



## Spare Brides

*Adele Parks*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# Spare Brides

*Adele Parks*

## **Spare Brides** Adele Parks

Damaged and beautiful, they were the generation who lost so much and became 'spare brides'. The richly compelling and emotional new novel from Sunday Times bestselling author Adele Parks is the powerful story of four extraordinary women left to pick up the pieces of their lives, in the scarred, glamorous and endlessly fascinating post-First World War era.

New Year's Eve, 1920. The Great War is over and it's a new decade of glamorous promise. But a generation of men and women who survived the extreme trauma and tragedy will never be the same.

With countless men lost, it seems that only wealth and beauty will secure a husband from the few who returned, but lonely Beatrice has neither attribute. Ava has both, although she sees marriage as a restrictive cage after the freedom war allowed. Sarah paid the war's ultimate price: her husband's life. Lydia should be grateful that her own husband's desk job kept him safe, but she sees only his cowardice.

A chance encounter for one of these women with a striking yet haunted officer changes everything. In a world altered beyond recognition, where not all scars are visible, this damaged and beautiful group must grasp any happiness they can find - whatever the cost.

## **Spare Brides Details**

Date : Published February 13th 2014 by Headline (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9781472205391

Author : Adele Parks

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Romance, Fiction, War

 [Download Spare Brides ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Spare Brides ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Spare Brides Adele Parks**

---

## From Reader Review Spare Brides for online ebook

### Stephanie Wood says

This is a realistic story of four women coming to terms with their expectations for the future after the horror of war. Adele Parks deals with their emotions and desires honestly - even though not all the characters are easy to like - and she crafts a tale which has the reader wondering what they might have done in the same position. Personally I am not normally a fan of historical fiction, but the issues raised here had me engaged from the beginning.

---

### ♥?♥?Sofia♥?♥? says

I read a few reviews of this author that didn't fill me with confidence going into this book; but I have to say that there is a rawness about this story that surprised me, it's very...'frank', I think the word is. There are depths to the writing, the style and character development that lifted this novel out of the mundane kept me engaged. Powerful narratives, with an overwhelming sense of despair, underwrites the sense of loss at so many lives lost in a futile war; every brittle laugh or seemingly whimsical affectation disguises the utter hollowness of lives lived without meaning and for appearance..at times this made for uncomfortable reading....in a good way, Parks captures it all perfectly.

Four women live during a time where they had little or no choice of what their lives should mean or be outside of society's expectations find that friendship is not always everything it should be.

Really enjoyed it.

---

### Vicky says

I found this book enjoyable but didn't think it was as good as some of Adele Parks other books... The synopsis makes out that the story is going to be equally divided between the four main characters but just seems to be about Lydia and her love affair with Edgar Trent.

It's a shame that Ava's story wasn't fully explored as she seemed to be the most interesting and ambitious of all the 'Spare Brides'.

The good thing about the book is that there are a few surprises that have been left right to the end which made the last few pages exciting and I thought that the post war mentality of the characters was very interesting. I also loved reading about the 1920s fashions and how the different classes were affected after the war.

---

## Lucy says

I must say that this may be one of the worst books in my possession. Actually, it's not in my possession any more. It's on a tram. In Edinburgh. 300 miles from my home town. I'm rather pleased that the majority of people liked this book. I now have hope that the random stranger who picks the book up will enjoy it.

However, the premise sounds good, so why did I dislike it? A group of four women are all left in different martial situations after the First World War. 1920s. The Lost Generation. Sounds fab doesn't it? In fairness, Adele Parks does write quite well, and she evidently researched the war and its aftermath very well. This is what made the first section, Winter, quite compelling.

This first section is good because the stories of all four women are equally weighted. However, they all vary greatly in interesting personalities.

The story would've been very different if Adele Parks had chosen to make Bea or Ada her protagonist. Or even Sarah, even if she was a little dull. However, Lydia was our protagonist and for me, the book went downhill from there.

Lydia has little or no positive aspects about her personality. She was beautiful, yes but she was also dull, vapid, shallow, arrogant, spoilt, whiney and completely self-absorbed. And we're frequently reminded that Lydia is beautiful as if excusing her childish behaviour.

