



# A Marriage of Inconvenience

*Susanna Fraser*

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Lucy Jones is a nobody. As an orphan she was reluctantly taken in by her wealthy relatives, the Arringtons, on the condition that she be silent and obedient, always. When her lifelong infatuation with her cousin Sebastian is rewarded by a proposal of marriage, she's happy and grateful, even though the family finds excuses to keep the engagement a secret.

James Wright-Gordon has always had the benefits of money and a high station in society, but he is no snob. He's very close to his sister, Anna, who quickly falls for the dashing Sebastian when the families are brought together at a wedding party. Meanwhile, James is struck by Lucy's quiet intelligence, and drawn to her despite their different circumstances in life.

Lucy suspects that Sebastian has fallen for Anna, but before she can set him free, a terrible secret is revealed that shakes both families. Will James come to her rescue—or abandon her to poverty?

95,500 words

## A Marriage of Inconvenience Details

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Author : Susanna Fraser

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# From Reader Review A Marriage of Inconvenience for online ebook

## Nefise says

I loved the story and its progress. Author's writing style is charming for me. So I'll try her other books too.

Just epilogue part might be little different. I can understand that James's resentment and anger but after that enraged, he forgave Lucy and accepted the situation very quickly. No, Lucy was not the only one to blame, she behaved incorrectly but she has decided the right thing in her own conditions. Just after James had a big disappointment and decided to separate their lives, I couldn't easily convince his sudden acceptance everything.

Except that part, from beginning to end, there's nothing I can say that it didn't fit me or didn't make sense. I read with great interest and pleasure. This kind of books, remind me that why I love to read romance books, especially historicals one.

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## Jacqueline says

Very nicely done regency. I enjoyed the development of the relationship between the hero and heroine. Well written and fairly evenly plotted. No real missteps in the historical accuracy. Very enjoyable. I did like the second book better though.

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## Katie Michaels says

As a poor relation, Lucy depends on her aunt and cousins to financially assist her and her younger brothers. And she doesn't expect much from life, perhaps a job as a governess one day. But her cousin Sebastian shocks her when he asks for her hand in marriage. Lucy has mooned over him for years, so she is thrilled. But she must keep the betrothal a secret until her cousin Portia's wedding is over.

During the family's trip to see Portia wed, Lucy meets the handsome viscount James and his lovely sister Anne. Sebastian becomes obviously besotted over Anne, but since their engagement is a secret, Lucy says nothing. In the meantime, Lucy is becoming fast friends with James, and perhaps is feeling a bit *too* friendly, but she honors her commitment to Sebastian. Until he betrays her. Then the road is clear for a relationship to develop between Lucy and the handsome lord who is worming his way into her heart.

This was a sweet little story. Of course, Lucy is a virgin, so we witness her indoctrination into the sexual realm. The love scenes are good, though not especially blush-worthy. The story development was solid and the main characters were easy to root for. You could see the big foil in the Lucy/James relationship coming from a mile away. I felt like his reaction was over the top and I wasn't able to forgive him quite as easily as Lucy did. But all in all, I found it an easy, satisfying read, that left me with a smile on my face. Almost 4 stars.

P.S. We get a glimpse of Anna's future in the epilogue. But I was pleased to find out we can read the rest of her story in her own book, *The Sergeant's Lady*.

## Wollstonecraft homegirl says

I liked this, although I'm being on the generous side with 4 stars. I read it straight through and moved immediately onto the next in the series, which is the surest sign I've enjoyed a book.

There's nice writing on display here which feels historically apt and not too much drama. It's very ballroom/front room/country house, not too much outside the norm, which I generally prefer.

The heroine, Lucy, is an impoverished poor relative who has ended up engaged to a cad for reasons I won't spoiler. At the same time she draws the attention of a neighboring title, our hero, James. James is a managing, good hearted politico. Lucy is insecure and fails to see her own attributes, namely her inner strength, kindness and beauty, after years of being belittled by her family. James sees all her good attributes and when the cad breaks up with her suddenly, James ends up compromising her. They have to marry and figure out how to be together, including how to make the sex work. The row at the end felt a bit excessive and manufactured for a last minute twist, but overall the plot was quite satisfying. It's an interesting, engaging story.

