



Heartstrings and Diamond Rings

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HE'S THE MAN OF HER DREAMS . . .

In a world full of frogs, Alison Carter is determined to find her prince. Maybe her dating past is more Titanic than Love Boat, but she's seen enough happy marriages to know that true love is possible. No matter what, she won't give up on happily-ever-after. If she can't find Mr. Right, she'll simply hire someone who can.

SHE JUST DOESN'T KNOW IT YET

When Brandon Scott inherits a successful matchmaking business, he thinks his prayers have been answered. Set up a few lonely ladies, collect the fee, how hard can it be? No one needs to know he's not really a professional matchmaker-especially not his first client, the beautiful, spirited Alison. Soon he's falling for her-and her dreams of kids and carpools. But Alison is getting close to figuring out his secret, and if she learns he's deceived her too, she'll walk right out the door, taking Brandon's heart with her.

Heartstrings and Diamond Rings Details

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Author : Jane Graves

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From Reader Review *Heartstrings and Diamond Rings* for online ebook

Ami says

I like Jane Graves's stories before but this one is MEH!!! Let me list down the a couple things that I dislike (so I can say what I like later) but is very important on why I give my rating.

+ The whole plot is everything about Alison trying to find a guy and she goes on and on and on about how she wants to get married and doesn't want to live alone. Hasn't Bridget Jones's era gone?!? I think this is why I give up on contemporary romance *sigh*. Not to mention, that Alison doesn't even try to love herself first, before she settles down. Oh, no, she is one of those women who doesn't feel complete until someone loves her. At least Bridget Jones improves herself and loves who she is before settling down with Mr. Darcy.

+ There is NO chemistry what-so-ever between Brandon and Alison. I'm sorry, but I just don't buy it. I actually like Brandon okay. In the end, I think his characters develop. It's Alison that I cannot stand.

+ On, and should Brandon be peerfeeect?!? Yeah, sure, Alison is the ordinary girl, and of course she gets the PERFECT guy. I know this is the dreamy thing to do, but I get tired with that cliché

Having said that, I still give this 3-stars rating. Why?

+ The banter between Alison and Brandon actually works. Until the part where Alison wants Brandon though, that one just lets everything down.

+ The supporting characters, including Tom (Brandon's friend), Charlie (Alison's Dad), even some of the clients that Brandon get are fun. Oh, and I know I sound an awful person, but those disastrous dates that Alison has are actually funny.

I guess I still preference paranormal/urban fantasy romance rather than contemporary *sigh*

Rachel (BAVR) says

Sweet mother Mary, now I remember why I typically won't touch contemporaries with a ten-foot pole these days. My generation is really taking a beating in the self-worth department, if this book is any indication. I remember being bombarded with cheesy "Girl power!" testimonials and Oprah telling me I don't need a man to be happy in my youth.

Far be it from me to call the Spice Girls liars, but if Jane Graves says so ...

SUMMARY:

Heartstrings and Diamonds Rings is the story of dried-up spinster - I mean, "lonely" thirty-something Alison Carter, who wants to get married so much that she'd probably consider a potted plant to get the job done. Alison, like all the heroines in contemporary romancelandia, is unlucky in love. All she wants to do is find her soulmate and get married, pronto, then make gaggles of snotty children and move into a house with a pretty white picket fence. Why is life SO HARD? The men she dates are pretty much like, "Uh, Alison, your

desperation is showing. It's actually blanketing you and displaying flashing lights making out the word SPINSTER in place of your face. I think maybe it would be best if I dated a woman who wasn't already checking my blood type." So Alison, dumped once again, cries and moans about how undesirable and lonely she is to her - wait for it - cats. (I feel like I'm in the cliché machine, and it's been set to spin cycle.) Finally, after all kinds of woe-is-me angsty, Alison decides to take matters into her own desperate, dried-up hands ... by hiring a match-maker. Brandon Scott is an unsuccessful home-flipper (or something along those lines) who's running his deceased grandma's matchmaking business to make a quick fortune. When Alison walks into Brandon's office and spills her desperation all over him, he promises to find her the perfect match. Unfortunately, Brandon is about as good at matchmaking as Alison is at deflecting crazy cat lady accusations. As expected, Brandon sets her up on several disastrous dates, each one worse than the last. And then Alison starts to wonder if her inept matchmaker is the man to fill the hole in her ... heart.