This book is also very, very melodramatic. It's straight out of a Mills and Boon. Plot synopsis:(view spoiler)

Yuck. As you may have guessed this certainly was not my cup of tea.

I personally thought that the romance in this book was not very good. I have nothing against affairs in novels – but I want them to be written well. This romance was predictable, boring and I didn't care for it at all. I would say the main love interest, Edgar Trent was excruciatingly boring. He was undeveloped and stereotyped, and hardly any of the chapters were from his point of view leading to making him be a figurehead, a pawn in a chess game. The sex scenes also were not executed well. They were long, boring and very clichéd. I wanted them to be over.

However, I am in the minority, and it does seem most people liked this book. It was just not my cup of tea.

---

## Danielle says

Read more reviews at [What Danielle Did Next](#)

You know those books that you feel were just written for you. Like you made a list of everything you could want in a book and an author was wonderful enough to somehow accommodate you?

SPARE BRIDES was a "me" book. Adele Parks should really have included a subtitle "For Danielle" because this book had everything I look for in historical fiction. Impeccably researched, wonderful character development and fabulous writing, it was a joy to read from start to finish.

I am a huge war history geek, I wrote my thesis on the effects of WWI on the psyche of Irish writers and their literature so the time period is one I adore to read about both in fiction and non-fiction. Examinations on Post-War life are a particular love of mine and Spare Brides hit the mark with its compelling story about the fragile state of a society literally shell-shocked.

Spare Brides tells the story of four upper-class women whose fortunes after the war are very different. Sarah, widowed and left raising two children, fights loneliness every day. Her sister Beatrice, never the beauty must now come to terms with the fact that the lack of men and her less than stellar financial situation means she'll be left on the shelf. Ava, beautiful and vivacious, for her "single" is a state of great opportunity and the independence gained from working while the men were away fighting is not something to be relinquished easily and Lydia, beautiful, rich and spared the grief of losing a husband in the trenches she has it all so why when the captivating and brutish Edgar Trent walks into her life is she willing to risk what every woman around her craves.

I have never read Adele Parks before and I heard this was her first foray into historical fiction so I didn't know what to expect. Parks manages to capture beautifully the delicate balance between the desperation to recapture the past's former glory and familiarity and the encroaching modernity with the wants and desire for change. The Old World is losing its grip and the social lines are blurring.

From the first pages I was caught up in this world of glamour and sparkle tinged with sadness and despair. Park's four heroines are equally well developed and grabbed my sympathy and attention for their individual plights.

Sarah, patient and kind has been dealt the rawest of deals. She was fortunate to have married for love, a rare commodity in a culture focused on marrying well and losing her husband, finds herself a single mother, aching for the company, passion and security she knows a man can offer.

Beatrice, eager and intelligent had her precious chance at a successful season "out" ripped away by the declaration of war. Now the men who have returned to England are broken, their souls and limbs left behind in the fields of France. Those who managed to escape relatively unscathed have their pick of the "spare brides" and Beatrice is cast aside, too chubby, too forgettable. I really sympathised with Bea, a girl who would have thrived in the halls of University who is forced to be humiliated at every social outing as the old ways win out for the time being.

Ava, the epitome of the post war modern flapper, teetering on the edge of scandal at all time refuses to find herself in such a hopeless state as Beatrice. Determined to stand and be counted, her story was fascinating. The hopes and dreams of single women today, the opportunities that lie before them were founded here in the steely ambition of women like Ava so many years ago.

Lydia, the true heroine of the story was the one who invoked the widest spectrum of emotions in me, from sympathy to hatred, love to screaming frustration. Her recklessness at a time when her peers scrambled for the safety of the familiar was compelling to read. Her cold accusation to her husband of shirking his responsibilities by accepting a desk job during the war effort and her belief that being a war widow would have been more acceptable than the shame of being on the arm of a healthy man is unbearable to witness at times. Her subsequent relationship with Edgar was equal parts admirable and horrifying and her journey was

ultimately unforgettable.

