



A Duke Like No Other

Valerie Bowman

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General Mark Grimaldi is devoted to his service for the Crown, risking his life and giving up everything for his career. The political promotion he's always wanted is now within his reach, but he needs to convince his estranged wife to return to England and play the role of happy bride in order for him to get the position.

Nicole Huntington Grimaldi has spent the past ten years in France, not having seen her husband since she left England. But now he's on her doorstep, asking her to return with him, and Nicole sees the opportunity to get something out of this deal. So she agrees, on one condition: she wants a baby.

A Duke Like No Other is a Regency spy caper with Valerie Bowman at her best as husband and wife match wits and may just fall in love in the process.

A Duke Like No Other Details

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From Reader Review A Duke Like No Other for online ebook

Barbara Rogers says

3.5 STARS

Series: Playful Brides #9

Publication Date: 5/1/18

I was so excited and looking forward to reading this book because it sounded like it would be something unique. I really liked the story, but I am all over the place on what my rating should be. This is another of those books where the story is good, but it is filled with modernism and the story just doesn't fit with the time period. The writer writes excellently, it is just that either the research or the editing, etc. is missing something. So – if you actually like your historical romances to fit into the time period into which the book is set – this one won't meet your standards. I'm also not a big fan of flashbacks and this book is filled with them. My eyes nearly rolled out of my head with me doing so many eye rolls because of the anachronistic words, phrases, actions, etc. in the book. Just a couple of instances of things: The author had Grimaldi being able to inherit because of a codicil in the will (unless they change that before it is published) – it would have been in the Royal Letters Patent raising the first Duke to that title - not a codicil in a will. A second thing is the Bow Street runners wearing red vests – they didn't. The horse patrol wore those, but the runners didn't. Just lots of stuff - like starched shirt fronts, constantly used the word 'sex' to refer to the act rather than the gender, guards at the gates coming into London, etc. Maybe this will all be fixed before publication and I'll be wrong on all of this.

The main characters are two of the most stubborn, pigheaded, strong-willed, uncommunicative characters I've ever seen in a book. They spent ten years apart, each stewing in their own righteousness rather than actually having a conversation about what had happened, why it happened and what they could do to fix it. I don't think the two of them had a whole and complete conversation in the entire book. I have a hard time warming up to people who supposedly love each other being so self-centered with each other. In this one, I tend to lay more of the blame on him than her, but they certainly both earned their fair share of the blame. They both have a tendency to throw a fit, give up on things and walk away rather than fight for them and make a stand. Annoying.

Major General Mark Grimaldi is a totally self-made man even though he is the grandson of a Duke (he went from a Corporal to a Major General who is a spymaster and he's only thirty-four years old – yes, eye roll). He claims no family ties with them and there are very, very few people who even know of the tie. His grandfather wouldn't accept that Mark's mother had married an Italian and he wanted her to leave Mark's father. It caused a big family rift and she broke with her entire family. Mark's father (I believe he was a shoemaker – yep – eye roll time) made Mark promise not to use his mother's family connections to advance himself in any way. So, Mark took that deathbed promise very, very, very seriously and wouldn't acknowledge his mother's family in any way. Not only wouldn't he acknowledge them – he hated all of the aristocracy – yes – eye roll – a bit of overkill there I think.

Lady Nicole Huntington is the daughter of an Earl. During her first season, she was bored and decided she'd be a Bow Street Runner (sigh – eye roll). When they wouldn't hire her, she decided she'd become an assistant to the runners and she set about chasing down thieves. She met Mark outside a ball at her grandmother's home when she was chasing down a footman who had stolen a fork (or spoon) off the buffet table. Yes, she was about as foolhardy as you could be. Unaccompanied, she chased the thief outside the

home and down the mews where he could easily have turned and attacked her – then, she spoke with a stranger she met in the alley – does all of that make her a TSTL heroine? Probably. Anyway – the stranger was Mark and a couple of months later they were married.

After a big row where he made assumptions and blamed her and she tucked tail and ran home to mama then she ended up in France for 10 years. Evidently, she was living in France during the war and was a spy for the English, then continued to live there after the wars ended.

