



The Dare and the Doctor

Kate Noble

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With writing that is “nothing less than brilliant” (*Booklist*) comes the third in the witty, sexy Winner Takes All series from Kate Noble!

Dr. Rhys Gray and Miss Margaret Babcock are friends—strictly friends. But over the course of the year, as they exchange dozens of letters, they share personal details that put them on the path to something more. When Dr. Gray helps Margaret realize her dearest dream and she comes to his defense in the uproar that follows, it seems that their connection cannot be denied. But will their relationship stand the scruples of society and jealous intendeds, or are they destined to be only friends, and nothing more?

The perfect novel for fans of Regency Era romance, *The Dare and the Doctor* is a clever and passionate love story worth sharing.

The Dare and the Doctor Details

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Author : Kate Noble

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From Reader Review The Dare and the Doctor for online ebook

Juliana Philippa says

3.5 stars

Bottom Line (Up-Top). Recommend it! Not as wonderful as the other two Kate Noble books I've read, *Compromised* and *Follow My Lead*, but still totally worth the read. Enjoy!

Setting. Mostly London, England in the mid-1820s

Series. This is the third and final book in the Winner Takes All series. I have not read either of the other two books and while normally I like to read books in order, if the others don't make it onto my to-read list then I'm happy to skip them (both of them are on my to-ponder list). That is what I did in this instance and though it would have been nice to have read the 2nd book where we're first introduced to the two main characters and see their initial interactions, not having done so won't prevent your enjoyment of the story. Note: to those who did read and enjoy the first two books, both couples feature quite prominently in this one (especially Phoebe and Ned).

Miss Margaret Babcock, Our Heroine. Margaret is 20 years old and has spent all her life in the countryside. Her mother passed away 3 years ago, which was a profound loss, as they were very close and her mother pushed her to do and try things she might not otherwise. Margaret lives with her father, who is out of the picture for most of the book, but who it seems she is close to as well. She has no siblings and is somewhat of a loner, though in the last year or so she has started to go out to local parties and interact more with people. For the most part though, Margaret stays at home and takes care of her beloved flowers and plants.

She is quite an interesting heroine and I really liked her. She's a little reserved and could come off as cold, but really it's just shyness, insecurity, and the fact that she is very single-minded in her focus (which is usually concentrated on her gardening). She's very passionate about her work and is a generally curious person, really coming alive when talking about plants, flowers, science, etc. Margaret is also quite sweet and refreshingly honest (which can sometimes prove awkward, but provides for some good laughs ;-).

Dr. Rhys Gray, Our Hero. Rhys is around 30 or so (we're never given his exact age) and comes from an esteemed and old English family. He's the second son and has three brothers and three sisters. His father and older brother, the heir, are abroad, due to a scandalous incident in the past that you learn about quite early in the book; this makes it so that although Rhys is only the second son and his father is living, he effectively plays the head-of-the-family role. He would be happy to live a quiet life at his home in Greenwich (i.e. outside of London), tending to his patients, doing his experiments, and occasionally lecturing. Unfortunately, his family—especially his father and older brother—puts additional demands on him that promise to disrupt his desired way of life. Rhys is intelligent, thoughtful, and has a strong sense of responsibility and duty.

Summary. Margaret and Rhys have been exchanging letters for around a year, and the book starts with several of them (which I always love). The tone is friendly and playful, but nothing more than that, and the subjects are usually of their mutual interests and science-related. Much to Margaret's delight and surprise, Rhys procures her an opportunity to present a special hybrid rose she created (right term?) to the Horticultural Society of London, and so she journeys to London with a few of her precious roses. She's excited to see Rhys again, though also somewhat nervous; she doesn't love society and social gatherings, is a bit socially awkward, doesn't know what her interactions with Rhys will be like after exchanging letters for

so long, and is wary of what the Horticultural Society's reaction will be (especially since she's a woman).

