



Velvet Undercover

Teri Brown

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Samantha Donaldson's family has always done its duty for the British Crown. In the midst of World War I, seventeen-year-old Sam follows in their footsteps, serving her country from the homefront as a Girl Guide and messenger for the intelligence organization MI5. After her father disappears on a diplomatic mission, she continues their studies of languages, high-level mathematics, and complex puzzles and codes, hoping to make him proud.

When Sam is asked to join the famed women's spy group La Dame Blanche she's torn—this could be the adventure she's dreamed of, but how can she abandon her mother, who has already lost a husband to the war? But when her handlers reveal shocking news, Sam realizes there's no way she can refuse the exciting and dangerous opportunity.

Her acceptance leads her straight into the heart of enemy territory on a mission to extract the most valuable British spy embedded in Germany, known to the members of LDB only as Velvet. Deep undercover within the court of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Samantha must navigate the labyrinthine palace and its many glamorous—and secretive—residents to complete her assignment. To make matters worse she finds herself forming a forbidden attraction to the enemy—a dangerously handsome German guard. In a place where personal politics are treacherously entangled in wartime policy, can Samantha discover the truth and find Velvet before it's too late...for them both?

From author Teri Brown comes the thrilling story of one girl's journey into a deadly world of spycraft and betrayal—with unforgettable consequences.

Velvet Undercover Details

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Author : Teri Brown

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From Reader Review Velvet Undercover for online ebook

Jen Ryland says

While I can't stop thinking there is something slightly cheesy about this book (and the racy sounding title and come-hither cover aren't helping matters any) I gave it a chance and thought it was a lot of fun.

I loved the setting -- WWI Germany -- and thought the spy stuff, while completely improbable, was still pretty entertaining. Samantha, the main character, was kind of a prickly loner, but I get that, so liked her. She's a young British girl with a talent for speaking perfect German and is plucked out of school and asked to go undercover as a governess to help contact a missing spy. (Okay, here's the part that never made sense to me - the organization who recruits her knows the spy's code name but not who she is. Then they're saying that she's dropped out of sight, but there are two likely candidates of who she is. To me, that part was a little sketchy.) There's a romance, which was pretty insta-love-y but still quite sweet. I wish the book had conveyed more of a sense of danger and had richer historical detail, but I still enjoyed it. Historical brain candy, like the last book I read, but tasty nonetheless....

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Thanks to the publisher for providing an advance copy for review!

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

Samantha Donaldson's family lives in England at the time of WWI, and she and her mother are worried that her father hasn't been heard from and is feared missing. When she nearly wins a Girl Guide competition, where she has excelled in all manner of things, including knowledge of foreign languages, she is approached by a spy organization, La Dame Blanche to be one of their operatives. She is a little conflicted, knowing that if she joins the organization and goes to spy in Germany, she might well die. Captain Parker persuades her, however, by mentioning that he might be able to help locate her father if she is willing to help him. After accepting, Samantha is trained by her "handler", a talented spy named Letty Tickford, who teaches her the finer points of codes, being followed, and disguising oneself. She does well, and is soon sent to Luxembourg to take on the identity of a young woman who has died in order to infiltrate the royal household and extricate a fellow spy. Now Sophia von Schonburg, she must memorize her backstory, locate the operative known only as "Velvet", and serve as governess to the children of the family as well! Samantha soon finds out that her assignment is quite dangerous when her fellow teacher is killed, and she must decide if she can trust one of the German soldiers, Maxwell, in order to survive and to possibly find her father.

World War I has been under represented in young adult fiction in the past, but seems to be a rising trend, perhaps because of interest in television programs like *Downtown Abbey* or *The Crimson Field*. Spy stories are always a good bet, and this had plenty of historical details as well as a pulse pounding undercover assignment.

My favorite part of this was the fact that Samantha learns that the world is not all black and white. The war is not necessarily divided into "us" and "them". This makes it hard to know whom she can trust, but she is young enough that she can still see Germans as good people, no matter what her government tells her. It

helps that she spent some time in Germany as a child and has good memories of being there. Her struggles in assessing her feelings and weighing them against her loyalties to La Dame Blanche as well as her country, are realistic and poignant.

