

Tangled Webs

Elizabeth Baroodly aka Christy Demaine

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Kelly Severinson is looking for a man. Not just any man will do, however; he must be “rich, sexy, interesting, important.” She finds what she’s looking for in Charles Manderley, a handsome and successful older man who happens to find her just as fascinating as she finds him. In Kelly’s mind, the fact that Charles is married to someone else is a mere nuisance, and her decision to pursue him in spite of his inconvenient wife sets off a string of events in *Tangled Webs*.

When Kelly sets her snare for Charles, he falls right into it. Married to Tessa for twenty-five years, he is desperately trying to escape the fact that he is aging. The spark between him and his wife has grown cold, his children have grown up, and the gray hairs have sprung up quickly. The day he meets young, beautiful, and vivacious Kelly, he suddenly feels young again himself. When his suspicious wife is called away to help her mother, the way is clear for him to move the illicit affair forward.

Tessa is well aware that her husband has been slipping away from her. Her trip to help her mother becomes a soul-searching time, one which is made more complicated by the unexpected attention she receives from another man.

Tangled Webs takes place in the 1970s, when Cheryl Tiegs graced every magazine cover and many women were still growing accustomed to the idea of having options beyond marriage. While Tessa chafes against the double standard that makes her husband feel justified in having an affair, Kelly embraces the power her own youth and allure gives her over men. Eventually, she discovers that the reality of becoming Mrs. Manderley may not be all that she imagined.

Elizabeth Baroodly (aka Christy Demaine) packs a lot into her short novel. The story is by turns entertaining and thought-provoking as it explores the hearts and minds of the three main characters. Each of the three is well realized, and readers will be drawn into their individual story lines. Charles’s stubborn sense of entitlement, Tessa’s determined devotion, and Kelly’s focused pursuit are given equal attention. Although Kelly’s moral compass may be questionable, the consequences of her actions lead her down a challenging and life-changing path.

The novel is structured in an effective manner, and although there are few typos, readers may be dismayed that the first of them occurs at the very beginning of the first chapter, where a letter is missing from a main character’s name.

The story maintains narrative tension from start to finish, and the pace flows comfortably. Readers will be fully invested in the fates of the characters. Dialogue is natural, and the author effectively conveys the emotional growth of each character.

A subtle tone of humor is woven through the dramatic tension of *Tangled Webs*, offering an occasional respite from the more serious themes. The book is absorbing and appealing, and readers will be satisfied with the thoughtful conclusion.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (April 16, 2013)

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