Would it have been so hard for Graves to write Alison as anything other than a boy-crazy empty shell? At first, I thought that the cat lady implications, the mental breakdowns over bad dates, and the silly talk about NEEDING to get married because being unmarried is the worst thing ever were a joke. You know, like Graves was parodying the tropes that show up in poorly written romance. But then, to my horror, I realized that Alison is supposed to be taken seriously. Brandon even points out her creepy desperation at one point, and it ends up getting glossed over, apparently because Alison is just SO adorable or something. I don't know. This type of story just isn't my cup of tea. The humor is a little too cutesy, and the unintentional cat lady jokes made me angry. I have cats, too, but Alison's cats are used as a plot device to emphasize her spinsterhood. Stupid. Brandon, for his part, seems like a decent enough guy. I wouldn't let him anywhere near my business, considering that he crashed and burned with the housing market and has the matchmaking senses of a drunk sailor. Still, he genuinely likes Alison even though she's about 95% cray-cray, and I have to respect a guy for that.

Kristiej says

Comfort reads. I think most of us have them. They are books that make us feel good despite the chaos that might be going around all about us. There is not a definitive definition I think. The In Death books are some of my comfort reads for example and as they are murder mystery romance that really doesn't make a whole lot of sense that genre would be a "comfort" but I think it's the sense of family I enjoy.

And then there are comfort authors. While some books may be better than others, overall reading anything by a 'comfort author' will just make you feel warm and cuddly. Jane Graves is such an author for me. After a great but busy week's vacation, I was ready for a read that would make me feel nice and relaxed and bring me a smile and chuckle.

I couldn't have asked for anything better than Heartstrings and Diamond Rings. It's a wonderful cute story that had me smiling frequently. It was a reread so I knew going in it would hit the spot.

Alison Carter is desperate. While she thought her last loser boyfriend was going to propose, what he was really proposing was a threesome. She really wants to find someone to love and she wants to start a family but so far the guys she's seen have been odd to say the least. She's tried the online dating thing but even it didn't work. A friend suggests an old-fashioned matchmaker and while she's skeptical, she is just hard up enough to give it a try and heads over to the sweet old elderly matchmaker in town.

Brandon Scott is the grandson of the recently deceased matchmaker. He's staying at her home as it's been willed to him as long as he lives there, otherwise it reverts to the local Baptist Church. Brandon is a hustler and very, very good at the game. He needs to come up with a large amount of cash to get in a squeal of a deal

real estate development opportunity. When Ally shows up, he talks her into believing he has a calling for matchmaking and is taking over the business from his grandmother. Ally is reluctant but Brandon is a whiz of a sales person and she goes for it.

This is where the smiling and the chuckling come in. The dates do not go well, no they don't go well at all and Ally has no problem expressing this to Brandon. But there are developing feelings between Ally and Brandon. Brandon begins to look very good and he seems to have all the qualities Ally is looking for. But Brandon is a fraud and is only in the matchmaking business long enough to get some money and he is gone. Brandon could have come across as a bad guy, but he wasn't, not at all. He was a hustler sure, but he wasn't the least mean spirited about it, it's just been the way he was raised. And as the story moves along and we get to know him better, his background becomes more and more poignant and we really start rooting for him to find the family and happiness he really does need.

Ally's back story is equally affecting and she equally needs what Brandon wants. She is a wonderful character, quirky, full of charm and humor and helpful to everyone. She really gets into the spirit of the Matchmaking Service, thinking that Brandon is in it for the long term, and comes up with some wonderful ideas to get the word out. I just adored her.

And Brandon was such a loveable character too. It would have been so easy to dislike him as I said above, but Ms. Graves wrote him in such an endearing way.

This is a continuation of a series but can very easily be read as a stand-alone. Her best friend had her story told in a previous book, Tall Tales and Wedding Veils, another delightful story I've read and now that I finished up this one, I think I'll go back and get.

Heartstrings and Diamond Rings is cute, funny, good descent characters with the hero a shade of gray, but a nice shade, quirky and everything that makes a comfort read such a comfort to read. I quite happily recommend this one to fans of Rachel Gibson, Susan Andersen, SEP and other authors like these one. I just wish we could do halves here as this is really a 4 1/2 book.

Mary Gramlich says

Will love lead me to my soul mate or do I have to settle for the right mate?

