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Poison Or Protect: A Delightfully Deadly Novella



Synopsis

Can one gentle Highland soldier woo Victorian London's most scandalous lady assassin, or will they both be destroyed in the attempt? New York Times best-selling author Gail Carriger presents a stand-alone romance novella set in her popular steampunk universe full of manners, spies, and dainty sandwiches. Lady Preshea Villentia, the Mourning Star, has four dead husbands and a nasty reputation. Fortunately, she looks fabulous in black. What society doesn't know is that all her husbands were marked for death by Preshea's employer. And Preshea has one final assignment. It was supposed to be easy, a house party with minimal bloodshed. Preshea hadn't anticipated Captain Gavin Ruthven - massive, Scottish, quietly irresistible, and...working for the enemy. In a battle of wits, Preshea may risk her own heart - a terrifying prospect, as she never knew she had one. Delicate sensibilities? Contains men pleasing women, and ladies who know what they want and ask for it, sometimes in detail. May also contain plaid, appearances from dandy vampires, and the strategic application of leather gloves.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Hooray for my first 2016-release read! I am officially a die-hard fan of Gail

Carriger's books. I started off this year by reading her Parasol Protectorate series, and

followed up with her Finishing School series. And I plan on reading her Custard Protocol series in July, which is when the second book Imprudence releases. I will read ANYTHING this woman

writes. Also, not to toot my own horn, but she does follow me on Twitter and Instagram which made

me squeal in delight when I saw my notifications. I just adore her. And her cat is gorgeous, not that that's relevant to her writing.

The Novella *Poison or Protect* (a stand-alone romance) is the first installment in the *Delightfully Deadly* series which will feature the graduates of *Mademoiselle Geraldine*. Our first heroine is Preshea Buss, who was initially introduced in the *Finishing School* series. She was a catty, spiteful, unlikeable girl who has grown into a dangerous and wealthy woman. On her mission, she meets an attractive Scottish soldier named Gavin Ruthven. Even though I knew I would enjoy the book because of the familiar world it was set in and the appearance of some of my favorite characters, I was pleasantly surprised by how much I actually LIKED Preshea. She is very self-aware, intelligent, and skilled at her chosen profession. She knows her flaws, and she makes no excuses for them. Her maturity and evolution throughout the novella was not reserved simply for Gavin, but allowed her the ability to form healthier relationships with others.

“Always, there was a tiny part of her that wanted to kill any man she knew. On principle.”

Gavin was just a kind, gentle, and swoon-worthy character that complemented Preshea perfectly. Once I started reading the book and realized it was more romance-focused, I was briefly disillusioned. I expected a rake, or one of those regency romance rugged alpha Scotsman tropes that I had left far behind. But that's not who Gavin was at all, and I found it extremely refreshing.

Note: Not that there is anything wrong with the rugged alpha-man stories! I do enjoy a good bodice-ripper romance once in a while. It's just that as I've grown older and figured out my personal wants and desires in a partner, I realize that I actually don't find those kinds of men attractive in real life. And the feminist in me occasionally rages against their behavior.

“He liked knowing she could kill him.”

The romantic/sexual scenes were well-written and enjoyable. And honestly, I don't really know what to say beyond that. It's a sex-scene guys fill in the blanks :P. I guess what I'm saying is, if I had the opportunity to have a little fun with Gavin, I would not turn it down. Every woman should be lucky enough to have a little Gavin in their lives.

swoons

The espionage/mystery element of the book was not fully explored to my satisfaction. But I understand that with this being a novella, the author had to narrow her focus and not bite off more than she could chew. I encourage everyone to download a copy of this ebook. At the very least, it would give you an idea if this author is worth adding to your TBRs.

I received a pre-pub version of the book from the author for a review. A more comprehensive version of this review is at my blog *Hedgehog Librarian*. For those familiar with her other works, this

feels much closer to the Alexia novels than her more recent teen pieces and it's a comfortable but intriguing return to a well known place. In this transition between time periods of her other works, Carriger draws forward a character from the Finishing School novels, Preshea, who is now a fully trained and highly capable assassin. Sent on assignment to a house party in the North, Preshea encounters a Scottish Captain who might get in the way of her assignment and might mean more to her than a target or an irritant. While the story is intended to be a stand alone, Carriger probably rightly assumes familiarity with her universe. She does not waste time explaining how vampires and werewolves interact, vampire tethers, ghost naming conventions, etc. This will not be an issue for familiar readers but might cause some confusion for someone coming new to the series. There are two interesting side plots: the lovers that Gavin is there to support and Preshea to break up and another pair of young ladies who have their own special connection. The search for scandal as the first pair finally realize they are not the best matched seemed unnecessary. Wouldn't young girls at a house party be up late giggling in each others' rooms? Overall it was a nice short trip back to Carriger's world and I recommend it for Alexia fans. If you are introducing new readers to her work, I would continue to suggest *Soulless* as the gateway, however, for best world building.

Gail Carriger is one of my favorite authors. Ever. I have read all of her other series and I am getting around to her short stories. This installment does not disappoint! I'm excited to see how this series progresses because we leave the girls after Finishing School and this is like a class reunion of sorts. That said, one does not need previous knowledge of the world to enjoy this story. I don't know how, my guess is a towering stack of dainty sandwiches and teacups, but Carriger always manages to adjust her writing just so to meet genre and age expectations. [book:Poison or Protect|30320387] is most definitely an adult romance, different in tone from the most recent Custard Protocol series, but it does not lose any of the wit or charm. Brava!

I have to admit to a bit of trepidation when it comes to romance books. I greatly enjoy a good love story, but I've never been much for overly explicit sex scenes that wind up reading like a play-by-play at the Twister National Championship. But I've read and loved Ms. Carriger's *Parasol Protectorate* (which has some romance-novel aspects to it, but is much more of an adventure tale, IMO,) *Finishing School* (in which we first meet the star of this novella,) *Prudence* (the first book in her Custard Protocol series,) and a couple of her short stories, so I decided it was worth the risk to

see what she'd do with a full blown romance, and I was right to take the chance. Even though there are some very explicit - and titillating - sex scenes, she deftly uses those scenes to help build her characters and their relationship, giving them a narrative importance, something that's all too rare in my experience. As with all of her works, Ms. Carriger has given us a bevy of well-developed, occasionally quirky characters each with their own purpose and many with secrets that add surprise and suspense to the tale. Even though the book is fairly short, being a novella, she is still able to add enough substance to side characters to give the reader reason to care about them.

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