



Gracious Living Without Servants

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Juliet has done the right thing all her life, and where's it gotten her? She's a thirty-year-old widow who's had to move in with her parents.

Things start to look up when her glamorous—but married—neighbor Seth seems to be flirting with her and helps her land a job at a local paper.

Then she's assigned to investigate Seth's wife. Juliet is quickly immersed in lies, manipulation, and a deepening sex scandal. But she feels alive for the first time in a long time.

Maybe she needs to do the wrong thing for once. Or maybe she's headed for disaster.

Gracious Living Without Servants Details

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From Reader Review Gracious Living Without Servants for online ebook

Jalynn Patterson says

About the Book:

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About the Author:

Brenda Cronin writes for The Wall Street Journal, where she has worked since 2001. Her short fiction has been published on both sides of the Atlantic. This is her first novel. Born in Washington, she was raised in Connecticut and lives in New York City.

My Review:

This review honestly, was a little difficult for me to do. I am not really in agreement with the plot line and how it all was handled among the lives of the characters. There is a lot of things I disagree with but I will review this one the best I can to let you in on the overall feel of the book.

Upon opening the book and reading about the title character we find that Juliet has come from a pretty well off family, financially. She is a thirty year old woman that was married and had been for about a decade when her husband Alex was tragically and instantly killed in a car accident. She was now staying with her parents until, she had hoped that she could get back on her feet again. But after listening to one of her parents' close friends she had found out that her parents were afraid she would commit suicide after such a devastating blow to her life.

Well it's not long when she attends a party thrown by her parents that she finds herself flirting with a man that is thirty years older than her. At first she feels a little guilty but decides she has nothing left to lose. After getting a job through the family friend things start changing for Juliet in ways you may not expect. This book has a lot of twists and turns.

The storyline is a strong one with some foul language. The author has done a real good job making the characters seem very real and the story a prevalent one at times seemed very convincing as well.

****Disclosure**** This book was sent to me at no charge for my honest review from the author.

Mary says

I received this book as a Goodreads Giveaway! LOVED the title! OK, first I had to get past the creepy factor...our Juliet and a much much much (35 years!) older man. Once I accomplished that I have to say I really liked this book. Juliet was a wonderful character, smart and funny and goofy and interesting. I really didn't "get" her attraction for Seth, but she really seemed to like him so I went with it. The story was fast paced, complex without being complicated, and kept my interest until I could not wait to get to the most satisfying conclusion.

Jennifer Garcia says

I received this book from TLC Tours in exchange for an honest review.

Juliet the main character was very likable and very lost. A recent widow, she tried learning how to live on her own again while living with and leaning on her parents. During this stay at her childhood home, she comes in contact with her neighbors, her parents' friends. Oddly enough, Juliet has a severe attraction to, the 35 years older than her, Seth. Seth's wife helps Juliet get a job at a newspaper and the story really starts there. The beginning of the book is slow, which is understandable, but I really started to feel a part of the book when Juliet was doing her investigations. She had to write a story on Seth's wife and found out some not so flattering things about her.

I believe one of the major themes was to learn to live on your own after you have lost the love of your life. Juliet did not know who she was without her husband, they were two parts of a whole. Juliet wanted to feel again, and she did so with Seth, although I found that not so hot, in the romantic sense. I mean he was old, 65-ish to her 30-ish. The affair with Seth did jumpstart her road to feeling again finding herself.

All in all, it was an okay book. I'm glad I read it, but I don't think it left me with a forever imprinted impression.

For this and other reviews, please visit my blog Italian Brat's Obsessions

Aurora says

<http://sveta-randomblog.blogspot.com/...>

Kristine says

Original review found at <http://kristineandterri.blogspot.ca/>

* I received a copy of this book through a Goodreads giveaway in exchange for an honest review*

This book is basically about a woman (Juliet) who is lost after becoming a widow at the age of thirty and the direction her life takes as she tries to get back on her feet and create or start a new life..

I had mixed feelings about this book. I really didn't understand or feel Juliet's attraction and subsequent affair with Seth, a married neighbour thirty-five years her senior. I saw no appeal in the man, could not feel any chemistry between the two of them and thought they were quite boring together. Even their secret rendezvous's were dull and lacked sexual chemistry. Perhaps if Seth had a personality or positive attributes I could have understood the attraction but he really wasn't a good person. On the other hand, I thoroughly enjoyed the fact that Juliet was investigating his wife and that entire part of the story line. I loved the conflict that it created and was very pleased with the outcome.

This book is Juliet's story of the events, people and situations that help her to figure out who she is and what she wants out of life. It was a solid first novel for Cronin and I look forward to reading more from her in the future.

Elise Miller says

Perhaps the strength of *Gracious Living* without servants by Brenda Cronin, is revealed by my own identification with its 30-year-old protagonist, rather than with its 60-something couple – although I am myself 66-years-old!

