



Upon a Moon-Dark Moor

Rebecca Brandewyne

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SHE WAS Highborn and Beautiful...HE WAS Gypsy-Dark and Brazen

Only the crying gulls and crashing waves of the rocky Cornish coast were witness to their embrace. Maggie was Sir Nigel Chandler's proud daughter and the mistress of Highclyffe Hall; Draco was the misbegotten son of Sir Nigel's dead brother and a carefree Romany maid. And Maggie knew from the first day she saw her cousin that he was as mysterious and untameable as the moors that stretched endlessly along the sea. She had lived a virtual prisoner in a mansion haunted by dark secrets, a father's cruelty, and a stepmother's cunning. Then, on a black and rainy night, a stagecoach drew up bringing the darkly handsome Draco into her life, and Maggie's fate was sealed. On the starlit moor the seeds of a forbidden desire would grow, spawning a love so strong that no power on this earth could deny its rapture - though its consequences could destroy them both...

Upon a Moon-Dark Moor Details

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From Reader Review Upon a Moon-Dark Moor for online ebook

Sharon says

Place: Cornish coast

Time: Story begins in 1810 when the (h) is 10 spanning 10 years

Lead Characters: Maggie Chandler (h) Draco (H) illegitimate Romany cousin

Well developed secondary characters

Abusive father

Love triangle

1st Person POV

Historical data

Violence

Rape

heroine drugged

murder

animal cruelty

revenge

smugglers

Corn Law igniting workers unrest

5+ star rating

The story begins with a very brief prelude as the (h), now 98 years old explains her need to tell her story.

She is 10 years old when the tale begins...1810.

Maggie Chandler is a smart little sweetheart. She spends her young years playing the sleuth, gathering information from the servants revolving around her father...what mood is he in, what part of Highclyffe Hall is in (so she can avoid him), when is he leaving, where is he going, how long will he be gone... Once a week Sir Nigel calls his small motherless daughter into his study to pay her an allowance and then makes her sign his ledger confirming she has been paid.

1810 is the year her cold, arrogant, hateful, abusive father, Lord Nigel Chandler, springs one unexpected change after another into her lonely, fearful life which changes her path forever.

Although this is written from Maggie's POV, each character within the story is defined so I had no trouble clearly understanding each individuals character, thought, feeling, motive...excellent writing.

Draco (H), the half gypsy bastard son of Sir Nigel's dis-owned brother enters Maggie's life one hell bent wildly storming night. She has never met him, but has heard of him due to her diligent detective eaves dropping behind closed doors. He is 5 years her senior, arrogant, reclusive, resentful and wild. Because she is such a sweetheart, a tentative friendship is sprouted, so she thinks.

Other major characters have entered her life as well, courtesy of her hateful father, without forewarning.

This is a meaty story that was hard for me to put down. There is so much depth to the characters as well as

drama and action.

Rebecca Brandewyne is a new favorite author whose books I'm gonna be hunting down.

Fre06 Begum says

I loved this book when I read it years ago and I still love it now! Def one of my old time faves!

Lyzzie says

Très bonne surprise pour ce Aventure et Passion qui se démarque des autres par son côté plus sombre et moins cul-cul la praline. Les personnages ont tous leur défauts ce qui les rends encore plus crédibles. Alors oui le livre met du temps à démarrer mais c'est à cause du résumé (qui en fait n'est pas un excellent résumé puisqu'il nous parle du milieu du bouquin!) et du fait qu'on s'attend à une histoire d'amour traditionnelle. Au début je me demandais si j'allais accrocher à ce récit d'enfance surtout que le récit est sous forme d'autobiographie. Mais finalement le passage enfance n'est pas en trop et est vraiment nécessaire pour la suite. L'héroïne n'est pas trop pénible et est assez forte tête. Il est clair que parfois la ressemblance aux Hauts de Hurlevant est flagrante mais je l'ai plus ressenti comme un hommage que du plagiat. Bref, je recommande chaudement ce livre.

Antoinette says

This book was a great and compelling read. It is not life changing, but it is memorable and enjoyable. What sets this book above many other romances is how complex and multifaceted each character was, and how much the heroine matures and transforms throughout the novel.

