



## Trial and Temptation

*Ruby Lionsdrake*

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After ten years of flying freighter ships from planet to planet, Val Calendula never thought she would apply for a job as a combat pilot in a mercenary outfit. But her brother has gotten himself into financial trouble, and he's heading to a mining prison if Val can't pay off his debts. Mercenaries don't always live long... but they make good money while they're alive. A few combat bonuses, and Val could earn what she needs. The problem? She might have graduated from the military flight academy, but she hasn't fought anything more dangerous than dust bunnies on the bridge lately. To make matters worse, the man in charge of hiring pilots was her instructor back at the academy. Commander Thatcher was almost as brilliant as he was arrogant and condescending, and he never seemed to think Val was smart enough to be there. She has no idea if she'll be able to convince him otherwise now... or if she'll be able to stand working with him.

When Gregor Thatcher left the military, he never expected to run into any of his former acquaintances, much less the one he admired and mooned over during his two years teaching at the academy. Back then, he never told Val Calendula he cared for her, partially because officers weren't supposed to have relations with cadets, but mostly because he didn't know how to speak of his feelings. He might not have any trouble grasping navigational mathematics and astrodynamics, but people are more problematic. Gregor is elated that Val has entered his life again, but he's fairly certain she hates him. Worse, he's responsible for deciding whether she's qualified to be a combat pilot. How can he judge fairly when his tongue tangles and idiotic words come out of his mouth whenever she's around?

When the captain sends Val and Gregor on a mission to pick up a military advisor and deliver him to a planet at war, Val hopes she'll have an opportunity to prove herself capable of the piloting position. Gregor hopes he'll have the opportunity to improve Val's opinion of him. But when the military advisor goes missing, and they're forced to divert to a dangerous moon base, the mission turns into a fight for survival. Val may learn too late that there's more to Gregor than that aloof exterior... and that inside is a man she could love.

Trial and Temptation is a full-length science fiction romance novel of 73,000 words. It is part of the "Mandrake Company" series and is recommended for readers who enjoy space-based adventure (such as Firefly) and steamy love stories (in the style of Linnea Sinclair).

## **Trial and Temptation Details**

Date : Published October 17th 2014 by Ruby Lionsdrake

ISBN :

Author : Ruby Lionsdrake

Format : Kindle Edition 250 pages

Genre : Romance, Science Fiction, Science Fiction Romance

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## From Reader Review Trial and Temptation for online ebook

### Cogito\_ergo\_sum says

3 stars.

This sci-fi romance was action packed with laser gun fights, fighter jets(?), and assassins. Furthermore, the novel was well written with clean prose. But what I liked most of all was that the hero was unique. It isn't often that a romance lead has a social mental disorder. (I suspect he has some degree of autism.) His genuine effort to try to interact with people made him very likeable, in my opinion, and memorable. The heroine, on the other hand, while some of her internal dialogue was amusing at first, grew somewhat boring later on in the story. Compared to the hero, she wasn't as interesting.

This is the first book that I've read in the series, and I'll look at the other books too.

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### Jacob Proffitt says

Although you could probably read this one as a stand-alone (seriously, the characters from the previous figure very, very lightly in this one), I still recommend you read in order. Not only will you have a good idea what to expect, but the first story is ever so slightly better, I think.

Not that there's anything wrong with Val or Gregor. Indeed, they're lovely and a great couple; I fell for Val almost immediately and Gregor wasn't far behind. The plot was much more straight-forward, though, and the sci-fi just a tad lighter sprinkled, so the story as a whole felt a lot more linear. Probably because it was a lot more linear. There's really no tension about whether or not Val would qualify and be offered a position with the company, for example (it's clear she is a good pilot from the start—however rusty). And I never quite felt the *danger* they were in throughout, somehow.

Which makes it sound like this was a weak story and nothing could be further from the truth. It's action-packed and gripping and the pacing is excellent. Indeed, I gulped it down in a few short binges and emerged eager to find the next. So far, this series is shaping up very well, indeed.

