really any hindrance to their romance except that she's technically a lady because she was married to a loathsome Baron. The story is mostly about her being lost after the death of **her scummy husband that her father had sold her to**.

Phil is a surgeon at a naval hospital where everyone is sorely overworked in the middle of the Napoleonic War. Little by little Laura finds her new path in life helping him there and learning to be a nurse.

It gets pretty descriptive of the surgeries etc and is not for the fainthearted, yet wasn't particularly gory either. It was always clinical. But there is spraying blood from time to time.

So while the romance was sweet it was only a smaller part of the story. Mostly the story was about Laura finding herself with Phil's help.

The part that removed the 3rd star was the preachy bit *at the end* when her disgusting father shows up again. (view spoiler)

So for me that really tarnished Phil in my eyes, giving her an ultimatum like that.

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## Shelley says

I loved Laura and Phil even more than Nana and Oliver, and that's pretty impressive. Laura's life was harder than Nana's because she had no one looking out for her, and she was very screwed up emotionally as a result. I loved how Phil supported her so well, and seeing them doing doctoring together was very cool. My only quibble is that they were awfully blunt with each other from the start - I'd have thought Laura would have been at least uncomfortable with some of the conversations for quite awhile. Also, she kept unloading her story on everyone she met, and that felt kind of weird. But the writing and characterization were top notch once again. My guess is that we'll get a book about Polly next, which will be great.

Originally: I've had this on my shelf for weeks, unread. I don't know why I forgot how awesome Carla Kelly is, but I already don't want to put it down. Also, as an added bonus, it's a sequel to *Marrying the Captain!* Brilliant.

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## Ilze says

Very nice story, very noble and self-sacrificing characters, but the book didn't really draw me into the story emotionally. Too much "telling", not enough "showing".

IMHO, there were too many subplots for a story of this length:

- Laura and Philemon's story, which should have been the main story but almost got relegated to the background
- Laura's backstory with her father, the school and her first marriage
- the whole jumble of the medical, hospital and war subplots
- the continuation of Oliver and Nana's story from "Married to the Captain"
- the subplot of Laura's father.

All these plots got jumbled together in my mind and it was hard to keep them straight, especially the hospital subplot and the characters in it. Besides which, I never could remember what exactly "Stonehouse" meant when it was mentioned in the story, and why it was different from "Torquay" - and I don't regard having to retrace the parts I've already read so that I can figure out what's going on to be a good thing in a novel. Because of all this I actually felt stupid at times while I was reading the book. I have to wonder who the intended audience for this book is since I consider myself to be fairly intelligent and well-read.

I would have much preferred to read the hero and heroine's love story and especially Laura's growth and recovery from her sexually traumatic marriage into love for Philemon. The other subplots should have been considerably decreased in volume and complexity.

Too much plot, character and location confusion do not make for a great read. Finally, if one hasn't already read the previous book in the series (Married to the Captain) things would be even more confusing: Nana and Oliver would be strangers and the chapters at the end with Laura's father would leave the reader completely in the dark.

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## Luli says

*You can find this review in English below.*

3.5 stars.

Menos al que *casi* siempre puedo confiar en la señora Kelly para salir de una mala racha de lecturas.

Tengo debilidad por los héroes que dibuja esta autora; aunque podrían caer en la definición de *beta-héroes*, yo prefiero pensar en ellos como hombres sensatos, prudentes, respetuosos, inteligentemente paritarios y entregados a sus mujeres. \*swoon\*

En este caso, Philemon Brittle es todo lo anterior y más. Un hombre entregado a su oficio y que ha sacrificado su vida personal por las vidas de los demás.

He tenido más problemas para conectar con la protagonista, Lady Laura Taunton. No me malinterpreten, me ha encantado, ella también ha pasado por lo suyo y está intentando rehacer su vida, lo que me ha chocado es lo bien que se ha desenvuelto una dama en el ambiente de sangre y tremendo dolor en el que, literalmente,

Mr. Kelly la ha arrojado. Ha sido poco creíble. Quizás si hubiese habido una transición más suave hubiese podido entenderlo, pero todo ha pasado en cuestión de días. O casi horas. Esto me ha dejado un poco fría.

