



A Brazen Bargain

Laura Trentham

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Love soothes the deepest of scars.

Minerva Bellingham is at her wits' end. Her younger brother, Simon, will have them penniless and on the streets if his extravagant gambling habit isn't curtailed. An enormous debt to Lord Rafe Drummond is the final indignity. Signing over her dowry is their only choice. Until Lord Drummond suggests something much more scandalous. She can keep her dowry-in exchange for the Bellinghams working three months as a housemaid and stable boy.

Scarred from his service to the Crown, Rafe recognizes the young Simon Bellingham has the makings of a good duke. Minerva is a different story. Her pure, delicate beauty only underscores Rafe's tarnished, bleak soul. Yet he delights in cracking Minerva's icy reserve to reveal a fiery, stubborn woman. And Minerva discovers the gruff master of Wintermarsh has the heart of a poet. But before they can find a future safe in each other's arms, a menace from Simon's licentious past slithers back into their lives, forcing Rafe to plan the most important rescue mission of his life.

Warning: Contains a paragon of the beau monde who gets the hang of polishing silver, and a master of the house who'd like her to make his bed-preferably with him in it. Also passion unleashed with the mere touch of a finger. Readers are encouraged to swoon.

A Brazen Bargain Details

Date : Published September 12th 2017 by Laura Trentham (first published January 26th 2016)

ISBN :

Author : Laura Trentham

Format : ebook 298 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Regency Romance

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From Reader Review A Brazen Bargain for online ebook

Ermione Pickwick says

Soooo good! This is one of the rare examples of a story where everything falls in the right place. I'm in love. I'd like more books like this one.

The plot is what I'm always looking for in romances, passion, struggle, a-satisfying-but-not-excessive dose of misunderstanding, a strong-willed heroine and a tormented hero. And many other things.

Let's be honest, I was craving for this love story from the first book in the series and therefore I had high expectations.

The hero, Rafe, is hot! (Fan needed here.) He is a charming spectrum of dichotomies, stubborn and so adorably insecure, rough and gentle, bitter and sweet, impetuous and cautious, extremely passionate but also detached.

The heroine is his perfect match and they are adorable together.

The plot is funny, original and fast-paced. I liked Simon, the heroine's brother, a lot and I'm waiting for him and his story!

The only thing I have some doubts about is the "historical" imprecision in regards to the noble titles and the society precepts of the regency era. In some parts I had the impression they weren't observed.

FOR MORE REVIEWS VISIT IL PROFUMO DELLE PERGAMENE!

Laura says

Lady Minerva Bellingham's younger brother is a spoiled brat. He became the Duke of Bellingham at a young age and they only had a tutor to raise them. Simon has gotten himself in with the wrong type of friends. Viscount Hampton is all too willing to find gambling parlors for Simon to lose his fortune. Unfortunately for Hampton, Lord Rafe Drummond figures out what is going on. When Simon loses Minerva's dowry to him, Rafe intends to teach him a lesson. However, Minerva is the one that visits Rafe the next day. Rafe dislikes Minerva. She is his sister's best friend and the one that he felt was a bad influence. Rafe feels that Simon just needs somebody to give him the guidance he never had and Simon will make a wonderful Duke. Rafe proposes that Simon and Minerva work for him for three months at his estate.

Minerva not only quickly learns how to be a housemaid, she excels at it. Every time Rafe finds her in his room, he realizes that after his years of service to the Crown, no decent woman would ever want him.

Minerva slowly starts to fall in love with Rafe even as he attempts to keep her at arms length. When Hampton attempts to destroy everything that Simon has worked for by destroying Minerva, Rafe can no longer remain impartial.

This was the first book by Laura Trentham that I have read. I was intrigued by the plot synopsis and it did not disappoint from page one to the end. Rafe is wonderful as the tortured hero. Minerva is extremely intelligent, witty and not afraid of Rafe. She actually hates him in the beginning of the novel. There were points in the novel that I just wanted to smack Simon for being stupid and not seeing Hampton for what he was.

I received this ARC from NetGalley and the publisher in exchange for an honest review. Thank You.

Ki says

This is the second book in the Spies and Lovers series and it's not going to be my last. I know of Laura Trentham's contemporary romance, especially of *Melting into You* from her Falcon Football series but I love spy novels and to mix it with Historical romance will have me running to read it! *An Indecent Invitation* was a great start for Laurens in this series and genre and this second book into this series will have you wanting more.

