



The Carpenter's Lady

Barbara Delinsky

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Shaken by a painful divorce, successful television writer Debra Barry leaves New York for the beautiful countryside of New Hampshire, where she hopes to find peace and solitude to mend her wounded heart. The old house she's bought, though, needs as much repairing as her own shattered emotions. To make it the home she's always wanted, she seeks the help of master carpenter Graham Reid, a compellingly enigmatic man seemingly as hard as granite itself. Hiding from his own bitter past, Graham reluctantly agrees to take the job, not suspecting that his own life is about to be altered as well. As the house begins to come together, he and Debra unexpectedly find themselves laying their own emotional groundwork. Drawn together by desire, can these two wounded lovers find the courage to tear down the walls between them and build on the promise of new love?

The Carpenter's Lady Details

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Susannah says

Yeah, no.

This book is a re-issue of an edition that was first published in the early 1990s, but originally the story itself was written and published in 1983. It seems rather sad to look back through the window of time and wonder, is this what passed for acceptable romance twenty to thirty years ago? Really? If so, no wonder this genre has the reputation it does. This book is really, really horrible. I couldn't finish it - and that's saying something. I feel compelled to warn readers about certain issues that may make it as disturbing for them as it was for me.

The premise is that of a recently divorced woman who just passed her 30th birthday and is still coping with the changes and disappointments of losing her husband to a dalliance he felt compelled to explore with a mutual co-worker (both the heroine - and I use that term loosely - and her ex-husband work in the same office as scriptwriters for a daytime soap opera). As premises go, it's a bit awkward but could work given some creative effort. The hero seems guarded and interesting at first - tall, sculpted, brooding, a carpenter who renovates homes. They meet, she hires him, and at first he hesitates, because he's attracted to her and he's not up for a relationship just now - but then he gives in (we're really not sure why), and makes her agree on a condition I found a bit troubling but managed to get over for the sake of the story: that he's not going to control his urges to consummate his attraction if he takes the job.

I have a special affinity for men who work with their hands. Carpenters are top of the list for me, in fact. It's why I picked up the book in the first place - a carpenter and a writer? I'm so there.

I also like a man who knows what he wants, and tells you up front. Honesty is usually a very good trait. So I was intrigued at first, and dove in.

As the story progresses, it soon becomes obvious that what could be interesting tension between the two was just a set-up. The trite handling of circumstances and obvious plot twists designed to get these two to the brink of sexual encounters in the quickest, most ridiculously cheesy fashion possible started to make my eyes bleed. The guy is a total oaf - and not in a cute, endearing way. He's a misogynistic cad who practically rapes the woman while she's struggling to fight off his grabby hands and forced kisses while simultaneously trying to control her own rising passions brought on solely by his physical "charms."

Puh-leeze. Okay, so this may be dated - but really? Did we totally buy that crap in the eighties and nineties? I'm looking at much more recent reviews and wondering how in the world grown women can actually find this palatable - much less acceptable and even "delightful" as one reviewer wrote? Seriously? Um, *no* .

The female protagonist is a dolt and an airhead. Brief glimpses of what could possibly be evidence that she's not are quickly doused whenever the guy walks in the room. I wish she were smarter. I wish she'd fire his ass, and file a police report. But she doesn't.

By the third time the two of them *almost* get together my stomach couldn't take any more. Put this one back on the shelf and buy a book on how to fight off selfish, chauvinistic jerks or possible rapists instead, because if this stuff titillates you, you're going to want to know what to do if it happens in real life. If you're one of those women who confuses the lack of mutual respect coupled with a severe lack of self-control for honest attraction, then a class in self-defense would probably save your life one day.

Bonnie says

What can I say about this book? My comments mirror those of people who said they can't believe this passed as romance in the 1980s. I had the same visceral reaction to this book as I did to Fifty Shades of Grey. Rape as a sensual come on? Seriously? Jealousy as attractive? This book is about a woman who at first appears like she's going to be gaining some long-lost independence. I tend to like books where somebody breaks out of their preconceived mold and tries a new life on their own. But that is where her strength ends.

She ends up being a needy clingy woman who falls for a dominating man, who feels no need to knock, or feels entitled to listen in to her phone conversations, and to tell her what to do when he hardly knows her is off putting.

I will say Barbara Delinsky has matured in her writing, thank God!

Dyana says

This is an early Barbara Delinsky romance novel. It is well-written fluff and a fast read and I liked it - guilty, guilty! Debra Barry is a newly divorced (cheating husband) soap-opera script writer who moves from New York to the New Hampshire countryside to start over. Graham Reid is a successful architect who had moved to New Hampshire many years earlier to work with his hands as a carpenter because his ex-wife had destroyed his relationship with his daughter. Debra buys an old house that needs major renovations. She researches and finds Graham is the best carpenter in the area. Sparks fly at their first meeting, and he is determined to refuse her plea to work on her house because of his bitter past. He doesn't want to be tempted by love again. The flyleaf says ..."drawn together by their past, they struggle to find the courage to tear down the walls between them and build on the promise of new love". Corny but an interesting read.

