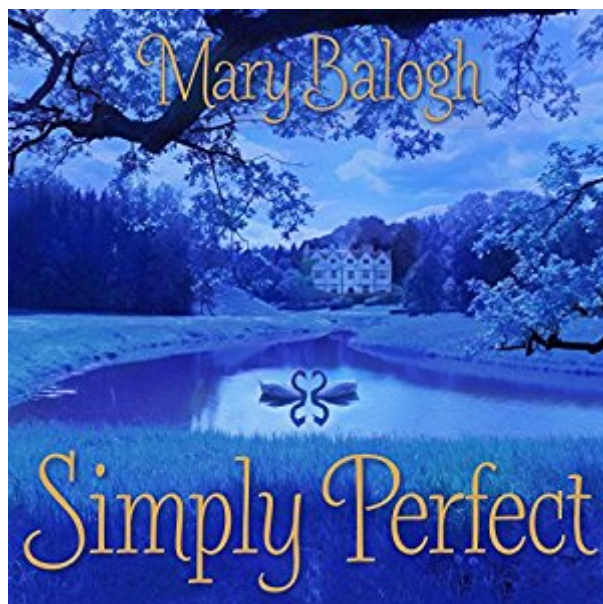


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Simply Perfect: Simply Quartet Series, Book 4



Synopsis

Tall, dark, and exquisitely sensual, he is the epitome of male perfection. Not that Claudia Martin is looking for a lover. Or a husband. As owner and headmistress of Miss Martin's School for Girls in Bath, she long ago resigned herself to a life without love. Until Joseph, Marquess of Attingsborough, arrives unannounced and tempts her to toss away a lifetime of propriety for an affair that can only lead to ruin. Joseph has his own reasons for seeking Claudia out. Instantly, irresistibly attracted to the dedicated teacher, he embarks on a plan of seduction that leaves them both yearning for more. But as heir to a prestigious dukedom, Joseph is expected to carry on his family's legacy. And Claudia knows she has no place in his world. Now that world is about to be rocked by scandal. An arranged marriage, a secret that will shock the town, and a man from Claudia's past conspire to drive the lovers apart. But Joseph is determined to make Claudia his at any cost. Even if that means defying convention and breaking every rule for a love that is everything he has ever wanted - a love that is perfection itself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the final novel in Balogh's "Simply" quartet, and having read it a couple of weeks ago, I delayed reviewing it because I was unsure how I felt about it. After a second reading, however, I've decided I liked this book. I didn't love it, but it does engender an engaging warmth and Balogh does seem to understand the conventions of the Regency, which for me helps make her writing credible. Other reviewers have maintained "Simply Perfect" is flawed, and I cannot argue with this. Many of the supporting characters are insufficiently explored in this book, and therefore to anyone

who hasn't read Balogh's previous series, might seem one-dimensional. The denouement introduces a bit of a jarring note, and scenes with Attingsborough's daughter can be cloying. Nevertheless, for me these faults are outweighed by Balogh's portrayal of the main protagonists and their burgeoning love. Miss Martin, entrenched in duty and her prejudice of the upper classes, is rather inflexible; Attingsborough, overshadowed by his father, is hidebound by duty and convention. Their flaws don't suddenly disappear overnight, but provide continuity with earlier portrayals of these characters in the *Simply and Slightly* series. The hero and heroine are no longer in the first flush of youth - in fact at 35, Claudia would have been considered to have taken root on the shelf - so there is no immediate "coup de foudre", no epiphany. Instead, Balogh describes the tender unfolding of a mature and considered love between two flawed and duty-bound characters. The four stars I've given this novel do, however, come with the two caveats.

This story is an excellent completion to Mary Balogh's 'Simply' series which followed the lives of four schoolteachers from Miss Martin's School for Girls in Bath. 'Simply Perfect' takes as its heroine Miss Claudia Martin herself, an on-the-shelf spinster whose life is bound up in the school and whose antipathy towards dukes and other members of the aristocracy is well known. At the start of this story Claudia finds herself showing the Marquess of Attingsborough around the school before travelling with him to London in order to drop off two pupils at their new positions and to visit her man of business. Claudia soon finds that there's more to the Marquess of Attingsborough than she first assumed. Initially appearing to be rather a wastrel aristocrat who just lives for parties and entertainments she soon realises that there is more behind his handsome and charming exterior - an unexpected female in his life, one he has to keep away from society. Claudia and the Marquess, Joseph, find themselves thrown together a great deal. This story also includes a roll-call of almost every character Mary Balogh has included in her last dozen or so novels including all the Bedwyns, the women and their husbands from the other books in the *Simply* series, Neville and Lily from 'One Night for Love' and Lauren and Viscount Ravensberg from 'A Summer to Remember'. For those who haven't read any of Balogh's other books these extra characters might feel rather overwhelming. Another character from 'Simply Unforgettable' also appears, Portia Hunt, the jilted potential fiancée of Lucius Marshall.

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