In this story we see both Rafe and Minerva, two characters who've been mentioned and made appearances in the first book come together for a life changing experience. In this Rafe is shown more in depth of how he became who is and how that changed his view of life and the people around him. This gave him the hand in working, or training Simon, Minerva's young Duke of a brother, to become a better Duke as he matures into his role. This does not come easy because both Minerva and Simon has to work for it by knowing the ins and out of how to run a house, as servants or workers, for him at his home. Rafe just see this as a teaching for the two to grow up and stop being spoiled brats. And because Simon was gambling away everything he had, some one had to step in. And of course, Rafe didn't take a liking to Minerva, being that she is his sister's best friend and a bad role model. But Rafe himself isn't bad; he's strong like the spy and gentleman he is, a dominate of power, charm and wit to challenge anyone, but still he harbors scars full of insecurity and vulnerability.

Minerva is tough, she doesn't back down and when she gets the opportunity to strike she does it. Working for Rafe opened up her eyes on how tough it is to work for people and how much work goes into doing things the "right way". This changed how she viewed and treated her own staff and warmed her cold behavior seeing how Rafe acts around his own staff and towards her and her brother. She didn't even like Rafe, not just for winning her dowry from Simon and making her work for it back, but just because he's her friend's brother, another man trying to ruin things. It's great seeing her change from a rude and brat to a warmer human being than she was at the beginning. She's been through a lot after the death of her father and then her young brother gambling away their money and her dowry, she it was understandable for her to be cold and off limits to keep her safe.

The wit and humor mixed with the fast paced and tension between the characters were great. The added adventure of danger gave it more action and movement to a conclusion and HEA for these two but also throwing in a small love story calmed the waters and gave for a nice distraction. The build up between the two was done absolutely perfectly because we just weren't thrown into the love but sizzled up to it which

made the story more about them and not just about lust and desire in the bedroom.

Callista Briars says

This is the sequel to An Indecent Invitation, so of course I had to read this too! This story is about Lily's brother and HER best friend. The ol' switcheroo (last book was brother's best friend and sister). Rafe was wallowing in depression over something that happened to him on his last assignment (he's a spy). Minerva, trying to save her own brother as usual, confronts Rafe about her brother's gambling debt to him. Rafe says he'll wave the debt if she and her brother come work for him. Rafe is a smart guy and does this in order to teach the younger man how to run an estate and grow up. It was a great story with lots of smokin' hot sex! Loved it!

Mei says

[Rafe has almost fallen into the trite trope of *I'm not good enough for her!!!* (hide spoiler)]

Claire Robinson says

5 - "Following the proprieties has never been my strong suit." Stars!

Laura Trentham absolutely rocked my socks off with the second book in the *Spies and Lovers* series. I really enjoyed *An Indecent Invitation* (the first book), but *A Brazen Bargain* was literally a struggle to put down, I enjoyed it that much.

"I find I'm rather partial to brutes."

Rafe and Minerva featured a little in the first book, in that Rafe was Lily's brother, Minerva her friend, and Grey the man Lily loves is Rafe's best friend.

Rafe Drummond was a temptation she wasn't sure she could give up.

You are lead to think that the man behind the scars is as dark and brooding as his exterior makes you assume, and in this story you are given the reasonings and back ground into why he is as he is.

I loved that Minerva challenged him on his ornery personality, and the fact that in this book she is indirectly indebted to him, it just made the chemistry and verbal sparring between them even more interesting, and the author did a superb job in keeping things building between them without rushing to the main event (so to speak), the story as a whole is so much more than an attraction between two people, and the layers that Laura built around that just gave it such a vivacity and beguiling depth.

"Let me take care of you."

I am not a huge Historical Romance reader, but I cannot recommend this series highly enough. The author manages to keep the feeling of Historical in relation to the language, descriptions locales etc, but challenges

the normal expectations in that her characters are strong, her female leads willful, intelligent and full of spark and mettle.

Her unmarred purity only underscored his tarnished soul a hundred fold.

Minerva faced challenges, and dealt with them herself, no deferring to Rafe or her brother for guidance, and I loved the depth of character Laura gave Rafe, yes he was strong, dominant and a little bit naughty, but there was a vulnerability and charm to him as well. I absolutely loved them both, and when they finally worked out their feelings for each other were a match... So, so sexy!

"There's beauty in the darkness. You just have to look a bit harder."

I so hope that we get to return to this series soon, there are certainly more characters with stories to be told.

ARC generously provided via Netgalley, and it was my absolute pleasure to provide the above honest review.

Ermione Pickwick says

I've read this novel some time ago now...I don't know why I hadn't rated it earlier, especially because I've loved it, and since I've finished my first reading I've read it several other times. Lovely, touching and very hot!