There are flaws it's a little light on developing a romance between the H/h. It all felt a bit too pragmatic. And as characters they were a bit weak, the characterisation was there, the volume needed turning up.

The sex was great, and far more varied than I expected from a book which felt quite traditionally regency in tone.

All in all, a good book.

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## Lyuda says

This was unexpected emotional role-coaster for me mainly due to the fact that I read *The Sergeant's Lady*, the author's wonderful debut novel, couple of years ago. The debut featured some of the secondary characters from this book. And I don't want to be cryptic, but I really-really wanted to shout: ***Anna, please stop what you're doing, just stop!***

Anyway, back to this novel. I'm not sure why it took me so long to finally read it. I really liked it. Many reviewers provided wonderful descriptions of the plot so I don't think I can add anything to that.

For me, the story shines when the main protagonists are the only ones on stage. Their slow building romance is so lovely! There is undeniable attraction, understanding and tenderness intermingled with humor. Both characters are likable, strong, honorable people protective of their families. Although, at one point toward the end, I wanted to throttle the hero for his overreaction but, thankfully, he quickly recovered and mended his ways. And even if I had some lingering doubts, the epilogue sure erased them.

I enjoy the author's writing style, her ability to infuse realism and create a believable historical setting and

her attention to details. Very well done!

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### **ShoSho says**

4.5 stars

I loved that this wasn't another silly historical romance that doesn't stay true to the time period it was suppose to happen in!

The characters didn't act modern ,they were exactly what you'd expect from people in regency England and I loved the story.

Plus for once the bad guy was taller and better looking than the hero. How refreshing is that ?!

It was one of the best historical romances I've read in while.

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### **Jess the Romanceaholic says**

This is a Quickie Review. To view the full review, please visit The Romanceaholic.

Expected Release Date: April 11, 2011

Publisher: Carina Press

Author's Website: <http://www.susannafraser.com/>

My Source for This Book: Netgalley

Part of a Series: Yes, Prequel to *The Sergeant's Lady*

Steam Level: Hot

When I first picked up this novel, I admit I was a bit hesitant. I have never read any other work by Susanna Fraser, so I was unfamiliar with all of the characters, and was very concerned with reading a story where the heroine is in love, jilted, and then very quickly married to another man. However, I quickly overcame my misgivings as I got to know both Lucy and Sebastian, and was introduced to both James and Anna.

Overall, this was a very enjoyable, mildly angsty romance with just a tiny hint of kink. The numerous family issues that Lucy experienced, and the delicate balance of trust she built with James made this a delightful read. 4/5 Stars

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### **Dorothea says**

*A Marriage of Inconvenience* is a prequel to *The Sergeant's Lady*, and a very good prequel. It fits so well with what I know about the characters in *The Sergeant's Lady* that I think it might have been written first -- but if that's the case, then the existing publication order is a very happy one, because the secondary plot of *A Marriage of Inconvenience* is the origin of the disastrous marriage from which "The Sergeant's Lady" escapes at the beginning of her own story. I'm very glad to know how Anna ends up happily before reading about her earlier misery in *A Marriage of Inconvenience*.

*A Marriage of Inconvenience* is a good romance all by itself, but I love it even more, not only for its position as back-story for *A Sergeant's Lady*, but because of its basis in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*.

Before you get worried -- no, this is not one of those ridiculous Jane Austen sequels or paranormal-izations or erotica-izations. Nor is it exactly fanfiction, at least not in the Missing Scene sense. I think *Mansfield Park* was an inspiration for Fraser's story, and that Fraser's story is a commentary on and criticism of *Mansfield Park*, as well as being its own story. And it's a very good one.

(stop reading here if you don't want spoilers for *Mansfield Park*!)