I loved that there was a murder mystery to solve and would have loved it even more had the investigation started earlier and was more complex. Nicole was the one to solve the mystery while Mark, the spymaster, just looked incompetent asking inane questions and accepting evasive answers (yes, eye roll again). No – I don't mind that she solved the mystery – I would just have liked them to work together and need each other more rather than making her the hero and him the zero.

You probably think I didn't like the book. That isn't the case. I liked the story or more to the point, I think I liked the possibility of the story. I just didn't like that it was basically a contemporary novel with horses and carriages rather than cars – instead of living up to its potential and being a really good Regency romance.

I would recommend this book because the story is good and it is well written, but you will need to be able to suspend your disbelief and overlook the anachronisms.

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"I requested and received this e-book at no cost to me and volunteered to read it; my review is my honest opinion and given without any influence by the author or publisher."

Aly says

London, July 1818

General Mark "Grim" Grimaldi dedicated his life to his work, defending his country. He's more than ready for the post of Home Secretary. But there's a catch : the man running the Home Office wants a family man for the job. The trouble with that ? Mark is already married... and his wife has been in France for the past ten years. They let their pride get in the way and were both too stubborn to say what was in their heart. Can he convince his estranged wife to come back and play the loving spouse for a few months, until he get the position ? Nicole is ready to accept the proposition, but she have her own condition : she wants a baby. There's also a mystery to solve and a surprising revelation waiting for our hero.

The estranged spouses trope can be a hit or miss for me. While I'll be the first to admit that the reason behind their break-up was foolish and I wish for a little more courtship and seduction, I had a really great time reading this book. It was my first time reading this author and even if I began the series with book 9, it can be read as a standalone no problem at all. I wished I knew at the beginning what happened to make them

separated (because I don't like wondering and speculating and I always wary for the worst). But I'm so happy that I got to see flash-back of their first meeting, first kiss and an overview of their three months of marriage. Both MC were lovable and strong character. She's clever, independent, direct and a wild spirit who's got some secrets and unusual pastime. He's hard-working, determined and a man of honor. But more than anything, what I liked about Mark was his attention to details, the little gestures and attention he had toward the heroine. The mystery brought something different to the trope, but I also think it might have eclipsed the romance a little bit, but the few twists and the good pace made me want to read the next book and look for the previous ones too.

Val Shameless ?? Steamy Reads ?? says

**In the mood for a good ole historical.
Hoping for some bodice-ripping.**

Carvanz says

Mark has dedicated his life to his work. First as a soldier, a spy, and now it his goal to become the Home Secretary. It's all within his grasp until he's informed he won't be considered without proving he's a family man and must present a wife. That's going to be tricky because Mark already has a wife and they've been separated for ten years.

Nicole is wild and free. She is not one to settle into what society dictates. For years she has lived her life in France where she is able to live the life she enjoys. However, she waits each day for the letter that will inform her that her husband has been killed while in service to his country. When he suddenly appears at her doorstep, her emotions are all over the place.

I loved this second chance story of a couple that have obstacles to overcome. There was just a tiny bit of misunderstanding that started the rift between them, but at the heart of it is a true separation of trust, beliefs, and wants. Perhaps a long honest conversation might have helped at the time but the fact that Mark was set in his belief of her position could not be ignored. Now, years later with more maturity and the opportunity to truly see one another, they may be able to heal what is broken between them.

Mark had every reason to feel the way he did but I personally thought he was a bit boneheaded. Nicole could have fought harder for him and what they had but she fled instead. Nevertheless, when you take those two decisions away, this story is quite charming with a bit of angst. I enjoyed reading how they reunited, placed conditions on each other, and came together for a common cause.

This is a really enjoyable book and I'd love to read about some of the secondary characters as well.

I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this book provided by NetGalley and St. Martin's Press. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

Dual POV

Safe (view spoiler)

Triggers (view spoiler)

Stacee says

I loved the idea of this synopsis and couldn't wait to get started on this one.

Nicole and Mark are great MCs. She's sassy and strong and he's stubborn and charming. Together they know how to push each other's buttons and do it frequently. Their beginning banter and strategizing was fantastic. There is a fairly large cast of characters and I wonder if some of them were from other books. I especially loved Regina.