Readers of spy adventure mysteries like Lee's *The Body in the Tower* as well as Carter's *The Gallagher Girls* will be enthralled with this story of divided loyalties, romance, and intrigue set against the backdrop of upper class society during World War I.

The only thing that didn't thrill me about this book was the cover. I would have rather seen a silhouette of a girl in WWI era clothing set against the background of a Luxembourg street of that era. This cover looks too modern.

Zemira (Kylo Ren fangirl) Warner says

I don't normally read historical novels but I wanted to give it a try since this one was about spies during the World War I. I've seen a lot of World War II books but no one writes about the First one.

This was a perfectly nice story. Can't say I was on the edge of my seat like I thought I would be. It's a mystery/thriller after all. Shouldn't I be allowed to expect that?

It will certainly appeal to the younger readers looking for a break from all those dystopians.

The ending tied everything up nicely but in a way it left room for a possible sequel if the first one sells well. The final reveal was a nice touch and it left me with a smile on my face.

Theresa says

I give this a solid 4.5 stars!! I really really liked it!! I was on the edge of my seat reading and everything was sooooo interesting. I had never read a book like this one before but I really enjoyed it. I liked all the characters and the plot was really good. There were a few things that confused me when I was reading that I wish could have been explained a bit more. Other wise I definitely recommend this book!! A really quick, exciting read!

AH says

"Trust no one." Good advice for a spy.

I can always gauge my enjoyment of a book by the amount of times I am inspired to go and Google. I'd never heard about *La Dame Blanche* and I blame our crappy high school history curriculum. Why didn't we ever learn about some of the heroines of the war? The people that risked their lives to track train schedules, troop movements, and the like? (Remember, no computers or internet in WWI).

Samantha is a bright young woman destined for more than her present job at MI6. She is talented in both math and speaks many languages due to her father's work as an ambassador. After she places third in a Girl Guide contest, she is approached by MI6 and offered a job as a spy. She balks at first because her father is

missing and she doesn't want her mother to lose anyone else. When they offer to help find her father, Samantha accepts the offer.

Samantha is trained in all matters of spycraft - ciphers, evasion, self-defense, etc. Her mission is virtually impossible. Samantha takes on the identity of a distant cousin Sophie who will be a governess to the children. She is dropped in the palace of the Kaiser's son in order to find the elusive agent Velvet, whose identity is unknown because the handler has been murdered.

The story kept my interest throughout. Each time I thought I knew who Velvet was, I was dead wrong. Each chapter begins with a definition of something to do with spycraft. The story is told through Samantha/Sophie's point of view and I enjoyed watching her unravel the mystery.

Thank you to Edelweiss and Balzer and Bray for a review copy of this book.

Jessie Potts says

Why you should read it: I haven't read many historical YAs and love these genre crossovers. Samantha is a really great heroine who is smart and the perfect spy. Teri Brown is also a fantastic storyteller, and Velvet Undercover will sweep you away. The mystery of who Velvet is kept me guessing, and come on, who doesn't love an elite all-woman spy group?

INTERVIEW WITH TERI BROWN

I loved the women's spy group. If you ran one, where would you send your spies?

Teri: In Portland, Oregon, we have an ice cream shop called Salt & Straw that has the craziest ice cream flavors known to man — honey and lavender, roasted cherry and bone marrow, blackberry and goat cheese with habanera — things like that. And they all work. Their ice cream is nationally known and so incredibly dreamy delicious. Every month they temporarily unleash a set of new flavors on the world. Yes, that is where I would send a spy — to uncover all their secret recipes and find out what they were working on ahead of time. You're welcome, world. I'm nothing if not civic minded.

Tell us about this forbidden attraction to our German hero!