When you have been looking for love as long as Alison Carter has, you have kissed an excessive amount of frogs, and you start to wonder if there is just something wrong with you. Alison has been successful in every aspect of her life but one – relationships. She wants so much to build a life surrounded by children, married to a man who will share her dreams and light up the night with passion.

Brandon Scott wants none of the above; he is looking to make his next fortune not make a great match. But for Brandon the housing market has crashed and it took Brandon's home-flipping career with it. There is an opportunity for him to recoup his losses with the matchmaking business his grandmother left him in her will. Brandon has to stay in the house to keep it and run her matchmaking business instead of selling it all for a profit. Brandon figures he can live in the house and make money off the business so a matchmaker Brandon becomes. He figures it cannot be that difficult he knows about men obviously and he has dated enough women this should be a walk in the park.

As fate would have it this is how Alison the queen of bad dates is coerced into meeting Brandon the man looking to get some quick cash and put Plano, TX in his taillights. Alison has all the makings of a great date

but Brandon has found that the men she is matched up with all have a secret they cannot wait to share with her which has nothing to do with long-term relationships or marriage and everything to do with gender confusion and emotional baggage, this woman is really a dating nightmare.

While Alison cannot get her dating life to work out she is doing a great job of helping Brandon perfect his business. She knows how to market him like the pro that she is and the more she does her magic the more work comes Brandon's way. This is not the plan Brandon had in mind but the more time he spends with Alison the more he realizes the best-laid plans are the ones that need the most adjustments made to them. Brandon wants to stop thinking about her and work on her match but he just cannot stop thinking that maybe he is the perfect match for Alison. How is he going to leave her behind and walk away with more questions and less answers on what he should really be doing with his life?

Jane Graves writes fun books, with great characters who embrace their imperfections and make the most of the curve balls life throws at them. Alison and Brandon have come from different places in their lives but Ms. Graves writes this story so that the two people blend so well together that once she is done you have so completely fallen in love with them you cannot wait for their new life to begin. Jane's other gift is her secondary characters add so much to the story with their sassy personalities you are ready for them to have their own story told.

Jacob Proffitt says

This is fourth (and last) in a series, but this one is mainly connected to the second (Tall Tales and Wedding Veils). I'd definitely recommend reading at least that one before this as it includes Alison (a bit) but her friend Heather is all over the scene in this one so it's as well if you know her and Tony from the start.

This was standard on every level. Which got boring. I mean, Alison is a good girl who wants to get married, but she can't catch a break on the dating scene. So she goes for a matchmaker service. That's fine. But Alison's dating history is a running joke that continues into this one where her dates are arrested, admit to being gay, admit to being a lesbian "in transition", etc. So they're *all* outrageous and where even one strains credulity, having them all pile on together breaks any sense of this being anything but a novel. And since I was hyper-aware of it being a novel, I couldn't help but notice that it's all pretty much by-the-numbers and that there's nothing outstanding about it.

And because it was going down the plot road with the leading man having a huge secret that's going to crush our leading lady... Well, I decided to get out before the payload hit the pavement. Yeah, there are some fun character interactions—including with the main couple. But I just couldn't lose myself in the story and the on-deck blow-up was enough tension to wear me out.

I'm giving this two stars because it's not terrible and there's some decent banter. But it's a weak two stars and it probably doesn't actually deserve the second...

A note about production: There were a *lot* of typos in my copy. Mostly dropped words. Which was really weird, frankly.

Lisa Kay says

[and felt Alison could have given in a bit for her part, but hey – a minor quibble (hide spoiler)]

Crystal ♥ RBtWBC says

3.5 Stars

Heartstrings and Diamond Rings was a cute and funny romance about a Alison Carter, a lady unlucky in love having visions of a cat lady future, and Brandon Scott, a down-on-his-luck real estate flipper struggling in today's economy who takes a con in his late grandmothers match making business to earn him enough money for his next flip.

When Allison walks into 'Matchmaking by Rochelle' she expects an elderly lady, not a man that resembles her every wet fantasy. Skeptical at first about a male matchmaker Allison eventual caves and let's Brandon match her up with three different men, and the dates from hell begin. Just when Brandon's about to make the money he needs to leave town and start his new deal, and when Allison thinks she's finally found a man she can have a future with, Brandon realizes that he's the perfect match for Allison. Is it too late though? And will Allison ever be able to forgive him when she finds out about his deception?