Plot wise, it was okay. I enjoyed the murder mystery plot line, but I was mostly irritated at the ongoing lack of communication. If Nicole and Mark had literally one conversation, the story could have taken an entirely different turn. Instead it was flashbacks of the beginning of their relationship {which I liked} and the rest of their time together was spent in bed {which made sense for the story} or each wondering how the other felt {which was horribly repetitive.}

Overall, it was a quick and enjoyable read with characters I really liked. Unfortunately, I wanted more talking and understanding and something more at the end.

****Huge thanks to St. Martin's paperbacks for providing the arc free of charge****

Jultri says

General Mark Grimaldi is ambitious and shooting for the position of Home Secretary after years of serving his country during the Napoleon War and afterwards working for the Home Office. However, the preference is for the incoming Home Secretary to be a settled, married man. How convenient then, that Mark just so happens to be one. What is less convenient is that he has not set eyes on his wife for 10 years and in fact, she is not even on English soil.

Nicole left her husband and country behind 10 years ago to live a relatively quiet existence in France. She never expected Mark to show up and certainly not to ask a favour from her. In exchange for playing happy, docile wife by his side for a while, Nicole wants something from him in return - a child.

I do like this trope of estranged married couple, however, this one didn't quite live up to its promise. Firstly, about a good chunk of the book was devoted to solving a murder case with half of the remaining time spent in the past, uncovering the genesis of their romance and the backstory of their estrangement. That really didn't leave much time for the characters to reconnect on an emotional level, what with a couple of

enthusiastic reunion sex scenes thrown in there to take up page space. The writing got a bit repetitive at times. Additionally, there is also a fair few anachronistic word choices and terms thrown in there. Case in point, Mark saying: "I'm not a complete Neanderthal." (The book is set in 1818. Neanderthal fossils were not found until 1856, the name not formally used to describe the species until about a decade later and not in common usage until after the turn of the next century.)

Overall, it was a quick read to pass time, but not memorable. This is an ARC provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest opinion.

Thank you Joanna (and Bubu by extension) for the instructions on how to insert GIFs. Yay, you can teach an old dog new tricks after all!

Patrice says

In my humble opinion, this is a well written, historical romance; where the characters are well-honed and the reader can have a connection with them. This story takes place following the Napoleonic war.

Our hero, Mark Grimaldi, is a British general and on the short-list of candidates for the Head of the Home Office; now that the fighting is over. Mark ran a spy network for Britain during the war. There is a small caveat for the Head of the Home office; they prefer a family man or at least a man that is "settled". Lady Nicole Huntington is not your average woman of the ton; she prefers a good investigative mystery to solve than the usual "missish" activities of other girls her age. This trait is one that draws Mark to Nicole; even though he is only a military man and she a member of the aristocrats. Their's is not an easy match as Mark has a bit of "baggage" he carries with him.

I liked that this story has a little bit of a mystery thrown into all the drama with the main characters and the sub-characters.

I received an uncorrected digital galley proof from the publisher for an honest review.

Alison says

General Mark Grimaldi is the grandson of a Duke, but his mother was disowned for marrying an Italian Catholic and so he has always had a dislike of the aristocracy. He married Nicole Huntington 10 years ago, thinking she was an aristocrat who loved him as the poor soldier he was then. Unfortunately three months into the marriage he discovered that she already knew of his aristocratic family, added to which she was secretly spying for the Bow Street Runners behind his back. Words were spoken in anger and Nicole fled to France where she has been a spy ever since. Now Mark is hoping for promotion to Home Secretary but his boss wants to appoint a family man, so Mark has travelled to France to see if he can persuade Nicole to return to England until he gets his promotion.

I found this book a bit misleading, the blurb led me to believe this was an couple, estranged as a result of a misunderstanding, reconnecting to enable the husband to get a prestigious promotion and falling in love. Whilst it was, it was not the main plot, which revolved around solving a murder. So this was kind of a murder sandwich ie romance-murder-romance. And to be honest, both felt a little halfhearted, there wasn't enough romance AND there wasn't enough detective work. I also noted a few word choices that seemed out of place in an historical novel, talking about "giving a toss" about someone and "fancying" someone seem too modern.