Upon a Moon-Dark Moor does appear to be partially inspired by Wuthering Heights. There is an illegitimate gypsy cousin, Draco, another cousin, Edmund, who represents a more refined and idealized romance, and a wild-ish heroine, Maggie, torn between her passion for one, and her "love" for the other. Beyond that, there is little similarity. While the heroine is no Cathy, she is flawed enough to make her interesting. Certainly, Draco is no Heathcliff, and thank God for that, because even I, who like my romance spiced with bitterness, cruelty, and woe, would have to say that one Heathcliff is enough for me. Beyond that there is the HEA, so never fear.

It is interesting how these 80's romances are so much meatier than current ones currently on the shelves. In this novel there are actual relationships that are developed over time. This book spans ten years! It begins when Maggie is ten years old, and the reader follows her as she grows up and comes to understand herself, her relationship with her father, the world and being a woman in the world.

So in a nutshell:

- Great complex characters (if you are bored of the same'ol, same'ol)
- Dark brooding Byronic hero (yummy!)
- Love triangle (keeps you into it)
- Tempestuous passionate romance (can't live without it)
- Tinges of social commentary (just to make you feel smarter)

I LOVED how Maggie was written because she was both compassionate and cruel, wise and foolish. and a bitch, and really I think she treats Draco pretty bad.

She says, "I was what I was, what we all were, and perhaps it was not within us to be other than that."

And no it's not PC. But he only drugs her once and rapes her a couple of times! Other than that I would say he is actually nicer than most.

Candace says

One of my old time favorites. I love the atmosphere and tone of this novel. I loved the characters.

Bgurl (don't h8 me cuz I'm honestful) says

UPON A MOON-DARK MOOR, by Rebecca Brandewyne:

3 "Goth Good, But Noth Great" Stars

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT! I know I'm a shitty punster! I just couldn't help myself. Put away your pitchforks & I'll get on with my review.

Upon the wild, savage moors of Cornwall, high atop the crumbling, sea-drenched cliffs, lies a forbidding looking manor house called Highclyffe Hall; home of a lonely, motherless girl named Maggie. The only child of Sir Nigel Chandler – a cold, harsh man, prone to violent mood swings and scathing, midnight rants – Maggie is solitary and awkward; a disappointment to her intolerant, overly critical father.

The only kindness she's ever known comes from her Aunt Tibby and cousins Sarah and Esmond. Engaged since babyhood to Esmond, her father's heir, Maggie consoles herself with fantasies of a brighter future, when she and Esmond are married and live happily ever after in Highclyffe Hall.

In true gothic fashion, however, her romanticized future never comes to pass. In the summer of her 10th year, three new people enter Maggie's life: a mercenary stepmother; a manipulative stepsister; and, a bastard born, half gypsy cousin named Draco.

As Esmond's affections shift to her stepsister, and Maggie and Draco's affinity grows, her childish dreams of the future are shattered. And, Maggie embarks on a different path to maturity and the unforeseen destiny that awaits her at the end.

While, *Upon a Moon-Dark Moor*, By Rebecca Brandewyne, has all of the makings of a good gothic romance, it isn't a great one. Long-winded, purple prose such as the following, bog down Maggie's first person narrative:

"The Hall itself was old and fashioned in the shape of an E, for it had been built during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It was constructed of Pentewan rock hewn from the cliffs near Mevagissey at Chapel Point and brought by wagons to the site where the house stood. Over the ages, the rough..."[blah, blah, blah for 2 more pages].

~Maggie, Re: Highclyffe Hall

Granted, such meticulous attention to detail does, indeed, paint a vivid mental picture, but countless pages are dedicated to minutia; whereas, dialogue is scarce, and interactions between Maggie and Draco short and infrequent.

THERE ARE 2 THINGS THAT SAVE THIS BOOK FROM A BELOW AVERAGE RATING:

#1: Draco is a nearly perfect romantic hero. Discounting the two times he forced himself on Maggie (*Hey, cut the guy some slack, NonCon was big in the 80s*), he's everything a woman wants in a man: loyal, accepting, fair, liberated, smart, attentive, protective, caring, and passionate.