Debbie George says

Predictable but I adore Barbara Delinsky!

elizabeth zelinger says

This book was just ok for me. I thought it was somewhat contrived and trite. Pretty lady leaves big city for simpler life. Hires handsome virile Carpenter. He has a secret past. Fall in love. You know the ending... good read for the beach. Very predictable...

Mary Gramlich says

When you move forward do you have to leave your past behind?

Debra Berry has said goodbye to her cheating husband, over bearing family and hello to a life that will be one she creates. Debra has so many possibilities of where to go from here, especially with the new house she just bought and the career she is so successful at. The house is a mess but she owns it and nothing from the past can spoil this dream.

She hires the best carpenter in town, Graham Reid who is less than anxious to take the job. He doesn't think he can get any work done while he spends the day thinking about her and trying to control he desire to possess her. But the money is too tempting and the opportunity to enticing to walk away from.

Graham and Debra try to control the passion between them but the longer they are together the worse it is to resist. Debra and Graham both have had past relationship failures and trouble with trust but it seems like they can build from the ground up not only the house but themselves.

While everyone is trying to manipulate the end result with Debra's life she knows that she could not write a better ending to a script than one that has Graham in her life forever.

Don't judge the book by the writing, take it for the year it was written and enjoy. When you read the earlier books by Barbara Delinsky you realize that contemporary romance was not her greatest forte shall we say. But this book was written in 1999 and does it fit the writing style for that time, place, and tone of contemporary romance – absolutely. I also felt this book was a precursor to Escape which came out this year as the story is different but the concept of being your own woman and finding your own place is important.

Lindsay Nelson says

It was a nice, easy read. A little smutty, but that's what makes it good.

Rhonda Rae Baker says

Loved this book's emotion and adventure. Extremely delightful!

Am very happy that I gave the premise of 'romantic novel' a chance. The setting descriptions were so vivid and exciting, I couldn't put it down and if it weren't for a paying job, this story would have ravenously been devoured in one setting...(-:

It's all about taking second chances on happiness. I'm all too aware that this can only happen after you break free from the chains of previous relationships and heartaches. Break free from paradym's of yesteryear and take the leap of faith that actually changes the stars.

I was moved by this story and am familiar with much of what happened to these two...true to life and dramatically cheering!

I'm looking for more of Delinsky's novels now...Hummm...there are so many that I want to read.

Linda says

LOL Rather dated, as others have said, maybe I am just too used to reading more sophisticated literature.

Mary-Megan says

I think that most of my problem with this novel comes from judging a book written in 1983 by a 2017 standard. Times and writing were different back then. Still, certain things rubbed me the wrong way. The only reason anything happened between Debra and Graham was because he was the only person she had any interact with. Sure she saw people in town, but they were more or less the only characters in the book (aside from phone conversations). So was it true love or just an attraction do to proximity? I say the latter because I didn't see much spark/attraction otherwise. Then, the man nearly rapes her. How many times does a woman have to say "let me go" and "no" before a man gets a clue. But then to have her suddenly acquiesce and be all turned on by his macho/domineering behavior? I'm sorry, but no. Whether or not she was just denying her feelings, his brutish behavior deserved a slap and kick. Besides his caveman behavior, the writer's use of exclamation points drove me crazy. Every time Debra talked she ended with an exclamation point to the point that it made her seem overly dramatic. It made me dislike the character because it seemed like she couldn't just talk like a normal person without the extra flair the exclamation point implied. Maybe this novel was a huge hit 34 years ago, but in my opinion it does not live up to today's standards.

Cindy says

This was a somewhat 'fluffy', romance filled with real life issues kinda book! I particularly enjoyed the aspect of remodeling an old home (with the hunky carpenter)!!! I've been working on getting all my books on shelves in my home. I believe that I read this book already several years ago. It didn't detract from my enjoyment of the book this time.

Freda Larimer says

Good story line. Too fluffy for me. My least favorite of her books I have read.

Diana says

Loved this book. Would love to see the house the Carpenter's Lady renovated. Great, great read!

Shirlene says

Debra Barry left New York in April after divorcing her husband, Jason, and purchased a house in New Hampshire that needed a lot of work. She didn't tell anyone that she was a screenwriter for a soap opera along with her ex-husband and a few others. The first thing she did was to hire a carpenter, Graham Reid, as general contractor to restore her house.

Graham tried to talk himself out of taking the job even after they kissed. He couldn't help but take the job because he really wanted to work on the house. They each told themselves that they could handle their

attraction without letting it go to far.