*Mansfield Park* is my favorite Austen novel. (My review is [here](#).) I have a lot of problems with it, but it's brilliantly written and thought-provoking. Earlier this year I had a long conversation with my best friend about it. He said that if only Henry Crawford had known better than to elope with Maria Rushworth, Fanny would have married him, Edmund would have married Mary Crawford, and everyone would have been happier: Fanny and Edmund needed the Crawfords to teach them how to be less stiff and puritanical. My view is that while I don't think that Fanny and Edmund ought to be together, Henry Crawford puts himself beyond the pale by continuing to pursue Fanny after she says No to him repeatedly, and Mary is also acting unforgivably by conspiring to urge him on despite Fanny's known wishes. The end of *Mansfield Park* is a triumph for Fanny (limited, but the only one available) because for the first time in her life, against the explicit desire of everyone to whom she's always submitted herself, she has exerted her own agency and been vindicated.

I haven't yet made my friend read *A Marriage of Inconvenience*, but I think it would please both of us. I imagine that Susanna Fraser first thought of her story by saying to herself, "*Mansfield Park* is such an interesting but frustrating book! Poor Fanny will never get to become her own person if she marries Edmund. It's a pity that the Crawfords turned out to be really bad after all. I wonder what would have happened if they had been nicer and Edmund's own flaws were more prominent..." [Edit: I just found an interview with Fraser about this.]

Lucy Jones (like Fanny Price) is the eldest daughter of a mother who left her gentry family to marry someone without social standing. When the family reaches a crisis, Lucy is adopted by her weak-willed aunt and raised (in a markedly inferior position) with her three cousins (the elder boy who grows up an irresponsible man prone to accumulating debts; the younger boy, Sebastian, who is kind to Lucy in a rather paternal way; the proud girl who is well aware of her superiority to Lucy).

Traveling for the daughter's wedding, Lucy and Sebastian meet Anna and James Wright-Gordon, a pair of dashing and friendly siblings. Sebastian is obviously taken with Anna...

The plot-driving problem in *A Marriage of Inconvenience* is not a mismatch of prudery and disregard for proprieties. It's that Sebastian is a hypocrite. Fraser has given him a few new flaws that Edmund lacked (Edmund was much more concerned with honor, for one thing) but besides these, Sebastian is really a more sinister Edmund, complete with his horror of any sign of indelicacy in women. I found this extremely satisfying.

Lucy's personality follows Fanny's even more closely; Fraser just gives Lucy the opportunities to gain self-esteem that Austen withheld from Fanny. Lucy starts off very self-abnegating, timid, and demure, and the sensitivity and kindheartedness that these qualities were based in (for Fanny as well) don't change; they're just allowed to flourish in healthier and more independent ways.

Anna Wright-Gordon is also delightful. Mary Crawford is one of my favorite characters ever, and I love how she recognizes Fanny's worth and seeks her happiness, even though she's misguided in her methods. Fraser doesn't do away with Mary's friendliness in Anna; it's easy to imagine that Anna really is Mary Crawford with a much nicer brother. (I also enjoyed imagining *The Sergeant's Lady* as the further adventures of an older, wiser Mary Crawford.)

Fraser also repurposes some plot details from *Mansfield Park*: Lucy, like Fanny, does the difficult part of her aunt's embroidery, and the amber cross and Mary/Anna's gift of jewelry reappear in the most delightful and appropriate ways.

However, because of the important ways in which James is different from Henry Crawford, Sebastian is different from Edmund Bertram, and Fraser's priorities are different from Austen's, the plot of *A Marriage of Inconvenience* really doesn't parallel that of *Mansfield Park*; the two diverge very early on. Rather, their relation is that of mutual commentary: *A Marriage of Inconvenience* makes some points about the dangers of prudery and self-abnegation that *Mansfield Park* (at least superficially) ignores, and *A Marriage of Inconvenience* is most fully understood and enjoyed as a variation on Austen.

It may be coincidence, but *Mansfield Park* is especially well suited to this kind of intertextuality: Austen's novel is itself illuminated by the parallels between its own characters and the dramatis personae of *Lovers' Vows*, the play whose private acting is such an important part of Austen's plot. Here's a good explanation of that connection.