Heartstrings and Diamond Rings had a wonderful cast of characters that were both humorous and likeable. I really liked Brandon as a main character even though he wasn't entirely truthful, his character had dept and dimension. However, Allison wasn't a favorite of mine. I didn't like how she was content with just settling out of her fear of being alone and she was written as having low self esteem but some of her actions contradicted that; her clothing choices, minor comments, ect. I did enjoy the dialogue between these two though, it was witty and entertaining.

The romance between Brandon and Allison was slow to develop and in-turn slowed the whole plot down for me, though I thought it was a fresh breath for the genre how these two became friends first before getting romantically involved. There were several steamy scenes that I enjoyed between the pair but the story was pretty predictable.

Overall Heartstrings and Diamond Rings was a good contemporary romance that was easy to read. It's nice every now and then to take your time with a book instead of the suspense being so built up you can't take a break from it.

Becca says

Seriously, what is wrong with the author? How is the hero or heroine suppose to be likable in any fashion?!? This book has some **major** fat phobic and LGBTQ issues. I'm sorry, but I just can't believe the heroine is a 'good, sweet girl' when she describes her overweight co-worker as a vulture hovering over a candy bar OR later on in the story, bribing said co-worker with Godiva chocolates in exchange for darn good graphic design work. Why not just describe this co-worker as a great graphic designer, why must she instead be a **"great graphic designer IN SPITE of her apparently grotesque appearance"**

This was a DNF.

AH says

Heartstrings and Diamond Rings by Jane Graves is a nice, light, contemporary romance. Our heroine Alison Carter is a 31 year old who works in the marketing department for a sweets company. She lives in her condo with her three cats – one less than the required amount to be a crazy cat lady. All she wants to do is to settle down, get married, and start a family. Unfortunately, Alison has been unlucky in love.

Brandon Scott, a real estate investor down on his luck recently inherited his grandmother's matchmaking business. He decides to give it a go to earn some much needed cash for his next deal. Did I mention that Brandon is also very handsome?

Around the same time, Alison decides that she will use a professional matchmaking service. She is surprised to find Brandon as the matchmaker. Alison is a trusting sort of person and she decides to use Brandon's services to find a potential husband. The results are hilarious. You see, Brandon doesn't really know what he's doing and he doesn't properly vet the dates.

Alison's dates are disastrous. The man who worked in pharmaceuticals was a drug dealer. The man looking for Mrs. Right still pined for his ex-wife and so on....

It was so easy to relate to Alison, even if I haven't had her issues with love. Alison is just a normal girl, normal sized, with a weakness for chocolate. I loved how she rationalized her chocolate habit. I've so done that! I felt so bad for her when her dates ended badly.

I loved how Brandon started falling in love with Alison. Brandon was torn between being a professional matchmaker and admitting his true feelings for Alison.

This is a sweet romance with lots of hilarious moments. The supporting characters are entertaining and I liked the little side romance for Alison's father. Yes, it is a little predictable, but it was an enjoyable read. I have never read this author's books before. Now I'll be on the lookout for more of her books.

Review posted on Badass Book Reviews.

Shannon says

If I was rating based on first impressions, this book would have definitely gotten two stars or below. The main character Alison was so annoyingly desperate that I was five seconds away from putting down the book and never finishing it. I was just so aggravated by every part of her personality. Then, somewhere along the way, I actually started to like this book. I'm guessing it happened around the time that Alison met Brandon. I liked all the crazy dates he set her up on. They may have been a little over-the-top and ridiculous, but I found myself laughing anyway. Like many romance books, there's the big secret that the hero is hiding from the heroine. Obviously, the girl is going to find out and there will be heartbreak and anguish before they run off happily ever after. I know they weren't a big part of the story, but I loved the plotline with Marco and

Delilah. Their relationship was just so wonderful and adorable that I wanted them to be in the book for more than six pages.

I hated Alison from the first chapter. She was so desperate that I wasn't at all surprised that no one wanted to date her. It seemed like she was more interested in the idea of marriage than the man itself. She wanted to get married and have a family so bad that she was willing to settle for losers. I forced myself to keep reading and I actually started to like Alison. She was crazy annoying at the start, but I started to sympathize with her during all the craptastic dates. They all started so promising and then next thing you knew, something utterly horrible happened. Alison didn't have an unhappy childhood or anything, but the family tragedies she faced in her life made me feel for her. I still thought she needed to chill a bit, but I could understand why she acted the way she did.