" 'How I have loved you [Maggie], wanted you, and thought never to make you mine, thought to lose you to Esmond when it is we who belong together! I have waited so long for you to see it' Draco whispered in my ear. 'You are so beautiful, Maggie. Even when you were a child, I could see the promise of the woman you would become, and I knew then that there would be no other for me, that I would wait for you to grow up. When I first saw you again, I wanted you so badly that it was all I could do not to seize you then and there and claim you as mine.' "

~Draco

Yep! Draco's "Hotter Than Hell"! But be warned, you'll have to wade through 400 pages of purple prose to get there. Which leads me to...

#2: *Upon a Moon-Dark Moor*, may not be a great love story, but it is a good coming of age story.

10 year old Maggie may think she's "older than her years", but she's actually very naive. While she's endured cruelty, unfairness, deceit, and betrayal; she's too inexperienced to understand the motivations behind such actions and often draws the wrong conclusions. As time passes, and Maggie matures, she not only gains a more realistic view of people, but also the world. With understanding, comes forgiveness and acceptance, for those who've transgressed against her, as well as herself.

The Victorian Gothic setting underscores Maggie's turbulent maturation as she eventually sheds the rose tinted glasses of youth and gazes upon the real world horrors:

"I could no longer deny what we had both known: my father had no love for me, but cared only for his pride and name. It was in that moment that I was made fully and bitterly aware of what it meant to be a woman in

a man's world and that I came as close to understanding my stepmother and Julianne as I ever would. Now I saw with cruel clarity that because I had had the great misfortune to be born a female, I was a prisoner as surely as though I were shackled by chains, legally bound first to my father and now to my husband. I had no rights of my own."

~Maggie

And it's wonders:

"With each new experience, I learned my strengths and weaknesses. I was a woman of deep and lasting passions, wild and impetuous, more often than not ruled by my heart instead of my head. I was not made to live life tamely, but to seize it with a vengeance and bend it to my will. My emotional heights were rapturous, my depths all too filled with despair. Yet now that I saw all that life had to offer, I was glad I was not other than what I was."

~Maggie

In the end, Maggie's difficult evolution mimics that of the Victorian era at the turn of the century.

If you like Victorian Gothic coming-of-age stories, where adolescent girls use an abundance of purple prose to recount their angst filled journey to womanhood; you'll enjoy Rebecca Brandewyne's, *Upon a Moon-Dark Moor*. Go-th forth to Amazon and "One-Click-th" it now.

OH, STOP YOUR GROANING! I SWEAR IT'S MY LAST PUN!

Thanks to Fre06 for another good recommendation.

Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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Rebecca Brandewyne is a household name in the bodice ripper genre. Her Aguilar's Fate series is more popular than this one, but since I'd managed to obtain books 1 & 2 of this duology, Chancellors of Highclyffe Hall seemed like a good starting point for this author.

****Warning: Spoilers!****

Maggie Chandler is the daughter of Sir Hugh, the lord of Highclyffe Hall - an elegant, creepy castle built on the moors of Cornwall. Her father blames her for the death of her mother and abuses her at every turn. Matters only take a turn for the worse when he marries a fortune hunter, and she ends up getting two wicked step-somethings that waste no time in barging into every aspect of her life.

The opening of this book really reminded me of *ELLA ENCHANTED* - you know that part when Ella's father marries Dame Olga and she ends up getting Hattie & Olive as step-sisters? *ELLA* is one of my favorite books **of all time** so that similarity really stirred up all kinds of warm and fuzzy feelings. There's also elements of the *WIDEACRE* series in here, too, what with the feuding families and kissing cousins and matters of inheritance.

Speaking of inheritance, later on Sir Hugh finds out to his disgust that his estranged brother (who fell in love with a gypsy - gasp!) has a bastard son, Draco, who also ends up coming to Highclyffe Hall. Maggie isn't sure how to feel about him. He's quite a bit different from her other cousin, Esmond (who she's betrothed to), but she can't stop obsessing over him and how different he is. Just in case we forget that he's a gypsy, she keeps referring to him as My Gypsy Cousin. They end up forming a bond over the fate of Black Magic, a beautiful wild stallion that Sir Hugh brutally abuses. Be forewarned that if animal cruelty is a trigger for you, there are some pretty horrid passages of horse abuse in this book.