**A note about Steamy:** Way lighter than I expected, actually. There's some light kissing but only really a single explicit scene that, while very hot and not short, is still all alone by itself... Well worth the wait, though...

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### Szinna says

Wow, egy nagyon érdekes f?h?ssel találkoztam ebben a könyvben. Bár nincs kimondva, a f?h?s nyilvánvalóan Asperger szindrómás, aki nem tudja megfejteni mások érzelmeit, nem is próbál hazudni, mert csak még jobban összezavarná ezzel saját, kicsi rendezett és logikus világát. Emellett zseniális pilóta és matematikus, aki tökéletesen tisztában van elszigetelt helyzetével, és hiányosságaival. Mindez pedig finom humorral megfogva remek karaktert eredményezett. Mikor át kell nézni egy csomó helyet, de az els? a listában nem az, amit a h?sn? és a logika javasol, h?sünk zavarát h?sn?nk finoman a lista átrendezésével

megoldja.

A h?sn? érzelmei túl gyorsan fordultak át, és a történet második felében az akciók nem igazán izgalmasak, de ez miatt csak egy csillag levonás jár.

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### **(Eirene) Sleepless Romantics says**

I want a dwarf mango tree.

I liked it, maybe not as much as the first and third book but it was a satisfying read anyway. The hero reminded me of Zachary Quinto's Spock but like... shier and obsessed with flying.

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### **Coyora Dokusho says**

It was soooooooooooooo good. I was smiling so big when I read the ending. Gregor was so cute!!!! CUTE!!!!!! I'm really looking forward to the next book. Great world-building, cool plot, believable characters that I got emotionally involved with!

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### **Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says**

I loved Mercenary Instinct and could not wait to visit the Mandrake Company again. Commander Gregor Thatcher was a side character in Mercenary Instinct (he got a small mention only) and Val Calendula is a brand new character in the series. However, the two are not strangers. They met years ago when Val was a cadet and Gregor was one of her commanding officers. Now both have left the military and are part of the Mandarke Company.

I think Gregor Thatcher is one of the best awkward male characters I have ever had the privilege to meet. He is brilliant in his field but he just does not get small talk or how to relate to the people around him. He tries so hard to appeal to Val and everything he says just comes out wrong. For me that was his big appeal. It takes being stranded in a very dangerous situation for Val to see him and appreciate him for the wonderful man he really is. The two have to carry Trial and Temptation and they do a very good job of keeping things moving.

As always in a series I would have liked to see more of the characters from book one but that did not keep me from enjoying adding Gregor and Val to the list of my favorite characters. The fact that this is primarily Gregor and Val's story means that it functions well as a stand along story. I still recommend reading Mercenary Instinct first and after you finish these two you can move on to book three The Assassin's Salvation.

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## **Samantha Brody says**

Maybe closer to 2.5 stars, but I read this right off the heels of GAMES OF COMMAND, which I am fairly certain colored my view quite a bit. It didn't quite live up to expectations and wasn't as well written, which made it more of a tedious - rather than fun - read....(the insta-love on Val's part was also SO annoying to me sighs - I get regretting her misunderstanding of his behavior, but it switched into love just a bit too fast to be believable for me).

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## **Gwen (The Gwendolyn Reading Method) says**

I love myself a good introvert love story, so I was a true sucker for this one! Love.

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## **Mei says**

This is a second installment where another set of characters are the hero and the heroine.

We've already met the hero: Thatcher, the strict and almost cyborg-ish member of the Mandrake mercenaries! :)

Here we discover that he is yes, strict and sometime seems like he has no feeling, but he's also very perplexed with why other people do not understand his actions! It was hilrious to read! LOL

The heroine, a "normal" woman first loathes him, but when they're thrown together in a very dangerous situation, she cahnges her point of view. She glimpses his humanity and realizes that he has strong feelings, but is unable to express them.

Slowly, she pulls out his feelings and introduces him to a more human approach to life! It was endearing to read and I liked that too!

