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Emma Burcelli has suffered over a decade of dating disasters. But she concludes that love is officially dead when her grandfather Poppi suddenly passes, leaving her grandmother Nona devastated. To help out, Emma works in the family bookstore, which Nona insists must be decked out in sweetheart décor as Poppi would have done for Valentine's Day. Although she feels like a V-Day Scrooge, Emma quickly learns to enjoy the task with the help of a handsome family friend, Lane Forester, who shows her that hanging hearts is much more fun when done to the tune of Dean Martin. As Emma and Lane share time and memories of Poppi, she reconsiders the notion that romance is *alive*.

Just as Emma's heart begins to lift, however, she learns her sister has already staked a claim on Lane. Emma's mother and sister insist Lane only sees her as a future sister-in-law, but she can't help wondering if it could be something more.

Once Upon a Winter's Heart Details

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Author : Melody Carlson

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From Reader Review Once Upon a Winter's Heart for online ebook

Laura says

Title: ONCE UPON A WINTER'S HEART

Author: Melody Carlson

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Genre: Romance/novella

Emma Burcelli has suffered over a decade of dating disasters. But she concludes that love is officially dead when her grandfather Poppi suddenly passes, leaving her grandmother Nona devastated. To help out, Emma works in the family bookstore, which Nona insists must be decked out in sweetheart décor as Poppi would have done for Valentine's Day. Although she feels like a V-Day Scrooge, Emma quickly learns to enjoy the task with the help of a handsome family friend, Lane Forester, who shows her that hanging hearts is much more fun when done to the tune of Dean Martin. As Emma and Lane share time and memories of Poppi, she reconsiders the notion that romance is alive.

Just as Emma's heart begins to lift, however, she learns her sister has already staked a claim on Lane.

Emma's mother and sister insist Lane only sees her as a future sister-in-law, but she can't help wondering if it could be something more.

ONCE UPON A WINTER'S HEART is a Valentine's Day romance. I initially thought it was a new Christmas book by her so I was excited to get it, but it was just as good as a Valentine's story – and a nice twist.

The story isn't written in deep point of view, and there is some telling, both of which jumped out at me. It also was fairly predictable, especially where Emma's sister was concerned. I liked Emma's openness, her friendliness, and Lane was a very nice man, and realistically flawed.

If you want a Valentine's Day novella to read, then ONCE UPON A WINTER'S HEART will be sure to warm you up. It is a delightful read. Warning for the more conservative readers, the characters do drink wine. ONCE UPON A WINTER'S HEART is a story I recommend for a sweet holiday read. \$11.00. 160 pages. 4.5 stars

Carrie says

When Emma's grandfather dies, she's sure that romance has died with him. Her parent's marriage seems to be little more than a sham, her sister is recently divorced and now the only successful romance she's ever seen has ended. She goes home to help her grandmother, taking care of her grandfather's bookstore and trying to decide what to do with her life. When she meets Lane Forester, she starts to think maybe there's some romance left in the world after all, but things don't go as expected. Her mother and younger sister, Anne, have already decided Lane would make the perfect second husband – but nobody asked Lane. Once Upon a Winter's Heart is a surprisingly sweet Valentines' day story. The characters were likable and

well-developed. I sympathized with Emma – it's always challenging to be stuck in a situation where everything could be fixed with a little honest communication – but no one is willing to communicate. It's one of the most frustrating things you can deal with.

Overall, I enjoyed this story. I would say I feel like the ending is very abrupt and a lot of “loose ends” are either not wrapped up or just fix themselves with very little explanation. It almost feels like we are being set up for a sequel – but a sequel in which we already know what's going to happen, so kind of an awkward ending. However, if you want to read a cute story that will warm the cockles of your heart for Valentines’ Once Upon a Winter’s Heart is a good choice.

I was provided with a copy of this book for review.

Debbi Faust says

I really would rate this three and half stars.

Jen says

A sweet Valentines Day story for those hopeless romantics

Yvette says

If you are looking for a Valentine's Day novella that is not too sugary, sappy, or full of perfect people, look no further. Emma is convinced that Poppi was the last of his kind, as all the marriages in her family are falling or have fallen apart. On top of this, her very Italian looks have made her feel less attractive than her blond, blue eyed mother and sister since she was young. This might seem a bit cliche, and so might her father's words to her, but it fits the story and helps give a lovely feel to certain scenes.