Aunque ha sido impresionante leer sobre los procedimientos médico-quirúrgicos de la época. Muy interesante. Uno de los puntos fuertes de la historia.

Y el romance, como siempre, exquisito. Lento, bonito y con obstáculos realistas que salvar. Aunque hubiese sido más interesante si Lady Tenton no hubiese *remoloneado* tanto antes de aclarase las ideas.

Una nota: no he leído el primer libro de la serie y ahora sé que hubiese sido una buena idea. Hay un par de asuntos que seguramente hubiese entendido mejor si lo hubiese hecho.

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3.5 stars.

Thank goodness I *almost* always can trust Mrs. Kelly to get me out of a bad streak of readings.

I have a weakness for heroes drawn by this author; although they may fall into the definition of beta-heroes, I prefer to think of them as sensible, prudent, respectful, *intelligently* defenders of the gender equity and devoted to their women men. \*swoon\*

In this case, Philemon Brittle is all of the above and more. A man committed to his job and who has sacrificed his personal life for the lives of others.

However, I've had more trouble connecting with the heroine, Lady Laura Taunton. Do not get me wrong, I have loved her, she has also gone through her own hell and is trying to redo her life, what has shocked me is how quickly Lady Taunton behaves at ease in the environment of blood and tremendous pain at which, Mr. Kelly, literally, had thrown her. It has been quite unrealistic. Maybe if there had been a softer transition I would have been able to understand it, but it all has happened in a matter of days. Or almost hours. So it has thrown me off a bit.

Although it has been impressive to read about the medical-surgical procedures of the time. Very interesting. One of the story's strong points.

And the romance, as always, is exquisite. Slow, beautiful and with some realistic obstacles to save. Although it could have been even better if only Lady Tanton hadn't delayed her change of heart so much.

One note: I have not read the first book in the series and now I know it would have been a good idea. There are a couple of things I would have probably understood better if I had.

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## Jan says

This story blew me away. It's the best romance I've read in a while, and definitely the best Harlequin I ever read. It manages to be equally sad and distressing and hopeful at the same time. It's a story about war and love, but mostly about healing.

Laura Taunton is a bastard sold by her father to the highest bidder, which landed her in a very abusive

marriage with an older man. After he falls sick, she nurses him until he dies 3 years later. A Lady and a widow, she's discovered by her unknown half sister (another bastard of Lord Ratcliffe, and the heroine of *Marrying The Captain*), and when she finally gathers enough courage to meet Nana, she meets Lt. Blittle, a Royal Naval Surgeon.

Circumstances lead her to a matron position at the Naval hospital Blittle works, where they care for the wounded soldiers and sailors of the Napoleonic War.

War is always ugly, and Carla Kelly excels in showing how it's ugly for everyone involved, the soldiers, but also the people at home. Never did I so fully grasp how the Royal Navy (but I'm assuming every army) really owns the people enlisted.

The hospital is a sad and dreary setting for a romance, and Laura is obviously traumatized in more than one way, but it was incredibly powerful to watch her find her own strength and worth. I loved how Phil Blittle saw her for who she was and could be from the start, but had the patience to let her find herself. Too often in romances the hero is the magic healing factor, and while I believe it's true love can heal many a thing, I loved how Phil wasn't a force of healing, but more a little nudge here and there.

Philemon blittle is truly and admirable hero, even if his job will always come first, and he never has enough time for Laura, (and isn't quite up to par with romancing someone either), and yet he's so caring and gentle and kind that you wish the man a through night sleep halfway through the story. And even though I really wanted to smack his head in the whole showdown with Lord Ratcliffe, it's possible he understood what Laura needed than I did. Isn't there a saying about gentle healers and stinking wounds?

In the end I think they were quite perfect for one another, both strong characters with a hard life, who deserve someone warm to hold them, and loving mirth to lighten the heavy days.