A great SF romance with a lot of action, damger and some real hot moments! :)

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## **Judy Lewis says**

SCI-FI DELIGHT !!!

Title: Trial and Temptation

Series: Mandrake Company

Author: Ruby Lionsdrake

Designation: Book Two of Series, Full-Length Standalone Sci-Fi Romance, NO Cliffhanger

Genre: #sciencefiction #romance #action #adventure

Reading Platform: Kindle Edition

My Rating: Five Delightfully Entertaining Stars\*\*\*\*\*

Jackpot! I've found another great author to add to my list of favorites! This is my first time reading Ruby Lionsdrake but it certainly won't be my last! I love, love, love romance and adore science fiction, but throw

in a generous serving of pulse-pounding action, thrilling adventure along with a sprinkling of snarky humor and I'm in heaven! And Ruby Mandrake just delivered the perfect combination in Trial and Temptation, the second riveting release in her popular Mandrake Company series. Granted, I sorta started out of order by reading Book Two without realizing it was the second of the series but no problem, each of the books are full-length standalones and can be read in any order. However, I did race back to Amazon and picked up Mercenary Instinct, the first book of the series, so I can read it next and then resume reading them in chronological order. Trial and Temptation is an exciting, imaginative, fast-paced exceptionally well crafted, well written and well edited science fiction romp filled to the brim with action, adventure, danger, humor and romance. The narrative is beautifully written in the third person with clearly defined his and her perspectives from the two protagonists, handsome mercenary Commander Gregor Thatcher and beautiful former freighter pilot and hopeful new mercenary, Valerian Calendula. Neither Gregor nor Val are your traditional hero or heroine but I fell head over heels for both. They were not your typical lovers either...you know...love at first sight...meeting and instantly falling into lust and love. In fact, these two unlikely lovers met ten years earlier when Val entered the Galactic Conglomeration as a cadet and Gregor was Lieutenant Commander Thatcher, her academy instructor....her very arrogant, pompous, know-it-all instructor. And apparently he hasn't changed a bit, so get ready for some fireworks with these two. They were the cutest couple ever and absolutely perfect together, playing off each other brilliantly. The entire dialogue was smart, sexy, at times funny, well executed and flowed effortlessly. I was immediately drawn into the story by the snark and attitude of the strong, sassy Val who was determined to secure a job as a mercenary in order to make enough money to bail her brother, Yarrow, out of trouble but was so afraid she might fail since her former academy nemesis, Commander Thatcher, would be the one to decide if she could pass muster and become a permanent employee of Mandrake Company. Val was an absolute delight and poor Gregor was far from your typical charismatic alpha male hero. Poor thing...he was totally clueless when it came to wooing a woman but I have to give him an A+ for effort. Once he set his mind to the task, and, of course, put it on his list, he's determined to win the heart of cadet Calendula. And yes, the brilliant Commander had a list for everything! lol.... No spoilers from me but I will say if you enjoy thrilling well-written science fiction loaded with danger, drama, action, adventure and steamy romance, then Trial and Temptation is most certainly the book for you.

Did I like this book? No, I LOVED it! I was immediately drawn into the story and once I started, I couldn't stop. I read well into the wee hours of the morning; I simply had to discover, do they or don't they, and I was not disappointed! Would I recommend it? You bet and I am but only for adult readers since there are some steamy love scenes included. Will I read this author again? Abso-freakin-lutely! As a matter of fact, as soon as I finish this review, I intend to devour Book One, then hopefully pace myself on three other books in the series. And the most important question of all, was I entertained? Oh lawd, yes! Totally and completely entertained. I loved it! Fabulous entertainment and an awesome read.

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### **Tami says**

Another winner in this series! I very much liked Thatcher. He was so clumsy, but still so good.

His interactions, his inner motives, the dialogues - it all made the book so enjoyable. The love interest was also very nicely done. An interesting and relatable woman. No beauty contestant, no wonder woman. Just a nice gal.

The story had the same great pace and good writing. I like the world-building a lot and it was very nice to meet again with the mercenaries of the Mandrake company.

