ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

Reason and Romance: Austen Series, Book 2
Debra White Smith
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This novel puts a Christian and thoroughly modern spin on the old adage about never getting a second chance to make a first impression. Reminiscent of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, the two sisters in this book couldn't be more different, yet they find themselves in similar romantic straits. College professor Elaina Woods unexpectedly swoons over Ted, her snooty sister-in-law's brother, who also happens to be her student. Little does Elaina know that Ted's engaged to another woman. Pretty younger sister Anna hitches her star to a suave and handsome model, but she's crushed when he leaves town abruptly with nary an explanation. As both sisters struggle to mend hearts broken by men who aren't what they seem, will they be able to bring themselves to put their trust in God and ever consider taking a second chance on love?

This is the second book in the author's Austen series; the first was *First Impressions*. The founder of Real Life Ministries, Smith has also written the *Seven Sisters* fiction series, as well as the nonfiction books *Romancing Your Husband*, *Friends for Keeps*, and *More than Rubies: Becoming a Woman of Godly Influence*.

Smith's dialogue and character development are masterful: Elaina and Anna demonstrate Christian values while still reading as "real" women facing the same desires and anxieties as other women, engaging contemporary readers as well as fans of Christian romance. The sisters are funny and charming; several passages will have readers laughing aloud. Like all sisters, though, the Woods girls exchange frosty comments and icy glares at times.

The only issue that some readers may have with this novel is the list of characters that Smith includes, along with their corresponding Austen alter egos. Those unfamiliar with Sense and Sensibility may feel overwhelmed, and those who have read Austen's work may feel condescended to by the cheat sheet, since they'd pick up on the similarities between the two novels on their own.

The language that Smith uses in describing the setting brings the story to life. Reading her description of Anna's trek through a snowstorm, readers will feel her chill as "a gust of wind whined through the bare trees and slammed snow against her cheeks and lashes like pinpoints of

ice.”

Readers of Christian romance novels will find *Reason and Romance* a satisfying read; the echoes of Jane Austen will also hold strong appeal for general romance fans as well, as *Sense and Sensibility* gets a delightfully modern makeover.

Amy Brozio-Andrews