



The Prodigal Son

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Matthew's continued and stubborn religious support places his entire family in danger, causing quite the strain on his marriage. After all, Alex was born in 1976 and raised in an extremely secular environment (prior to being flung three centuries backwards in time) so she finds all these faith related conflicts very difficult to comprehend.

The Prodigal Son Details

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Grace Elliot says

Alex loves Matthew and he loves her - but he also loves God's word - and at a time of martyrs, when preachers are executed and their faithful followers transported this places Matthew in great danger. Whilst Matthew feels he must follow his conscience, Alex can see the bigger picture and knows that Matthew's faith endangers not just him, but her and their children. Undeterred, Matthew insists on assisting preachers to evade capture, and in so doing brings heart break on his family when his daughter meets an untimely end in an accident involving a dragoon guard.

The Prodigal Son is a sweeping novel that tackles many issues: from religious persecution to paternity rites, from wifely obedience to a husband's duty the reader is in the hands of a skilled writer. For me the book has a similar feel to the work of Diana Gabaldon, and dare I say it, I find Ms Belfrage's work far more credible. I absolutely loved the intimate scenes between Matthew and Alex - the physical attraction between husband and wife was tastefully written and utterly necessary to help the reader understand the strong bond between the couple.

I didn't realise until reading some of the reviews, prior to writing my own, that The Prodigal Son is the third book in a saga. I was no disadvantaged by starting with #3 but I can see there would be an added richness and depth to the story if I already knew the characters.

Bravo Ms Belfrage and I can hand on heart recommend this book to any reader who wants a historical fiction read that's a little out of the ordinary - but in a good way!

Patty says

This is my second book of Ms. Belfrage's - I read Like Chaff in the Wind last year and found myself immersed in the tale of Matthew Graham and his wife Alexandra. Matthew is a man of 17th Scotland and Alex a woman of 20th century England. A very severe thunderstorm sent her back in time where she landed at his feet. They soon fell in love and Alex learned to adapt to a world without modern conveniences.

In this third volume of their story Matthew has been returned to his home after having been kidnapped and sold into bondage by his brother, Luke. Alex rescued him and all seems well. Except for Matthew's assisting the Presbyterian ministers that have been outlawed by the restoration of King Charles II. He is constantly being harassed by the local constabulary and hauled in for questioning. Alex fears for his life and their safety. When they learn that Luke may be behind much of the pressure their fears increase but Matthew refuses to compromise his beliefs - even for his family.

This sets Alex on edge and she finally gives him an ultimatum. Will he abide by it?

I found I enjoyed this volume more than Like Chaff in the Wind. It still had an overwhelming feeling of fear and oppressiveness due to hatred of Matthew's brother (seriously - is he deranged?) but there were some periods of lightness and hope. I do like Matthew and Alex as characters and the inclusion of young Ian - I can't say much about him without spoiling plot points - in this tale made the family complete. It can be read as a stand alone; the back story is integrated very well. I'm very much looking forward to their further adventures as the book includes a look at the next story in the series.

Margaret says

This is book three in The Graham Saga, set in 17th century Scotland during the reign of Charles II. I have not read the first 2 books in the series and that did not hamper me from enjoying (and understanding) this book.

I will start by saying that I love the cover, there is just something about the crooked gravestones, the wind blowing and the bird perched to hint at the conflict, loneliness and despair that takes place.

This was a fairly quick read for me, it didn't take long till it grabbed me and then I had a hard time putting it down. Now when I say a quick read I don't mean to imply that the book is a light and fluffy read, because it was far from that. The story line was very interesting, it is a part of history that I don't know a lot about.

I know that I have said it before, but I have so much respect for writers of historical fiction because they have such a big responsibility to get history right and portray it as it happened. In The Prodigal Son, Anna Belfrage did it wonderfully, I could feel the conflict involving Sandy Peden, both from Matthew and Alex's point of views. Her knowledge of the time period and events was apparent and I learned a lot.

Being introduced to Alex I could tell that she wasn't from this time period originally (from making everyone eat their vegetables and bathing, while everyone else thought she was nuts). It wasn't hard to bond with her and the family, the interactions with the children was real and you could feel her love for her family and that they were her priority. Matthew had his issues, between wrestling with his faith, conflicts with his brother and the situation with his son Ian, one could not help feeling his struggles.