I thought that Mark's excuse for getting upset with Nicole seemed flimsy and for a supposedly clever man he was remarkably stupid about his family and his wife. Nicole on the other hand seemed to default to running away at the slightest excuse.

Overall, it was a pleasant enough read but it didn't wow me.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Bumped for release.

Melanie says

A Duke Like No Other was an absolute delight from start to finish with amazing characters and a wonderful romance.

With the promotion General Mark Grimaldi has been working towards his entire life finally within reach, he will stop at nothing to achieve his goal. Even if that means he must go to France and convince his estranged wife to return to England and play the happy bride for a few months. What Mark didn't count on though was Nicole having conditions of her own. Nicole Huntington Grimaldi has built a good life for herself in France during the last ten years but is willing to play along with Mark's schemes if he'll give her the one thing she's been missing out on; a baby.

Nicole has always had interests that lay outside of what was expected of her as a young lady but she never let that stop her from pursuing what she was passionate about. Nicole's work with the Bow Street Runners was very unique for a heroine and I loved watching her analyze situations and conducting investigations. Despite carving out a good life for herself in France, Nicole is lonely and longs to have someone who accepts her for who she is.

Mark has dedicated his life to his country and has spent his entire adult life working his way up the ranks towards becoming Home Secretary. Mark is understandably frustrated that the position he has worked for is in jeopardy due to the man in charge preferring a family man get the job. Mark has distanced himself from his family and after learning about his early life, I found that to be reasonable. Mark dislikes the aristocracy due to his mother's family's treatment of them when he was young.

Nicole and Mark's relationship at the start of the book is quite rocky which I guess was to be expected as they were separated for ten years. Throughout the book we get flashbacks to when Nicole and Mark first met and got married. I enjoyed these little snippets of their early life together and seeing how much they both grew as individuals. In the present both Nicole and Mark are still wary of one another and not willing to fully trust each other. One area though that they do not have problems is in the bedroom. Nicole and Mark have amazing chemistry and their physical scenes are quite steamy and very well done. The only aspect of their relationship that lacked a bit for me was communication between the two. While I understand why they don't open up with each other, it did get frustrating at times.

While *A Duke Like No Other* mainly focuses on the relationship between the two main characters, there was an intriguing side plot about the murder of Mark's cousin who was heir to a duke. Mark is tasked with investigating his death wherein he is paired with a man from the Bow Street Runners who had worked with Nicole in the past. The investigation was really interesting with several clever twists thrown in and I enjoyed

how it concluded. I really liked that Nicole was running a parallel investigation with Mark's cousin Regina and that they were the ones to break the case.

A Duke Like No Other was a really fun read and I plan to read more of the books in this series in the future. I would definitely recommend this series to anyone looking for new historical romance books to pick up.

I received an advance copy of this book from Netgalley and the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Valerie Bowman says

I love reunited lovers. Sigh.

♥ WishfulMiss ♥ says

Mark is finally going to get everything he set out to achieve when he joined the military. Without using his family name and connections he's proven himself on his own merit. Now the only thing standing in his way is his estranged wife. His superiors think a settled man would be the best fit so Mark heads to France on the off chance his wife will help him.

Nicole hasn't seen her husband in ten years and as much as she would like to slam the door on his face for abandoning her for all these years, it's not every day that Mark comes to her for a favor. If she agrees to return to London and play the loving and supportive wife for him, he'll return the favor. And there's only one thing Nicole wants more than distance from her husband. A legitimate child.

It's been a while since I've read historical romance but I was feeling a need for a change and I'm glad I read this one to get me back into this genre. The characters were fun and likable. Mark was a stickler for the rules and Nicole was free spirited and head strong but together they sparked right off the pages. I really liked them even when they were trying to keep to their agreement and emotionally keeping a distance and even when they were trying to one up each other, there was no denying their chemistry. The murder mystery was engaging and kept the story moving, the side characters were funny and the romance was so sweet. These two never stopped loving each other and I loved the fact that the author kept both MCs faithful even when they were convinced their marriage was over before it really even had a chance to start. They still held hope that things would work out between them deep down inside and I found that adorable. It was easy to root for them and I loved their HEA.

