



The Bargain: 1

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Coming to London has given Precious Jewell a taste of freedom, and she will do anything, bear anything, to keep it. Defying her master is at the top of her mind, and she won't let his unnerving charm sway her. Yet, will her restored courage lead her to forsake a debt owed to the grave and a child who is as dear to her as her own flesh?

Gareth Conroy, the third Baron Welling, can neither abandon his upcoming duty to lead the fledgling colony of Port Elizabeth, South Africa nor find the strength to be a good father to his heir. Every look at the boy reminds him of the loss of his wife. Guilt over her death plagues his sleep, particularly when he returns to London. Perhaps the spirit and fine eyes of her lady's maid, Precious Jewell, might offer the beleaguered baron a new reason to dream.

The Bargain: 1 Details

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From Reader Review The Bargain: 1 for online ebook

Margaret says

A short story introducing a slave/indentured servant named Precious Jewell. Stepping in for her mistress who died in childbirth, Precious is responsible for little Jonas. The story moves from the Americas to England and Precious faces some challenges there.

I do plan to read more of Precious' story. It's interesting how her mind works and how she interacts with her "master." It's weird to me how I automatically labelled her as stubborn because she went against him. But was she really? No, she was a captive woman who had a goal and was willing to take the risks associated with achieving that goal. I look forward to future parts.

Aleen ~Lampshade Reader says

I'm a big fan of books that are in series, however this is the first time that I've read one that has serialized parts to it. The Bargain, Part 1 is the beginning of the tale that revolves around the slave Precious Jewell. The story starts out in Regency England and in future installments will progress to Port Elizabeth.

You get thrown into the story right away and it takes you for a ride starting from page one.

Precious experiences the loss of her mistress (with whom she's close to) during childbirth and it seems that her life is about to change.

"Precious Jewell is a free woman. No more my slave. She will care for my son, Jonas."

It is from that decree, which Precious has waited her whole life to hear, that sets the tone for the rest of the story. Precious makes a promise to look after Jonas, but soon finds out that freedom is not that easy to obtain.

She is a cynical character. One who has been through so much suffering and disappointment. Trust is not something she gives away easily. Her inner monologues are true to her character.

"She knew what orders were. They were ingrained in her brain, and the consequences of disobedience had cut scars on her back."

It's when she confronts Baron Welling, that he puts any plans that she might have had to a halt. After all, she's been waiting two years for him to grant her freedom. Two years of taking care of his son, who now thinks Precious is his mother.

"Once a woman marries, all her money, possessions, even her rights become her husband's."

Precious is of course, considered a possession.

The Baron is a haunted man, haunted by his wife. Depressed and desolate, constant reminders are ever present. He even finds similarities between his wife's eyes and that of Precious.

"How could he let Jewell go and take the last traces of Eliza, too?"

(There is a link there and I look forward to reading future installments to see what it means. Although, I might have an idea...).

However, it is his compassion and duty to his son and wife's memory that makes him strike up a bargain with Precious. He will be leaving for South Africa to mend relations with the slaves and decides that he doesn't want to leave his son behind. The Baron realizes the closeness between his son and Precious. It convinces him that there could be an alternative to granting her freedom.

A 5 year bargain is struck that forces Precious to become an indentured servant. However, she has plans too and will wait until the right time to execute them.

My thoughts: This was really well written. Even though we were just introduced to the characters, they were still interesting. I liked the fact that this Regency was different than those I've read before. The protagonist being a slave was new to me and I find that it was a refreshing change. The only aspect I didn't like was that the POV changed suddenly. It kind of threw me off guard at times. Overall, I'm invested in this series and intrigued as to where Precious will end up, and how she will grow as a character.

NOTE: This is a serial, which means that there is a cliffhanger. Conflicts from Part 1 are resolved, but the story is not over yet.

Fionna Guillaume says

As the author explains, this story is the first episode in a series of soap opera-esque mini-stories, each of which stands alone but clearly leads to something more. That is the impression one gets after finishing *The Bargain*. And, like every good soap opera, it does make you want to read on to find out what happens next!

I found this well written, with believable Regency-era language and social norms. Precious Jewell is instantly likable; I can see myself rooting for her throughout the story. Also, I'm intrigued to see how colonial South Africa will be portrayed later on. All told, this is a nice intro to what promises to be an interesting historical romance.

Shelia Brown says

I reread parts of this book today and look forward to the sequel. Lord Welling is grief stricken over the loss of his young wife, Eliza who died during childbirth. He sees images of Eliza when he looks at Precious. Precious was Eliza's slave. Precious' eyes are almond shaped and brown with flecks of green just as Eliza's eyes were. How could that be? Sometimes he addresses Precious as Mouse, sometimes as Madame. It's an interesting book. He is unable to relate to his son but Precious has become a surrogate mom to Jonas. How will Precious adapt to a new location and the bargain that Lord Welling proposes? Will Precious flee? Will she stay? She loves Jonas as much as she would love her own child. Lord Welling will probably do some real

soul searching in the sequel. He feels his hands are clean regarding slavery.

