



## My Sweet Valentine

*Annie Groves*

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An emotional portrayal of the lives of four women as Valentine's day approaches, in 1941 wartime London

'Life brought enough problems and upsets for young hearts, especially young female hearts, without them having to carry the added burden of the war...'

Tilly is passionately in love with the dashing American journalist, Drew. But he is harbouring a secret that threatens their burgeoning love. At the same time, Dulcie's brother Rick walks back into her life, the man who she longed for all those years ago...

Agnes is comforted by the loving arms of her caring train driver fiancé Ted. And Sally could not be happier with her talented surgeon boyfriend at her side, especially since he's risked his life to visit her at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve.

For Tilly's mother, Olive, the cold heart that had been frozen since her partner died, is beginning to thaw. But the man she pines for is betrothed to another. The net curtains on the well-to-do Article Row have been twitching, and prying eyes have seen the way she's been looking at Sergeant Dawson...

When the clock strikes midnight at the Hammersmith Palais, three couples stare deeply into their lovers' eyes. The confident and stunningly beautiful East Ender, Dulcie, is left alone once more, abandoned by her boyfriend at this most precious of precious moments.

But the women of No. 13 Article Row know that joy is short lived in the London of 1941. It's a treacherous place, especially for the tender-hearted. As Valentine's Day approaches, the perils of war threaten life as they know it and all matters of the heart.

## My Sweet Valentine Details

Date : Published February 2nd 2012 by Harper (first published January 5th 2012)

ISBN :

Author : Annie Groves

Format : Kindle Edition 400 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction

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## From Reader Review My Sweet Valentine for online ebook

### Natalie says

It was an okay book, but personally it felt like a waste of time reading it. What I did enjoy was the number of historical facts mentioned such as the bombing at the Cafe de Palais, very interesting. There were quite a few errors in the book which was a shame.

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### Ruth says

3.5 Stars. After surviving the onslaught of Hitler's Blitz on London, the women of Article Row -- Olive and her daughter Tilly, and their lodgers Agnes, Sally, and Dulcie -- continue to struggle to adjust to life under the ever-present specter of war. Working as a nurse at St. Bart's, Sally continues to see the worst of the Blitz's impact on London, but finds solace in her relationship with George, a young doctor whose affections have helped her forget her own breach with her family back in Liverpool. Agnes is blissfully happy to be engaged at long-last to her boyfriend Ted -- the only thing marring her joy is her future mother-in-law's refusal to open her heart to the one-time desperately lonely orphan. Dulcie is as incorrigible as ever, exasperating and endearing herself to her fellow lodgers by turns, and dating an American pilot -- and determinedly ignoring disturbing signs that he's less than enamored of her than she'd like to believe. And while Tilly is blissfully happy dating Drew, the dashing American reporter, Olive fears that in wartime Tilly's passionate nature will only lead to heartache. But even as Olive fights to protect her headstrong daughter, the widow finds herself increasingly drawn to the attentive -- and very married - neighbor, Archie Dawson. As each woman strives for happiness in an increasingly war-torn London, they find that the only constant they can rely on is change, as they strive to hold on to the hope of a better world in the midst of unimaginable sorrow and loss.

My Sweet Valentine, the third outing in Annie Groves's Article Row series, continues to be a warm-hearted, poignant portrayal of life on the home front during the horrors of the Blitz. Whereas previous installments of the series gave relatively equal page time to each woman's story, this volume focuses primarily on Tilly and her romance with Drew, and its impact on her relationship with Olive. In the second volume, Home for Christmas, Groves introduced -- albeit in a very gentle fashion -- the changing moral values of the time, and the impact a potentially rash liaison or even marriage could have on a young woman's life, with a couple's future so uncertain thanks to the realities of the war at home and abroad. Groves further develops this theme here, giving, I think, a very realistic portrayal with Tilly of a "good girl" struggling to navigate rapidly changing social mores of the day and reject or reconcile them with her conservative upbringing.

