



Sweet Hearts

Melissa Brayden , Rachel Spangler , Karis Walsh

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Do you ever wonder *Whatever happened to...*? Find out when you reconnect with your favorite characters from Melissa Brayden's *Heart Block* , Rachel Spangler's *LoveLife* , and Karis Walsh's *Worth the Risk* .

In *Firework* by Melissa Brayden: Lucy Danaher was born into a life of privilege, and has always enjoyed the view from the top. But after clashing with reporter and rights activist Kristin James, she wonders if there's more to the world than she once thought.

In *Getting Serious* by Rachel Spangler: Lisa Knapp has never been the romantic lead. She's better suited to comic relief, but when another guest at her best friend's wedding doesn't go for the easy laugh, Lisa has to face the prospect of getting serious.

In *Risk Factor* by Karis Walsh: Myra Owens runs a therapeutic riding program for returning soldiers. She won't risk getting hurt by becoming personally involved with her riders until Ainslee Harriot challenges her to take a chance on love.

Sweet Hearts Details

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From Reader Review Sweet Hearts for online ebook

Lucky Luc says

This book was just meh. If not for Melissa Brayden, I would have given this a 1.5 to 2 stars. Rachel Spangler's "Getting Serious" was a cute Novella but I could not connect with Lisa's droning on and on about "not being life coached" as her excuse for acting like a normal person attracted to a real woman who was not looking for just another notch on her belt. But the writing was good and I was able to connect with Marty, who was patient and kind when dealing with Lisa's irrational petulance. However, Kari Walsh's "Risk Factor" was just not very good as a romance. The premise of the book being to help wounded warriors with PTSD by helping them connect with nature and their inner peace through horses was beautiful and would have been a perfectly fine short story without the forced insta-love between Myra and Ainslee. I thought it was contrived to force us to believe these 2 women would fall for each other so quickly, including Myra falling for her when she just saw a picture of Ainslee like a pre-pubescent boy looking at his first Victoria Secret catalog. Perhaps it is because this book had the unfortunately timing of following Lola Keeley's "The Music & the Mirror," which is one of the top 5 romance novels I've ever read, but I felt like I was just trying to get through the book because of the lack of depth in the characters in the last 2 stories, even with the knowledge all 3 stories were novellas.

Kate says

This book was one of the ones I had chosen to read over the Christmas break. It was nice to have shorter stories to read rather than a full novel. I will read anything that Melissa Brayden is involved in and I wasn't disappointed here. Besides her story the one by Rachel Spangler and Karis Walsh I read as standalones. I really enjoyed each of these stories and if you're looking for a good romantic read then this is worth a try. I will say I think I prefer a longer length novel rather than short stories. I find it hard not having the depth that a full length novel gives you. This is why I often wish we could see more from the people in these stories.

ARC received via NetGalley

Margaret says

I can't actually believe that I'm rating something with words by Melissa Brayden in it less than 4 stars but hey - first time for everything I guess... :-/

Rather than comment individually on each story I'm just going to say that these novellas felt...tired. Like there was a reason that these novellas are novellas rather than full length sequels. I agree with another Goodreader who suggested that Getting Serious by Rachel Spangler felt a little rushed and like it had enough for a full length novel of its own. Probably no surprise, then, that I found this the most enjoyable of the three.

3 stars is possibly a little harsh - all three authors are well loved for a reason and their professionalism shows in the quality of their writing. However I guess with this reputation comes high expectations and I just didn't get the sense of joy and swoon that I usually associate with finishing new books by these authors.

~ * K E L L I E * ~ says

Sweet Hearts is an easy, light-hearted read featuring some of my favorite authors – Melissa Brayden, Rachel Spangler and Karis Walsh.

All three novellas are follow up stories to the authors' previous work (Melissa Brayden's Heart Block, Rachel Spangler's LoveLife and Karis Walsh's Worth the Risk).

All three novellas were enjoyable reads. I loved 'Firework' by Melissa Brayden. Then again, I've thoroughly enjoyed everything Ms Brayden has written to date so why should this be any different ;-) I also completely enjoyed 'Getting Serious' by Rachel Spangler. Ms Spangler's entertaining story had me smiling on a few occasions. 'Risk Factor' by Karis Walsh was good, although I found it to be my least favorite of the three stories in this collection.