Lily says

I loved Rafe from the first book and was eager to read his story. It was wonderful! Both of the Spies and Lovers books are fabulous. I love how Laura Trentham draws me into the story in every way. The characters come alive beautifully. I loved Rafe and Minerva together and separately. Minerva had such a strength and depth to her. Even though she was cold to the outside world, she had a warm and loyal heart and a take charge attitude when it was warranted. Rafe was the type of hero I love...scarred and intimidating on the outside, but insecure and honorable on the inside. Together they brought out the best in each other with their courage and passion. That passion was really sizzling hot and erotic! I thoroughly enjoyed this novel and would highly recommend both books to any fan of historical romance. I have a feeling the next book will be about Minerva's brother Simon. I can't wait!

Samantha says

I've been itching to read a Laura Trentham book for some time now and so I jumped at the chance to read an ARC of this lovely book. A Brazen Bargain is the second book in her Spies and Lovers series but it can stand alone which worked out well for me because I haven't had the chance to read the first book in this series yet.

I loved both of these characters to pieces. Minerva was my favorite kind of historical romance heroine. She was strong-willed and got shit done on her own. And Rafe was my favorite kind of historical romance hero.

He was tortured and scarred but deep down he was a good man and I fell in love with his character almost immediately. The romance that developed between the two of them was both sizzling and sweet. The way everything progressed from their mutual disdain for each other at the beginning to love had my heart racing especially towards the end.

The overall plot with Minerva and her brother Simon having to work off his debt and the whole situation with Lord Hampton was interesting and kept me flipping the pages. I also really loved the tiny subplot with Jenny trying to win Tom's heart. It was so cute.

Overall, this book was a really fantastic historical romance. I've read a lot of exceptional historical romance lately and *A Brazen Bargain* is definitely a top favorite and I highly recommend it.

Miriam says

Scarred and haunted by memories of war, Rafe keeps away from society despite his title. He works with his hands by day and drinks himself to sleep to keep the nightmares away. He is dark, brooding, and intimidating yet just and gentle and compassionate.

To be honest, he was, to me, everything Minerva was not.

Not that Minerva was a horrible witch. She's known as the Ice Queen to her peers. Her demeanor and actions reflect it well. And I really didn't like her. Strength is one thing for an incredible female lead to have, especially in historical romances when women did not have the freedoms and rights contemporary women do. But arrogance and lack of compassion are not what I want to see in a female lead. I loved and was grateful for Minerva's strength, but I despised her highhandedness and haughtiness. She was, at the beginning, not the kind of woman I wanted Rafe to fall in love with.

Did she change, become softer, more understanding? Yes. The bargain struck with Rafe did that. The difference between the Minerva at the end was a far cry from the Minerva at the beginning. Her transformation was beautiful. It made her outward beauty a hundred times more stunning and made her worthy of the right to claim, hold, and protect Rafe's heart.

I didn't read the first book in this series. If you didn't and are wondering if you should, you won't need to. Who Rafe and Minerva are, how they came to be where they currently are in life are explained in depth in this book. That being said, this story has given me a reason to want to read the first one.

This was a challenging read for me. More than once I wanted to put it down and say, "F*** it" because Minerva grated my nerves until they were raw. I'm glad I muscled past those initial feelings and finished this story. It was definitely worth reading.

Received from NetGalley via Pump Up Your Book for an honest review

Sissy's Romance Book Review says

This is book two in the "Spies and Lovers" series. I have read the previous book " An Indecent Invitation" in

the series but I felt this was a standalone book. This was really a traditional much loved Historical Romance. I loved Lord Rafe Drummond who is our hero. Rafe has the basic concept of traditional hero that has been scared and tries to be strong..loved this type of hero. Our heroine, Minerva Bellingham was someone that tried to take charge, fix things and did what they could for her family. Minerva younger brother has fallen into the wrong crowd and also someone that is spoiled. Her brother ends up owing money to Rafe and Minerva thought to give him her dowry in place of the money. But Rafe has deiced that they would befit more from working off the money and learning from this experience. It had a good side story too... overall loved having the chance to read this book!!

Melody May (What I'm Reading) says

Posted on What I'm Reading

When I started to read A Brazen Bargain, I wasn't expecting a Beauty and the Beast kind of story. In a way, it is. We have Lord Rafe Drummond who is scared on his face and he's a bit gruff. At times he's scary, but I think he's more wounded animal than whatever one perceives. He basically saves Minerva's brother from making a terrible mistake and he figures he could make Simon pay the debt by working it off at his estates. Sounds like a decent proposal, otherwise he could call in the markers and have him pay the money outright which would cause ruin for Simon and Minerva.