A very moving read, and highly recommended.  
I cannot wait for *Marrying the Royal Marine*

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## **Liewen says**

Not the perfect book but exactly my favourite kind of historical romance : not so much steam (do not expect wild and steamy sex) but a thoroughly researched historical background (as usual in Carla Kelly's novels) and a nice romance with two main characters that truly match. I'm a real sucker for Regency novels with a real & realistic military or naval background, especially well-written ones as Carla Kelly's always are :) I didn't read the first book of the series but it didn't matter at all.

I really appreciated that the medical background wasn't super-anachronistic (as it happens in some historical novels with doctors & nurses) : there is a high death-rate, a lot of them from various infections and not all of them anonymous, the surgery is done without real sanitization (the bistouries & scalpels are wiped on the surgeon's apron) and the main character himself professes that surgeons & physicians hardly know a thing, even if he keeps trying. Also, he hasn't a moment to himself and, when ill, doesn't magically recover to have wonderful sex with the heroin.

The hero is not supersexy nor super-handsome, he's just a regular nice guy with real empathy but oh my... I LOVED him and I loved the scenes from his point of view. I loved him as much as I loved the heroin, who really struggled with her past issues and didn't magically recover on her wedding night. The end was quite

satisfying as well : happy but not unrealistically so : it's wartime and we can feel it.

Speaking of which, the book was REALLY jingoistic, with the "evil Boney" mentioned nearly every other page,

but it made the background all the more realistic (after all, we are in a Navy hospital in Plymouth in 1809-1810). And it is very funny to read when one is French ;)

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## **Rane says**

Carla Kelly has a way of showing not glossing over like some other regency romances the hardships of war. But not the war it's self, but the effect it has on the lives of people. How it effects the families and love ones of soldiers- off to fight battles they don't know their be able to come home from. In *Marrying The Captain* You shown the effects war has on families, and the love that soldiers live on, when their hearts are back home and their minds having to be in the heat of battle. With *The Surgeon's Lady* you gives sometimes a hard look at what doctors even to this day have to go through, trying to save the lives our their brave men, and having to deal with the lost when they can't save the lives of a soldier. But, through this book, it showed me how laughter, hope and love still burn bright even in the most darkest of times.

Lady Laura Taunton was sold by her evil father to pay off his debts to a man, Laura came to fear and hate. After her husband had a stroke leaving him in a infant state for three years, he finally died a thankless job for Laura. Now free Laura is lost more then ever, on whom she should turn to, what should she do, until a letter comes from news of a sister she never knew. In the process of learning about her sisters, Laura comes to learn a lot about herself, her inner strength that never broke through her father's betrayal and her hard marriage. She comes to work as a Navy hospital, where she learns to treat the men out there in battle, and she comes to rely and love one of the Royal Navy Surgeons, Lieutenant Philemon Brittle, whom breaks her out of her shell and makes her see herself and the possibilities that are endless that she can do.

Laura has a lot of learning to do, and at of love needed and to give, she hasn't be able to for almost all her life. You see the strength and love Laura has for her love ones, but the biggest lesson she still needed to learn was forgiveness, and through this that many of us are able to let go of the pain that weights on our hearts and for Laura this finally frees her from her past and move on with her future with Phil.

Lieutenant Philemon Brittle, was kind, caring, stern, helpful, loving and had a quick wit about him that took you by surprise. Philemon is one of those doctors that doesn't care about fame in a time of war, but helping each man as best he can with their wounds, cheer or make the soldiers laugh and wasn't ashamed to cry when he lost one of them. Philemon was the one whom truly taught Laura more about herself, not only being a nurse but being able to trust and love and forgive. Phil always saw Laura as an equal and treated her as such, always front up about everything, but a little shy when he confessed his love. Phil was Laura's rock in the storm she was going through, even when he himself had to deal with so much. He still made time for Laura and when he needed comfort and support Laura was finally there to help him as he helped her.

I loved Philemon and how he loved with all his heart, but his sense of humor had me laughing out loud in some scenes. Like after Laura and Phil finally make love for the first time Laura shyly ask if his aunt/housekeeper knows what their doing..