There is a lot going on in the book, the religious conflicts, family pressures, friendships tested and more. This is a series that I will start from the beginning and hope that there is more to come. Definitely a must for lovers of historical fiction.

Carolyn G. says

Wonderful read!!

Book 3 and everything I hoped it would be in the continuing story of Matthew, Alex and family. Looking forward to the next one.

Maggie says

A continuation of the Graham Saga. The soldiers and Matthew's brother Luke continue to pester him. Matthew is continually aiding the Reverend Alexander Peden who is a religious outlaw of the times, taking great risks with his family and his own life. This contributes to a very sad result. This story is also fast moving and a very enjoyable read which ends on a very surprising note.

Elysium says

4,5 stars

The book starts where the last one ended; Matthew is back from Virginia after his wife Alex saved him. Religious situation in Scotland is escalating and Matthew finds it hard choosing between his belief and his family. It puts him at odds with his wife and causes some trouble in their lives.

In this book Alex and Matthew spends the whole book together and it was nice to see more of their day-to-day life. In the previous books has been rescuing, long separations and the like while in this book they have time to have quarrels and problems in their marriage too. Made it feel more like a “real marriage”.

In the previous books there’s been chapters with persons from Alex’s old life but there wasn’t any in this. I don’t know if that’s because she’s settled more firmly in the 17th century and has kind of let go of the past?

Majority of the book deals with religious situation in Scotland and while I’m not very familiar with the subject it didn’t bore me down. At times I wanted to punch Matthew so hard because he can be so idiot and stubborn! But it shows the different look on religion in the past.

I was so happy to see that Alex has started to warm towards Ian. Poor boy! But hopefully things start to look better for him. The conflict between Matthew and his brother Luke is there but not so prominently as in the previous books.

I’ve really enjoyed this serie so far and I look forward seeing what happens in the future for them!

Jess Hughes says

The Prodigal Son - A Story of 17th Century Scotland

This page turner of a story is set in Scotland during the reign of Charles II, in the middle of the seventeenth Century. I knew little about the period and even though this is a work of fiction, I learned quite a bit about repression of the Scottish people because of their beliefs in the Presbyterian church. This is not a religious book in any stretch of the imagination. It is set during a time of great turmoil, civil war and religious persecution. There were strong feelings on both sides regarding religion.

The Prodigal Son, is the third book in a series written by Anna Belfrage. It stands on its own merit and can be read without reading the first two volumes. The story is seen through the eyes of one family, beginning 1665. The two major characters are Alex Lind, who is a 21st Century time slip-wife of Matthew Graham a rigid, staunch Presbyterian, who is determine to defend his religion, and its ministers, even at the cost of losing his life and family.

Alex, an intelligent, strong-willed, feisty woman is just as determined to bring him to her way of thinking and make him understand that he should think of she and the children first.

The novel is a page turner full of plot twists and emotional mine fields which tug at the reader’s hearts. There are a couple of scenes in which the reader may shed tears, I won’t give them away. There are several subplots which involved the continual harassment by English soldiers as they try to catch Matthew hiding renegade

minister's; Matthew's brother, Luke, who hates Matthew's guts; and the relationship Matthew has with his ex-wife, Margaret--she arbitrarily dumps her son, Ian, into the lap of Alex and Matthew's and leaves Scotland to be with Luke, who is now her husband.

It is Ian and the protection Presbyterian Minister, Sandy Peden, by Matthew, which the story revolves around. Although the book title, *The Prodigal Son*, is obviously about Ian, I was a little confused as it seemed so much emphasis at the beginning of the story was placed on hiding and protecting Sandy Peden from the English which is seen throughout the entire story. However, the theme became much clearer as Ian's relationship to Alex and Matthew grows stronger as the story progresses. This is but a small detail.

This story is well-written and each character has his or her own distinctive voice. You will not want to put this story down until you reach the end.

Awesome Indies Reviewers says

Time travel, religious persecution, murder, and fraternal hatred make for an irresistible mix in this novel.

The Prodigal Son is the third book by Anna Belfrage in her Graham Saga but it easily stands alone. The author refers briefly to previous key incidents in the series bringing new readers up to speed without dragging them into the past. I haven't read the previous books.

