



Sun and Candlelight

Betty Neels

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"MY CHILDREN NEED A MOTHER, BUT I DO NOT NEED A WIFE."

Dr. Sarre van Diederijk did a lot to restore Alethea's damaged pride when Nick Penrose badly hurt and humiliated her. So a short time later, when he asked her to marry him and go to Holland to live, she accepted. After all, Sarre was a very nice, kind man, and Alethea might actually be happier with him than she would have been with Nick, even though love wasn't part of the deal. But once in Holland, Alethea discovered that happiness and love could blossom when you least expected it.

Sun and Candlelight Details

Date : Published April 2012 by Harlequin Books (first published 1979)

ISBN :

Author : Betty Neels

Format : Kindle Edition 224 pages

Genre : Romance, Fiction, Category Romance, Harlequin

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From Reader Review Sun and Candlelight for online ebook

Teri Pre says

This is my 2nd books by Neels and all of her stories (there were 3 in one and 1 in this one) seem to have the same premise. This will be the last one of hers that I read.

Anna says

This was a strong Neels book, with better-than-usual dialogue (especially early on) and a pluckier heroine than many of Neels' ladies. Perhaps my favorite part, though, was the framing of the marriage of companionship. Midway through, Neels makes what might be the closest she's come to a statement of the philosophy on marriage that surely underlies all her books with an early marriage plot:

"Love, if there is nothing else with it, can be utterly destroyed and leave nothing in its place, but liking and respect can grow into deep affection and even love" [says the grandmother in chapter 3]. I maintain that many of Neels' books -- which frequently employed this plot device -- sought to make their case for this slightly counter-cultural view of love and marriage, notwithstanding all the other heaving-bodice tales among Neels' numerous peers at Harlequin.

Neels offers a similarly unusual perspective on the *significance* of marriage a few chapters later. In chapter six, her heroine reflects (if somewhat ungrammatically): "he was a man at the height of his career with wide interests, he had made his mark in the world, he had his home and children, all that was behind him, whereas a younger man would probably see his wedding as the beginning of these things." In this, Neels suggests a different place for marriage amid life's larger events -- perhaps even that it need not impute the key meaning in life.

Though many today do indeed marry later and sometimes with the same accomplishments behind them as Neels attributes to her late-30s doctor*, we too often persist in unachievably lofty visions of soulmate marriages that sometimes doom relationships which would have otherwise had a strong chance at lifelong companionship, however intermixed the ordinary sorrow and joy.

*Side note: Now that I know a bit more about the medical profession, it cracks me up how consistently Neels under-ages her characters. The acclaim and success she credits to men in their late 30s probably wouldn't happen until early 40s, while the way she often describes women in their late 20s probably holds more truth of women in their mid-30s. Ah, romance.

Pamela Shropshire says

This is the quintessential BN marriage of convenience. Alethea is Men's Orthopedics sister at Saint Theobald's and is in love with Nick, the orthopaedic registrar. During a special evening out (she thinks he's going to propose), he asks her to Brighton for the weekend. He does not take rejection well, and leaves the restaurant, leaving Althaea to pay the bill. She has no money on her, but fortunately is rescued by a handsome Dutchman, Sarre van Diederijk. Alethea's heart is broken and continues breaking every time she sees Nick, so she begins to make plans to get away.

Sarre keeps coming round. After a few dates, he proposes a marriage of convenience. He is divorced with children – twins of 11, and the Faithless First Wife is now married to a rich South American.

In spite of the luxury into which Alethea marries, all is not roses and champagne. The twins are determined to dislike her, aided and abetted by their Nanny. Alethea does begin to forget Nick, only to suddenly discover she is in love - REALLY in love - with Sarre. However, there is the OW; Anna, a doctor who works with Sarre, is a frequent visitor. Alethea thinks Sarre loves Anna.

The kids do several mean tricks to Alethea, culminating with them going to a tumble-down cottage with the idea of locking Alethea inside. This backfires on them and all 3 are trapped in the cellar, necessitating a rescue by Sarre. When all are safe, Sarre says, "By Sun and Candlelight" to Alethea, although she doesn't get the reference then.

The kids and Nanny do an about face; Alethea has won them over. Sarre, however, insists that she go to England to see Nick (although his name is never specifically mentioned). On the way, Alethea decides she will not return and stops by the hospital to tell Sarre why. She admits she loves him; he says he loves her; they go home together; marital relations may now ensue; and all will live HEA.

As usual, there are some great secondary characters: Alethea's wise Granny; Sarre's younger brother Wienand and fiancé, Irene; Al, the Cockney butler; and Mrs. McCrea, the Scottish housekeeper.

This has long been one of my favourites. I think it was the first MOC story by TGB that I ever read and I have reread it many, many times!

Tonya Warner says

Wonderful as always. Betty Neels at her best.

Sarre and Alethea come together in a great story.

Evelyn says

A lovely story.

