



Let Love Be My Judge

Marion Catterall

AuthorHouse (Jun 25, 2016)

Softcover \$18.24 (204pp)

978-1-5246-3251-9

This spicy romance offers a mature appreciation of love's many opportunities, passions, and adventures.

What sweetens a romance—A beautiful location? A lusty lover? Marion Catterall's frisky novel *Let Love Be My Judge* explores the power of yearning and denial, as heroine Catherine Riding navigates relationships with two very different men. Who will she choose? From Lake Tahoe to the Scottish Highlands, Catherine follows her heart to a thrilling conclusion.

Catherine's approach to men and sex is matter-of-fact. She has hardly had time to enjoy herself. At forty, she has successfully guided her haulage business through a terrible recession, though, and is finally ready for a little fun. "How I managed to stay calm, firm, and positive over that terrible time, I will never know," she says. "I just wanted us all to have a special summer holiday together ... to celebrate that life was looking good for us all, at last." A mishap in Miami derails her family vacation, and in short order Catherine finds herself looking down the length of Thomas Hague, an American judge with no patience but plenty of sex appeal.

After a racy encounter, Catherine knows she'll have a hard time forgetting Thomas; however, she soon finds herself in the arms of Squire Donald McFadden, a Scottish laird who won't take no for an answer. Their first time sends Catherine home battered and humiliated. Her feelings confuse her. She didn't consent to Donald's advances, yet she couldn't resist him.

As a complex heroine, Catherine negotiates her own feelings, reassuring herself that "he was smitten with me now." In a culture where consent often functions as foreplay, Catherine's rape feels not only out of place, but also strongly unromantic. *Let Love Be My Judge* falters when it reaches too far, trying to pack in more than one subplot. Is it a highland romance? A vacation fling? Catterall is an ambitious writer, and her promise is apparent in this novel, but sticking with tried-and-true tropes might have served her story better.

One element that makes *Let Love Be My Judge* a standout is Catherine's disability: following two hip replacement surgeries, she has difficulty moving or putting much weight on her right leg. Catterall's practical approach to Catherine's physicality is refreshing. The hip trouble doesn't take center stage or dominate the plot; it's just a fact, like the color of her eyes. In a genre that often fetishizes disability or treats it like a rare exotic or a barrier to real love, it's wonderful to read about a mature, self-assured woman enjoying her body exactly the way it is without apology or explanation.

Catterall, also the author of *Hold Me Close and Closer Still*, has come into her own as a romance writer, and her new novel is often a delight to read. Packed with gorgeous descriptions of jewelry and clothes, not to mention spicy sex scenes, *Let Love Be My Judge* flows easily through scenes of passion. Catherine is not overly prone to introspection, which keeps the action moving along. Although nonessential characters, such as Catherine's husband and family, disappear from the plot almost immediately, the other balls stay in the air nicely.

A perfect companion for a rainy fall day, *Let Love Be My Judge* offers a mature appreciation of love's many opportunities, passions, and adventures.

CLAIRE FOSTER (November 9, 2016)

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