That said, I do feel like the book suffers for focusing so much on Tilly and Olive's oft-times stormy relationship, and relegating the other residents of Article Row to minor supporting players. One of the main reasons I enjoyed London Belles and Home for Christmas was the sense of community Groves managed to build between these very different women, brought together by shared need and the rigors of life on the homefront. Agnes all but disappears, left to suffer off-stage with her future mother-in-law's patently obviously disapproval, with only a brief update on the state of her relationship with Ted. Dulcie fares somewhat better -- Groves offers a tantalizing glimpse into the development of her unlikely friendship with an erstwhile suitor, now horribly wounded and rejected by his family. I love Dulcie because at first glance she seems like such a selfish character -- but underneath that bold-as-brass exterior lurks a heart of gold.

Of the lodgers, Sally fares best here. Groves continues to explore the toll Sally's fractured family life took on her emotional well-being, and while her reaction to her father's remarriage is extreme, and certainly the stuff

of soap opera, Groves manages to imbue Sally's story with an appreciable level of emotional authenticity. Groves continues to explore Sally's changing moral views here, particularly vis-a-vis her intensifying relationship with George, contrasting her more mature decision-making process with Tilly's youthful, impetuous nature. It's a contrast that brings into sharp relief the error of focusing so much on Tilly -- likable enough, but incredibly immature -- and that quality, coupled with Olive's smothering, wears thin in a novel of this length (400 pages).

Sadly, Annie Groves passed away shortly before this novel was published, but with it she cements her status as a master when it comes to writing nostalgic, warm-hearted, female-centric wartime fiction. While *My Sweet Valentine* is far from perfect, focusing on -- at this point -- my least favorite resident of Article Row, it is a solid entry in the series. I particularly appreciate how, despite the story's gentle tone, Groves never shies away from exploring the stark realities of wartime, delivering brutally honest sequences exploring the emotional impact the Blitz has on survivors. She's at her best when exploring the human toll of war on the homefront, and its catalyst as an engine of social change. Though the prose is still occasionally clunky and repetitive, and the characterizations uneven, I enjoyed revisiting Article Row, and I look forward to finishing the concluding, posthumously published volumes in this saga -- *Only a Mother Knows* and *A Christmas Promise*.

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### **Carol B Davis says**

#### **Good**

Love this author and her series of books. She makes her characters registering and engaging so you keep wanting to read more.

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### **Faye says**

A classic family saga. loved it

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### **Victoria Shepherd says**

A lovely piece of history, charmingly written.

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### **Mimi says**

Very disappointed in this Article row #3  
There was very little happening. Too many irrelevant details about the daily life of the number 13's lodgers ... I did enjoy *London Belles* and *Home for Christmas* though...

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### **Kim says**

This was number 3 in the Article Row series. I read number 2 recently without realising that it was part of a series and left a comment saying that I wanted to know more about the characters.

I love books set around the second world war- and it was nice to catch up with the characters again. I think there is another one due out in the autumn.

She has a nice easy style and I will definately read more by this author (no 1 is reserved at the library!).

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### **Janice says**

I Read this on the kindle

This is the 3rd book in the series

I am really enjoying the book, Olive Tilly's mother & landlady to Sally, Agnes & Dulcie she is a bit of a mother hen to the lodgers but find that the reason she won't let Tilly get engaged is selfish I can understand why she won't let her marry her American boyfriend Drew but not why not let them get engaged Agnes is the quiet one & don't believe she worthy as she was left on the orphanage steps as a baby she is engaged to Ted who is having to support his mother & 2 young sisters, his mother don't like Agnes because of the thoughts that she was illegitimate in her eyes

Dulcie well it is all about her she comes across as shallow but every now & then she does something nice she goes to see David who flirted with her before he married but she told him he not like that, now he got shot down so he lost his legs damaged his arm & also got shot in the groin so can't be a husband, his wife wouldn't go to see him & is carrying on & while out with a Naval office gets killed in a bombing raid Sally her father betrayed her mother & 2 months after her death marries who Sally considers not only her best friend but more like a sister they have a little girl, I won't say more as this would spoil it

This is a good series & will be going straight on to the next book in the series

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### **Jackie Hoyle says**

I registered a book at BookCrossing.com!