The majority of the book takes place over the course of a few weeks in London, where we see Margaret get to know the city, prepare for the Society's visit and redo Phoebe and Ned's greenhouse, and spend time with Rhys. Both Rhys and Margaret are quite insistent that they are merely friends, and from our third-person POV, that is what they both honestly believe (though every now and then, stray thoughts of attraction wander in). Their conviction that they are friends and nothing more is tested, though, when a surprising wrench is thrown into the mix; this happens quite early on, but I'll leave it at that (click on the spoiler if you want to know more). (view spoiler)

Thoughts. I definitely enjoyed the book and would recommend it, but I was a bit aggravated by some things. This is the third book I've read by Kate Noble and she clearly has certain plot patterns and ploys that she likes to repeat. Her main characters are always quite different though, so at least I can give her that, but the twisting-the-reader-into-knots and giving us heart palpitations are both things I could do without. I understand plot ploys and the need for them, but sometimes it almost seems like romance authors are just randomly throwing in obstacles in order to draw the story out into a full novel and postpone the HEA as long as possible. Especially when it's something that SO monopolizes the time the hero and heroine spend together, it can get quite irritating.

Now on to my praise: the main characters were lovely and really, really cute together—they're such a nerdy pair, I just loved it!! Lol. Their romance was very believable and it was nice to watch the development of their feelings for each other; it's clear they think very highly of one another and feel some affection, but watching them slowly fall in love and realize that their connection is deeper than just friendship is hugely enjoyable. They have a clear understanding of the other, and are able to read each other and connect on a whole other level than with those around them. The supporting characters are for the most part entertaining, though Rhys's family got on my nerves a bit and seem quite self-centered for a good portion of the novel.

Also, for those worried about Margaret's age (which is maybe no one but me), as with Noble's other books, though the heroine is quite young and far younger than the hero, you would not at all know it were we not told that she was 20 years old.

Fun Quote.

The gardens, for a London home, were impressive, at least in size. He had absolutely no idea what kind of plants were growing because of the dark ... but then he realized he knew someone who wouldn't let a little lack of light stop her from proper identification.

All he had to do was listen for it.

"... These pots are much too small, the root will ball up and choke the poor thing ..."

"Miss Babcock," came the scratchy voice of young Bainbridge. "Did I tell you your eyes look beautiful in the moonlight?"

"There's very little moon and I'm not looking at you, how can you possibly tell?" Margaret answered.

**This review is of an ARC provided by Net Galley and the publisher*

(Written November 27, 2016)

Brandy says

3.5. Lost 0.5 because I felt the hero was a bit weak. Enjoyed the botany/medical aspect.

Molly says

Outstanding fun! Kate Noble's light touch and witty style makes this "friends to lovers" story exciting and worthwhile. I liked wholeheartedly both characters and was rooting for them to discover the depth of their feelings. The plot itself wasn't riddled with cliches and the prose helped sell me to both on the period and the character's internal struggles. In terms of plot, the trip to the Greenwich laboratory was particularly well done. I haven't read any of the previous books in the series, but I'm definitely picking them up.

Jackie says

I enjoy Noble's writing and characterizations a lot, as well as her light touch of humor. but there isn't much in the way of GMC or real tension in this story of a gardener/botanist young lady who falls for an older medical man when he facilitates her coming to town to present her new breed of roses to the Horticultural Society. Both Margaret Babcock and Rhys Gray are unconventional, people of science and inquiry, so they make a great couple. But the stuff keeping them apart—Rhys' promise to his mother that he'll marry the daughter of their neighbor, a man whom his father once wounded in a duel, so said father and brother can return from exile on the Continent—isn't all that compelling, and the climactic reveal of the villain was disappointing from a feminist point of view.

Kazen says

It should have been the perfect time for me to read this novel - I just finished a spate of heavy non-fiction and dearly needed some romance in my reading life. But try as I might, I kept getting pulled out of the story.

First, the good:

- The plot has some nice twists and turns to it.
- The book starts off with letters, yea! Not enough to call it epistolary, but I like it all the same.
- The heroine is unconventional (super tall, not super pretty) but the hero loves her just the way she is.
- The pose on the cover is from a scene in the book and is fitting. Even the fact that she's not wearing a corset is explained, woah.