The second half of the book starts out with all kinds of soapy drama and, sadly, is where this book takes a turn for the worse. Sir Hugh ended up crippled for life by Black Magic, which has caused his personality to take a turn for the worse. He's even more of an asshole than before! Through mysterious means, Draco ends up becoming very rich. Julianne, seduces Maggie's betrothed away. Maggie ends up having jealousy-sex with Draco, which quickly turns into rape-sex when he realizes that he's not the man she's thinking of. Then Draco spirits her away to Gretna Green, where he drugs and rapes her some more prior to their marriage. Maggie gets blotted out from the family bible. She has a baby. Draco provides for them with his inexplicably gotten wealth.

Maggie is not a very subtle narrator and keeps making these foreshadowing segues like "I wish I had known that..." or "if only I had ____". It took a lot of mystery out of the writing, because it was like the author didn't trust me to deal with any bad events on my own and wanted to hold my hand the whole way. I also didn't like the way the rape was treated; Maggie is very dismissive of it, and convinces herself that it was something she actually wanted, calling herself a passionate and earthy person (which I guess is 19th century speak for "very interested in sex"). Since this is a gothic novel, there's a mystery tacked on at the end, and of course, the hero is implicated as being the perp. I didn't think that this was done particularly well, either, and the heroine's Nancy Drew skills made me roll my eyes.

UPON A MOON-DARK MOOR definitely contrives to write in that 70s gothic style, and even the title sounds like something you would see on one of those book covers with women in cumbersome gowns fleeing from sinister misty castles. The only difference is that those books tend to be very clean, and this actually had some sex in it. Honestly, if you're just getting into the gothic genre, I recommend starting out with Victoria Holt. Hopefully *ACROSS A STARLIT SEA* will be better...

2 stars!

Sabrina Jeffries says

These Cornwall Gothics are old books (don't let the September 1999 re-release date on Amazon fool you), very un-PC, and written in first person, but the heroes are just yummy. If you like your heroes gentle and you're looking for humor, these books are not for you, but whenever I want a bit of sturm and drang, I reread both, since one follows the other.

Sheila says

My first novel ever read. Unforgettable. will read again

Misfit says

Bland heroine, and not too likeable hero (if that's the right word for Draco). If I wanted a first-person narrative gothic with a Cornwall setting, I could have done better picking up Victoria Holt. The rape/forced seduction with the traitorous body trope is freely used, I know there are some readers that draw the line in the sand at this, so consider yourself warned. I believe there is a sequel, Across A Starlit Sea.

Dana Loo says

Ottimo romanzo storico, una narrazione in prima persona che però nn penalizza i personaggi che emergono vividi dal racconto della protagonista. Belle descrizioni di una Cornovaglia selvaggia e mutevole che accompagna le vicissitudini dei personaggi principali. Forse un po' lenta la prima parte della fanciullezza di Maggie. Ricco di avvenimenti, anche storici, che la Brandewyne riporta, dando ancor più carattere al romanzo che ho letto davvero con grande piacere...

Melissa says

Definitely one of the better romance novels I've read in a while. It's loosely based on Wuthering Heights, so that was a plus going in since that is my favorite book. It seemed tome where in W.H. each character was so involved in their own personality issues, this book had a few extra characters so that each could embody someone from the original work and each could be their own person as well. The writing is really what kept me in the story though, because it could have easily become very cheesy very fast.

KC says

Like all of my favorite romances, I have reread this several times over the years. Here are my key takeaways.

some spoilers

1. This historical romance set in early nineteenth-century England (1800-1819) is clearly inspired by Emily Brontë's tragedy *Wuthering Heights* and, therefore, contains similar elements:

- a. It's told in first-person POV.
- b. The first 100 pages, give or take, focuses on the intertwined childhoods of Maggie and Draco so it takes a while before the romance kicks in.
- c. It contains gothic undertones.
- d. The love triangle didn't bother me because I never felt the OM was a real threat. Maggie obviously had feelings for Draco but was in denial.

2. Draco had it BAD for Maggie but adopted the cold-alpha-but-hot-in-bed mantra, 'cause pride.

3. Maggie took a long time in recognizing her love for Draco, so I felt bad for him and wanted to hug him . . . and kiss him and squeeze him. Sigh.