Teri: What's not to love about dangerous attractions? Especially when you are 17 and undercover in Kaiser Wilhelm's Palace! Plus, Maxwell Mayer wears his guard uniform so very well and has a touch of melancholy about him. Who can resist a handsome, tortured hero in uniform? Certainly not Sam. But there's that whole being an undercover spy on the opposite side of the war thing that keeps getting in the way ...

Head over to the HEA Blog to read more of Teri's interview!

<http://happyeverafter.usatoday.com/20...>

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

“I’m pleased to inform you that you’ve been selected to join La Dame Blanche. We would like you to leave for training with the objective of joining the Third Company in Luxembourg. Are you interested?”

This started off okay, but I lost interest.

Samantha was a strong character, and she always tried to do what she thought was the right thing. She was young to be a spy, but she seemed to be confident and suited for the role, and the blackmail certainly cemented things for her.

The storyline in this was okay, but I just lost interest. I’m guessing that other people would enjoy this, but for me I just got bored, and I couldn’t get back into the story.

The ending to this did have a bit of an interesting twist, but it still wasn’t enough to save this book for me. I do think other people will enjoy this though, it just wasn’t for me.

6 out of 10

Gia says

Velvet Undercover was a fabulous book read. I immensely enjoyed reading it. The book was filled with never-ending, lip-biting suspense.

Previously read Teri Brown's Born of Illusion series and liking it, I expected no less from this one. Turns out my expectations were proven right.

Spying? And all that in synopsis was enough to attract me to the book.

I relished reading about Sam's skill like ciphering secret codes and her training as a spy. However, I would've really appreciated if it was more.

The main character, Samantha (aka Sophia Téresa) was brilliant, smart and brave. Loved her.

The romance was..hardly there. It was less, but sweet and nice though. Would've liked some more.

Elizabeth says

Historical fiction about spies?! YES AND PLEASE. She's smart, observant, and fifteen. Undercover as a governess for German royalty. (Full review to come)

Rachel (APCB Reviews) says

I feel as though this book did half of what I needed it to in all areas. It half made sense. The characters were half developed. The plot was half enjoyable. Overall I'm left with a hardly memorable story and equally unmemorable characters. Disappointed am I. Review to come.

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

Not the most original book ever, but fun!

My expectations weren't very high for Velvet Undercover. I've had mixed reactions to Teri Brown's previous books, and Debby (Snuggly Oranges) wasn't a huge fan, which generally means I won't be either. Oddly, though, this was the first book (that wasn't HP) to click with me in a slump period. It's not that it's the best book ever, but for some reason Sam's voice clicked with me. Velvet Undercover was a quick read for me that had me turning pages, and that's what I really needed just now.

I debated what to rate this one, between 3 and 3.5, and went with 3. My enjoyment was more of a 3.5, but quality-wise, I don't know that the book quite earns it. Velvet Undercover is fun, but it's not adding anything new. It follows a pretty typical spy formula and does everything tolerably well. This one might be better for reviewers newer to historical fiction or espionage novels because of that.

This is, however, one of the rare instances where I would have liked the book more without the romance. For one thing, I think it's way too convenient, and, for another, there's not nearly enough build up of the relationship, especially given the circumstances.

If you're looking for something fun and fast-paced, Velvet Undercover might fit the bill. I'm very glad I read it when I did, but I don't think this is one that will stick in my memory.

Debby says

2.5 stars

Historical fiction is the genre that I've been trying to delve into much more this year. This paired with a fondness for (at least the idea of) spy thrillers, as soon as I heard about *Velvet Undercover*, I was excited. A teenage spy sent into Germany from the UK during World War I? Color me intrigued. This book was entertaining... but not exactly mindblowing.

I'll start with my biggest point of critique and the thing that kept this book from ever really engaging me fully: **the writing**. I have this thing with historical fiction - especially those set in Britain or with British characters. I really need the writing to feel authentic and engrossing. If you're in Britain, you should at least attempt to present British-sounding dialogue and terminology. You should not, like this book, talk about a dinner of stew and biscuits - when biscuits in Britain means cookies. *facepalm* Overall the writing was so Americanized and watered down for its target audience. That's not to say it was bad, but it just left me wanting more. And with settings in London and Berlin, I really want a sense of atmosphere to where I can picture the places, the people, and the mannerisms in my mind, but this book never quite got there.