As much as I admire what Fraser has done, I might not recommend *A Marriage of Inconvenience* to Austen fans who aren't familiar with today's romance genre. (And *definitely* not to Austen fans who don't like feminist criticism -- although romance fans who *do* like feminist criticism should like Fraser regardless of their stance on Austen.) Because Fraser is not Austen, and because *A Marriage of Inconvenience* is very much a genre romance, it lacks the rewarding subtlety of Austen's social maneuverings and ethical and emotional quandaries. Readers who don't already appreciate genre romance for its own sake will probably not find that deliberate comparisons to Austen make them more favorably inclined.

For my part, because I was so delighted by the Austen commentary in the set-up, I felt slightly let down by the second half of the story. At this point the plot has diverged so much from *Mansfield Park*'s that the only continuing commentary is the main theme of Lucy learning to assert herself. It's also at this point that the story really relies on a typical genre-romance plot structure: in the absence of any further external obstacles, the couple's relationship is threatened by private misunderstandings and potential incompatibilities that they must overcome. Lucy and James have two such problems, and while Fraser handles them sensibly, they were less interesting to me than the rest of the plot and made me dislike James a bit.

Still -- I am very, very impressed.

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## Ruth says

This was an excellent follow-up to , which you absolutely HAVE to read before this one. I really liked that this one was a prequel. It must have taken some careful planning to work the two stories together, but they mesh together beautifully. Not only do we get to have Lucy and James's story, but we also see more about the characters from Anna and Will's story. It really works incredibly well, and the attention to detail is extremely good.

There were several things which I really liked about this one

- The virgin bride thing is handled incredibly well. I've always been slightly miffed that authors refer to The Talk that brides would have had from their mothers prior to marriage, and this one works with that by giving it a twist. I appreciate the honesty.
- It deals with the unhappiness of marriage when really, how well did some of these carefully-chaperoned and essentially ignorant women know their husbands prior to marriage?
- It also centers on what happened to poor relations. They would have been completely dependent upon a wealthier relative for everything, but that goodwill was a tenuous thing.

I really like the way Susanna Fraser writes. Both of her books I've read have a lot of attention to detail in both the setting and the realism of the characters, that I really enjoy. I'm not saying that most other books are sloppy, but I really appreciate that she goes to effort to make it as accurate as you can whilst still telling a great romance.

Also, the covers of these two books are just beautiful.

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## **Book Binge says**

Lucy gets engaged to her cousin, Sebastian, whom she's always admired. He was always the kind one of the family, the one that was most attentive when she went to live with his family after her parents died. Lucy knows that Sebastian doesn't love her but she thinks herself in love with him so she accepts his proposal. Sebastian's mother wants the engagement kept a secret because she doesn't want the limelight taken from Sebastian's sister, Portia, who is to be married soon. Soon after the proposal Lucy and her family heads off to the country for Portia's wedding. While there Lucy meets Portia's soon to be neighbors the Viscount Selsley and his sister, Anna Wright-Gordon. She builds a quick bond with both but with Lord Selsley, James, she finds she can be herself and feels quite comfortable with him.

When Sebastian meets Anna Wright-Gordon he is instantly smitten and finds that he can't seem to stay away from her. Lucy is quite hurt at the attention that Sebastian dotes on Anna but since no one knows that he and Lucy are engaged she can't really show her ire.

When the head of Sebastian's family comes to the country to reveal that he has lost all of the family's money Lucy is jilted by Sebastian immediately due to the fact that Anna has a boatload of money and can save the family. Lucy and James are then found in a compromising situation and are then wed.

Up until this point in the book I was really loving this story. I didn't particularly care for Sebastian because I knew there was something hinky going on with him and that he wasn't the fine upstanding honorable citizen that he portrayed. When he jilted Lucy I just wanted to crawl into my ereader and give him a big ole punch in the jaw. I felt so badly for Lucy but she soon found herself with James which was so much better for her. I loved seeing the friendship and attraction grow between James and Lucy and I wanted them together so much it was ridiculous. But I also really loved Anna and didn't want that nice young lady stuck with yucky Sebastian (and as the book goes on he gets worse and worse).