Lois says

Not a bad story but the romantic lead is manipulative and abusive. I know that can be common in romance but in this context, I'm not sure this can be salvaged.

Ann says

Beautifully Written! Absolutely loved this 4-book serial. The Bargain, Episode 1 starts the story of Precious Jewell, a slave. Precious was a maid to Eliza, Lord Welling's wife. Eliza died in childbirth, but not before giving birth to a son, Jonas. Lord Welling refused to bond with his son, and simply expected Precious to take care of the child. Of course, Precious made not too subtle attempts to encourage a relationship between Lord Welling and Jonas. However, Lord Welling would have none of it.

Compounding the situation is the fact that Precious wanted her freedom. Instead of rushing to sign papers to give Precious her freedom, Lord Welling is determined to keep her in her current position. He even found himself enjoying his encounters with Precious and watching her womanly figure.

Truly enjoyed the dialogue and the chase between Lord Welling and Precious. Will Precious yield to her master's charm, and will she get her freedom? Read on!

Vanessa Riley's writing style is fantastic. Looking forward to reading Episodes 2, 3, & 4. Thanks, Vanessa! Highly recommended.

deb says

The Bargain

Good story and I can tell by the story line that this will be an awesome series. Yes, I can't wait to see what happens next between Jewell and Lord Wellington.

Lucy says

I haven't read a serial before and I love how this first episode took off. Precious is a great character, I love how she is spirited and opinionated and how she already doesn't let Conroy get away with anything. I'm not such a fan of Conroy who can't seem to understand why Precious wants her freedom in the first place, but I can't wait to see what happens when they go to Port Elizabeth. It's definitely a series I want to continue!

Paula Shreckhise says

This is the first part of a serialized story. It was quite interesting. I liked the author's way of putting words on the page. It feels realistic to the time period and her choice of words are never redundant or overdone. I liked the story also. There is just enough information given to pique my interest to pursue the rest of the story!
Good job Vanessa Riley!

Jenn says

I must say as much as I hate serials as I have no patience for the waiting of them to be published, this one took the exception. (There has to be at least one to every rule right?) When I first opened it in my kindle, it said it should take me a little over an hour to read. I am a very slow reader. NOT THIS TIME! I finished this episode in 30 minutes and immediately opened the second episode. I was not fond of the main character's name, but as the story progressed, it kind of grew on me. I am excited to find out what happens to these characters in the following episodes as in this short time I grew attached to them as if they were in a full length novel. I have a very strong feeling I will be sad to see the end of the final episode, but at this time thankfully I'm only on number 2 of 4. If you have never read anything by this author and are not fond of novellas or serials please don't give up she has several full length novels. She is an excellent author and I always look forward to another book by her to read.

Debbie Whitlock says

Short and sweet

This was a pretty good book. I believe the plot and characters could have been more developed. I also believe you can make this one complete story instead of novellas.

? Gramy ? says

Jewel had spunk and courage, a likeable combination.

However, there were too many unanswered questions.
It is not a 'Happily Ever After' type of reading I look forward to.

Evelyn Nathalia says

The Bargain Episode I had an interesting story. I like the plot and the characters.

Precious Jewell was the lady's maid of the third Baron Welling's wife. When she was freed by her mistress so that she would take care of her son, she could not refused. How could she deny her dying wish? But after two years, a shocking truth that changed her freedom and a certain handsome baron made sure of that.

The Third Baron Welling was still in regret of what was happening to his wife two years ago. Now, he needed Jewell more than ever to take care of his heir. So he made a difficult offer that she couldn't refuse.

I really love the setting and the era. The rebellion that she put to her master was understandable. I can't wait for the next episode.

Latoya Wilson says

Would've been five stars

This is a great story, gripped me from beginning to end until I saw the season 1 tacked on but couldn't find season 2. I don't know if authors are preparing for a movie deal or what these days. Since I couldn't find season 2, I stopped at book 1 season 1. No point in continuing if I can't finish and season 1 is three years old. I am going to follow this author and hope she finishes the series... however long that is. Let's go, Vanessa. You have a beautiful story on your hands, this reader needs a finish line.

Scarlett says

This short book is part 1 of 4 in a historical series by author Vanessa Riley. Although it's only the beginning of a much larger plot, the book can stand alone. I saw it almost like a pilot episode for a new TV show. (By the way, I think it could translate very well to TV!)

Riley's style is very readable. The book was well-written and seemed to be well-researched in terms of historical accuracy. Also, her two main characters are three-dimensional, and I want to know more about them. Lord Welling was particularly interesting as a flawed but likable man. Fans of historical fiction will want to keep their eye on this author.