So, we see Simon and Minerva working off the debt. Yes, it was a little cruel how Rafe made Minerva work, but it also showed her more about other people's lives. She learn to appreciate the things she had taken for granted. Now her brother was a little harder to crack, and he doesn't learn the error of his ways until Rafe saves him again. By this point, we see Simon start to mature. Once Simon starts to mature, we see the relationship between Minerva and Rafe to bloom.

I enjoyed A Brazen Bargain, because you have Rafe teaching Simon responsibility. I liked how love developed slowly between Rafe and Minerva. She was like the rest of the ton and not seeing what a good guy Rafe was until they were outside the prying eyes of the ton. I had to warm up to Minerva, because automatically thought he was a villain in leading her brother away. I love Rafe, because he was a extremely decent guy, scars and all.

Overall, A Brazen Bargain a pretty good read. I like that it's different twist on Beauty and the Beast. They weren't held prisoners, but they had to pay the toll one way or another. It's a little easier to work a little than go into financial ruin.

Copy provided by author via PUYB

Seanna Yeager says

A passionate love affair between two people, who you would never expect to fall for each other. Minerva has always had to take care of herself and her younger brother Simon, who has become a complete rake hell. Simon has gambled away Minerva's dowry, to Lord Drummond. To earn back her dowry, both Minerva and Simon must work as servants as Lord Drummond's estate. While they are thrown together, Drummond learns that there is much more to Minerva than he originally thought. There is plenty of passion and intrigue in this

book. I loved it.

Thanks Netgalley!

SOS Aloha says

The bargain that yields mutual satisfaction is the only one that is apt to be repeated. - B. C. Forbes

I dove into *A BRAZEN BARGAIN* after reading a contemporary novel of an Army veteran's struggle with PTSD. It put me in the mindset to recognize that veterans of the past, including those from the Napoleonic Wars, also suffered from PTSD. But it was something not discussed by polite society. Enter Lord Rafe Drummond, the hero in *A BRAZEN BARGAIN*. He stands on the edge of society, knowing the ton would turn away from his gruesome scar. Rafe retreats to his family's estate, Wintermarsh, where he seeks solace. By day, he works the land alongside the tenants. At night, he slips into alcoholic haze to chase away the nightmares from combat. Rafe was a secondary character in *AN INDECENT INVITATION*, Book 1 in the Spies and Lovers series. He watched his sister fall in love with his fellow soldier, Gray Masterson, as the couple solved the mystery of his missing father.

Now it's time for Rafe find what is missing in his life - love. From the shadows of London, he spies the drunken Simon Bellingham, a young man coming into his title as a Duke, on the verge of losing his inheritance at a gaming hell. Rafe joins the game, outmaneuvers those seeking to manipulate Simon, and wins a voucher from the young Duke. The following morning, Rafe prepares to release Simon from the debt until his older sister, Minerva, appears on his behalf. It is clear she has managed Simon's life (and their family's estate) since the untimely passing of their parents. Known as the Ice Princess among the ton, Minerva strikes a nerve with Rafe. In turn, he proposes a brazen bargain - both Minerva and Simon will work off the debt for the next three months on his estate.

Trentham delivers a compelling novel with hints of Gothic romance and Austen wit. No doubt Minerva is the beauty and Rafe is the beast. But not all is rosy in the beauty's life. Aside from her gambling brother, she is a woman before her time in Regency England. Minerva has become the Ice Princess to protect herself from disappointment. Her icy demeanor thaws as she interacts with Jenny, a cheery chamber maid from the village. In fact, she realizes her own privilege as a lady and rethinks how she treats her servants back in London. Minerva still frets about the harsh work which Simon must face under Rafe's tutelage. As Simon begins to mature, Minerva recognizes that Rafe's actions are not coldhearted revenge, but the thoughtful effort of an older brother to instill discipline. Rest assured, Rafe does not see Minerva as a sister, but rather a passionate woman who would not be appreciated by London's dandies.

I appreciate that Trentham allows the characters to be imperfect. She doesn't wave her magic author wand and cure Rafe of his PTSD. Instead, he learns to manage it with the loving support of his family. For me, *A BRAZEN BARGAIN* was more than a Regency romance novel. It was a reading journey which offered hope and demonstrated acceptance.

I received a print copy from the author for an honest review.

Theresa says

It's okay...

This is the second book in the 'Spies and Lovers' series and, while I thoroughly enjoyed the first one, I just had a hard time swallowing the 'brazen bargain' that brought thenH/h together in this novel. Still, it's reasonably well written, the characters are likable and the plot moves along nicely even lacking any kind of substantial secondary plot. It also it's feels as if the author put her whole attention and depth of talent in the first novel and this one was written as an afterthought.

Bottom line: if you are willing to stretch your credulity, you'll likely enjoy it.