Alison and Brandon were cute. Even after living with his father's influence, he was a great guy. Yes, he did lie to Alison about the matchmaking business and I don't blame her for being crushed. She was so nice and excited to be helping him with his 'dream' of continuing his grandma's legacy. I would have been humiliated as well if I was her. All that aside, it was clear that Brandon didn't mean to hurt her. He wasn't some douche that wanted to screw everyone over. You could see towards the end of the book, that he had a conscience and felt guilty. I don't know why, but Alison seemed less marriage obsessed and psychotic around Brandon. I'm not sure exactly why it was and how to explain it, but they just clicked and there was no lack of chemistry between them.

This book isn't something extra special. It's pretty much a run of the mill funny romance, a copy of every chick flick movie ever made. It's predictable and cliché a majority of the time, but for some reason, I still really liked it.

Lisarenee says

You know the old saying, "If it wasn't for bad luck I'd have no luck at all?" Well, when it comes to dating that pretty much sums up Alison Carter's love life. On a recent date with her boyfriend of 8 months, all the signs seemed to indicate it would be the night he'd propose. She'd seen him in a jewelry store, she'd overheard him talking with a minister, she'd seen a travel brochure on his desk, and he'd taken her to a pricey restaurant. Truth be told, he did propose something, but marriage was not it. It was a ménage à trois. She couldn't say goodbye fast enough. If you think that was her worst date, you'd better think again. It was like the dating Gods had it in for her.

When a friend recommended Alison try a dating service, she decided to give dating another try. She figured she didn't have anything to lose. They couldn't do any worse, right?

Brandon Scott flipped real estate, or at least he did till the market bottomed out. When his grandmother passed away he inherited her matchmaking business. Trying to raise money for his next project, he decided to use the matchmaking business to fund his endeavor. His plan was simple - advertise, get new customers, set them up on some dates, make a tidy profit, then close the business and get the heck out of Dodge, er, Plano. He thought it'd be easy. He had no clue what he was getting into, and he'd never met the likes of Alison.

This was such a fun read. I was laughing and grinning practically the whole time I was reading this book. So many bad dates and the situations, while seemingly unreal, strangely enough are not that far fetched. I knew

someone with the same issues as the "conflicted" date. You'll have to read the book to find out which date I'm talking about. I don't want to spoil it for you.

Bradon was a fun character. An extremely handsome man with a commitment phobia. Exactly the wrong type of person to run a dating service. I liked learning about his family and background, which allowed us a glimpse of what made him the way he was. I liked how he tried to deny his feelings for Alison, in part, because he didn't think he was the right guy for her. He didn't want to settle down and have a family, but knew she did.

Alison's bad luck was so funny. Someone who by all rights should have met "the one" ages ago, but somehow the man had eluded her. I loved her perseverance in the face of such tragic circumstances. You couldn't help but sympathize with her.

There were so many fun elements to the story it'd be difficult to list them all. I liked the fact that Alison worked for a candy company and that her cats were named after characters from the 'I Love Lucy' show. It made me think of that funny episode at the candy factory where the candy is going down the conveyor belt too fast, so they try to eat the candy to prevent it from falling on the ground. There was no such scene in the book, but it still brought the scene to mind. In a way, Alison's dating escapades reminded me of the kind of situations I could envision Lucy finding herself in if she were dating.

On the Lisarenee Romance Rating Scale, this one gets a Fan rating - the temperature in the room seems to have suddenly gone up a couple of degrees and a fan would be nice. Overall, I gave this one **5 out of 5 roses**. A very fun and enjoyable read.

To read a Q&A with Ms. Graves, enter a giveaway for this book (now through September 25th), and read more of my reviews please visit my blog at: <http://www.seducedbyabook.com/2011/09...>

willaful says

After a series of astoundingly bad relationships, Alison is feeling desperate enough to try anything -- even a male matchmaker. Brandon, who recently inherited his grandmother's business, seems to almost be able to read her mind, so it seems likely he'll be able to find her just the right man. There's just a few things that Alison doesn't know... like that Brandon is just borrowing the matchmaking business to scam money for a big real estate deal. And that the men he finds are going to make her previous bad dates look like Prince Charming. And that Brandon himself, a guy who has no intention of sticking around, might be the only Mr. Right she's ever going to be satisfied with.