Memorable Moment:

Finding out that Mark remained celibate for 10 years was jaw dropping. Like, that NEVER happens in romance, especially in historical romances that have the MCs separated for such a long period of time.

Would I recommend?

I loved it, it was fun and the MCs were just meant to be :)

**** ARC provided for an honest review ****

I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this book. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

SAFETY INFO: (view spoiler)

Andrea says

3.5 stars

"Sometimes life calls upon us to be the things we never thought we were meant to be."

My first Valerie Bowman book, and certainly not my least. Seems I missed out on some pretty fun (if slightly far-fetched if the other books are all like this) stories here! I really liked the writing, it was so easy to keep turning the pages, even if I did roll my eyes quite a bit here and there.

The premise of this was what initially made me request this title: a grumpy spymaster who, in order to get the promotion he wants to become Home Secretary, has to retrieve his long-estranged wife from France and pretend to be a family man, only to realize that the feelings he thought he had long since buried have actually never gone away? A woman who is determined to make the best out of a shitty situation to get what she wants and is not afraid to ask for it? A man who is dead set against reuniting with a ducal family who cut off his mother after she married a lowly Mister only to find himself entangled in a whole lot of family drama, including the murder of the heir? Sign me up!

I actually liked the first half of the story. I liked both Nicole and Mark, I thought they were a really good match, both headstrong and impulsive, neither letting the other, as Nicole put it, "run roughshod" over the other. It was nice. There could've been a whole lot more bitterness between them, and I liked that they accepted their past.

But there were some things I didn't like:

- The murder investigation, in my opinion, overshadowed the reconciliation. And, the reveal of the killer made me roll my eyes. Hard...
- The spy stuff. You have to suspend your belief quite a bit here. Nicole, a wealthy aristocrat, got bored during her first season and started going after criminals whom she then presented to Bow Street. They were so impressed with her, they let her work for them. After her marriage and subsequent move to France, she works for the French police too. Need I say more?
- The frequent misunderstandings. You see, both Mark and Nicole have a tendency to throw in the towel at the first sign of trouble and run away. And, I have to say, for a supposedly clever man, Mark could be really really stupid at times. Just saying. Anyways. So, after a whirlwind romance the unlikely pair (she is a member of the ton, while he is just a Mister) got married. Their first fight after a few weeks of bliss? (view spoiler)

But even despite all that, I really did enjoy this book!

Safety warnings for those who care regarding their separation:
(view spoiler)

I received an ARC from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

alexis says

A Duke Like No Other has been on my radar for quite awhile. Anything to do with Estranged Spouses are an instant 'yes' for me. Picking up this one was a no brainer.

I liked the bare bones of *A Duke Like No Other*. Of course, there was the Estranged Spouses thing, but there was also the fact that Nicole used to be an unofficial Bow Street Runner. That was pretty unique. And the whole unexpected inheritance plot that the title promised is kind of a favorite of mine (re: *Dukes Prefer Blondes*).

Loving the set up, wasn't enough to love the novel overall. I found *A Duke Like No Other* lacked the angst and relationship development I expect from Estranged Spouses despite having a solid premise and strong side characters. One of the reasons why I felt that way was that Nicole and Mark didn't truly get to air out their issues. A lot of the story is addressed via Flashback, which I don't have a problem with (re: *The Day of the Duchess*). Regardless, flashbacks needed to be well placed and not feel like most of the story is being told through characters having flashbacks.

The other main reason why Nicole and Mark's relationship didn't feel full developed to me was the lack of time they spent doing work in each other's company. Don't get me wrong, I hate when the Hero and Heroine's lives/plot completely revolve around only interacting with each other. I've starred many books low because of that. In fact, I liked that Nicole spent time with a female friend she had. However, there's a happy balance and I didn't feel that. With the whole "two spies" premise, I was expecting Nicole and Mark to work together to solve the crime. Instead, they felt like they were doing things separate. It would've been great to have them work out their issues in the heat of the drama while trying to solve a crime. I didn't feel that with *A Duke Like No Other*. When the mystery was solved, Mark and Nicole's confession felt like a contrived afterthought.

While *A Duke Like No Other* didn't live up to my expectations, it was definitely a fun read. I may even be tempted enough to pick up the next book in the series if my suspicions about certain two side characters end up being right.