Graham started working on the separate carriage house and got it ready for Debra to live in while he worked on the main house. It took him a couple of weeks to get it ready. They stayed out of each others way until then. After it was completed, she went to take a look at it and they ended up kissing each other again. They were getting carried away until he made a comment about her being promiscuous. She was infuriated and broke off what they were doing. It was then that she discovered that he thought she would be easy because of overhearing a conversation she had with the head writer on her phone. She then explained to him what she did for a living. He was embarrassed but wouldn't admit it. He got jealous when she took off for the weekend but they worked it out where they ended up becoming friends. That relationship worked for awhile until Jason showed up in early June.

Jason arrived and Graham was surprised to find out that he was close to 20 years older than Debra. She told him to leave but Jason insisted that he wasn't leaving unless it was her as his wife once again. Graham stepped in to defend Debra's position when he took her by the arm. They were no longer married and Graham insisted that he leave. Jason left and they took refuge in each other and began making out. Once again it was halted by a comment Graham made. Graham refused to admit that he was falling for Debra and had still told her nothing of his past. He was surprised to find that he wanted to but the words wouldn't come. That took away the ardor of their make-out session.

The next day, Debra's father came to visit. They talked and David French told Debra that he approved of her interest in her carpenter. The three of them had dinner together and Graham discovered that she made him feel like the architect he was rather than a carpenter. He still hadn't opened up to her. She slept in the next morning and he went to check on her. They ended up spending the day in bed together. He just couldn't hold off his desire for her anymore. Debra told him that she was in love with him. She didn't understand how that could happen in just two months. Graham didn't want to be in love with her either but here they were. The next day, her brother, Stuart, called to tell her he had found out something about Graham. She didn't want to listen but couldn't stop herself from listening either. He told her that Graham had married the daughter of a wealthy banker in New York. They had a daughter that had just graduated from high school. He had become a successful architect using his ex-wife's money. He had left NY 8 years back and had never returned. Debra was stunned and hurt that Graham hadn't told her himself. Her mother called almost as soon as her brother hung up and told her the same information. She pretended that she already knew. Graham could tell she was getting more upset with each phone call. The next call was from Harris, the head writer. He told her that Jason was pressuring him to fire her and asked her why. She told him about the confrontation they had when he had come by. She told Harris that he was just mad because she refused to go back to NY as his wife. Harris told Debra that Jason would be fired before she was. He was the less creative of the two and was often late turning in his work. Harris asked Debra to talk to Jason but she told him that Jason was not her concern any longer and she hung up. Graham then took Debra for a ride in his truck when the phone rang again. He took her to his house and explained that he had met his now ex-wife while they were in college and they married when she became pregnant with Jessica. She wanted her wealthy lifestyle more than she wanted him and they grew apart. She was a good mother and Graham accepted visitation. He soon found out that Joan had been feeding lies about him to Jessica and she had grown to not want to be around him. He hadn't fought what he thought was a losing battle to win her affection and left NY after she had asked not to see him anymore.

Debra suggested to him that he try and reach out to her again now that she was grown. He had never spoken about his failure of a marriage to anyone before and told Debra that this was a battle that he didn't feel like he could ever win. She told Graham that she hadn't known her father until she was 15. They literally ran into each other at a restaurant when she was 15 and had steadily grown closer as the years went by. She told Graham that his relationship with his daughter wasn't a lost cause yet. He needed to give it another try now that she was going to be living away from his ex-wife. Graham felt much better after talking with Debra and he told her that he was falling more in love with her as they got to know each other even more.

Jason called to tell her that the divorce she had obtained was no good. The license of the notary who witnessed the divorce papers had expired. Debra refused to have sex with Graham until this problem was resolved. It took most of a week before Graham's attorney found out where the notary resided currently. He had renewed his license and was still a notary. The divorce was valid.

They made plans to go out and celebrate that evening. Graham returned to ask Debra for a postponement of their dinner plans. His daughter had been hit by a cab in NY and was in critical condition. He wanted to go see her. Debra agreed to go to NY with him.

They flew into NY the next morning and went to the hospital. Graham told Debra that Jessica had a broken leg and arm along with a few broken ribs. The doctors felt they had repaired the internal damage and she would make a full recovery. Graham told Debra that Jessica had first thought that she had died when she saw him there. He and Jessica talked a little. Graham asked Debra if they could stay for a few days to give them a little time to work on repairing their broken relationship. Debra agreed and they made love after they arrived at the motel they where they were staying. They were making plans to go to dinner when they heard Johnny and June Carter Cash's song, "If I were a Carpenter". The song about a carpenter, his lady, marriage and a baby. Graham asked Debra if she would marry him and if she would have his baby. She said 'yes' to his proposal.

Rachel C. says

This book has not aged well. Graham's behavior would result in criminal charges today.