Parks has a wonderful ability to create characters that are unfailingly sympathetic and her thoughtful examination on women, their status, their relationships and their hidden desires is staggering.

This is a period of time when an ever present cloud of dismay and guilt crossed social lines that no-one was able to avoid.

The unspoken calculation of what everyone has lost and gained in the war and the resentment seeping out through thinly veiled insults disguised as concern. The desire to forget yet the unwillingness or perhaps incapability to do so is a recurring theme. One cannot help but feel for these women, these “spare brides”. Caught between the fleeing past and the charging future, their present is desperately sad. The painful knowledge that their purpose in life; to be a wife and mother has been lost and watching men broken by war try desperately to come to terms with the images of horror and brutality forever playing behind their eyes.

This book was by far my favourite historical fiction book in recent years. Capturing the struggle of women and giving a voice to those who were part of a generation filled with uncertainty and change at too fast a pace is a story that can be appreciated by any generation and will be just as important and relevant to the daughters and grand-daughters that come after. Simply stunning.

---

## **Megan Readinginthesunshine says**

I'm already a big fan of Adele Parks, I've read and enjoyed her previous novels so I was looking forward to her latest release. I was especially looking forward to this one as it was a historical, and I love historical fiction.

In 1920, The Great War is over, and everyone is now trying to readjust to life after all they have been through. And with so many men lost, the chances of finding a husband are slim. As Beatrice, Ava, Sarah and Lydia try to find their way in life, a chance encounter for one of these women with a striking yet haunted officer will change everything...

I really enjoyed this, I was really interested to see how Adele's writing would be with a slight change in genre but I fell in love with the story straight away. I was soon hooked to what I was reading and I flew through the book.

I loved the characters. I liked how the four women had their own individual personalities and so I could hear their separate 'voices' as I read. I liked Edgar very much too and I was hooked reading about him and how he was affected by the war, as well as reading about his interactions with the ladies.

Adele Parks is a real storyteller, the period detail was beautiful and ever so vivid – it felt as though I had travelled back in time and was stood watching the scenes play out in front of me. The atmosphere, the clothes, everything seemed to jump to life. Adele also does a fantastic job of portraying life after war and the effects that it had not just on the towns and cities, but the effects on the actual lives of people who survived and their feelings as they all began to try to move forward with their lives.

I don't want to give any more of the plot away but it is a gripping story of the four women as they journey through love, loss, grief and hopes for their future. I really enjoyed Spare Brides and I hope to see more of

## **Samantha says**

*Spare Brides* is essentially about four upper class ladies and their adjustment to life after WW1. Friends who have previously lead silly giddy lives where the most difficult decision they have had to make in a day is what dress or shoes they should wear suddenly are given responsibility, jobs and a purpose in life. In reality this is a book about awakening, friendship, the search for direction and happiness and Adele Parks takes us on a journey that changes each of these women's lives forever.

The characters are flawed before the war but these flaws are made all the more visible to themselves and those around them when the war ends and the heavy price that victory has cost them is painfully brought home to them with the loss of loved ones, and the realisation that nothing will ever be the same again.

With thousands of men lost, and damaged and crippled survivors coming home this means challenges for everyone. For the upper class women it means fewer husbands available forcing those who don't find marriage the turmoil of what they will do with their lives, they have no purpose and no direction. Beatrice falls into this unenviable category; sister to Sarah whose husband is killed in the war leaving her with two children to bring up alone, Bea was hoping to find happiness and marriage before the war but being less attractive than other girls her 'coming out' was a disaster due to the start of the war and dashed all her hopes of happiness. Her story is of loneliness and tragic acceptance to a life of emptiness. Then there's Sarah who loses the love of her life and spends every day mourning for him and trying to bring up two children alone. Sarah and Bea become the 'spare parts' and looked on with pity, being offered invitations to events as a courtesy.