4. The chemistry between Draco and Maggie may melt your panties, but one scene might freeze dry them (or make your head explode with rage) as it involves a forced seduction and drugs.

5. Draco is smokin'! And it's not pipes.

I would have given this 5-stars if Maggie hadn't been so clueless for so long and if the romance had started sooner than it did.

Becky says

I was pleasantly surprised by this book. I was expecting a drama filled Mary Sue TSTL heroine and not an ounce of depth to the story but what I got was a well thought out, well researched story set in Cornwall with a heroine I actually liked and a hero that didn't get on my nerves that bad.

I mean it was still a bodice ripper (he literally rips her bodice off)

but it was well written (the author did a lot on the time period and the Corn Laws and such) and the characters were actual people, not cardboard cut outs of the same people over and over.

I enjoyed the secondary characters quite a bit because they weren't just background noise, but had unique voices of their own. Even the evil ones were interesting, because the heroine either understood them or sympathized with them at one point or another.

I can always tell if a book is halfway decent, or if the idea of the story is, just because I'll start subconsciously writing stuff in that setting in my head.

The moors came to life with Brandewyne's talent, and I'm impressed because this book was written years ago, and the style of writing has changed in so many ways. But I still found her story better than some of the modern stuff I've picked up recently. Garbage.

My one complaint, of course, was the giant miscommunication at the end. I just hate when two reasonable people suddenly don't notice when one either goes off the deep end or is acting a certain way that is not true to their character, and never questions that.

I know that in real life Draco would have forced Maggie to explain her sudden hatred, or coldness toward him and it would have all been resolved without the dramatic ending.

(view spoiler)

But other than that I really enjoyed it. I even learned a little something, a tiny history lesson. :)

Naksed says

In *Upon a Moon-Dark Moor*, the author rewrites *Wuthering Heights* to suit her. Eh. I never particularly liked that over-the-top gothic classic to begin with and this version left me similarly unmoved.

The first person narrative of the heroine is annoying, what with all her foreboding "as you shall soon see, dear reader" and "if I had only known then, it would have made such a difference later." All these warnings and dire allusions set me up for some epic plot twists and turns but in the end, the big "reveal" was lukewarm.

The gothic mood is adequately set, though strangely interrupted from time to time by history lessons from the author about international news of the 19th century, which has little relevance to the mood or plot of the story.

The best part of this book is not the romance, but the several chapters in the beginning that deal with the heroine's childhood and early teens. Starting with meeting the hero, her mysterious and terrifying "Gypsy cousin", the illegitimate son of her late uncle, their budding relationship and their involvement with a magnificent stallion named Black Magic, I thought this was the most emotionally poignant, well-written, and riveting part of the book. I had thought it would set me up for a volcanic reunion between the two characters after the hero's inevitable banishment and triumphant return to the heroine's dwelling, just like it was after Heathcliff's return to Cathy after his self-exile. But unfortunately, this was the point where the story fizzled out.

The heroine was so frustrating, wishy-washy, and dull, she made me miss the ever so insufferable Catherine Earnshaw's spirit. She is also one of the most TSTL heroines I have encountered in a genre that is saturated with them, so this is really telling something.

How many times does her father have to berate her, tell her he hates her and wishes she was dead or never been born, strike her and actually try to kill her, before she stops every other paragraph with "I still couldn't really believe my father hated me..."

What more treachery, scorn, dishonesty, humiliation, cowardice and rejection does the man she supposedly loves have to unleash upon her before she realizes he never cared for her?

How much more kindness, loyalty, love, protectiveness, tenderness, and passion can the man who has loved her since he can remember heap upon her before she admits that she is in love with him?

The hero stood up quite well to Heathcliff's daunting figure, though the author softened him enough to make him a romantic hero. He has so many qualities and he is so kick-ass in some ways but then, the author inserts a couple of bodice-ripping moments that seem completely out of place and out of character for him. It's like she could not make up her mind whether to write a dark romance starring a cruel but potentially redeemable anti-hero, or a straightforward romance with a broody but upstanding hero. The result is muddled.

Overall, it was interesting and well-written enough to keep my attention to the end but this will definitely not be something that I will re-read or think about much after its conclusion.