And now, the not-so-good:

- I never felt like I was in the Regency. The language is a little too modern, societal customs and expectations are bent a little too much, and I found a medical tidbit that, while not wrong, is unlikely. It felt like a wallpaper romance when I prefer something more of the period. (For more about wallpaper romances check out this article at Smart Bitches Trashy Books, where I totally agree with Candy.)

- Noble made her chops as a TV writer and it shows. There were a ton of scenes that are meant to be seen, not read. We meet Rhys' large extended family in a whirlwind, with each person passing through the foyer of the home. It would be perfect on TV - you could see the trouble making 12-year old bounding up the stairs, the sister too engrossed in her book to notice Rhys has arrived, and so on. But on the page it's a tangled lump of spaghetti, with no means or end. Here's another example: Margaret's friend is with her on the second floor, telling her about the suitors that are being turned away at the door.

"Oh! There's one!" Sylvia cried. "He's wearing a gray coat and hat. And . . . he's knocking . . . and the butler is telling him you are not receiving today." She pushed closer to the window, her nose almost touching. "He's taking off the hat . . . decently good looking, although his chin is a little weak."

If I make a rectangle with my fingers all director-like I can see it - how the shot would be framed, how good it would look. But it wasn't satisfying on the page.

- Because of the above I started skimming parts, and I didn't feel like I missed anything. Eep.
- While there were seeds of conflict it didn't drive the story until the very very end.

So despite having the outward appearance of being just what I needed, *The Dare and the Doctor...* wasn't.

Thanks to Pocket Books and NetGalley for providing a review copy.

(Nat) Reading Romances says

A sweet friends to lovers story

The Dare and the Doctor is Kate Noble's third book in the "Winner Takes All" series. It can easily be read as a stand alone.

This regency style novel was slow paced and very romantic. I've read so many romance novels that lack real romance, but this one didn't, which made me so happy! Rhys and Margaret were the perfect match, however, I wanted more sexual tension and to read more about them realizing they were truly in love with one another. I particularly enjoyed their trip to Greenwich.

The author has great storytelling skills, but some scenes had a weird structure that go back to what happened before an event on the previous chapter. This works very well on TV, but it just messed with the pacing in my opinion.

This character driven story had depth and relatable characters, mainly the heroine. It was my first read by Kate Noble and now I'll look for the previous books in the series!

I voluntarily reviewed an Advance Reader Copy of this book.

Laurie says

Every once in a while, a book will fall into my lap and take me completely and utterly by surprise. Kate Noble's The Dare and the Doctor is just that book. Oh, my goodness -- this book (and series) delighted me on so many levels. It incorporates one of my hobbies, gardening (though I am no Margaret Babcock), a dash or two of family drama with a friends to lovers story that is smart and imaginative.

The aforementioned Margaret Babcock is a heroine who prefers the company of plants and flowers, because they don't judge. She is brilliant, funny and a beauty on her own terms. It is impossible not to adore this woman with unpolished edges and amazing heart. She is a woman before her own time and it is a sheer joy to walk beside her.

Dr. Rhys Gray is best kind of man – a very good friend, a dutiful son and wise medical practitioner. While wearing each of these mantles, he weighed down by obligation and may not see all that is in front of him.

Every moment spent in Margaret and Rhys's company was time well-spent. I loved their rhythm and rapport. The loveliness that was witnessing their relationship grow from that of confidantes to something more is among the facets of this book that made it magical to me. I simply adored these characters and how Kate Noble wove their story was clever and never cloying.

It is always fun to get the chance to visit with characters from previous books in a series and they appear here like a perfect Greek chorus. Their voices registering all the feelings of the reader with a wink, a poke or a swift kick to the shins. It simply made this book all the better.

Go grab not only The Dare and the Doctor, but also The Game and the Governess and The Lie and the Lady, each will keep you engrossed for hours on end. The perfect way to spend the day after Thanksgiving. Or as it is known in my house, National Pajama Day.

Enjoy!