But then everyone gets married – first Lucy and James, then Portia and her man and then Sebastian and Anna



- and the book kind of changed for me. Lucy, though she seemed a bit cowed by her family and their hatefulness in life, was quite a strong person overall. However, when she married James she seemed to become a different person. Yes, I can imagine that becoming a viscountess when you've only ever thought of growing up and being a companion or a governess could be quite daunting, but the way she was handling things didn't seem to be quite in line with what we knew of her personality prior to the marriage. Also, while I knew from the first part of the book that Lucy had learned to hold her tongue quite a bit (hence being a strong person because of living with mean people) I never thought of her as one that was totally in control. When she married James one of the big things was that she couldn't let herself orgasm because it felt like she was losing too much control and she had always been in control. I just couldn't see that from what I knew of her. She lived in a family that basically controlled her life – what she did, what she learned, who she knew, how she dressed – when might she have had control? It was a bit confusing.

Then there is quite a large incident in the story that puts James and Lucy at sixes and sevens and it was a biggie. I can't tell you what happened cuz that would be too much of a spoiler, but it was enough to possibly tear them apart for good. While I felt that James overreacted a bit I had to remember that though he was a viscount he was only 24 years old! It helped to get me through the rough patch.

In the end I really loved the first part of the book and felt just ok with the second so my rating reflects the middle road. I really liked the author's voice and will definitely be reading more of her books in the future. I would have loved to have found out more about Anna and Sebastian but after looking at the author's website I realized that Anna's story has already been told – which is good for me since I want to know what happened! lol

Rating: 4 out of 5

This review was originally posted on Book Binge by Tracy.

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## **Bubu says**

In its set-up *A Marriage of Inconvenience* by Susanna Fraser reminded me very much of *Mansfield Park*, however, without covering quite as many topics as Jane Austen's book does. But it's only the general set-up that bears a resemblance; the plot is very much different.

Miss Lucy Jones has lived with her aristocratic relatives, the Arringtons, ever since the death of her parents at the age of nine. Penniless and powerless, Lucy learns to keep quiet and stay obedient. Treated by the Arrington's with thoughtless neglect (Aunt Arrington) at best, at worst with malice by her cousin Portia, Lucy fancies herself in love with her cousin Sebastian who has been the only one to show her kindness. There's also the eldest of the Arrington's, Sir Henry - or Hal -, who is absent for most of the book.

The book starts with a completely unexpected proposal of marriage from Sebastian to Lucy, which she accepts. But because Portia is soon to be married to the Marquess of Almont, they decide to keep the betrothal secret until after Portia's wedding. What Lucy doesn't know is that Sebastian has ulterior motives.

At the Marquess's country estate, where Portia's wedding to the Marquess is to take place, Lucy meets James Wright-Gordon and his sister Anna Wright-Gordon (heroine of *The Sergeant's Lady*). Now, everything gets a little complicated. There's an instant attraction between Sebastian and Anna. Lucy sees it but can't act upon it because her betrothal to Sebastian is to stay a secret. At the same time, there is a growing attraction between

Lucy and James. It becomes clear pretty quickly that Sebastian is the evil guy of the story. An opportunist, he breaks off his engagement to Lucy, as soon as he is sure of Anna's affection to him. Besides, unlike Lucy, Anna has a huge dowry. James is suspicious of Sebastian's true character, but his sister proves to be too head-strong. So what happens, happens. Anna and Sebastian end up being engaged, and Lucy and James find themselves in a compromising situation which leads to their marriage. Neither James, nor Anna have any knowledge of Lucy's and Sebastian's broken-off engagement, which will become a problem later in the book. Basically, Sebastian makes Lucy promise never to tell anyone, especially James and Lucy, about it.

James is, by far, the more interesting character, or rather refreshing character. I enjoyed it that he's nothing like most heroes of Romance novels. He lost his parents at a young age as well. He loved another woman and was let down by her. It was refreshing, however, that he's not a brooding, tormented man who carries self-loathing as a sort of badge of honour. He's young, only 24, and politically ambitious. He loves his sister and his remaining relatives, and is loved in return. James is an incredibly honourable man and his interactions with Lucy are very sweet.