Back in 2002, Alex time-travelled into the second half of the seventeenth century. In this story, seven years later, she is now married with three children and living in Scotland. Her husband Matthew divorced his former wife for adultery with his brother, and both brothers regard the son of that previous marriage as theirs.

The son is one source of tension between Alex and her husband Matthew, but the greater problem is Matthew's insistence on aiding outlawed Presbyterian ministers and attending forbidden services on Sundays in secret venues.

Alex fears for her husband's life and the impact on her children if he is caught for his crimes, the most likely penalty being his death and the rest of the family being sold into slavery in America. Matthew is torn between his love for his wife and family, and his total faith in his religion and his desire to help his religious brethren and to offer food and shelter to ministers on the run from the law.

The tension and the strain on the family is palpable, and added to Alex's stress, is the problem that being an emancipated 21st century woman, she isn't ideally cast in the role of a subjugated 17th century wife. It's easy to empathise with Alex, and in her, the author has created a vivid character, strong, principled, independent, yet, loving her new life because of her husband and family.

Matthew is equally strong, but his upbringing and principles are very different to those of his wife, and yet, he kills for her and for his religion.

It's a complex and interesting novel with a finely-tuned plot and credible characters. There are some sad and

emotive moments which avoid falling into sentimentality. The story ends plausibly, but with a question in the air of possible change for the next book in the series (extract included afterwards).

The moral and ethical dilemmas are fascinating. The story gives a good insight into religious fervour and how far men will take it. Do you turn your back on political lawbreakers? Or do you risk your life and that of your family to help them? No easy answers.

I don't usually choose historical fiction but I thought this book sounded interesting, so I would recommend it, not just to those who normally read historical novels but, to anyone who wants a good read. The author adds a useful historical note at the end, setting the events in context.

It gets a deserved four stars based on the interesting plot, strong characters, the pacing of the story, and the overall professional finish.

I received this book free of charge from the author in return for an honest review.

Nancy says

This was a very enjoyable read - The Prodigal Son by Anna Belfrage 4 stars

The tale of Matthew Graham is both and sad and a happy one. The happiness is gained from the deeply abiding love he shares with Alex – a woman who originates from a time far advanced from his era of the 1660s. The sadness comes as a product of the turbulent times in which they are living. 17th Century Ayrshire, Scotland, is an unstable location to live in where religious persecution and incredible cruelty abounds, the factions of Roman Catholicism at odds with Presbyterian Christian doctrine. The well researched historical aspects shine through in this novel as Anna Belfrage portrays what it was like, on a daily basis, for the families who risked dying, or being mistreated, as a result of the principles maintained and the religious choices made by the man of the house.

The author plunges the reader into the situation where Matthew is torn between choosing to act upon his religious beliefs in helping outlawed preachers, some of these very good friends of his, and continuing to practise his religious observances which have been banned by the king. All of these friendly and supportive acts put his wife and family at serious risk of being punished along with him if he is caught in wrongdoing by the forces of the King and cause strife between him and his wife, Alex. There are many instances of this repeated in the novel, the problem of being detected a continuous one for Matthew Graham. He relents only a little when under pressure from Alex, who is essentially as trapped as he is in her own 21st Century influences.

There are some very tense and indeed some incredibly emotional moments during the long tale when events happen which are outwith the control of Matthew and Alex. In employing the time-travel aspects of the novel, the author is able to neatly weave in many situations where otherwise anachronisms would need to be avoided in a historical novel. We get glimpses of Alex using her twenty-first century knowledge to enhance her 17th Century harsh life, touches of humour creeping in as well to lighten the tedium of the role of the 17th Century wife of the hearth and home. The role of the boy Ian, as son and nephew throughout the novel, is an important one and how Alex accepts the boy at her table is an interesting one. It's hard to know, but a typical 17th century Scottish wife would probably have been very guided by the man of the house and would have had no such truck with a boy whose parentage was suspect. The time travel/ fantasy aspects make it

easier to overcome many prejudices of the times.

Margaret Skea says

I came into this book without having read the first two in the series, so some of my reactions may have been different had I started at the beginning.