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### **Jess says**

This is the second book in the series, I liked it a little more than the first. The characters were a little more engaging and I found myself rooting for them more. The plot was still intense with a lot of details and fighting. This series definitely feels like it's leaning more towards more science fiction than romance. I'm going to bench the series for a bit and come back to it.

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### **Nessa says**

THIS BLURB WAS A RIP OFF. IT SOUNDED EXTREMELY INTERESTING AND ALL I GOT WAS A FLAT STORY. IT WAS LIKE EVERYTHING WAS TOO TONED DOWN, I DIDN'T GET MUCH HYPE FROM THE RELATIONSHIP...RATHER THE CONCEPT ALTHOUGH I DO THINK THE ACTION PART AND TERMINOLOGY FOR THE SETTING WAS INCREDIBLE.

FRANKLY, THIS WOULD HAVE MADE A BETTER MOVIE THAN A INTIMATE BOOK.

OUR HERO reminds me very much of Big Bang Theory's Sheldon Cooper. Except for the hot bod and the handsome face, his mannerisms, his intellect and the way he tackles problems and excels in his studies makes him close to perfect - a cold robot. I rather like characters like him because it's nice to see how the misunderstood, awkward man gets the girl and how it happens is oh so intriguing. There was that here...except it didn't reach my expectation. What would have made this better would be an ongoing, slow building sensual chemistry between the two. The story started off with me wondering WHEN we will get to the attraction to start. It did surprise me when the heroine suddenly kissed him when they were locked in freezer container...the mood just didn't call for that kind of abrupt romantic scene to be honest. While the kiss scenes were nice, the passion and attraction just ended along with it UNTIL the next one initiates again. The consistency of their emotions just didn't flow in my opinion, which is rather sad. As a character, I did like Gregor. I think he's like the hot nerd, and he's the kind of man I would want to be stranded with because he's resourceful with his quick mind I just want to jump his bones.

OUR HEROINE, I had a hard time liking. Frankly because she kept judging the hero (I know he deserved them but when you read about his thoughts...it just seemed unfair) and she's always so sarcastic towards him and basically not that loveable or cute....she seems kind of selfish too. I didn't think she was the right kind of character for a vulnerable man like Gregor. I don't mind that she seems more the hard ass and woman with her own mind...but she just appears like she's also constantly trying to prove herself and gahh...she just rubs me the wrong way. She's hot but to me she's not cute and endearing at all. All her actions just doesn't appear genuine.

OVERALL this would have been better if the heroine was acceptable to me, but I also wished there was a true chemistry and sexual tension that built right from the start and not hit me like a brick in the face a few chapters later.

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## **Beth says**

*Trial and Temptations* is an action packed, science fiction story that includes space travel, planetary war and an endearing romance between a socially awkward genius pilot and a hotty pilot recruit.

Geogor Thatcher had a huge crush on his training Val Calendula. He never thought he'd see her again once he left the military. Val Calendula needs money to save her brother. She joins the mercenary crew of the Mandrake Company only to discover the man that tormented her military career, Geogor Thatcher, is now in charge of her fate in the Mandrake Company.

Sent on a desperate mission to transport a general to a war riddled planet, Geogor and Val discover appreciation for each other flight skills while the attraction between them blooms. Geogor seems to be suffering from Asperger, which makes his pursuit and attraction to Val and Val's ability to see beyond his botched attempts very endearing.

I found *Trial and Temptations* a highly entertaining and a very enjoyable read.

Written by: Ruby Lionsdrake

Series: Mandrake Company

Sequence in Series: 2

Print Length: 203 pages

Rating: 4 Stars

Genre: Scifi | Fantasy

Find this book on: Amazon

Reviewed for: <http://tometender.blogspot.com>

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## **Grace says**

A lot of people say they like this story better than Viktor and Ankira's. I felt that there was definitely more angst in Val and Gregor's story than the first.

I'll be interested to see how Yarrow's issues work out.

Basically, if you liked the Mandrake universe, you'll like this!

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