Happy Reading

Barbara says

Although I generally love the "friends turned lovers" theme, this tale was lacking in the *sigh* department for me. Yes, it was obvious that Rhys and Margaret belonged together, and yes, I was hoping they would both realize it, but....there was not a single moment where I found myself completely in love with their love. If that makes any sense. I did enjoy Rhys' character and his inner struggle with his feelings for Margaret. I think I just wanted that moment in when they finally realized their love to have a little more "umph" to it.

Sonya Heaney says

Originally posted [HERE](#).

Kate Noble writes wonderful historical romances. They are full of truly unique characters, have plenty of plot rather than just having characters flit around ballrooms for no good reason, and they bring nineteenth century England to life.

I'd give *The Dare and the Doctor* five stars if it wasn't for the fact the entire book is written in out of place US English (perhaps the most mistakes I've ever come across), and a few times it nearly drove me to distraction! Noble writes a lot of books set in or about England; there's no excuse at this point.

Otherwise, I really loved this one. The author takes us into different parts of the London of the day, exploring the day-to-day as it was, and bringing the city to life. She gives her characters interesting occupations, and researches them thoroughly, but we are never bogged down in boring details.

I love how distinctive each one of her characters is. Our heroine here is SO socially awkward, and yet she is aware of it and not unhappy with who she is. Our hero is such a genuinely decent and thoughtful man, but stands up for himself when he needs to.

I also like that there's not time wasted on mental lusting and too much sex, and we get a complete romance instead. Too many authors are forgetting to have their characters fall in love these days, but that's never a problem with this author's books.

However, it's disappointing to have the fantastic atmosphere of the book ruined with wording that stood out like a sore thumb and made me groan with frustration.

I don't think it's unreasonable to expect an author of many books set in Britain to know words like *autumn* and *arse*. Astley's Amphitheatre was a real place, and that is a real name, and the spelling of places like these cannot be changed just because they brought up red squiggly lines on the editor's Word document!

I also sort of wish the characters had stopped blinking all the time. *Double blink* was used as a reaction so many times it nearly made **me** start doing it!

This book will work fine as a standalone, as it is a story pretty well self-contained. I think there're two points where events of past books are referred to directly, but they are easy enough to understand.

For me, *The Dare and the Doctor* was a really good read. I liked the uniqueness of the characters and the plot

they found themselves caught up in, and I would happily recommend it.

Review copy provided by NetGalley.

A side note:

I was reading an ARC, so maybe the actual book will be fixed, but I'm not the only one who has noticed Noble's books tend to come chock-full of typos and other errors. I do hope this is fixed, but seeing as the blurb on the cover of the last book mixes up loose and lose, I'm not so sure...

My original review:

I'd give this one five stars, but it is set in England and written entirely in US English, and I found that very frustrating.

I love Kate Noble's characterisation and original plotlines. I'm always excited to see a new book from her. This is a memorable story, and it has so MUCH story. Noble packs more into her books than most writers, so I never get bored.

However, I don't think it's unreasonable to expect an author of many books set in Britain to know words like *autumn* and *arse*. I also find it infuriating to see editors changing the spelling of British place names!

Proper review to come.

Wollstonecrafthomegirl says

There was much to like here. First and foremost, a great H/h. Margaret, bluestocking horticulturalist. Still distressed from the loss of her mother and a bit trapped in her own world. Except for when she corresponds with our hero, Rhys. With Rhys she can be herself. Rhys is rather a retiring sort himself. He's a hard-working doctor with a tiresome, large family for whom he feels responsible. In Rhys' words these are two people who "*very happily kept to themselves side by side.*" Companionable silences between them are exactly that: companionable.

Their romance is a friends to lovers. They're both already in love with the other, but in utter denial about it. They were very cute together. And the core of this story is held up by their romance. I liked friends to lovers because it tends to be comfortably sweet, and I was in the mood for that. This satisfied that craving nicely.

Noble's writing is fluid and her dialogue is good. She's a bit too modern and, at times, the characters quirks and traits seem to come direct from an early 00s romcom. There's this whole "I dare you" motif which goes on far too long, including into the sex scene, but none of that bugged me too much.