It is an interesting premise to have a 20th century heroine married to a 17th century hero and the period of the covenanters is one that I am familiar with, as is the area in which this book is set. The basic plotline inevitably produces conflict, particularly between the two main characters. There is also conflict between the covenanters and the authorities, in this case military, who seek to ensure that the English king Charles' edicts re religious observance are enforced. This part of the tale is very well done, as is the depiction of a child who doesn't know where he belongs and the mixed emotions of the adults surrounding and in relation to him.

Also of interest was the treatment of Sandy Peden, a famous covenanting preacher, which I did find convincing.

The major negative issues I had with this book were the main character, a devout covenanter's occasional taking of the Lord's name in vain (particularly when he used 'Jesus' as an expression of ecstasy.) and his wife's (more frequent) swearing - in the sense that I found it a little hard to believe that he would have married her in the first place if this swearing was very much part of her vocabulary. I believe from the author that she swore much more in the earlier books and is gradually moderating her language, and that it was something the main character struggled with, but as I haven't read the earlier books it's hard for me to know if it would have made me more or less convinced.

One other language issue that I found distracting was the frequent use of 'aye' or 'no' at the end of sentences - which I did not find authentic, but I know from the author that that usage is much less in the next book, which I believe will come out soon.

D.w. says

Here we have a tale where a time transported strong woman meets the 17th century and the 17th century just doesn't know what's hit it. Our heroine is out in her third sojourn in this tale, which can stand alone, but in the midst of so much entangled in the history of one person and her family might be perceived with greater dimension when encompassed as part of the entire tale.

Alex has come from the future and met a man fully immersed in his own time. The strength of their love story and the building of their family in this time is the story. The surrounding tale of the Scottish Covenanters is nearly secondary, for the struggle of a woman convincing her man that deep seated moral cares become secondary to real fears for the protection and succor of ones family could take place in many settings. The time is not as intrinsic to the plot as is the story of the family and as the subtitle relays, it is the story of the Graham's their saga.

We see this also in that the love between our hero and heroine are present from the beginning of the tale, the subplot of the Covenanters only mildly brought forth, even though it returns and returns, it is never as epic to us as the tale of the interactions of husband and wife. That alone is enough to keep the pages turning. The area where I might fault this, is in the heroine using more modern input to increase the strength of her family. Whether that is a knowledge of history, or technology, little of that is present beyond some adherence to a change in diet and an adherence to cleanliness. Some of my favorite tales are those where an uptime brings knowledge to that previous time and aids themselves and the people there with the changes they can bring. Our heroine seems little inclined to add her knowledge to aid her husband's farm.

Aside from that, one can read the Prodigal Son and become rapt up in the tale of Alex and her family, wanting to quickly discover what has come before and what is to come after if not already a fan of the series. Ms. Belfrage creates a strong woman who loves life, her husband and her children, not necessarily in that order. Strong enough that this is a heroine you'll want to meet and get to know better.

Annette says

Source: I won a free copy from The Review Group in December 2013.

Summary:

In the third Graham Saga book, Matthew Graham has recently returned to the lowlands of Scotland, from the British colony in North America, Virginia. Matthew and his time-traveling wife Alexandra have several children. Matthew has a son from a previous marriage named Ian. Charles II (1630-1685) has enforced loyalty to the Church of England. Matthew and his kinsman are loyal to their Presbyterian ministers. The Prodigal Son exemplifies loyalty and passion, both for their beloved homeland of Scotland, and in Matthew and Alex's marriage and family.

My Thoughts:

The Prodigal Son is the only book in the series I've read. I don't think The Prodigal Son can be fully understood, especially in reference to Alex's time-travel and Matthew's detour in Virginia, unless the previous books have been read. I'm curious how Matthew and Alex's relationship began. I'm curious of the relationship Matthew had with Ian's mother. I'm curious of when the hatred and animosity between Matthew and his brother Luke began. References to each of these are given in The Prodigal Son, but I want a full story. I'm planning to read all of the books in the series.