For most of this book, I was torn between finding it sweet and funny, and a little too obvious. The repartee between the characters is entertaining, but the over the top humor that's supposed to be unexpected came off more cliched. It was also hard to warm up to Alison at first: "...when she was in the presence of a man who just might be *The One*, it was more like a swirl of hope, telling her from the inside out that this -- *this* -- was the man who would make her life complete." Not hard to see why she can't find a good man -- they would smell her desperation a mile off. I liked her more once the sadness and vulnerability that lie behind her drive to get married are revealed, and she and Brandon make an appealing pair.

This follows *Tall Tales and Wedding Veils*, and Heather and Tony from that book are secondary characters, but you don't have to read them in order.

(reviewed from an e-arc provided by netGalley)

Christi Snow says

My Review:

Okay, I am officially sold... I think that I now officially qualify as a Jane Graves fan. OMG, this book was so sweet and such a wonderful read!! This book is the personification of what I love about contemporary romance.

Brandon works at flipping properties, but with the recent economic downturn, things have been really tight. When he inherits his grandmother's matchmaking business, he sees a quick way to make the \$30,000 down payment for his next flip via her \$1500 charge for hooking up new clients with 5 matches. What he doesn't plan on when he takes over the business is how much these peoples' lives and their possible matches will affect him. Brandon has never had a good foundation to understand love (con-man father, no mother, and a grandmother who inherited him when he was 16 yo.) but he has been trained as a conman by his dad so he knows how to read people. Who knew that this would serve him so well as a matchmaker...and it really does. He has a talent when it comes to matchmaking except when it comes to poor Alison.

Alison has had the worst luck EVER when it comes to love and all that she really wants in life is a family. At 30, she is starting to feel a bit desperate and decides to pay the big bucks for a matchmaker service. The problem is that Alison is truly a NICE person and allows to give Brandon more and more chances as he sets her up on more and more disastrous dates. He's not doing it on purpose, but it may just be a bit of unconscious sabotage as he gets to know and like Alison more and more.

This is such a sweet book. I absolutely ADORED both of these characters. Brandon has absolutely NO FOUNDATION for understanding love, but regardless of this, he is a truly nice guy and as he gets deeper and deeper into this matchmaking business, he starts to realize how much of an affect it can have on people's lives. After the sudden death of both her mother and brother, Alison is terrified of being left alone in this world (all she has now is her dad and she is terrified of him dying.) She desperately wants a family and sees that time is running out at the age of 30 to obtain that. She is willing to accept that there may not be fireworks to achieve that goal. Settling is okay with her, but as Brandon gets to know her better and better, HE is not willing to accept that for her. She deserves more.

This is really such a sweet book. It left me feeling good and happy. There are funny moments in the book, as well as poignant ones. It's just really a fantastic read and I am so happy to discover this (new to me) author!! I am now a Jane Graves fan!!!

Anna says

I almost stopped reading this book in the first 15 pages, I disliked the female protagonist so much. Her desperation to get married was just too much, especially considering this was written in the 21st century. It's like women's lib never happened. (Maybe it just never happened in Plano, Texas? I find that hard to believe.)

Alison is dating a guy that she clearly isn't in love with. What she does love is the idea that he might propose the night he takes her to a fancy dinner. When he proposes something other than marriage (a threesome), she freaks out, breaks up with him, and spends the next few pages ranting about what a "degenerate" he is and outlining all her other major failed relationships, all of which add up to her basically being a complete idiot when it comes to emotions and relationships.

For example, multiple sex partners? Definitely not everyone's idea of a good time. I have no problem that she isn't into that and that she even might be offended by the idea. HOWEVER, this was a man she was all set to MARRY, but she wasn't even capable of having an adult conversation about what he'd like to explore in the bedroom. Rather than being mature enough to say, "You know, that's really not my thing," she calls him names like "degenerate" and "pervert," then dissolves into a giant puddle of self-pity, including vodka shots and the obligatory eating from the ice cream carton.

