



The Fortunes of Francesca (Best of Betty Neels)

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All problems had an answer—but marriage?

Francesca was naturally optimistic—and she needed to be. She'd cut her nursing instruction short in order to look after the elderly aunt who had so kindly opened her home to Franny and her brother. Financial difficulties led Franny to apply for a job as Lady Trumper's assistant, but Franny's outspoken manner clearly didn't please her. It was only through her godson, Marc, that Franny was able to get the job. Marc always seemed to be on hand after that....

Betty Neels:

- She is a USA Today bestselling author.
- Her series novels consistently rank #1 in their month, averaging 16 percentage points higher than other titles.
- To date, The Best of Betty Neels titles have averaged a 55% NSR.
- Since 1996, 21 consecutive #1 Harlequin Romance titles have been published, including her most recent, A Good Wife (7/03).
- Her novel Emma's Wedding (5/02) had a 61% NSR.
- Betty wrote 134 books during her 30-plus-year career, publishing exclusively with Harlequin Books.

The Fortunes of Francesca (Best of Betty Neels) Details

Date : Published July 1st 2013 by Harlequin Special Releases (first published 1996)

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Author : Betty Neels

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Cecilia says

This is one of the "desperately poor mousy girl works incredibly hard for no real reward but eventually is appreciated by an incredibly rich and successful doctor" type of Neels stories.

This one is intensified by a malevolent uncle who steps in and actively tries to destroy her and her lovely aunt. Wayyy over the top, and weirdly (without the incest aspect), brought Flowers in the Attic to mind.

With that excessive layering on of hardships on the poor heroine's head, plus the very brief resolution (view spoiler), this was not as satisfying as some of Neels' other titles. 2.5 stars

Edited to add this standout gem:

AT EXACTLY TEN O’CLOCK on the Monday morning Franny presented herself to Lady Trumper. She looked neat and tidy in her navy skirt and white blouse topped by a navy cardigan. The garments did nothing to add to her looks, but Lady Trumper noticed and approved. At least the girl didn’t wear a skirt up to her thighs and one of those vulgar tops printed with some stupid sentence...

I love it when Betty tut tuts over our vulgar modern times!

Mudpie says

This book was hard for me to read. The misfortunes that kept happening to Franny! Just when things improved marginally, something much worse happened. One step forward, three steps back! Give the girl a break!

There's the two dimensional villain in the form of the uncle, but perhaps it's to show what a hero Marc was to come charging to their rescue hehe! He was stunned he'd offered her a marriage of convenience but did not regret it one tiny bit.

Franny's plainness and mousiness was harped upon repeatedly, but it was all for the contrast at the end when Marc saw her as the beautiful young woman she really was, when not being constantly beaten down by life.

Marc was not very kind initially, especially when Franny acted wifely asking him not to work so hard or be careful. I guess it was difficult for a man used to his own ways never answering to anyone to suddenly have a wife hovering over him. He had not planned on getting married at all! When he forced Franny to visit his nasty godma, her former employer who fired her on Christmas eve, I was angry with him too. But I

understand he had no choice because she's his godmother not some acquaintance so Franny had to accept and learn to respect his elders too.

But what happened after The godmother insulted Franny to him...bravo!

What I cannot understand when a hero offered a marriage of convenience is, can a man not even in his 40s totally give up sex? Marc was only 35! And the Betty Neels heroes don't seem the type for casual sex, let alone have a mistress. This just puzzles me about the heroes in MOC plots. Those who offered MOC to heroines they already secretly loved at least was just being patient and playing a waiting game.

Oh and sometimes Franny's thoughts and speeches were really unfiltered. She was either really naive or too simple minded!

Caro says

Leer a Betty es tan lindo...

Sus novelas siempre tienen algo que me identifica. En este caso ella trabaja de noche como yo y es como si me hiciera un guiño cuando cuenta cómo llega a casa de mañana y va a dormir; me gustan sus heroínas fuertes y luchadoras y Franny no es la excepción. El doctor es un poco frío, pero el final amerita esa falta de pasión.

Emily says

1/24/17-1/25/17:

Enjoyable, though not my favorite BN, because the hero and heroine didn't see much of each other at all, and when they did, he was always trying to get her to shut up and quit annoying him. And there were too many hardships which lasted a little too long. But Francesca was a hoot and quite a character, so that made it worthwhile. :) 4 stars.