Lucy's character was harder to grasp. I can't really put my finger on it. Maybe it was her characterisation that wasn't done well enough, or maybe there was so much else going on in the first 65% of the book, but I didn't quite believe in her growing affections for James. I didn't dislike her, though. She's a very practical person, knowing that her position in life doesn't give her many choices. She takes what she can get, without being a martyr. I loathe martyrs.

The third part of the book revolves very much around the expectations and worries that Lucy and James feel concerning their marriage. Especially Lucy, who has no knowledge of sex whatsoever, finds it difficult to adjust to the marriage bed. James is trying his best to comfort his wife and pleasure her sexually. Lucy has control issues which prevent her from enjoying sex. There's a little bit of psycho-babble going on here that put me off a little. The direction of their conversation concerning her problems sounded too modern, but it wasn't a big issue. Anyway, James makes Lucy overcome her fears and they have great sex. I know it sounds silly, but there's no other way to put it. Anyway, I did find it refreshing that James wasn't just another Romance hero who can make any woman come just by looking at her, and Lucy wasn't just another Romance heroine panting and moaning and losing her head the moment James touches her. It takes some coaxing and convincing - and a little bit of bondage - from James for Lucy to relax (!) into the role of a wife who allows herself to enjoy the physical aspects of marriage.

Where's the conflict? There must be a conflict, right? Well, it comes after Sebastian's deception and Lucy's unknowing participation in it is revealed (I'm trying not to put any spoilers here). Remember? She had made a promise not to tell a soul about their betrothal, and if it hadn't been for Sebastian's lousy character and his ulterior motives, it wouldn't have hurt anyone in the first place. However, James is disgusted to find out about the secret engagement, but more so that Lucy wasn't honest, and one word from her could have prevented his beloved sister's marriage to Sebastian. He's devastated to see Anna completely transformed very shortly after her wedding to Sebastian. I found his worries for his sister extremely touching, but at the same time, his reaction towards Lucy a little over the top. They went from total bliss to utter destruction within a matter of two pages. It is Anna who rescues the day, though. She makes it clear to both, James and Lucy, that she was so besotted with Sebastian, she would not have listened and had moved forward with her wedding. I must say, the ending felt rushed and incomplete. For all his sweetness, James's behaviour was slap-worthy, and Lucy was too quick to forgive him. She should have made him grovel a little longer, especially after all that he had said to her.

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## willaful says

3.5 stars. This story reads like what you might get if Fanny's cousin Edmund from *Mansfield Park* had had a sleazy side, and if Henry and Mary Crawford weren't made into the baddies. (This turns out to have been deliberate. I don't think the book moved as far from the original inspiration as the author thought, though.)

Poor relation Lucy is thrilled, though very surprised, when her beloved cousin Sebastian proposes marriage to her. But shortly thereafter, they meet James, Lord Selsley, and his sister Anna, a very beautiful and extremely wealthy heiress. As Sebastian's interest turns in Anna's direction, Lucy is distraught, yet at the same time she finds herself strangely drawn to James.

The title isn't an apt one, since no marriage takes place until two thirds into the story; by that point, James and Lucy are pretty into each other, so it isn't even all that inconvenient.

I enjoyed Fraser's voice and her characters very much. James is a darling, a jaunty, intelligent young man who appreciates Lucy's quiet beauty and artistic talents. (He's also on the short side, which comes off as totally charming.) Lucy is also very likable: she's in the unpleasant position of being dependent on people who dislike her, but she conducts herself with dignity and sense.

The story feels unbalanced though. The section before the marriage is leisurely but well paced; the latter part just feels off. One of the conflicts which arise (view spoiler) was not sufficiently foreshadowed, and the other conflict is heartrending but rushed. I also wish Fraser had taken out all the *Mansfield Park* elements; these are *not* the same characters -- thankfully -- and I found the vestigial reminders distracting.

I'm not surprised that Fraser's second book was the first to be published, since it was more polished. I look forward to her third.