We meet the beautiful Ava, enchanting, mesmerising, scandalous, vivacious, most of the men lust after her and most of the women secretly envy her. Seemingly a frivolous and self-centered flapper, Ava is a much more complex and fragile character than she first appears. War work has given these women some purpose in life and they are enjoying their new found freedom it's inconceivable that things can return to the way they were before the war and of course they can't. Ava doesn't just want to be a wife she wants to have a career or make a difference in this new world. She is absolutely determined not to end up like Bea just because she doesn't want to marry, she wants a career. She fights to find herself and surprisingly uses her new found courage to help her friends not least Bea to find strength within themselves to try something new.

Then there's Lydia; having made a successful marriage to Lord Chatfield and soon to become a Countess when her father-in-law dies, she is tormented by being unable to produce an heir although she is envied by others as she is spared the grief of losing a husband to war. When she is drawn to Edgar Trent it is difficult for those who know her to believe she would be willing to sacrifice a husband and grand lifestyle that the others most want for what they believe to be a silly infatuation. To her friends it seems equally unfair that she should have two men when some women have none. She embarks on a dangerous affair but learns a lot about herself along the way and what really is important in her life.

Beautifully written, Adele Parks does not disappoint in this novel. Passionate and at times poignant she takes the reader through the giddy, lavishness of pre war frivolous trophy women and pompous Victorian men to a very different country post WW1. Four friends each with their own secrets and desires, each facing their own demons and trying to adjust to a post war life that is trying to hold on to the old values while having to move forward into the new world where social boundaries were blurred and embracing change was frightening and

exhilarating in equal measure.

Returning soldiers who managed to come back relatively intact had the pick of the 'spare brides' leaving no room for those less fortunate plain women. My heart ached for Bea the wallflower when the war ended, with no great looks or dowry to rely on she has to face the painful realisation that she'll be left on the shelf and die an old maid. Parks takes us from the eager intelligent puppy like girl to the resigned, often humiliated and wary woman that she becomes.

But this novel is not all doom and gloom; there are some unexpected twists and turns which I won't reveal that go on to make this a satisfying and happy read. Each of the four characters are well developed; it is easy to identify and sympathise with them all and each one brings something fragile and raw to the story to touch your heart. It seems that the war fought on the front was a prelude to the war that inevitably has to take place once the men return and the fighting is over. This war did change lives forever, it opened up opportunities, it broke down social barriers, it left families destroyed by the horror of war and the guilt of profiteering from it but it also meant new beginnings which comes across very well in this novel. It was awful, it was brutal, the struggles of both men and women during this time were monumental and Adele Parks deals with this brilliantly in her book.

I have to give this book a 5 star rating, it was beautifully written, brutally honest, heartbreakingly real but mostly it was a book that I would not have wanted to miss - it would make a great film. You have to read it.

I would like to thank the publisher for sending this in exchange for an honest review.

---

### **Lili says**

I give this book 2.5 stars.

The cons slightly outweighed the pros for me. I hated the character of Lydia - she was a passive, irritating sycophant who only ever spoke about men. I was hoping she would die at the end of the book. Ava on the other hand was the complete opposite, and Bea was alright too.

The writing style was not to my liking, it had some terrible sex scenes ("got to it" seriously?) and it was like the author had only just discovered the word 'lascivious'. The second half picked up more than the first but the ending was then a bit lazy and too neat.

---

### **J.A. Ironside says**

3 stars. Just. This was interesting enough to keep me reading until the end, although by the time I got there, there were few surprises left. It all ended as I thought it would at the beginning - when I'd been hoping I was wrong and was going to be treated to something poignant and sweet from at least one of the four characters.

That brings me onto problem one; we're led to believe that it's an equal division of book between four young women. It's not. Perhaps it was intended to start that way but it soon becomes all about Lydia and Trent. Frankly I couldn't care less about their love affair. I've seen the dynamic done many times before and often better. There was nothing to really like or dislike about either of them, nothing to get a handle on. So when



we got four and five chapters in a row focused on the pair while the more interesting situations of Ada, Beatrice and even Sarah, were just left hanging, it was more than a little frustrating. I think I did end up shouting 'oh for the gods' sake! Not another bloody chapter about that stupid affair' at one point.