Overall, Sweet Hearts was a nice read and I'd recommend it to readers who love cute/fluffy/entertaining romances (as I do) and/or those who like shorter novella lengths.

All in all, 3.5 stars

ARC provided by publisher via NetGalley

Pippa says

Fireworks by Melissa Brayden. 4 stars

Lucy is the CEO of a large newswire service, who is comfortable in her life of privilege and protective of her work. Kristin has just moved to San Diego, and needs to crack a great story to cement her new position as reporter in the local paper. Sparks fly when they meet for the interview, but will they be able to find common ground when they have such different perspectives?

This is another charming tale by Brayden, who always delivers likable characters and delightful stories. However, this shorter story felt a little rushed in places, and I felt I wanted a little more depth to the characters. It was still a joy to read and lovely to see more of the characters introduced in Heart Block.

Getting Serious, by Rachel Spangler. 4.5 stars

Lisa has always been the comic relief, rather than Prince Charming. Having thrown the wedding for her best friend Joey and her new wife Elaine, Lisa is the boi of the ball in her tux. Meeting Elaine's life coach Marty for the first time, Lisa finds herself captivated by the sophisticated and elegant Marty. Becoming the leading lady requires challenging how Lisa sees herself, and Lisa isn't sure she can.

This is a charming, clever and often witty tale. Spangler gives us just the right amount of detail to make the story work. It was a pleasure to read and I really liked both the main characters, although Lisa is better

developed than Marty. It was interesting to see the main characters from LoveLife in a different light, and to see more of Lisa, who is a winning character in her own right.

Risk Factor, by Karis Walsh. 2.5 stars

Myra runs a therapeutic riding program for returned soldiers. Ainslee is recently returned from Afghanistan where she was injured and had lost a leg. Still making the adjustment to her new prosthesis, physically and emotionally, she is struggling to come to terms with it all. Whilst in the roles of trainer and trainee, they both struggle with their immediate attraction to one another as well as their own emotional baggage.

This was the most problematic of the three short stories. The others were well resolved and the characters fun and engaging. The difficulty here is with the bigger hurdles the main characters have to overcome in a shorter story, and narrative time. The obstacles here seemed insurmountable rather than believable, and the characters prickly and unforgiving in their treatment of each other. It meant that I didn't really believe any of it unfortunately. I liked the equine elements of the story, and Walsh always does well with that aspect of the narrative. Perhaps it was harder for me because I hadn't read the original book, Worth the Risk, which had the romance between Myra's best friend and her new lover, but this story didn't work well for me.

Overall, I do think the first two stories are good enough to carry the book. I definitely recommend the first two stories, and will happily re-read them.

Pin says

Three novella-length romances for three best friends of main characters from three previous novels -- Emory Owen's best friend and business partner Lucy from Melissa Brayden's Heart Block, Joey Lang's best friend Lisa from Rachel Spangler's LoveLife, and Kate Brown's best friend and sort-of business partner Myra from Karis Walsh's Worth the Risk. A great idea and great execution. I loved all characters and their story lines. All three authors made good use of the shorter form, but each story would make good novel-length material. I've read all three novels that precede the Sweet Hearts stories, but I believe they can be read as standalones. I would recommend these stories to anyone who enjoys a good romance, and don't mind the shorter form.

ARC provided by publisher via NetGalley for review

Tiff says

Sweet Hearts: Romantic Novellas is just what it says it is SWEET. Insert "awe" here, and feel free to really draw it out like us Southerners do, AAAWWWWEEE. This is quick read, distinctively broken up into three well written, compelling novellas. All three authors are quite frankly amazing writers, and it shows time and time again in the works that they produce. This book is no different, even though each story is relatively short.

Normally when I review a book I will give a brief synopsis of who each of the main characters are and what's the basic premise of the story. I'm going to skip this step this time, and tell you what you really want

to know, is this book worth your time. I think yes, would be my resounding answer. Yes, this book is good. Sweet Hearts is fun, it's cute, and it gets right to the point in each of the three stories. Do I wish each was longer, hell to the yes for two of them, and one of the stories I was glad it was the length that it was. My final point is that well let's be honest, it has a Melissa Brayden story in it, that's really all you had to say to sell me.