The plot, luckily, kept me going. Samantha Donaldson gets recruited by MI5 due to her having lived in Berlin as a child, to dive into the field and save an undercover agent who may very well be compromised. She's been trained at a special school and has a knack for code breaking, so she's glad to be able to put those skills to good use. However, she doesn't go completely voluntarily. She's blackmailed into it, being promised information about her father who went missing during a diplomatic mission.

As far as mysteries go, *Velvet Undercover* **does a lot of things right**. You're pointed in one direction, Samantha is gradually decrypting clues as she goes along, and before long there are some murders and plot twists that convince you to keep reading. It really is interesting and compulsively readable in that sense. And as the story, for a large part, takes place in the royal palace in Berlin, it was cool to see an image of how one of the enemy countries was governed. Though the book doesn't delve into it too much, you do get a sense of the political maneuvering during the time period (and the foreshadowing about the consequences for the country and the world in the coming decades).

But, yet in other things, **this book is a bit simplistic and juvenile**. And not in the sense that this is a fun, rompy spy novel - it's completely serious - but **Samantha can be pretty dumb**. She arrives in Berlin knowing that there are two suspects that could be Velvet. She focuses only on that and gets annoyed when it's been like a week and she's not sure who it is yet. Seriously, after like a week, she plans to just *ask* one of the two if they're Velvet. And I'm supposed to believe she's a top notch spy with a promising future? Her sleuthing was pretty simple, and she jumped to conclusions way too quickly. I kind of expected that she would first spend some time (months, pretty much) adjusting to her surroundings and gaining the trust of the people, doing some sneaky and intelligent poking around here and there, but... no. Not really.

That's not to mention that the plot twist that should shock you was about the most obvious you might expect from such a spy novel, and that Velvet ended up being exactly who I thought it was - from the first mention of that character on the page. I still kind of enjoyed figuring out how the pieces fit together, and the story had a pretty solid construction, but **it just didn't wow me**. At all.

I guess it's all about managing expectations. *Velvet Undercover* is a story you read for the plot and setting, not the characters or the romance (which isn't a big deal - very much a side story - but also gave me pretty much zero feels). The story is solid and mildly addictive to read. And yet, at the same time, you shouldn't expect serious sleuthing, intriguing puzzles, or shocking plot twists. I hate to say it, but remember the 'teenage' in the 'teenage spy novel' label.

Summing Up:

Though I mostly enjoyed this book for its unusual setting and intriguing premise, *Velvet Undercover* never really wowed me. Samantha is pretty freaking dumb for a supposedly brilliant teenage spy, and I called the plot twists from a mile away. Above all, though, I really wish the writing had impressed me more. Writing style is more than half the battle in historical fiction with me, and Brown's was so average and bland that I'm doubtful I want to try another one of her novels. But we'll see about that at a later date.

GIF it to me straight!

Recommended To:

I... don't really know.

**An electronic review copy was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the contents of the review.*

KL (Cat) says

Possibly the only teenage-girl spy novel I've ever truly enjoyed, and I've read lots of this particular genre in hopes of finding a good gem. This is it!

Samantha is *realistic*, which I appreciate very much in a protagonist; she is a girl that is clever and talented and knows of the weight of what she is doing. Although she tries her hardest to be brave, some times (given the tenacious circumstances thrown at her) little slip-ups happen, but like any good spy she recovers quickly and keeps a calm head. More importantly, given the romantic inclinations she has for Maxwell (a high ranking palace guard) and him for her, Samantha often reminds herself that her work is much more important, and generally refuses to preoccupy her time thinking about him.