What did bug me, and what drags the rating right down is all the wholly unnecessary flim-flams and hoo-hahs. Plot, plot, plot everywhere and not a single one hearty enough to satisfy and so many bells and whistles the back half of the book practically screeched.

- Rhys is already engaged
- Complicated backstory about why he's engaged
- Drunken brother
- Scandalous mother
- Trip to Greenwich
- Sort of illicit night at an inn
- Scandal from illicit night at an Inn
- Duel
- Near death from duel
- Attempt to trap into marriage
- Unravelling marriage trap

For the love of God: commit to one or two elements and let the rest fall away.

It's all handled with an airiness that means none of these myriad elements seem to weigh the book down, but equally therefore, nothing ever seems very high stakes, even when it's supposed to and I wasn't invested in any of it. Ultimately, it detracted from a very nicely set up romance and everything coalesces to really bog the book down at the end.

That said, this kept me entertained for several spirited hours and I read straight through. Solid, solid 3 stars.

Chris C - A Midlife Wife says

It's easy to get hooked into these fun romance novels. *The Dare and the Doctor* is a continuation from *The Lie and The Lady*. We meet many of the same characters in each of the books of the series, but each can be read as a standalone too.

What I love about the writing of Kate Noble is that her style and flow of the story shines through. She always creates and casts strong women along with a strong man that beautifully offsets her and then crafts a tender love story with the lovely ending we crave.

Kate Noble makes it easy to fall in love with this style of writing. I know that it has changed the way I look at historical romances today. This book is yet another reason why I can fly through the pages and get transported back in time with a delightful story full of the hidden and reserved passion of the day. An amazing read!

Full review - <http://amidlifewife.com/dare-doctor-k...>

Caz says

I've given this a B+ at AAR, so that's 4.5 stars

This third book in Kate Noble's *Winner Takes All* series is another beautifully written romance featuring likeable central characters, a very well-drawn secondary cast and dilemmas that feel realistic while also being problematic enough to provide the necessary degree of conflict. **The Dare and the Doctor** is a gently

moving, character-driven friends-to-lovers story about two people who are perfect for each other falling in love while coping with personal and family difficulties. It's not absolutely necessary to have read the other two books in the series (*The Game and the Governess* and *The Lie and the Lady*) in order to appreciate this one, although it might help to have at least a rough idea of the storylines of each of them in order to be able to place the recurring characters.

Doctor Rhys Gray and Miss Margaret Babcock met briefly around a year earlier when Rhys visited his friend John Turner at his Lincolnshire home. Margaret's father, Sir Barty, is the local squire, a well-liked, congenial man who, at one time, had hoped to marry Leticia, Countess Churzy. As told in *The Lie and the Lady*, Leticia married Turner instead, but the Turners and the Babcocks remain on good terms, and Leticia has become one of Margaret's few friends.

Recognising in each other people of similar interests and turn of mind – as Rhys puts it, they “like to know things” – when Rhys’ visit is over, he and Margaret begin a correspondence in which they discuss their various academic interests and scientific pursuits. Margaret is a dedicated and talented horticulturalist, spending most of her time in the greenhouse on her father’s estate, where she cultivates and studies a variety of plants and flowers, adhering to scientific methods of study, experimentation and recording. She doesn’t just grow flowers, though – she is seeking to propagate a new variety of hardy China rose using a plant much beloved by her late mother, and she is passionate about her endeavours. But she is also quite shy and wary of people and places with which she is not familiar, so when Rhys writes to say that he has spoken to one of the most influential members of the Horticultural Society about her rose project and that he has asked her to come to London to present it to him, Margaret is apprehensive. She doesn’t really want to go to London, certainly not to take part in anything remotely approaching the social whirl that is the season, but her desire to get an expert opinion on her new roses – and the thought of meeting Rhys again, terrifying though it is – finally wins out over her nervousness, and she is persuaded to go along with the Turners, who arrange for them all to stay with their friends, the Earl and Countess of Ashby.