Ava's story wasn't fully explored and it felt like a let down. Beatrice got foisted off by the author as much as by society - it was a total cop out. I think Sarah was the only character that acted like herself all the way through but she was hard to care about as she was so intent on becoming a dour, drab little person.

What the book had going for it was the flashes of post war mentality and how mores and manners adjusted around that whilst on the surface staying the same. It was interesting what the war did the the gentry and aristocracy who in some ways were even more affected than the middle and working classes. The utterly despicable way poor and maimed ex-soldiers were treated was also slipped in. The problem was all of this was just sketched in and it was by far the most interesting part of the book.

But perhaps the biggest issue is that this was billed as a historical novel. It is not. It's chic lit wearing period costume. If your expecting something richly woven and depict ice of the time you will be disappointed, this is not the book for you. It failed to find it's target audience in me, in general I'm not fussed about chic lit. And this follows the tropes and tells of chic lit faithfully - many of which I don't like. For example, I got thoroughly sick of two page descriptions of how characters were feeling and why. I kept thinking that any second I'd get shown rather than told but it never happened. Also as with much chic lit, the love and sex scenes were formulaic with the odd naughty word thrown in to spice it up. While this style of writing no doubt delights many lovers of chic lit, I found it dull and irritating. I acknowledge it's a well written book. There's some flashes of genuine brilliance but ultimately I think I never would have read this if I hadn't thought it was a genuine historical novel. On the plus side it was something light, frothy and in no way brain straining while I was finishing up nano this year, so there is that. If you are a women's fiction lover and would quite like to read some set in 'Downton Abbey' time, knock yourself out.

---

### **Cristina says**

Absolute drivel...

There's absolutely no real connection with the period. It was pretty much tedium personified.

---

### **Sandra says**

First the good parts about this book. It was well researched. The 1920s was indeed a period in which people tried to escape in parties and women struggled to find a man often leading to fierce competition to snag one of the men that did survive the war. Which explains the high fashions and outlandish styles.

Also, I like that there are various groups represents, rich people, war widows, unmarried women and modern women. All with their own interests and ways of moving forwards. Especially so soon after the war the contrast is visible and still raw.

Now on to why this is a two star book.

Lydia.

Good lord she was annoying. The woman has a husband, more money than she could ever hope to spend, she looks stunning and she had great friends. She had everything, I repeat everything and she has the nerve to complain. There is no earthly reason why she in any day and age could reasonably voice any serious complaints. Yes, they are struggling to have a baby (which is a real concern) but other than that there is nothing.

Lydia shops, Lydia dances and Lydia complains. If she was so bored she could have found herself something to do. As proven in *Downton Abbey*, she could have served as a volunteer on a hospital board. Or like Ava concerned herself with the fate of the poor and husbandless. Trying to improve their lot.

If you are hoping she would do such a thing you will be tragically disappointed. She is not one of those modern women. No, she is uncreative and old-fashioned (despite her modern clothes/haircut) she simply does the worst thing she could have done. She starts an affair.

Edgar (the lover) is a war veteran. He comes back from the war with all his limbs, but damaged all the same. This is realistic enough, but Lydia, she starts falling head over heels for warhero image. She is a woman nearing 30 with zero impulse control. So soon she starts comparing her husband to Edgar and was ashamed that he was in the war office and not the trenches. Looking at him as if he was some traitor to the nation (he was not). The only thing that cares for her now is that you were in the trenches, any other sorts of contribution was no contribution at all.

It was when she started feeling so ashamed of her husband and starting an affair that I started skipping her chapters (which explains why I'm done so quickly). She is selfish, short-sighted and self-absorbed. As you'll read when it comes to Beatrice and the wounded soldier (among other things). And the fact that she thinks she can survive as a middle class wife is laughable. She said so herself. She is used to giving out orders instead of getting them. See how that goes in a household without maids.

I think the book would have been so much better without her in it and I would have doubtlessly rated it higher since I love to read about the interwar period.