October 2017: I've been going through my old updates, cleaning things up a bit, and, now, I'm catching up on my review backlog (I'm still in January of 2017!). In the past, I've always posted my reviews as updates, since they're really just a way for me to remember how I felt about the books I read (for my own benefit, rather than to inform anyone else) and because I'm a big coward, but it's annoying and inefficient having to do it that way, so I might OFFICIALLY be reviewing things from now on.

...

Maybe.

Helen Manning says

One of TGB's best. Almost Dickensian at times; Francesca is optimistic and hardworking despite cruel and often heartbreaking obstacles. She lives in reduced circumstances with her loving Aunt and younger brother Finn (a medical student). 2 years into her Nursing training Franny is forced to leave to care for her Aunt who has a cardiac condition. This she does cheerfully and gladly to repay her Aunt's kindness in taking them in upon their parents' deaths. There is a backstory with a hideous Uncle and Aunt that will make you shudder.

She meets our RDD at his godmother's (a frightful snob) home where she works. He is unimpressed initially but comes to respect Franny's strength and commitment to her family. What is nice about the book is that Marc (who works constantly and untiring) begins to unthaw and notice that Franny has become more and more vital to him. They embark on a MOC and Franny falls first but not hardest. The dialogue is some of her best. When Marc realizes what a treasure he has we cheer for Francesca's HEA. Great read.

Pamela Shropshire says

First, I LOVE the title of this one. It's so like *The Perils of Pauline*, you know?

Anyway, Franny is applying for work as companion/secretary/lackey to Lady Trumper, who immediately decides that Franny is Not Suitable. Franny is on the point of leaving the house when the butler is informed that the kitchen maid has cut herself; Franny, having completed 2 years of nurse training, follows him to the kitchen and quietly but competently takes charge. She continues to assist after the doctor arrives; he is Marc van der Kettener, eminent cardiologist and godson of Lady Trumper.

Franny accompanies Elsie to the hospital in Mr. vdK's Rolls; then after she is abandoned in the waiting area, she takes a bus home.

Home which she shares with Auntie, who has a heart condition, and Finn, her younger brother who is studying to be a doctor. Later, Mr. vdK advises his godmother to hire Franny and she does; it is, however, a fractious relationship as Franny is quite chatty and outspoken. Mr. vdK doesn't like her chattiness either (at first).

They see quite a lot of each other even after Franny leaves Lady Thumper; Auntie has a heart attack and Mr. vdK operates.

Marc (time to stop calling him Mr. vdK) arranges things, proposes a MOC to Franny and generally takes charge.

The ending is quite nice. Whereas he once disliked her chatter, he tells her that "the day you stop talking I shall die, my darling."

This one lands somewhere in the middle of the pack.

Patricia schmit says

Excellent Neels Story

Although this tale occasionally gets a bit too hard a push to make it all work, most of the story is really good!

Monique says

Star Rating: ★★½??

Heather says

I really like this one. It is excessively cozy.

Leona says

[I was disappointed that he truly didn't love her. It was only at the very end that he fell in love with her, and only after realizing that she was actually pretty. (I guess, clothes, relaxation and good food do help make a difference.) I don't mind an

Angela Maher says

Not in the least raunchy, and written in a somewhat old-fashioned way, this is a sweet little romance for when you just want a nice, non-taxing story.

Allison says

Very nice.

Maddie says

I love Betty Neels and this is one of the better ones. Her stories are somewhat similar and that is part of the charm. These books are 'comfort' stories with happy endings. When you need a simple story with characters that resist the 'instant' gratification and 'selfish narcissism' so prevalent today, reach for a Betty Neels story.

Jite says**If you love Betty....**

If you're as big a Betty Neels fan as I am, it's hard to rate any of her books fairly because it's going to be 4 or 5 Stars- not because it's the greatest thing I've ever read but because she's Betty. The taciturn heroes, the saccharine but sensible heroines with a cheerful spirit and a hint of backbone, the barely detectable chemistry.... what's not to love? Yes I know these are a little (ok a lot) ridiculous but I love Betty and so it's all 4 and 5 stars from me.

Mirella Grace says

Love this novel! Really like it. I love the character of Francesca Bowen, a girl who has a positive thinking no matter what problems appeared in her life.

It also match the title. It was a fortune for Franny to have a great future husband in Marc van der Kettener. I can't imagine to have an uncle like uncle Will, thanks to Marc who has rescued Franny and her aunt from that domineering uncle Will!