The plot is an old one, with a new twist. The life potential of a bright, capable, and attractive woman is sabotaged by her own emotional dependencies and immaturity. Sounds like the story of millions of female lives before the advent (religious connotation intended) of feminism in America. Yet here, in Cronin's first novel, that plot is brought believably forward into the 1990s by the self-inflicted tangle between her May-December romance and her first stab as an investigative reporter. Cronin's own career as a journalist (*The Wall Street Journal*) informs the details of the investigative process. As a reporter, protagonist Juliet takes the reader along as she discovers that at the other end of a life full of achievement and even acclaim, emotional dependencies and immaturity can threaten to dismantle the glittering world of her elders.

The plot unfolds slowly, focusing on two sympathetic characters, but the romance soon becomes a page-turner. My only caveat is that this is no romance novel – if you don't enjoy facing the disconcerting, unattractive realities, from sags and wrinkles to the over-the-top lavish food and sex necessary to compensate for the natural insecurities of a May-December coupling, this book is not for you. Instead, read it for its insights and for its skilled build-up of tension between the investigation and the romance, between youth and age, courage and cowardice, even good and evil. I highly recommend this well-written book, but it is an easy one to ruin with a spoiler, so I'm going to sign off.

Amy says

www.amysbooketlist.blogspot.com

Source: Review Copy
Genre: Literary Fiction
Format: Paperback

I almost gave up on this book after the first few chapters. After finding out that Seth, the married neighbor was 65 years old, I was very skeptical. The main problem I had was that I knew I couldn't root for the main couple. Since this was a review copy, I kept reading and I'm glad that I did. I decided that instead of rooting for the main couple, I rooted against them. This made for a lot of funny faces while reading and very satisfying ending.

Were it not for my problems with the central relationship, I probably would have enjoyed this book a lot more. As it was, the book was well-written and very good. The main character was very sympathetic until the affair started, but even after that I wanted her to get better and start thinking straight. Once I really thought about it, I finally understood that Juliet was a very lost person who possibly made some possibly poor life choices. Understanding that basic fact makes some of her behavior much more understandable.

I would have rated this book a four or five if I was more open to the relationship between Seth and Juliet. If this doesn't bother you at all, then you will definitely enjoy this book. I am glad I agreed to read it.

Kimberly says

This was a First Reads Giveaway.

This book was one of those odd stories where I sort of liked it and sort of didn't. The main character, Juliet, grows up in a way through this book and is able to move on with her life after the unexpected and tragic death of her husband. But the romance with Seth seemed fake to me.

Diane says

We meet Julia, a thirty-year-old widow who has spent the past six months living back with her parents in New Haven grieving her lost husband. Her parents think it would be good for her to get out, see people, and think about what she will do next.

What she does next is begin an affair with Seth, her parents' sixty-five-year old neighbor, a law professor married to a wealthy heiress. I confess that I found this puzzling. Was Julia looking for security after her world was turned upside down? Was she just looking for a fling?

As the story progresses, we see that Seth and Julia seem to be falling in love. Julia wonders about a future with Seth, and he seems very smitten with her, unlike other women with whom he has had affairs. They meet in his office, have assignations at a local run-down hotel, and Seth makes elaborate preparations with food, wine and flowers.

Seth's wife Naomi arranges for Julia to interview for a job at a local arts newspaper. She runs a foundation that annually bestows a prestigious dance award. She also teaches dance locally, and many of the winners of the foundation's award were her students.

Julia gets the newspaper job, and starts out compiling events calendars. Naomi pushes Julia to write a story about her and the prestigious awards, and when Julia gets the assignment to write the story, it is not the fawning puff piece Naomi hopes for, but an investigative piece about financial irregularities at the foundation.

While investigating the financial irregularities, Julia meets with someone who has more damning information about Naomi and an improper relationship she had in the past. Julia continues to delve further, without telling Seth what she has uncovered.

And this is where I have an issue. Julia is a thirty-year-old woman, not a young girl starting out, and she should know better about conflict of interest. She is writing a story about the wife of a man she is sleeping with and she doesn't seem to ever question her own ethics.

At the very least she should tell her editor she has a conflict. She wouldn't need to get into the specifics, but she is jeopardizing any career she thinks she may have if the truth comes out. I don't think the author (who is a journalist herself) hit on this hard enough; there should have been more about how Julia's ethics were compromised.

The story is interesting, and the author gives us an insider's look at a small newspaper. Julia is a smart woman who makes bad choices, and seems to be a little out of touch with the reality of her situation. The fact that she thinks she could get a job at a bigger newspaper and keep Seth shows her complete lack of understanding the consequences of her actions.

I would have liked this novel better if Julia was more contemplative, but maybe after the last six months of her isolation and grief, this made her feel alive, and perhaps that is what the author intended all along.

Anne says

I received this book from Goodreads and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Although it was set in the 1990s the characters and their actions seemed somewhat oldfashioned and if I'd had to guess I would have placed it at least 50 years earlier. I think that if you like Anita Shreve you will enjoy Brenda Cronin's first novel.