The relationship between Matthew and Alex is passionate. Their steamy relationship keeps Alex pregnant through a majority of the pages in the story. It is hard for me to believe she had the energy it took to care for several children, clean and cook for a large family (no modern conveniences), and have the desire for sex. The chemistry and love between Matthew and Alex intoxicates them, and they are swept away from the hardship of life. It is their love and loyalty to each other that led me to love this story and rate it four stars. Alex is from the year 2002, she is bold in speech and freely shares her mind. Matthew has lived with Alex long enough that he understands her views and personality. Alex is frustrated at times, and as a source of comfort and sentimentalism, she reflects on her previous life. I believe Alex is learning to curb her speech, but it is difficult to change a character trait.

The Prodigal Son gave me a view of what life was like for the people of Scotland under the rule of Charles II. His actions against the Presbyterian ministers were cruel and barbaric.

Stephanie says

I really admire Belfrage's use of voice and language. She makes it so that the characters are well developed and thought provoking. And I admire how her characters interact with each other and does a good job expressing their emotions. Her dialog is also engaging and flows really well.

She gives wonderful details of the domestic life of the time the story is written in and details of what they had to endure in the regards to the government's (Charles II of England) unreasonable rule. There were laws or should I say-Charles II required his subjects to conform to the Church of England- on how they were to worship which as you know made it extremely difficult on the people. And that is putting it mildly.

Mathew Graham has risked much to support and protect his minister, Sandy Peden. And his family has suffered for that. I did not always agree with him and was often times frustrated with the decisions he was making. But having said that, he is one of my favorite characters in this story. I believe Mathew truly loves his family and has adjusted quite well to the fact that his wife-Alex-is from the future. I'm sure he is more tolerate to her ideas and beliefs than what most men during that time would have been.

Sandy Peden is a pious and fanatical minister who I actually enjoyed reading about in this story. He is opinionated- thinks women have their place and feels Mathew should put his wife in that place and has no problem telling him so. It is obvious he does not approve of her one bit. But she certainly matched wit for wit with Sandy. I do admire how Sandy is a survivor and he stands by what he believes and does not give into being told how he is to worship and what organized faith he is lawfully suppose too follow. Very entertaining....he adds a lot to this story.

Alex is a strong woman who is from the future and I believe her knowledge has really helped her and yet sometimes it was a hindrance for her, I think. I do however think she adapted quite well in the 17th century for someone being so forward thinking and modern of course. She does have a stubborn streak to her but so does her husband. I really enjoyed seeing the way they interacted with each other. Their relationship is really dynamic. And I do admire their strong sense of family and values. Alex does something in this story that I truly respect her for. But I cannot tell you! You will just have to read the book to find out!

I really have enjoyed this series so far and I look forward to continuing to read them! The Graham family are definitely among my favorite families to read about! I am giving this story a four and a half star rating and I highly recommend this whole series to people who are looking for a quality written time slip.

Stephanie

Layered Pages

Check out my website at: www.layeredpages.com

Erin Al-Mehairi says

The Prodigal Son is Anna Belfrage's third book in her Graham Saga series, a story about a time shifted

Alexandra (Alex) Lind and her husband, Matthew Graham, whom she marries in the seventeenth century. In this installment, Anna continues to give us the same well-developed characters, cherished love story, conflicts and resolution, and her usual amazing feelings of hope.

Starting the series with A Rip in the Veil, we meet Alex who is caught in a thunderstorm that suddenly transports her from 2002 to 1658 Scotland where she lands near the feet of Matthew and is thrown into the adventure of adjusting to an entirely new set of circumstances. Even as she is independent and strong, Matthew is stubborn and protective and they fall in love quickly as well as a whole host of other situations. As we read the second book, Like Chaff in the Wind, Alex and Matthew sail to the New World. You can read my review of that [HERE](#).

This third book, The Prodigal Son, sets them back in Scotland during a time of much upheaval due to politics and religion, both intertwined at the time. With many people standing up and almost risking their lives to be able to have religious freedom and not conform to the Church of England under Charles II, Matthew puts his life, as well as his family's in danger, by helping ministers and the cause. One of those ministers he assists is Sandy Peden (who actually existed and was on the run for his religious beliefs almost his whole life), much to Alex's disdain as she didn't want her family to suffer for the antics of these people's fervent beliefs (she doesn't quite always understand Matthew's desires and would prefer he stay out of it!).