I really enjoyed the bookstore aspects of this story and the way that Emma becomes aware of Lane, as well as Emma's relationship with her Nona and Lane's with Poppi. I also enjoyed the short scenes involving who is sitting where in church.

The relationship between Emma and Lane develops quickly, but there are setbacks along the way which make the story all the sweeter. There is a depth to the characters in this story that I don't always find in novellas, though perhaps that is just my reading.

Whenever a romance heroine is a little older (Emma is 32) it adds to my enjoyment, as does a familiar setting. More importantly, though, is that the plot is well structured and nicely paced. There was a lot to like in this novella.

A sweet and enjoyable story, with the romance balanced by grief and marital dysfunction. This is the first book I've read by Melody Carlson and I'm definitely up for more.

Shelley says

2.5? It wasn't bad, but all the characters were pretty unlikable. Emma quits her job and heads home after her beloved grandfather dies and falls for the man who gave his eulogy. Emma was so unsympathetic to everyone around her, most especially her mother. She, her dad and Noni were just super judgemental and Emma was always convinced in how right she was, even when she was clueless. Her sister wasn't great, either, but it's not like Emma came out smelling like roses. Lane and Gerard should probably run far away.

Nora St Laurent says

I'm thankful for a review copy of a book by one of my favorite authors. I instantly cared for and enjoyed this cast of colorful characters. I felt a part of their family.

Emma Burcelli gets a call to inform her of her Poppi's passing. Emma learns the funeral will be soon. She feels lead to leave her dead-end marketing-job in Seattle to go live with her grandmother, Nona.

Poppi's death hits the entire Bucelli family hard. He was such an encourager, family anchor - part of everyone's life and brought so much love to them all. Emma declares, "Romance is officially dead...of course, she knew that Poppi would probably argue this with her. He would launch into a passionate lecture about how love was alive and well for those who were willing to take notice...just open your eyes; he would often say to people, "Love is all around you." But Emma had never been able to see it." She was convinced, "True love was only to be found in old movies and classic books."

This author has a great mix of believable characters, all facing Poppi's death in different ways. Some comical and in denial and some sad. They also face Valentine's Day in very different ways too. Emma knows, "Valentine's day is a crazy holiday for many who are not in a relationship, lost someone dear, and/or are not in that series relationship, things get complicated."

Emma has mixed emotions about this day. She tells someone, "Valentine's Day is a cruel joke! Bah-Humbug!" She was a Valentine's Day Scrooge and wasn't afraid to say it. She marveled and reflected at how much Poppi loved this holiday. So did her grandmother, Nona. It was at Nona's request for Emma to go to the book store they owned and decorate it for Valentine's Day on February first. She'd do that for both of her grandparents no matter how she felt about that day. Her grandparents were love to her. She'd do it for them.

I enjoyed this novella sized book for several reasons. One, it was about an Italian family. I was raised in one and know firsthand that learning to make homemade spaghetti sauce is very important. I smiled big when they talked about this aspect of Italian family life. They said that it was important to learn how to make spaghetti and meatballs the way their family made it. It spoke love to the receiver. I remember my training and how this is so true. Second part of this story takes place in a book store. I loved that since I've worked in one for 10 years. And last but not least this author talks about a men's book club. Poppi started and lead a men's book club inside the book store. I loved reading about this aspect of the book since I've done the very same thing but with a group of women. Poppi had picked out the Phantom of the Opera for the men to read. He wanted to talk about different aspect of what love is. It was funny to read about the men's book club as

they discussed the book and drank wine at their meetings. It was a hoot!

My only complaint about this book is that it was too short. It left me wanting more. I wanted to hang out with this Italian family and learn more about them. I highly recommend this book for a mini get away from the worlds cares. This story will tug at your heart, make you smile and just make you feel good all over. Thanks Melody! I enjoyed meeting you this year at the ICRS Conference!