The existence of an all-women elite spy group is very interesting, and rather plausible, much like other "things" that occur in the novel. The plot-twists were unexpected and brilliant (although looking back, I appreciate the foreshadowing), the main players all interesting in their account, plus a nice and sweet romance that doesn't overwhelm the stakes at hand. The world building too was well done and I could see myself in Berlin, where everyone in the city was holding their breath, tense and waiting for *something* to happen.

So all in all, 4 stars— one knocked off because of Miss Tickford; you'll know what I mean ;)

Fafa's Book Corner says

Fafa's Book Corner (Wordpress)

Fafa's Book Corner (Blogger)

DNF

I think the only spy novels that I can enjoy are those written by Ally Carter. When I first heard about this book I was excited. I love reading spy novels and thought that this would be enjoyable. I was wrong.

The book starts off with explaining the readers that Sam is at a competition of sorts. Sam is a Girl Guide a group under MI5 in which she and a few other girls deliver messages. At the start of the book Sam and the other girls are in competition to see who will be going home with the Markel Cup. The competition consists of a few different tests.

Life at home isn't so great. Her father disappeared on a mission and since then her mother and her have remained hopeful that he will return. She really wants to win the Markel Cup because she feels like she would make him proud.

She does not win and goes to the bathroom to cry. Her cousin Rose comes in to cheer her up. When the two leave the bathroom they run into Captain Parker who reveals he would like to speak with her.

The next day she goes to the Girl Guides and is she told by her boss that the Captain wishes to see Sam. The Captain tells Sam that he was impressed by how she was able to translate a French poem into German. Due to this he offers her a chance to work with La Dame Blanche. After some thinking she declines. The Captain tells her that if she takes the job then he will personally look into her fathers disappearance. She was basically blackmailed into agreeing.

This would have been way better had I known earlier that this is supposed to be a lighthearted spy novel. The writing style read as such. I found that Sam's character was a bit of a snob and noisy. Now of course I have read about characters as such and enjoyed those books for example are Rebel Belle. But in this book the writing style really didn't work. It came off silly like Ruby Red.

Overall this was not an enjoyable read. I would recommend it to those who are looking for a lighthearted spy novel.

Lekeisha The Booknerd says

Originally posted [HERE](#)

While this story wasn't as thrilling as I would have liked it to be, I still loved the mystery and deception of it all. Sam is a very sharp protagonist, which suited the plot. However, even when she was at her best, she still had this doubt within her mind about whatever situation she found herself in. I understand that she was thrust into it without notice, but one can't be doubtful in life or death situations. Especially if you are in a country illegally, could be captured- tortured- killed for what you may or may not know, or you could just be charged with espionage and rot away in a prison camp. No time for screw-ups.

A desperate girl, eager to find out what happened to her father. An intelligence organization, desperate to retrieve a valuable asset from behind enemy lines. The problem? No one knows what Velvet looks like. Some have tried and failed (as in gotten killed) at this mission. So what makes Sam the next in line for being recruited into La Dame Blanche? Her ability to decipher codes, her multilingual skills, and the fact that they knew how to get her to agree. Mentioning her father is the equivalent of dangling a raw steak in front of a lion. A low blow, but it worked. Sam is very aware of things. Her father has been preparing her for this all along. Of course she agrees, of course she wants to make her father proud – especially if he's still alive. The only thing that eats away at her, is leaving her mother. The woman is barely holding up since the disappearance of her husband.

So, the story arced like I expect most spy mysteries would go. Sam leaves her home under super secret orders. She is then trained in the art of spying, deciphering codes, self defense, weapon firing, etc... She is smuggled into Germany and is given her assignment. Only thing is, chance will always have a say in how things play out. Sam wasn't expecting to fall for the handsome German guard. However, she didn't let her guard down and always remembered her duty. Sam wasn't stupid. The girl knew that there was more at stake than a mere rescue mission. And just what does her handler have to hide? The ending was a nice wrap, but I'm wondering if this will be a series of books about La Dame Blanche.

If you love stories of WWI, espionage and intelligence, then this would make a good book to read. It's not heavy on the thrills, but this is YA after all. Definitely recommend.