*"Probably. This room was throbbing and glowing. There might even be a crowd gathered outside, wondering what the hell"*

Overall: This was another beautiful story by CK, that may show the gloom and hardship of war, but also shows that love on it's own can win any war.

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### **Wollstonecraft homegirl says**

I have such an affection for this novel. It was the first Carla Kelly I read and I was entirely caught up by the writing and the story. I've re-read it a couple of times and it holds up. The romance is lovely and the story is interesting and well paced. Every time I read it I'm taken away by it again, even though I know precisely what's going to happen.

Laura, sister to Nana from the first book in the series [seriously, read the first book, it's also so lovely and sets up the backstory which is important to get the most out of this one]. Sold by her father into an awful first marriage. Derided for her inability to have children (because, of course, it's always the woman's fault). Eventually her husband has a stroke and she nurses him through his final years. His death sets her free, only she finds she doesn't have anything except his money, she's damaged by the marriage and has no sense of what to do with herself. Opportune then, that Nana should have sought her out. She goes to her sister and starts a new life. This brings her into contact with the navy and the surgeon at the nearby naval hospital, Philemon Brittle.

I can even get on board with that name. Philemon has become as much a romance hero's name as Sebastian. He is practical and sensible and not very handsome, every inch the CK doctor (or, as in this case, surgeon) hero. After Laura comes to his hospital to see a patient he impulsively finds himself asking her to come and work for him as a nurse of sorts [nurses didn't really exist yet, but, you know what I mean]. And in the spirit of trying to find who she is and in the wake of her attraction to Philemon and his conviction that she can do anything, she says yes.

So this is a romance which develops over sickbeds and in the midst of gruesome operations. There's death and sadness and an awful naval officer and Laura is subjected to an attempted rape which is pretty bloody awful. Eventually Laura is faced with the Father who damaged her so much.

This is not a romantic setting. These are not romantic themes. But gosh, because CK is a genius, it's romantic any way.

Philemon falls head over heels for Laura and gives her exactly what she needs, in that he's both comforting and demanding. That's true also in his proposal of marriage. Laura doesn't know if she's going to be able to be a wife in every sense given the continuing trauma from her first marriage. With patience and gentle encouragement from Philemon they get there together. The sex is about as explicit as Kelly gets and it's very sweet and sexy.

What can I say? I just love this novel and it's five stars all day long for me.

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### **Linda says**

Three months after MARRYING THE CAPTAIN ended, Lady Laura Thornton visited her younger half-sister Nana. They didn't know of their relationship until recently and Laura is unsure of what is going to



happen when they meet for the first time. She need not have worried because she is welcomed with love.

A widow, she was forced into a loveless marriage to Sir John Taunton, a man 30 years her senior. All for the sake of producing an heir; a child that was never born. She is lonely now. She wonders what she is going to do.

Soon, she becomes friends with Captain Worthy's surgeon, Lt. Phil Brittle. A no-nonsense man but with a warm spot, he lacks the good looks of the hero that is found in most romances. He is educated, courtesy of Captain Worthy, but his background is the working class. He is quick to point out to Laura that he is a surgeon which includes giving men a shave and removing slop jars. Nothing is too low for him to do if it provides comfort for his patients. This redeeming quality, along with his kindness, attracts Laura to this serious but gentle man.

Before too long he approaches her to come work for him at the hospital he is stationed at. She was going to say no; after all, this was not proper for a lady of her means. She had every intention to go back to Nana's home but the need of these brave men had her changing her mind.

"Are you..."

"Serious? Staying? Of unsound mind? I am, indeed, sir," she told him. "All three. And know this- I intend to fight Boney in my own way, too."

This story continues the adventures within the Captain's Fleet trilogy. Somewhat darker than MARRYING THE CAPTAIN, men are wounded and die. Laura thinks she has seen it all and then something else happens. And Lt. Brittle is a man to reckon with. He is the epitome of the working class and someone proud of his roots. In this book, Laura has the wealth: something she doesn't mind sharing. And Phil has no problems using it if it will help others.