Disclosure of Material Connection: #AD Sponsored by publisher.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising"

Nora St.Laurent

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Book Fun Magazine www.bookfunmagazine.com

Char (1RadReader59) says

Nona and Poppi had a marriage and a romance of love that was beyond anything that could be written about in a book or a movie. More than anything that Emma could ever imagine or had ever known. Even her own parents slept in separate rooms for goodness sakes. So, for her Nona and Poppi were the role models to follow. When one day at the apartment she shared with a roommate she went to college with, where she was getting her masters in Seattle that her grandfather, Poppi, had died.

That brought life into focus for Emma. One, she knew the last of the Romantics and romance itself had just died. Two that she needed not only leave school but the boring job that she hadn't liked for the two years she had worked there. Third and most important one of all that she needed to go home to the only real place that made her feel welcomed and safe. She needed to go home to Nona. She wanted to be with her, care for her, help her, love her, and comfort her the way Poppi and Nona did for her when she and her sister Anna were in need. She cared for them when her parents were too busy with their careers to notice them.

Her life back home is not what she is expecting when she gets there. Her parents issues are larger than life, her sister has grown two heads, which really isn't nothing new but now she is a mother and an ex-wife and she can't get a straight answer as to why she left her ex, her sweet nephew is more adorable than ever but missing his dad who now lives in Florida and is missing Poppi terribly.

Enter the mystery man from the funeral that seemed to know her Poppi pretty well when he got up to speak considering he said they just met 3 years ago. He is kinda cute no let's change that she thinks he's hot but there's one small problem she's been told hands off he belongs to her sister. But, wait her mother says yes hands off but they are not official yet he is just ear marked until the official year of mourning a marriage is over so it looks proper after the divorce. Wow, has she gone crazy or her family.

Come see how this unfolds you won't regret it. I loved this story for the simple reason that hey guess what NO SEX WHATSOEVER IN THE BOOK AT ALL!!! Just plain old everyday romance. Very good writing that keeps you interested in these characters and what is going on. Bravo!

Provided by Netgalley.com

Melanie says

Review on Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/review/R17LN8QI...>

Review on my blog (to be posted 2/11): <http://christianbookshelfreviews.blog...>

I've read several of Melody Carlson's books and plan on reading more in the future. Once Upon A Winter's Heart was a cute novella, perfect to read around this time of year - Valentine's Day. Not only does the story take place around Valentine's Day, but Emma (the main character) starts out as a Valentine's Day scrooge and is pessimistic about love.

I thought the story was fun, though there wasn't a lot of depth to it. The ending was a little abrupt and things seemed to happen very quickly towards the end. There was one thing I really liked in Once Upon A Winter's Heart's story, but I won't say what it was because that would spoil it for you, should you decide to read this book.

Overall, a good read. Not the best novella I've read and I wish the ending would have been a little different, but it was still an enjoyable and fun story.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received one or more of the products or services mentioned above for free in the hope that I would mention/review it on my blog. I was not required to give a positive review, only my honest opinion - which I've done. All thoughts and opinions expressed are my own and I only recommend products or services I use personally and believe will be good for my readers. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.

Rissi says

It's forever the bane of my reading life to never read seasonal books during the season they are using as filler. This past Christmas I was determined to read (and by "read," I mean actually make it to that last page) a few Christmas novels and did I? Um, no. When this book came around, I figured it was high time I snagged a copy and actually read it. So that's what I did. Set during the Valentine Day period, it tells the story of the jaded Emma whose trust in love is nothing if not fragile. Her grandparents were the prime example of what it means to be in a marriage with God at the center but then there are her parents. And her sister. With her grandfather's recent death, Emma leaves behind her life in Seattle to help her grandmother around the house and slowly begins to open her heart to Lane Forrester. But things get complicated when she learns her sister has a claim on Lane.

Reading this novel (which is very short on average though probably is longer than the "technical" novella), makes its reader feel nostalgic. It put me in mind of days past, folding colorful cardstock and cutting out hearts or writing out Disney Valentine's which is also closely resembling its cover illustration (and it's gorgeous!) and I suspect, exactly what Melody wanted the book to feel like. Those of us who prefer more time for characters to grow – both as individuals and as a couple if that's the path of the story, will be disappointed as there is very little depth of characters. The story takes a more lighthearted, easy approach to its subjects which can be nice on the occasion you feel overwhelmed with theology or topics that inspire a

reader to think.