Though not a religious novel, due to the time period itself being racked with religious zeal and war, it really seeped into every life during this time period following England's restoration as well as the settling of the American colonies. Men like Anna's character of Matthew would have felt strongly about holding onto his personal rights at that time, even if it meant hiding "on the run" ministers who were upholding freedom of religion and speech, even as others threatened their lives and chased them down. I enjoyed the times in Anna's story when Matthew and Alex would discuss religion or actions, even theology with alternate and proposed ideas of God, all as if they were discussing the price of tea, then they'd kiss and declare their love for one another. THAT is the best part of this book for me, by the way, the never-ending, undying love that Matthew and Alex have for one another that knows no bounds.

The worst part for me is that Matthew's devotion to the freedom of religion cause and helping others does leave a disastrous mark on their family and their life together. It was a chapter of weeping, but I won't share and spoil the novel. However, it's sooo sad!!! It truly tugged at the heart-strings. Again though, it didn't change their love for one another and there is a chance for rebirth of hope and family.

Another plot point in Anna's third book has to do with the title (The Prodigal Son), as Matthew's ex-wife, who was always in love with Matthew's egotistical brother Luke, comes to their country residence saying she needs to run from the plague, but when she has to leave the son that Luke has declared his, even though it most likely has always been Matthew's son, Matthew and Ian grow close, only to be torn apart and brought together in an ebb and flow of sorts. It's up to you to read and see if they are reunited permanently. But you'll love how Anna's writes so much emotion into all of the characters; you'll feel what they feel. She does a phenomenal job of developing characters and she handles, and has Alex handle, the situation with grace and understanding.

Overall, I love the LOVE that spills forth through this novel. I love Alex's independence, strength, devotion, will, endurance, understanding, plus she learns and adapts quickly! Living in the late 1600s is not easy when you are from the 2000s. I also enjoy her humor quite a bit, her bluntness, and her wit.

I've loved Anna's series so far, and especially The Prodigal Son, and I look forward (not very patiently) for the next novel in The Graham Saga. I highly recommend this historical series and I personally can't wait to

see where Anna will take the series. Matthew and Alex are the perfect couple who fit together as two parts of an apple, which really shows us as readers that nothing can stand in the way of love (even 300 years)!

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

I've grown to love Anna Belfrage's work. The imaginative story she has created for Alexandra Lind and Matthew Graham is a joy to read, but her attention to detail and sense of history make her books truly special which is why I was so eager to read her latest release, *The Prodigal Son*.

The third installment of the Graham Saga focuses on the religious conflicts that marked the seventeenth century. As a result, there is significant focus on what constitutes religious and moral justice as well as what lengths one must go to uphold one's beliefs. While these questions fascinate me, they also illustrate Belfrage's talent for folding history into her narrative. You see, *The Prodigal Son*, indeed the entire Graham Saga, is at its heart about the life Alex and Matthew share, how despite all, it withstands the tempest of war and sway of political/theologic upheaval. Belfrage never loses sight of that, carefully relating the larger story through the personalized experiences of her cast.

Speaking of Alex and Matthew, I have to commend Belfrage for her realistic of romantic affection and the intricacies of married life. These books simply wouldn't work if Alex and Matthew enjoyed a traditional happily ever after. Make no mistake, the two are deliriously happy with one another, but their life together isn't all sunshine and roses. They disagree, they argue, they test one another, and they don't always make up right away. In general I think there is a tendency to sugar coat reality in fiction, but I also feel there is much to be said for pragmatism, the idea that a real happy ever after requires patience, dedication and compromise.

This dedication to lifelike human emotion reaches to every member of Belfrage's cast, but is particularly evident when considering Ian and Alex. Perhaps it is because I can relate to him, having been in his shoes as a child, or because I could relate to her, as I walk in her shoes every day, but this relationship struck a huge chord in me. Yes, this is fiction, but Belfrage's profound understanding of the the human condition and sensitive representation of it in her novel is nothing short of extraordinary.

Reading The Graham Saga in order isn't necessarily required, but personally I'd recommend starting from the beginning. Each installment represents a stand alone chapter in Alex and Matthew's life together, but I think the relationships between her cast members are best appreciated when the reader has full knowledge of their individual histories. That being said, I greatly enjoyed *The Prodigal Son* and can't wait to see where life will take the Graham family next.