The reason for four stars? It felt a little too long. I didn't think every situation had to be concluded since I was aware of the third book. Still, I enjoyed this most unusual couple and learned quite a bit about what kind of 'doctoring' was done back then.

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## **Verity says**

@ 18 y/o, Laura's father sold her to the highest bidder to pay off his creditors. As a result, Laura's body & self-worth have taken a lotta abuse. She had nowhere to go & noone to turn to. Her hubby (30 yrs her senior) treated her as if she served only 1 purpose, as a vessel, to crank out his heir, 'cuz his 1st late wife had failed. Then he suffered from apoplexy & turned into an invalid. Laura got the thankless job of being his caretaker for 3 years. Now that he's expired, she's finally getting a chance to live her life. She's reuniting w/ her long-lost younger sis, Nana (heroine from the prequel = Marrying the captain) & meets Lt. Philemon Brittle, a surgeon in the Royal Navy. For the 1st time in her sad life, she feels like she's needed & she's given options, that she's worth more than just being the mental punching bag for failing to produce an offspring. Impressed w/ her quick-thinking, reaction & compassionate nature in saving a patient from the verge of death, Philemon offers her a low-paying job (peanuts compared to her wardrobe) w/ accommodation, as his P.A. &

hospital matron, to oversee Block 4's sanitation, laundry, victuals etc. Philemon falls deeper in love w/ her, as they work side by side, but he has his doubts & insecurities. He's a common, she's a Lady. He has crazy hours, snatches naps anytime, anywhere he can afford to, sitting up on a chair @ dinners / waiting room, 'cuz he has to up & leave @ a moment's notice. He's not a great catch. Plus, he knows how traumatized she is by past experience, he'll face an uphill battle in convincing Laura that marriage & intimacy don't have to be painful, if only she'll take a chance on him & trust him. His grueling profession during wartime isn't really conducive to a romantic courtship. What kind of life can he really offer her ?

I gotta admit that I'm partial to doctor heroes in historicals (not so much in contemps). CK's heroes always make the book for me. Philemon is honorable, warm, caring, courageous, admirable, passionate 'bout his job, stands up for his principles, protective, stern when necessary, has a subtle sense of humor & incomparable work ethics & moral. He teases & makes Laura laugh, she comes alive being around him, when her life so far has been grim & colorless & vice versa. Amidst bonding time w/ Nana, Laura learns the ropes from Philemon. He knows just how & when to boost her low morale. He knows how terrified & inexperienced she is, but he patiently brings the best outta her, surprising herself that she's capable of more than her limitations. Laura also impresses him w/ her backbone, fiercely fighting her own battles against the administrator who's too much of a chicken to lift a finger, whose bark is worse than his bite. CK portrays deeper layers of H/H in a way that endears them to us, w/out sugar-coating the harsh realities of war. It's bleak, messy, bloody, the body count is high, Philemon & Laura win some & lose some. There's only so much they can do, in the face of overwhelming obstacles to save the lives of the brave men. CK makes you appreciate the sacrifice the Veterans have made for all of us & curse the ugliness of unnecessary evil. She reminds us all that surgeons & nurses also fight the enemies in their own way, not just @ the frontline. Laura epitomizes Florence Nightingale, even though she lacks the medical background, she makes up for what she lacks, w/ her essentially overabundant loving nature. Just being there & holding the patient's hand is a balm to their soul. She takes the initiative to do the unthinkable when the dire circumstances call for the inner strength she didn't even know she possessed. Philemon instills the belief in herself & gives her back her self-worth & a true sense of purpose, that there's more to life than being a dutiful wife. She gives her preggers sis a prop when Nana needs Laura the most, esp whenever Oliver (Nana's hubby) is away in the line of duty. Laura transfers her own money & household reinforcement to help out w/ the myriad of tasks of running the hospital. She's vulnerable & insecure, Philemon doesn't browbeat her into doing anything she doesn't like to do. Tho' she initially resists, Philemon forces her to dig deeper to find forgiveness when her despicable dad returns after being incarcerated. What goes around, comes around. He gets his comeuppance & she learns that it ain't worth it to nurture hatred for the man who's ruined & scarred her for life. CK just knows to inject the right amount of horrors & inner struggle that human beings experience in their day-to-day lives. Underneath the sea of red & ravages of war, the sweet romance between H/H unfurls like spring blossoms. The premise of this book is similar to "The wedding journey" (which I loved w/ every fiber of my being, esp 'cuz I love road romance), both heroines' fathers sold 'em to pay off debts & they regret their irreversible actions in the end., tho' in this case he doesn't totally redeem himself 'cuz he's an invalid. Everything comes back in full circle. I hope Polly's (3rd sister) book will be as memorable as this 1. Can't wait to get my grubby paws on it.