✿ Huge thanks to St. Martin's for providing me with an ARC in exchange for a fair review ✿

Kimberly says

4.5 stars - Reviewed for **Wit and Sin**

General Mark Grimaldi, spymaster extraordinaire, has worked his way up the ranks and is now on the cusp of obtaining the promotion he has dedicated his life to achieving. There's just one problem: his superiors

want Britain's new Home Secretary to be a family man. Given Mark's many connections, securing a wife wouldn't be a problem...if only he weren't already married. It's been ten years since his wife left him and by all accounts she's been happily living in France. In order to convince her to come back to England and play the part of loving wife, he'll have to give her something in return. But the bargain these two strike is more dangerous than either could know. For close quarters have a tendency to bring feelings long-buried to the surface, and neither of them wants to admit that perhaps the fairytale picture they're painting for others is something they want to be real. Can two people used to guarding their secrets closely take a risk and open their hearts for a shot at happily ever after?

I adore a good reunion romance and *A Duke Like No Other* is an utterly delightful one! Valerie Bowman has a bright, effervescent writing style that never fails to charm me and I couldn't help but fall in love with Mark and Nicole's story.

Mark and Nicole's whirlwind courtship and marriage crashed and burned within months after secrets came to light and old wounds tore them apart. Nearly ten years later they have both changed, but one thing remains the same: the pull between them cannot be denied. I loved the sparks that flew between Mark and Nicole from the very start. It's clear they're utterly perfect for one another and their back-and-forths had me grinning more than once. They're not just smart, they're clever, and it was so much fun to watch them dance around the attraction simmering just beneath the surface. That being said, they don't simply fall back into one another's arms and I enjoyed that too. They were young when they married and I liked that they got to know one another again, to build that solid foundation they didn't have in the beginning. It isn't easy for them to get to the "happily ever after" point. Mark has definite issues with the aristocracy due to his upbringing and family history. His feelings tend to color his judgement and it leads him to make mistakes with Nicole. And after having her heart broken once, Nicole is terrified of opening it up again, which contributes to their communication problems. But every bump in the road is worth it in the end and I was rooting for these two to make it.

The romance in *A Duke Like No Other* was fantastic but it'd be remiss of me not to mention the subplot involving the unexpected death of an aristocrat with close ties to Mark. I enjoy a good murder mystery and I had a great time putting together the pieces of the puzzle alongside Mark and Nicole. Mark's career as a spy has been well-established over the course of the Playful Brides series (and his investigative skills are clear even if you're new to the books), but this is the first time you see Nicole's talent as an investigator. Watching them and their allies interview suspects was fun and the quest to unmask the killer added to the story without taking the focus off of Nicole and Mark. I do feel it important to note that some readers might have an issue with believability in regards to Nicole's career that began with the Bow Street Runners and grew since then. There are certain aspects of the story that require suspension of disbelief and there are also some more modern attitudes in this book than one might expect to find in a historical romance. This didn't bother me because Ms. Bowman's writing style is so breezy that I was happy to go along for the ride and shrug off things that might bother me in another book, but that may not be true if you're looking for more historical accuracy in your historical romance. Still, if you want a spirited romance with a cozy mystery on the side, you're sure to enjoy *A Duke Like No Other*.

FTC Disclosure: I received this book for free from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Jessica's Totally Over The Top Book Obsession says

3 A failure to communicate Stars

A Duke Like No Other was my first time reading Valerie Bowman. Although I enjoyed this book, there were a few things that didn't work for me. I love second chance love stories, but the reason for the separation has to be a good one for it to work for me. In A Duke Like No Other I didn't feel the reason the hero and heroine parted ways was a good one. Especially when it caused them to be apart for 10 long years.

I liked both Nicole and Mark, but I felt they both were very childish in the way they didn't talk about their problems at all. They let a little misunderstanding keep them apart for 10 YEARS! Then even when they made a deal to reunite they didn't work out their problems. I felt their resolution was rushed and took too long to get it. I felt the problems in their marriage were glossed over with hot sex and working on a murder case. Overall the book was cute and I enjoyed it but it wasn't as good as it could have been. Will I read more books by Valerie Bowman? Yes I will.