Kay says

4 Stars ~ When Alethea's dinner date leaves her abruptly in the middle of their meal, in anger because she refuses to become his lover, she's worried how she'll take care of the bill. When the waiter brings it, she peeks at the amount, and envisions the scene that is to come when he returns as she can't pay it. Alethea is the sister in charge of the Orthopaedic Unit at a busy London hospital; her date, Nick, was the Orthopaedic Registrar. She'd thought he was going to propose marriage not a dirty weekend. And just as the waiter returns, a tall handsome man who had watched the drama unfold, came to her rescue, pretending to know her and promptly paying the bill. He offers her a ride home, which for Alethea is the Nurses Home at the hospital, and they part ways. The next day, Alethea is surprised to find her rescuer is a consultant surgeon who is in London sharing his skills. Recognizing the Registrar as the man who had dumped her, Sarre

befriends Alethea, inviting her to dinner and always seeming to be near when Nick wants to be nasty. An easy friendship forms between them, but Alethea can't stop herself from thinking about Nick.

Sarre is a successful surgeon and also wealthy in his own right, and the single father of 11 yr. old twins. He's quite taken with Alethea, and seeing that she's finding working in the same hospital as Nick, he offers her a way out. He proposes a marriage of convenience; he needs a mistress to run his home and a mother for his children and exchange Althea will have a secure and happy future. Liking Sarre very much, Alethea agrees, but when she goes to Holland as his wife, she realizes it's going to be a battle to win his children's affection. With the children despising her behind their father's back; their Nanny unwilling to cooperate in any way; and Sarre working many hours away from home; Alethea wonders if she's made the right decision.

Betty Neels is quite adept at writing marriage of convenience stories. This is the first though with a divorced hero, though his ex-wife has been totally out of his and the children's lives since the divorce. Alethea is the beautiful nurse, 27, and though she loves her job, she wants more for her life. Nick's rejection of her because she wants marriage not an affair, is a real blow for her. Sarre jumps right in and snaps her up, making her believe that marriage is really for his children's sake, even though we the reader can see that he wants her for himself. There's a lovely scene that leads to the HEA where Alethea guzzles a brandy to give her Dutch courage to tell Sarre that she loves him; something that Sarre finds totally delightful.

Hopefulpuffin says

Jaguar, Bristol, Colt Sapporo (aka Mitsubishi), Fiat 500

Not Neels' best, IMO. Lovely British nurse thinks she's in love with cad British doctor. Enters into a MoC with RDD. Has challenging step-children, nanny and potential OW to deal with. All's well that ends well.

I just didn't love this one. I'm not exactly sure why but neither H nor h appealed to me. MoC plots have to be really stupendous for me to enjoy them and this one just wasn't there. Although I did enjoy the beginning quite a bit.

Leona says

If you are a Betty Neels fan, then I would recommend this book to you, even though I would only give it 3 stars.

Alethea is left stranded one night at an expensive restaurant by her boyfriend when she refuses to go away for the weekend. Seems she got all "dolled up" for a wonderful evening anticipating that boyfriend was going to propose. He proposed, just not the right question.

Left stranded at the table, with no money to pay the bill, she is rescued by an attractive man. (who pays the bill for her) Turns out the man is a guest surgeon at the hospital where she works. A sort of friendship emerges and they start to casually go out with each other whenever he is in town. However, things are rather turning nasty with the ex-boyfriend, who also happens to be a doctor on the same ward. Alethea decides to leave the hospital so hero proposes a MOC. After all, leaving would admit defeat to lover boy. But if she leaves on the premise of marriage, she saves face. Seems hero was married before, and has twin children that are in desperate need of a mother. So hero proposes a MOC. Her much loved Grandma encourages the match, and so Alethea accepts.

However, life is not as easy as other Betty Neels books. Given that hero is honorable, it really is a very bland MOC with kisses on the cheeks, handshakes and separate bedrooms. His children and their nanny resent her from the start and are quite cruel to her. The good doctor really doesn't spend much time with her always focused on the hospital and his brilliant, female colleague. It seems all Alethea does is eat and walk the dogs. In fact, the beautiful colleague makes sure to point out how much weight Alethea has put on.

Alethea is described as an extremely beautiful 27 year old. She is well poised, kind, nurturing and very successful at her job. I found it interesting that she would entertain such a loveless marriage at such a young age. I was even more appalled that Grandma would encourage her. This poor girl settled for a life that most 50 year olds wouldn't want all because one man (who by the way was really worthless) dumped her.

I found myself angry with the whole premise and felt very short changed by the ending. I don't think the hero truly earned her love. He deserved to end up with his colleague instead of a warm vibrant beautiful woman. I would have so much liked for her to go back home and force the hero to fight for their marriage.