Twin covers separated @ birth ?

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## **Dana says**

I think Carla Kelly may be my favorite historical romance novelist who is still writing. I love that her heroes

are just average men who actually have occupations other than sitting around and pretending to be rakes. I really liked the hospital setting in *The Surgeon's Lady*. The romance was also sweet without being sappy. I can't wait for the next book in this series.

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## Dina says

The 2nd book in the **Channel Fleet** series, *The Surgeon's Lady* starts a few months after *Marrying The Captain* ended. The Napoleonic Wars are still playing havoc with everyone's lives, and that's the setting of this book. You don't have to read the 1st book to understand the 2nd, but you might want to do that if you don't like spoilers because some events that took place at the end of the previous book are mentioned in this one.

Lady Laura Taunton is one of Lord Ratliffe's illegitimate daughters - the others are Nana, the heroine in the previous book *Marrying The Captain*, and Polly, the heroine in the next book *Marrying the Royal Marine*. Unlike Nana, Laura caved to her father's demands and agreed to marry one of her father's "friends" so he could pay his gaming debts. Her marriage to Lord Taunton, who was 30 years older than her, turned out to be a nightmare and she was glad when he died 5 years later. Now, one year after his death, Laura is finally ready to get acquainted with her recently-discovered half-sister Nana.

While visiting Nana, Laura meets Lieutenant Philemon Brittle, a Royal Navy surgeon who happens to be the son of Daniel Brittle, sailing master of Nana's husband Captain Oliver Worth's ship. (Yes, this is a small, small world.) Laura and Philemon become friends, then co-workers (when she ends up working with him as a hospital matron) and finally lovers (in the emotional sense). Unfortunately, some obstacles must be overcome: war times aren't conducive to courtship, Philemon is a commoner while Laura is a Lady (by marriage, but still a Lady) and she's still too traumatized by her late husband's behavior to deal with the physical prospect of lovemaking. Luckily for Laura, Philemon is a very understanding - and patient! - man.

I wanted to love this book so much, but alas, that didn't happen. There was nothing wrong with the writing - Ms. Kelly definitely knows how to do it without resorting to misunderstandings, betrayals and other contrived plot devices - but I didn't connect with Philemon and Laura. It's hard to buy a romance when I can't connect with the H/h.

Laura grated on my nerves: first, with her crying and babbling her life story to every single person who showed her a minimum of affection; then, with her indecision about the consummation of her marriage to Philemon. Okay, I know she had reasons to fear the marriage bed considering what she had gone through with her late husband, but she should have also believed Philemon and Nana when they told her that having marital relations with someone you loved would be different - I mean, she knew it was possible to enjoy it because she had been close to feeling some pleasure with her horrible husband a few times.

As for Philemon, he was a saint: caring, dependable, funny, strong and patient. Too patient. He was no pushover, but the way he waited *for months* for Laura to come to her senses and to their marriage bed made me want to shake him and tell him to go after what he wanted. I like beta heroes, but that was pushing it.