Ty says

Well this was just delightful and a wonderful way to spend time. I was worried about the novella length of the stories (I'm a person who really likes to dig into stories), but these were all written well enough to still offer satisfaction at their conclusion. Spangler's story in particular seemed to actually fit the shorter format, possibly because it only spanned over two days and implied the ending was just the beginning. Walsh's story is the one I think could have most benefitted from a full length exploration because of the depth of what she was exploring, but she still managed to cover a lot of ground with only the tiniest bit of excessive force.

What's interesting to me about going back to a universe and picking out one of the side characters to tell a story about is that usually those side characters are responsible for a lot of the humor or light heartedness in stories like these. The quirky best friend, so to speak. In both Brayden's and Spangler's stories, it was evident that Lucy and Lisa, respectively, had indeed played those roles because the dialogue in their novellas was snappy and witty as they stayed true to their characters. Walsh's story did less of this with Myra, but it's understandable given what she has been through in the interim between stories.

These are three of my favorite writers right now, so this was a joy. Possibly the only thing that could have made it better for me would be to also throw in something from Georgia Beers and Lynn Galli.

Velvet Lounger says

Three short stories giving us an insight into the love life of the besties from Melissa Brayden's Heart Block, Rachel Spangler's LoveLife, and Karis Walsh's Worth the Risk.

All light and fun reads, exactly what you would expect from such good romance writers and a lovely way to follow on from the main event. All three use the characters from the first book, but all stand alone as charming little tales.

Alena says

Netgalley

I know I am not a fan of short stories in this genre, but figured the wait was too long for the next full novel by Brayden.

Brayden's story here was the best of the bunch, but for me her witty bantering is teetering closer and closer to

the edge of annoying.

I didn't like the other two stories as much, Spangler's mainly because I already had issues with the book it was based on. These issues continued here.

So yeah, lesson learned. Really only try shorts based on characters I liked the first time around. I'm guessing that someone who generally likes shorts in this genre will like it.

Kathryn says

Firework by Melissa Brayden: 5- as always. [FF] Loved the story of Lucy and Kristin. Kristin is a no nonsense reporter who does a story involving Lucy's company in an unfavorable way. Will it effect their budding relationship?

Getting Serious by Rachel Spangler: 1- [B] Just a lot of male ego and bluster...abandoned

Risk Factor by Karis Walsh: 3- [B] This story was just ok. Loved the horses and how they helped change the lives of returning soldiers.

D. Leigh says

Three well established romance writers inside one cover? What a deal!

Karis Walsh spins another horsey tale, this one about a therapeutic riding program for returning veterans suffering from physical and emotional scars. As always, the author's attention to detail, knowledge of her subject, and experience in building a story arc shows. Good story.

Rachel Spangler spins a new tale off her previous novel "Love Life." That book was probably the least favorite of mine among her books (I haven't read the latest one about baseball since men's professional baseball is about the only sport that holds absolutely no interest for me) because of a small plot weighed down by pages and pages of reflection by the characters. The spin-off story for "Sweet Hearts," however, is a vast improvement. I found the characters much more likable and the narrative much tighter and fast paced. Very good story.

Finally, I totally admire Melissa Brayden as one of the better writers in our genre. She writes bright, crisp dialogue and clean narratives. However, she had a major fail on researching her subject for a spin-off of one of my favorite of her previous novels, "Heart Block." In that book, one of the main characters owns a communications company that basically distributes the news releases churned out by the public relations departments of businesses and corporations. As a working journalist of more than 30 years, I can confirm that such wires do exist. And, she's vague enough about the details of how the company works that she doesn't trip over any inaccuracies. Unfortunately, she does delve into details in her story for "Sweet Hearts" and gets two VERY BIG things wrong that would have required her to rethink her storyline to correct them. Sorry, Melissa, as much as I love your writing, this story pulls down my overall star rating for "Sweet Hearts."

Kitty Kat says

This collection of stories follows characters from previous books the authors have written. The first, Firework, by Melissa Brayden was my favourite of the three. It was a great story and I would like to have read a whole novel about these characters. Lucy and Kristen are at loggerheads over a story Kristen is writing, which will make Lucy's company look bad. Even so they are hugely attracted to each other and find it hard to resist taking things further. The steamy scenes are hot as one would expect from Melissa Brayden and very well written.