Once Margaret arrives, she is almost distraught to discover that the conservatory she had been promised as a place to work is not at all suitable, and immediately sets about putting it to rights. Yet her work is constantly interrupted – she has to go out for dress fittings, and to visit this place and that, when all she wants is to get back to her plants, her pots and making her special blend of manure and fishbone fertilizer.

Complicating things further is the fact that the Ashbys and the Turners seem to think that there is something more between Margaret and Rhys than a simple friendship born of an interest in science and academia. And of course, there is. It’s apparent to the reader straight away from the letters exchanged between the couple at the beginning of the book that they are more than half way toward being in love, but they continue to maintain that they are just friends, good friends, who happen to be interested in the same things.

Rhys was a doctor in the army, which is where he met Ashby and Turner, but he is the son of a viscount, a larger-than-life man who made fun of his bookish second son at every opportunity and whose sense of self-consequence and the superiority of his bloodlines unfortunately led to a quarrel with a neighbouring family which grew into something far more serious. As a result, the viscount and his eldest son fled to the continent, where they both continue to reside with no apparent desire to return home. But Rhys’ mother persists in the belief that if the disagreement between the two families can be patched up, her husband and son will return home and all will be well. And the method of patching up is for Rhys to marry Miss Sylvia Morton, the lovely daughter of a self-made businessman who had the effrontery – in Lord Gray’s opinion – to purchase the neighbouring estate and set himself up as a gentleman.

Even before he met Margaret, Rhys was resistant to the idea of the marriage, knowing – as his mother

refuses to acknowledge – that his father is quite happily living it up abroad and has no intention of returning to England. But he is a dutiful son and loves his family – even though they drive him round the bend – and has so far found it impossible to tell his mother “no”. Now that Margaret is in the picture, he is even less inclined to marry Sylvia, but can’t see a way to gently let down his emotionally fragile mother.

While this might seem like one of those very flimsily constructed “we can’t be together because I’ve got to marry someone else” plots at first, there’s more to it than that. For one thing, Rhys’ dilemma is extremely well written and laid out so that even when one wants to yell at him to forget his bloody family and do something for himself for once, it’s easy to understand why he finds that so difficult to do. In the absence of his father and older brother, he’s the man of the house and is the sole voice of calm and reason in what is, for the most part, a loveable, lively but somewhat unconventional (read bonkers!) family. His younger brother is in his “sowing wild oats” phase; his older sister is unhappily married and possessed of a very sharp tongue; his youngest brother is a tearaway and his mother doesn’t seem to inhabit quite the same reality as everyone else! Kate Noble paints a recognisable picture of family life complete with all its ups and downs and unpredictable messiness and somehow manages to make this bunch of collective pains in the arse rather endearing.

The romance between Rhys and Margaret is sweet and achingly tender, but not devoid of heat or passion. I like the friends-to-lovers trope as a rule, and it’s beautifully done here, right from the opening epistolary exchanges through to the gradually dawning awareness of the other’s attractions and of the true nature of their feelings for one another. Margaret is an especially appealing heroine; she has struggled with shyness and dislike of change all her life, and I admired her courage in deciding to get out there and try something new. She is refreshingly natural and honest, and when push comes to shove, is prepared to stand up for what she wants with a compelling grace and quiet conviction. And Rhys is a charming hero, a genuinely good, decent man who is torn between wanting to help his family or pursuing happiness with the woman he loves.

On the surface, **The Dare and the Doctor** tells a fairly simple story, but further exploration reveals an understated complexity arising from richly detailed characterisation and exquisitely crafted emotional nuance which made it one of those books I finished with a sigh of contentment. It’s not a ‘flashy’ book – there are no mysteries, spies, pirates, or other forms of derring-do to be found within its pages. But if you are looking for a rest from all that chasing around and appreciate a story replete with warmth, humour and subtlety, then I suggest you need look no further than this one.