Overall, this was an OK read to me, saved mostly by Ms. Kelly's writing. I liked how she set up the story, inserting historical facts without taking the focus away from the main plot. I loved revisiting Oliver and Nana: they're still going strong despite the hardships of war and they have the most sigh-worthy scene in the whole book. I liked the realistic tone of the story, even though following Philemon's medical activities was

too detailed for my taste sometimes. All that I missed was a strong H/h I could love.

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## kris says

I did not realize when I picked this one up that it was a sequel to *Marrying The Captain*. OOPS.

Lady Laura Taunton has many hats: she's the base-born daughter of Viscount Ratcliffe; she's happily widowed after a pretty shitty marriage; and she's plagued by guilt! Lt. Philemon Brittle has one hat: sexy surgeon extraordinaire! SOUNDS LIKE A RECIPE FOR FEELINGS SOUP.

1. Here's the thing, though: Philemon is just...too much. He's SO perfect that his only flaw appears to be the fact that he's working ALL THE TIME. Which raises the question: is it really a flaw if you've signed on with the royal navy and therefore can't choose not to work? I mean, it's not like he's choosing to go haring off after wounded sailors instead of ~wooing Laura.

So he's patient and kind and "understands a woman's body better than she does" and is just awkwardly Jesus in many ways. Only the deluxe package also includes the ability to make sweet sweet love many times even while running on 20 minutes of sleep.

2. Here's the other thing, though: Laura is just...too little. She has this History that she drags out and beats to death at every excuse. Obviously, it's meant to portray her guilt and shame or something, but it reads too much as a convenient Tragic Backstory for it to do any good. And then that Tragic Backstory is cheapened when there is no time spent on *how* Laura deals with it.

[trigger warning: rape] (view spoiler)

3. I was enjoying this story until the end, basically; that's when I checked out and got frustrated. There are 2 obstacles standing in the way of their HEA, and Laura's fears are dealt with off page. The other is the ongoing war. Which, okay: yay for honestly portraying the fear and terror and heartache that goes with it, but boo for leaving my couple right smack dab in the middle of it--actually, that's not true because the end of the book has them moving *closer to the front*! JUST FOR FUNZIES.

(Seriously: I get dedication to the Cause, but when you also realistically portray casualties of war and the toll that takes on families--it makes closing the book with a sappy smile that much more difficult. I *know* their suffering isn't close to over, and I *know* that there's so much worse to be seen. Do I believe they'll face it together? Sure. Do I believe they'll be happy old people surrounded by fourteen gazillion grand-babies? Maaaaybe not so much.)

3.5 FORGOT TO MENTION THE RETURN OF MY LEAST FAVORITE PLOT BIT EVER: FORGIVENESS EXPLOSIONS!!! Basically Philemon alienates Laura by telling her she needs to forgive her dad ASAP because he says so! And also because if she does it, then her sister Nana will too! And also here he is on the dock, injured and nonsensical and TIME TO FORGIVE HIM, LAURA!! (Philemon literally stands over her until she caves and starts taking care of the man who SOLD HER TO HER FIRST HUSBAND.)

SOMETIMES IT'S OKAY NOT TO RE-ENGAGE WITH SHITTY PEOPLE FROM YOUR PAST!

SOMETIMES FORCING YOUR SO INTO SITUATIONS LIKE THAT IS ASSHOLE BEHAVIOR!  
WHICH IS HARD TO DO WHEN YOU'RE ALSO NOT-SO-SECRETLY JESUS!!

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**Kristi says**

Thank goodness medical science as come a long way! Good lord I was repelled and riveted by what surgeons had to do with people then. I felt it was well done without being too graphic.

Loved both Philemon & Laura. He's a dedicated, hard-working surgeon and she's a Lady trying to figure out what to do with herself (and recover) after her jerk husband dies. I was rooting for her.

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**SheLove2Read says**

I really liked this story which is the sequel to Marrying the Captain. Carla Kelly is a wonderful author in that she draws you into the story in such a way that you don't want to put the book down. Philemon Brittle is a terrific romantic hero and I was glad to see him be "common"....i.e. not a Lord or Admiral or other titled gentleman. There's much to be said for the everyday man.

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