(P.S. There's a very confusing review of this at GoodReads, which implies that this is not a typical romance with a happy ever after ending. In regard to the hero and heroine, that is absolutely not true. For more info about the secondary characters, see *The Sergeant's Lady*)

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## Fani \*loves angst\* says

This is a book difficult to rate because it went from a keeper to a wall banger to an engaging read only to end as just OK.

I don't feel like saying much about the plot, since the description here in Goodreads says it all: The heroine gets secretly engaged to her favorite cousin but then he meets the hero's sister, jilts her for the rich-chick and the hero and heroine who have been friends so far, get caught in a compromising position and forced to wed.

The first half/part of the book was perfect. The part where Lucy and James get better acquainted with each other, the friendship that slowly turns to attraction, Lucy's feelings of guilt since she's betrothed to another, James' admiration of Lucy's strength and courage, all were exquisitely done. I felt their attraction, their tenderness, their misgivings, their hesitation, their passion. And then, they were forced to marry and everything went downhill. Suddenly, Lucy transformed from a calm, steady, intelligent and self-possessed

heroine to a frightened, insecure, self-questioning woman that couldn't believe she was worthy of being a viscountess. On top of that, for a woman with enough passion and sufficient lack of self-control to get caught in '*flagrante delicto*', she suddenly develops so much self control that she "can't let herself go" during the physical act and have an orgasm. At that point and for the following 60 pages or so, the whole focus of the book turned to whether Lucy would have an orgasm or not. She was frustrated, her husband was frustrated and this poor reader was even more frustrated than both of them.

However, eventually Lucy *did* get an orgasm -hallelujah!- and the plot could move forward once more. I really liked this part of the book as well, where a big misunderstanding forces our heroes apart and threatens their newfound happiness. I found their reactions realistic, their angst heartbreaking and was looking forward to their reconciliation. And since this a romance, of course there was one. It left me however somewhat disappointed. The ending in my opinion lacked oomph, a certain passion, a feeling that those two were really indispensable to each other instead of just a good match. Though those two were well suited, I read romances for that rare smoldering heat and passion that are not easily met in real life; Not for the understanding and tenderness that's so often met in most happy marriages anyway. But that might just be me after all. I can't help but wishing that the ending was stronger though.

So, 3 stars for the second half and 5 for the first, result in a total of 4 stars. Still, I can't help but feel saddened for the feeling of lost potential in this one. I did like the author's writing style so much though, that I'll probably try more books of hers in the future.

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### **Melissa says**

I loved Fraser's *An Infamous Marriage*, with its complex characters and mature, sophisticated relationship development, so I had high hopes for this book. Unfortunately, it was a disappointment. I didn't find the characters all that interesting or emotionally engaging, and the story felt like a perfunctory Regency romance plot. I could see all the wheels turning behind the scenes, and found it hard to disengage the part of my brain that was analyzing the mechanics and finding them wanting, in order to get swept up in the story.

After dragging along rather dully for the first part of the novel, the ending felt rushed, especially with regard to a pair of secondary characters who had been a big part of the story. The novel ended with a "10 years later" epilogue infodump to tell you what happened to them, which is one of my biggest pet peeves ever.

This one was just...blah. A 2.5 star read, I'd say.

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### **Denise says**

Wonderfully written story that had me hooked from the first line.

Lucy Jones was orphaned at a young age and eventually was taken in by her Aunt and Uncle. They were not kind to her and she learned to adapt by holding in her emotions. She and her cousin become secretly engaged and while she is very happy about it, she questions why he wants to marry her.

While visiting her female cousins fiance's family to prepare for the wedding, she meets James Wright-Gordon, who she connects with right away. Lots of sensual tension between them. Meanwhile her fiance' falls for James' sister Anna and after finding out the family fortune has been lost, he proposes to Anna without first breaking off the engagement with Lucy. To complicate matters to the extreme, James and Lucy

are found in a compromising position and James steps up to the plate to marry her. Plenty of twists, turns and shocking secrets throughout that kept me so captivated that I had trouble putting this down.

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