Amanda says

3.5 stars

This was my first time reading Kate Noble and it wasn’t half bad. I know, how complimentary, right? Sad though, much like with Rules for a Rogue by Christy Carlyle, The Dare and the Doctor COULD HAVE been amazing and yet it ended up falling somewhat short. I hate when I find books that have all the potential in the world and yet the author approaches it like such, “Oh I know! I’ll create a truly beautiful couple that are perfect for each other in every way and instead of putting something more simplistic in their path, such as an unwillingness to admit feelings which, when done right, can have oodles of depth, I’ll throw my leads into a dramatic, bungled mess of a plot instead.” And that’s exactly what happened here. SIGH.

Lemme just say how much I loved Margaret, and Rhys by extension because of how much HE loved Margaret (though it took him awhile to figure that one out, the big dummy). Still, when he had thoughts like

these, his obliviousness was easy to forgive:

"To his mind, Margaret should for all the world be monumentally uncomfortable appearing in her work trousers in front of these men. But then again, perhaps it was the trousers. She was comfortable. There was no hiding, so there could be no worrying about how she was presented. The only person she had to be was herself.

It was glorious.

She was glorious."

As Rhys put it so perfectly, Margaret was never anything but herself, which in this case was a rather tall, botany obsessed introvert who said exactly what was on her logical mind, no matter the circumstances. And Rhys was just as likable, what with him being so similar to Margaret in personality and interests. Their minds were linked it seems, well before their hearts were, which of course added to the delight in all of their interactions. I think the letters, YES LETTERS!, they exchanged at the beginning (as well as Margaret's heartwrenching letter later on) really helped the reader believe that these two individuals were better together than they were apart. (view spoiler) I also loved how Rhys encouraged Margaret's botanical pursuits and Margaret in turn wholly supported Rhys's work as a doctor. See? Two halves of the same whole. Soul mates and the greatest of friends (and lovers). And how well they knew each other, inside and out, just dazzled me, yes, DAZZLED ME. Take for example the first time they make love (IN THE CONSERVATORY!!!) when Rhys can clearly tell that Margaret is uncomfortable in her nudity, he starts naming off the scientific terms of different parts of her body, before kissing them accordingly. Now to many people this would seem I'm sure like the most unromantic thing ever but for Margaret's eager to learn mind, it was just what she needed to hear in that moment and Rhys knew that *melts* THESE TWO AND THE THINGS THEY DID TO MY HEART!

This all sounds incredible doesn't it? And it was, for the most part. Until *~the plot* had to go and nearly ruin everything.

The one looming obstacle preventing Margaret and Rhys from being together, beyond their own fears of intimacy and risk of compromising their close friendship, was the fact that Rhys was sort of, kind of (BUT NOT REALLY) engaged to another woman. This plot has a shitton of drama and backstory to it of course, and I didn't give a fuck about any of it and I'm usually a plot girl. The woman in question also happened to be a shady, social climbing harpy with barely a hint of any depth to her, making her presence even more of an irritant. She and the shittiness that passed for a plot were the metaphorical thorns in the story's sides throughout, not mention constant cockblocks. Every time Margaret and Rhys shared a really special moment or you thought, "FINALLY, they're going to see how much they love and adore each other and fight to be together", SHE appeared like the evil 2nd lead in a Korean drama and ruined the mood and, by extension the overall flow of the book. It was so very frustrating. I guess the only positive out of all this is that we got a lot of LONGING from both Margaret and Rhys and I'm a sucker for that kind of thing. And of course everything gets all sorted by the final chapter, but I still can't help but wish Kate Noble had done something a little less complicated and stuck with what would've worked just as well, which was Rhys and Margaret, two very solitary creatures finding a way to open up enough to fall in love. Sometimes an emotional romance is all the plot that's needed.

So while this was technically not a 4-star book by any means because of the aforementioned issues I had with it, I still had to round the rating up because Rhys and Margaret made me cry and any couple that makes me cry deserves more than 3-stars. Actually their letters to each other alone are worth an added star. If you love starchy heroes AND heroines bonding over science-y things and becoming each other's person, try to ignore and/or just side eye the nonsense plot and read this book. It's a guaranteed feels inducer!