I didn't respect some of the choices in the book though that falls into being a question of personal preference. There are cute classic book references and a scene that debates The Phantom of the Opera then there is the banter between Emma and her family which is cute – especially the scenes with her dad and I giggled over Emma adjusting to her mother rooming with her (note the scene of Emma taking her bubble bath), and in fact could even relate to Emma with certain of her personality quirks. Anyone looking for a cozy read will probably enjoy this novel. It's not great for those looking for substance, yet for a holiday read, there are plenty of hearts, sappy moments of paper nostalgia and of course a sweet romance albeit one that does end with ambiguity though, any well-read inspirational romance reader knows... the implication speaks volumes. *wink*

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Kathleen (Kat) Smith says

As Emma Burcelli heads home to her Nona's after learning of the death of her Poppi, she wonders if the last of the true romantic men has truly died as well. It seems like her Nona and Poppi's marriage was the perfect role model of what a happily ever after marriage really looked like, and after all the men she has ever met, there has been no one like Poppi. Guess all the good ones really are gone.

Leaving her marketing job in Seattle far behind after sensing this truly wasn't the dream job for her, she now has more than enough time to help her Nona get settled and help with the funeral arrangements. When she arrives at her Nona's home in the mountains, the last person she expected to see there was her mother. Thinking the worst, she heads inside only to learn that her mother has left her father. It seems that even her own parents couldn't make romance and love work in their own marriage living more like room mates than husband and wife. Oh sure, they could make it look good on the outside for appearances sake, but to those that really knew them like family, it was only a matter of time before things took a toll on either of them.

But her Nona's home wasn't situated for both of them to sleep properly and knowing her mother, Emma only believed it was a matter of time before her mother high tailed it back home. Without all the luxuries she had come to enjoy, living in a simple fashion hardly suited her mother including sleeping in a twin sized bed alongside Emma. Knowing that Valentine's day was truly something to be celebrated at her grandfather's bookstore, Nona asks Emma to help make sure all the decorations are up. But with romance and love being the furthest thing from her mind, Emma is the epitome of the Valentine's Day grouch. But when Lane Forester shows up late one rainy night, she wonders if the man her grandfather was mentoring could truly be her prince charming after all. The only thing standing in her way, is that her perfect blonde sister Anne has already claimed Lane as her boyfriend and has asked Emma to back off. But is it really that simple?

I received Once Upon A Winter's Heart by Melody Carlson compliments of Center Street, a division of Hachette Book Groups for my honest review. I did not receive any monetary compensation for a favorable review and the opinions expressed here are strictly my own. This is such a charming and heartwarming book perfect as a gift for Valentine's day or anytime you want that wonderful feeling of falling in love all over again. Grab a glass of wine, some of your favorite chocolates and don't forget to add just the right music, Dean Martin and you've got the perfect recipe for love! I easily give this one a 5 out of 5 stars!

Freda Mans-Labianca says

'AWWWW. I hope they get married'

That was my final thought as I closed the book.

Emma comes home because of a death in the family. She had no idea her life would change forever, and maybe that death had more to do with everything than you would normally think.

This is definitely a story for the hopeless romantic.

Emma was a little hardened to love or be loved, then Lane came through the door.

This is a perfect book to put you in the mood for love and the upcoming Valentines Day!

Grace says

Emma is fed up with Valentine's Day, and in general, anything to do with romance. She moves in with her Italian grandmother, Noni, after her beloved grandpa, Poppi, dies. Emma relishes living in the old home filled with memories and the intimate time spent with her grandma. Her peace is short-lived, however, when her uptown mom moves in with a broken heart. With the spark of love dying between her parents, and her own sticky situation with a man by the name of Lane Forester causing her grief, Emma struggles to make sense of it all.

My Thoughts:

Melody Carlson is often known for her gritty teen novels/series. Lately, I've seen fewer of her original ideas being published, replaced instead with these light-hearted romances. What happened? She's penned over 200 books in varying genres and styles, but still, I was surprised to see her name printed across Once Upon a Winter's Heart. It's so different from what I remember of Melody Carlson.

I could see this as a perfect movie for the Hallmark Channel during Valentine's Day. So, why did Melody tackle this piece? Maybe Melody grew tired of the gutsy undertaking of the tween/teen genre. I'm guessing it was because she wanted to try her hand at writing something else, but we may never know why Melody switched.