She then moans about how she can't find a good man and why does she always date losers? Other reviewers are kind enough to refer to this terrible track record as "bad luck with men" but I tend to see it like she's bringing it all on herself. Why does she date losers? It couldn't be that she scores a zero on the emotional IQ scale and therefore can't tell decent men from shady ones? That she's so desperate to get married that she'll just have to settle for good enough, but then refuses to understand that accepting ANYONE is a recipe for disaster? Or possibly that she overreacts to possible differences between her and potential mates because she has such a narrow view of what an ideal partner might be?

My favorite line was how she had previously dated a man who turned out to be gay. "Alison might have realized it sooner, but since he owned a Harley dealership and spit a lot, she stayed in denial even longer than Richard himself." There are so many things wrong with that sentence.

1) Gay people are just as capable of driving motorcycles as straight people. They are also as capable of spitting. Sexual orientation, manners, and vehicular preference are three entirely separate issues.

2) She stayed in denial even longer than Richard himself. What does that even mean? Did he sit her down to talk about it and she refused to believe him? WHY? Because she was so desperate to get married and have a family that she couldn't stand for a man to suddenly turn GAY? Arrrrrrgh.

There are other examples that irritated me as badly. Even though I liked the male protagonist Brandon well enough, there were times when it just didn't feel realistic to me. For example, when Alison told Brandon about the guy who wanted a threesome, he was shocked. Shocked. Now, Brandon is supposedly a real player; he's supposedly gotten around. Even if threesomes weren't his thing either (which again, is fine), I have a hard time believing shock is his most likely response.

It's really strange to me when *I'm* more worldly than the main characters of a book. Because seriously, I'm not all that worldly. It seems like a limitation on the author's part, rather than genuine to the characters, but I'll have to read more Jane Graves to make that determination fairly.

Did I mention this absurd little number is a RITA Award finalist? This just reinforces my idea that you cannot trust that just because it's up for an award means that it has any actual merit whatsoever.

Alycia says

Alison Carter wants nothing more than to find a nice, normal man get married, and have a family. She'd even settle for a little boring if that was the sure path to her supposed happiness. But after several dating disasters she is persuaded to try a personalized match making service.

Brandon Scott inherits his grandmother's matchmaking business as well as her house with the caveat that he can stay in the house as long as he wants, but if he moves, it is donated to a local church. Brandon is only staying as long as it takes to pull money together for an investment real estate project that he and his partner, Tom want to partake in. The other goal is to revive their careers that tanked when the housing market crashed. He decides that he can live with the white lie of taking over his grandmother's business, to pull together the much needed finances. Because how hard can it really be? And do what needs to be done.

Alison of course goes to Brandon's dating service expecting a nice older lady, instead she is greeted by a younger, attractive man. Deciding that her luck can't get any worse, she hires Brandon. Each client pays for 5 introductions to specialized hand picked matches. Brandon's business is kind of slow, but he's had successful matches so far. So surely he can do the same for Alison.

I like the main and supporting characters for the most part. There were several laughable parts involving Alison, her cats (Ricky, Lucy, Ethel) and especially the failed attempts of matches that Brandon has set up for her. For a guy that could peg Alison perfectly, he really failed at finding her a good match. Each situation with a new guy was worse than before, as well as the recountings of previous boyfriends before she decided to hire a match making service. However, they kind of got ridiculous because I already felt sorry for her, but each succeeding match is more of a catastrophe than the last. This entire story while very entertaining was very formulaic, even very predictable. A reader has an easy time guessing how the plot will be advanced and how Alison and Brandon will end up together.

Alison does finally receive her "perfect" match, even though the guy is perfect on paper and what she was technically looking for, she was bored and settling. It was a typical plot line where Alison and Brandon were ignoring their attraction to each other. Then become closer as friends. Alison is in marketing so she really helped Brandon market his business, reinvent the branding, and as a result opened up opportunities to make his business a huge success.

Once these two started to acknowledge their attraction, a match is found. The constant niggling guilt Brandon suffers from can be eased, he eventually gets what he wants. But life has a funny way of changing those supposed priorities.

They do get together, then the typical "big" misunderstanding happens, but luckily Brandon is able to figure out what he wants, he wants his business and most of all, Alison.

I enjoyed the fact that this book took place in Plano, TX. It is always fun to read about a place one is familiar with. Although this was an entertaining mediocre contemporary romance, I will try this author again. I recommend this book to contemporary romance fans who are looking to branch out and try new authors. Or readers who enjoy a book where one doesn't have to think too hard to follow the story.

*This ARC was provided to me through NetGalley.