Kristine Morgan says

Good sweet story

Fiona Marsden says

Sarre and Alethia. This is another one which I loved the title reference. A quote from Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Alethia thinks her doctor boyfriend Nick is about to propose at a special dinner. He does, but only an illicit weekend in Brighton. Not something a parson's daughter would agree to. Nick takes it badly and leaves her with the bill. She is rescued by Sarre who turns out to be the new consultant at her Orthopedic ward.

With Nick also on the ward as registrar, making her life miserable, it's only a matter of time for Sarre to step up to the plate and offer a marriage of convenience. Betty Neels does MOC stories well. Sarre has eleven year old twins, a boy and girl and they need a mother and he needs someone to run his home.

Unfortunately, the children, egged on by the governess, don't take kindly to Alethia's arrival and some nasty scenes ensue, out of sight of the professor. There is also the typical OW.

Overall a sweet read with some special moments.

Renea says

Gallantry has it's rewards.

Alethea was sure tonight would be so special, although they had only been seeing each other for a few months, Nick had told her he had something important to ask her. Had it not been for the kindly and oh so timely actions of a complete stranger Alethea's mortification would have been complete. I have always

enjoyed Betty Neels books as a teenager, her characters are usually so charming in their mistaken thoughts. From a different time period than the current independent feminist, the heroine is usually a very lady-like young woman. Her stories while very vanilla in the romance department is very delightfully written. The hero usually a doctor of outstanding repute usually is very large and placid in his manner. We are only given his POV in very minute detail. Her plots while always finishing with a HEA, is quite enjoyable and can be considered "light reading". If you're tired of all the graphic or eroticism in so many of today's novels, I recommend books by this author. Ms. Neels definitely has lived through a more genteel period and that comes through her writing splendidly

Michelle says

Lovely

If you enjoy your romances clean, light, fluffy and vintage then you will enjoy the wonderful work of Betty Neels

Margo says

This H did not earn the h's love, period.

Mudpie says

3.5* BRIGHTON!!!

Yes, THIS is the book which gave us the euphemism of Brighton in Neelsland! I do so want to like this book more, but overall it's really just an above average story. Coming from the high of reading Betty's first three books, they'd really set the bar high, this just fell short of awesome.

That's not to say there's nothing to love in this book. The opening was pretty good: our heroine Alethea was dining in a posh restaurant with NICK. Now why do I have a feeling he'd be a jerk just based on his name? We were told she's a beautiful girl, but not appreciated by a sulking Nick. He was sulking because Alethea REFUSED TO GO TO BRIGHTON WITH HIM! Aha! AND we knew he was just after a good time...After accusing her of being prissy, he walked out on her, in full view of the restaurant! Jerk! Bastard! The worst was Alethea had bought a new dress, thinking Nick would be proposing this evening!

Poor Alethea had to drag out the rest of her meal alone, hoping Nick would come back...and settle the bill which was larger than she could pay. Horrid Nick! Luckily our Rich Dutch Doctor Sarre, came to Alethea's rescue. It was soooo sweet of him and the taxi driver to watch over her while they had coffee at a coffee stall...how interesting! It so happened that Sarre was a visiting consultant at their hospital and he was there to protect Alethea from Nick's nasty behaviour most of the time. Nothing good happened whenever we saw "Nick" on the page!

Anyway out of the blue Sarre's proposal of a marriage of convenience took us by surprise, and Sarre was so adamant he was NOT marrying for love or a wife, but a mother for his twins and a hostess. His ex-wife was still alive! Which was why they couldn't marry in church...

SPOILERS

Anyway I read the book with trepidation because the stepchildren were EVIL! They behaved properly in front of their father but hatred and animosity shone out of their little eyes. Gosh! Thankfully Sarre was neither blind nor deaf but he did NOTHING to make the situation better for Alethea, like talk to the kids and Nanny!

The supposed Other Woman didn't really do much except it was convenient for Sarre to use her and make Alethea jealous...for a long time Alethea was still hung up on nasty Nick, even though she was fully aware of his faults! It was frustrating!

Oh it was funny that the kids had to point out to Sarre that they had not liked Alethea because she seemed like a visitor, "always sleeping alone" unlike their friends' mothers and fathers who were always kissing! Wonder what Sarre felt at that moment!

The usual supporting cast of characters were good, especially Sarre's brother Wienand. I don't think Sarre personally gave Alethea a house tour of love; he did not even put on the engagement ring for her...but he did give her a very good wedding day not just in England but also in Groningen. Sarre was rich, the whole family very rich, so we actually went to the lawyer's for the marriage settlement and will update. But no shopping spree for our mevrouw! I love how Sarre was always complimenting Alethea on her appearance and it didn't come across as mere flattery!

Sarre drove both a Jaguar and bought a new Bristol, which was an exclusive, limited hand built car brand! He bought a British Colt for Alethea too.

I wonder when was our RDD's dawning realisation...Alethea's was rather sweet. She caught him alone in his study, looking...SAD. I think he was sad because he thought she's still in love with Nasty Nick!