The leading lady, Emma, named after a Jane Austen heroine, was steady and determined. Her focus was clear and her agenda was fleshed out well. The co-characters (besides Noni and Tristan) came across as emotionless and unfeeling. The leading man to win over Emma's heart lacked any real charm. His dull demeanor needed a hefty dose of enthusiasm. Because of this, he failed to reach out from the pages and convince me of his love for Emma.

I don't want to give the story away, but the relationship between Emma, her mother, and her younger sister, Anne, was overwhelmingly frustrating. The author tried to stress that Emma loved her sister and mother (which is understandable), but it seemed heavily pushed upon the reader. Their "love for each other" didn't convince me enough that they actually did.

I didn't feel much sympathy for Emma's selfish mother and sister—which was confusing. Was I supposed to care for these characters or did Melody wish for me to dislike them? I don't want to reveal any spoilers, but

in the end, the story did not tie up Emma and Anne's relationship problems neatly. I wanted it to heal and mend. It was sort of disappointing.

Once Upon a Winter's Heart by Melody Carlson struck a par for me. It was okay. I recommend this book to women who like short reads with a tug-at-your-heart romance. It's perfect for Valentine's Day with a box of chocolates and a warm, cozy blanket.

This book was provided to me by Hachett Book Group in exchange for my honest review.

Bookworm says

Cliched short read I picked this up on a whim because I could get it cheap and was in the mood for a holiday story (I don't care if it's early September!). This book especially caught my eye since the main character works at a bookstore. Always a winner, right?

Nah. Emma is a young woman who has decided to swear off dating. Her grandfather has just died and she decides to move home to help her grieving grandmother and family. Add into the shenanigans is that her mom has decided to leave her dad and the suitor who picks up Emma's jaded eye is...seeing her sister???

So it goes. It's a light read that is only 160 pages, so you can sort of guess how it ends. That said, I wasn't impressed with this. This is my first exposure to Melody Carlson, but I just wasn't all that into the book. As other reviews say, there's a bit of a YA feel (not that it's bad!) to the book. It's formulaic, the characters are one-dimensional and there isn't sex, swearing, or any sort of possibly sketchy-ness to offend anyone (or maybe I missed it).

It's described as a Valentine's Day novella, but I think it could also suit for a holiday read. Maybe something to occupy a short flight or trip or to keep on hand while waiting for guests or food to cook. But I don't think it's a keeper and I doubt I'll be reading anything else from this author.

Rachael says

I wrote my first review in ages because of this book. Posted at Rachael Turns Pages. Link will not work as post is not up on blog yet.

In the heart of winter tragedy strikes. When Emma's beloved grandfather Poppi passes away Emma rushes home to be with her grandmother Nona and her family. Emma begins to help out in the family bookstore where she meets Lane Forester. Lane knew Poppi well and helps Emma remember fond memories and celebrate Poppi favorite holiday, Valentine's day. Romance is dead to Emma, but Lane helps her remember that love will find a way.

I randomly picked this book off my tbr list originally assuming it was a Christmas novel because of the title. I dove into the book without reading the synopsis and boy was I surprised to find this be a valentine's day novel. I'm really glad I decide to keep reading this book because it was such a joy.

This book reminded me that in tragedy happiness can be found. Emma would have never returned to her

family if Poppi had not passed away. She was one of those people that was too consumed to visit even for the holidays. When her family needed her she came and she realized the love and joy she was missing out of in her life. I loved to watch Emma interact with her nephew Tristan, who she hadn't seen for a long time. I loved watching Emma reconnect with her sister, Anne. Family was an important part of this novel.

Emma's time in the bookshop is where I could truly see her passion and love for Poppi. The place held so many memories and I could feel Poppi's presence when Emma was there. Lane Forester was an important part of the bookshop and I liked how Emma and Lane's relationship developed slowly and realistically throughout the novel. Lane is a very likeable, friendly, romantic guy, and he has a heart of gold like Poppi.

I'm so glad I decided to pick this book up this holiday season. I enjoyed this story and Melody Carlson wrote this book with the perfect mixture of sadness and happiness. I enjoyed this sentimental story.