The second story by Rachel Spangler, 'Getting Serious', is also really good. Lisa and Marty meet at a wedding of mutual friends and hit it off immediately but there is a problem - Marty is a life coach and Lisa thinks that is all a bit of hooey. Lisa is also very guarded and has some problems opening up. Nevertheless they still manage to get close. The sex scenes are wonderfully written and full of tenderness. I really enjoyed the story and it has made me want to read her previous book where some of the characters came from.

The third story although pretty good and satisfying was not really so gripping. 'Risk Factor' by Karis Walsh centred around an equestrian centre and an attempt to rehabilitate war veterans. I'm not a horsey person so didn't find all of the horse stuff very interesting but maybe if you are then you'll find it fascinating. Myra, who lost her brother as a result of war, tries to help three vets, one of them the beautiful Ainslee. The story of how she tries to help Ainslee and their growing attraction was fine but could probably have done with a longer book to fully explore all of the issues.

All in all a good compilation to while away a few hours.

I was given this ARC by Inked Rainbow Reads in return for an honest review.

Tara says

I quite liked all three of these. If you like these authors, you'll probably like the stories too.

Melissa Brayden wrote a Melissa Brayden story, which you either love or you don't (I do, and I enjoyed this one almost as much as I enjoy Heart Block and that's one of my all time favourites of hers, second only to Kiss the Girl).

Rachel Spangler wrote what was, for me, the strongest entry in the book and I want more of Marty and Lisa.

I enjoyed Karis Walsh's story, but for me, that's the story that would have most benefited from being drawn out to a full length novel.

If you like novellas, this is a decent set, especially if you like the books these are offshoots from.

Elizabeth says

First - the obligatory:

Note: This ARC was provided by NetGalley & Bold Strokes Books in exchange for an honest review.

Now the review:

I was having trouble staying engaged with this series of short novellas from some of the best Lesbian Romance writers in the business, so I just spent the last few hours powering through in order to reach the end and move on to my next read. I know, not something that usually accompanies a 4-star review but, mostly, it was because my nightstand is starting to pile high with books, and I'm anxious to get to them :).

Another reason for the 4-star review was due to my very favoritest author and Goddess of the Heart, Melissa Brayden being the front-runner, along with the always well-written and spunky Rachel Spangler, and my intro into the thoughtful and poignant writings of Karis Walsh.

5 stars - I know there were some lack-of-research holes that were discovered in Brayden's short story, "Firework", but it still served as my favorite of the three. Melissa's always fun and delightful banter between her main characters, as well as those quick-wit descriptors, such as:

"I suppose I could leave you to your drink."

"It's an option," Kristen said with a smile.

Lucy raised her shoulder. "I mean, for all I know, you're waiting on someone. A hot date perhaps."

Kristen nodded. "Yep. The hottest. She'll be here any minute now."

I thoroughly enjoyed Lucy and Kristen's tumble story into love, and it was a nice reflection against Brayden's famous "Heart Block". It was such a treat to return to Emory, Sarah, and Grace (and Walter!), and I was completely satisfied with it's run. Although, let me just be honest too and say, whenever Melissa Brayden has a novel out - no matter the subject - I'll just buy it, no questions.

3 stars - Spangler's "Getting Serious" was a nice taste of the writings and stories that Rachel Spangler has become known for in her novels. Purposeful and powerful in it's own mind and right brought a different tale altogether separate from the other two. While still funny and having Spangler show of her own skills of witty banter between characters, it was fun to follow Lisa and Marty through their own tale of love. Unfortunately though, this story fell short in my eyes, and it was partially due to some difficulties keeping in line with what was going on every second. Now, that could have totally been my mistake and fault completely, but it still caused me to lose the enjoyment that I usually settle in to when reading a great LGBT romance.

4.5 stars - I have yet to read an entire novel by Karis Walsh, but reading "Risk Factor" made it become more of a need than a possibility. Walsh captured me with her story of Myra and Ainslee's turbulent and emotion-filled journey to loving one another left me wanting more, and the only story I wish had been made to last longer so that it could have explored deeper paths. My second favorite of the three, I am glad to have had this introduction to Karis Walsh, and look forward to devouring more of her novels in the near future.

Overall, this collection was a great read, and I had fun with all three novellas. It was a great addition to have a short story like this available until the next Melissa Brayden novel comes along (holy crap...end of this year...UGH), as well as a great way for me to get introduced to a new author I had yet to explore in Karis Walsh.