---

### **Shahd Mt. says**

This book has utterly consumed me... I don't know how I'll ever recover

---

### **Kate says**

Overall I thought this was more like a 3 star rating but the ending was so perfect I bumped it right up to 4 stars. I adored that it was set in the 1920s and discussed so much that happened during and after WW1. Had this been a contemporary romance I think my interest would have waned long before the end. I did have some issues with the female characters; both Lydia and Ava drove me insane throughout but I guess that is what the author is trying to achieve. I predicted the plot quite early on in the novel but this didn't take away any of the enjoyment. Would recommend to any vintage lovers, historical fiction fans or for those who like good old romances!

---

## LiMaB says

So, let's start with the review for this one. I would rather give 2.5 stars but raised it to three since it really isn't a 2 star book.

I was so excited to delve into this story. I became fascinated with the 20's after watching *The Great Gatsby* (which for some people seems to be a deadly sin, whenever I mention this someone looks at me like I committed a crime) and was happy to find a novel that not only comes with a gorgeous cover, but also a story set right after WWI and with a lot of jazz and flappers.

All in all I was disappointed by the story. I won't go into details, this shall be a spoiler-free review after all. But I expected more. Way more. I liked the atmosphere of the whole thing, people who don't know what to do with themselves after the great war, one can only imagine how they must have felt. Parks manages to bring this aspect into a lot of chapters and she does so brilliantly. Altogether, I did enjoy the plot, but there have been a few scenes that could have been left out. But this isn't the main reason why I only gave three stars to this book.

When I read the blurb, I was expecting that the story would be splitted in equal parts for all the girls, Lydia, Ava, Beatrice and Sarah. I was happy to find a few other perspectives in it, but if you buy the book thinking that that's what you'll get, you will be disappointed.

Most chapters are told from Lydia's perspective, which smoothly brings us to the characters. I liked her at the beginning, but with every chapter told from her perspective, I began to dislike her. She is shallow, whiny and only concentrates on herself. There are a few bright moments in which she cares for others, but after all, it's all motivated by her own desires. I wanted to like her and her life, but I just couldn't. I think Parks made a huge mistake by focusing so much of the story on her, one really gets annoyed by Lydia's thoughts and constant pining. I also didn't like the way she talks to her husband, I realise that marriages based on status are not always happy, but girl, take a second and think about situations. Also, her whole transformation into her 'new me' made me question the character. People breaking out of their usual life is nothing new, but this one seemed to be quite sudden and I lost almost all interest in her at the end of the book.

Another girl, Ava, is a socialite and I liked her much more. She was daring, but not in an annoying way, but in a self-confident and forward-thinking way. I loved her short and sassy remarks and how she did show that there's more under her public persona. She gets a few chapters in the book, but I would have loved to find out what her life would look like after the end of the story. Like many other characters, her storyline just ended.

Beatrice is a 'spinster', but I did enjoy reading her chapters. She was quite relatable - you were mad at her, wanted to shake her, but I also wanted her to become happy. For me she represents a girl stuck in time, clutching to old ways, but wanting to be just as cool as Ava, or just as pretty as Lydia. Her money struggles also made her realer and I was always excited to read her name at the beginning of a chapter, her story really made me feel close to her.

The last girl is Sarah, a war widow with children. She made me sad a couple of times, I cannot imagine losing a husband in war and being left with children in a world that cannot really find its place anymore. I wished her all the best throughout the story and loved it when she started to get back into life!

There are a few other characters, but I won't say anything about them, since that might lead to spoilers.

At the end, I was left stricken about this book. The (few) chapters I loved didn't improve the many ones I

didn't like. I was fed up with Lydia at the end and I cannot help but think of the four girls as the friend group in Sex and the City. Beatrice is Charlotte, Sarah is Miranda, Ava makes a marvelous Samantha and Lydia is Carrie - someone I also never really liked and who asks her friends for advice without ever really entertaining the thought of following their suggestions.

I would still recommend this book, if you like a good 20s story and aren't disappointed by a very Lydia-heavy storyline.

---

### **Trish at Between My Lines says**

A new favourite. It was such a lovely atmospheric read and I was swept away by all the romantic drama and tension. Highly, highly recommended to all historical fiction fans.

---