Becca says

I am stopping this book at about 40%. What started as a really promising premise rapidly devolved as more and more plot threads were introduced. I will be honest and admit that I am not one of those readers that powers through books when I am not emotionally invested. If I lose interest, I usually put the book down and read something else that I am interested in (my TBR pile is quite large and something always calls to me).

In this case, the writing is good and I loved the opening chapters with the letters. I was so excited to meet the characters and see them on the page after learning so many little things through their correspondence (I am a sucker for this which is why I tried this one after DNF'ing another of Noble's other books). I loved seeing the two characters when they were outside of London and I found it lovely that they were both more introverted and reserved.

But then, things started to fall apart:

--There are a ton of flashbacks that start mid-conversation. I don't mind flashbacks, but I appreciate when they are in more concrete chunks, not just thrown in as part of a conversation. It made it hard for me to follow and remember whenever everything was taking place.

--There was tons of introduced family drama. The hero has a lot of baggage...and it was not fun to read about. His inner thoughts entirely shifted from those of wry reflection to constant turmoil.

--There was another woman keeping the hero and heroine apart. They had enough reservations as it was, throwing in the OT plot device to hang onto throughout the novel just was too much needless angst.

I think this is one of those--it's not you, it's me situations. The writing was fine and the characterization was solid. I just didn't like the flashbacks or the plot devices the author chose. I probably won't be picking up another full-length novel of Noble's for a while though I may try a novella--I read a Christmas one by her that I really enjoyed.

AnnMarie says

The Dare and the Doctor is the third book in the 'Winner Takes All Series' by Kate Noble. I haven't read the first 2 books in the series, so can confirm that this book can easily be read as a stand alone one.

This story is about friends, Doctor Rhys Gray, and Miss Margaret Babcock. I thought it a really novel start to the story to have letters shown that were sent between the friends. They started off quite formally, and by the last one they were far less formal with their greetings and salutations at the end. Straight away you realise that the couple are firm friends that could easily be so much more.

Rhys is a doctor and Margaret is a budding botanical gardener. She has endeavoured to make a hybrid rose that is exotic, yet can withstand the British weather and will bloom more than just once a season. Rhys knows that she dreams of having the Botanical Society view her new rose and accept the hybrid. To her enormous thrill, he manages to set up a meeting in London with members of the society. Not only is she thrilled at showing the new rose, but she also really looks forward to spending time with Rhys.

There is an obvious attraction between the two of them, and although Rhys would dearly love to act on it, he

is reminded daily by his family that he is expected to marry another woman. Not for her fortune, or her good name, but to join the families together so that Rhys' father and brother can return from abroad where they ran when they disgraced themselves during a duel with his soon to be wife's father.

The more time Rhys and Margaret spend together the more they find themselves attracted to each other, so it's no surprise that when Margaret learns that Rhys is to be married she is distraught. She just wants to get her rose acknowledged by the society, and then go back to the country to lick her wounds. She is normally the kind of woman that knows what she wants and goes for it, but when a family's happiness is at stake she knows she must take a back seat to them. Mustn't she?

Rhys too knows his duty, is there any way he can reconcile himself to his dreaded future with a wife he doesn't love, or will he somehow find a way to be with Margaret without putting his family's happiness in jeopardy. He and Margaret are so obviously perfect for each other, they have to be able to be happy together, don't they?

This book was a near perfect telling of a 'friends to lovers' story. It's one where you wanted to keep on reading to get to the point where if nothing else, they give in and at least have a kiss. There is a trouble maker amongst them too, one that is trying to make sure that the couple don't get together, and for me, it was quite a surprise to learn who that troublemaker was. It was quite the captivating story, with a nice amount of medical information thrown in along with some botanical knowledge too. A well written story with only one fault, a fault that many American authors tend to have. The book is written about England, with English characters, and yet the writing is very much American English. Silly things like calling Autumn, Fall, the characters walking on the side walk rather than pavement, or saying you will bring something somewhere, which should be that you will take something somewhere. It's a shame that those errors were there because other than that the book would have been perfect.

I voluntarily reviewed an Advanced Readers Copy of this book.