<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/12411411>

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### **Brenda Coody Leon says**

I am almost finished with this book, and I have to wonder if I downloaded a rough draft. I have never seen so many errors in a book in my life. I had high hopes for this book, which is supposed to be a family-type WWII drama. However, the book was quite a disappointment for me. The part about the fire-watching and incendiary bombs was interesting, however, the rest of the book felt pointless to me. There was no cohesive plot and it read like a bad teen romance.

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## Susan says

Okay, I'll admit it, I'm hooked on these "Article Row" books, set in London during WWII. You think they are going to be so nice and sweet and cheesy, and surprise! There actually IS a plot and a story behind each character. Yep, I have to read them all now (two more).

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## Ilovetoread2 says

I enjoyed this book as much as the previous ones and am looking forward to hearing more about the residents of Article Row. I could be picky about some aspects of the portrayal of some of the characters but enjoyed the story none the less. A lot of research must have been done concerning the Blitz and WWII in general.

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## Book Addict Shaun says

I was tempted to knock a star off for this book because of the amount of mistakes contained within. I don't mind a few mistakes in books but it just became irritating here. Also family saga authors love the word rueful and it was used in abundance here. Slightly irritating. But the characters and story more than made up for it and for me this was another enjoyable read from Annie Groves, who sadly passed away in 2011.

Wikipedia says Annie Groves was her mother's maiden name, I knew it wasn't her real name but I didn't know where the name came from. It's always sad to lose such a fantastic author, especially when such a fantastic series of books had begun with these Article Row novels.

Annie's books are usually set in Liverpool. The Champion family series was fantastic. I am yet to read her other work however I have read the previous books in the Article Row series and loved them too. The characters are a good mix. Olive took in Dulcie, Sally and Agnes as lodgers to share her home with herself and her daughter Tilly in the first book.

I found Tilly to be a bit of an annoying character the way she simpers after Drew all the way through this book and how her whole life is centred around him. Olive was annoying regarding this as well in her flat out refusal to let them get engaged or have any sort of sexual relationship. Perhaps because this is 2013 and the book is set in wartime it just seems odd to modern readers, but the fact that Olive is only early 30s was shocking as she is written like she's an older woman. So perhaps this is just because of the time it was set but was an awful way to live a life, being denied love or sex because it feels wrong or immoral. Drew has got the patience of a Saint it has to be said.

Sally and George are okay characters and Sally did redeem herself towards the end of the book in my eyes. I like her because she's the Liverpool connection and I enjoyed reading about her returning to my home town in one of the earlier Row books. Agnes didn't really feature much in this book and is really just an extra character. I can't even remember what she did in previous books.

This book got its five star rating from me however because of the fantastic Dulcie. I haven't enjoyed reading about a character this much in a while. She is such an amazing character and one that I wish I knew in real life. People might dislike her selfish, all about me ways but to me she is the best character out of all the Article Row girls. Underneath the selfishness and selfcentredness is a young girl trying to make a better life for herself and there are moments where you realise she can be a nice, loving person.

Overall this was a really enjoyable book and I notice a follow up is out soon. It was due out last year and I wonder whether it was started by Annie and finished by a ghostwriter or if she finished it before she passed away. I love a good family saga and this was excellent. As a child I loved reading anything to do with the war and I always used to write about evacuation for my stories in junior school. It's nice to read about Londoners pulling together during wartime and not letting Hitler ruin the spirit of the city. I just wonder what it would be like today, with the riots of 2011 it seems unlikely that the spirit of people in WW1 and WW2 would be emulated in the present day. Unfortunately I doubt it would.

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### **Samantha says**

Absolutely Love Annie Groves Books .. The 3rd Book of Article Row is Brilliant .. Felt Like I wanted to Shake Tilly at Times & Dulcie is one of My Favourite Characters in This Series she Just Let's everything fly over Her Head and No one is more Important than Herself .. Can't Wait for Book 4 :)

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