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LoveReading Reader reviews of **An Unlikely Agent** by Jane Menczer

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Pauline Braisher

*I've read a lot of very good books over the years and this is one of the best of them. Set in early 20th Century London, it tells the story of Margaret Trant, a young lady from a good home whose family have fallen on hard times due to tragic circumstances. When Margaret is offered a job at the mysterious Bureau 8, her life changes forever. Whilst it's a very classy "whodunnit and why", it's also the story of Margaret's struggle to come to terms with her past and hope for a better future, as well as that of a changing society and attitudes. **The reader is hooked from the first page and the plot is excellent, with plenty of twists and turns.** The*

narrative is paced just right with a good balance between the descriptive passages necessary to set the scene and the need to move the story on and keep the reader enthralled. The characters are believable and the reader cares what happens to them, which is always the hallmark of a good story. I will definitely read any further books by this author and really hope that this is the first in a series featuring Margaret and her colleagues in Bureau 8.

Alfred Nobile

This was a novel that conjured up the atmosphere of Edwardian London beautifully. Margaret Trant lives with her mother in a boarding house in St. John's Wood and works as a secretary. Margaret loses her employment when the business she works for relocates. A chance meeting with a stranger, who hands her a newspaper sees Margaret joining the mysterious Bureau 8. This is

*an intelligence agency whose main purpose is to hunt down a band of anarchists called The Scorpions. **This was my first foray into historical fiction and this book was populated with a vast cast of characters. I found myself enjoying the story and the escapades of the characters immensely.** The quality of the writing was really good, the atmosphere of Edwardian London was so tangible you felt you were breathing it and imagine yourself in gas lit streets with horse drawn trams etc. I also felt the ending of the book left room for a sequel. If so I would be interested in reading it.*

Thanks to Lovereading for the ARC. I feel anyone picking up this book will enjoy it.

Bev Farningham

One woman stands between London and anarchy.

Set in 1905, Margaret lives with her mother in a dreary boarding house and works as a secretary. Then the business is moving away from the area and as she cannot relocate, she hands in her notice.

Whilst searching for a new job, unsuccessfully, a newspaper is thrust into her hand and when she opens it she finds a job advertisement that appeals to her.

So begins her adventure with a spy agency, beginning as a secretary and then being introduced into the actual mechanics.

They are trying to track down a group known as The Scorpions, present leader unknown, who are intent on bringing anarchy to the world. Can they infiltrate this group and stop them before it is too late?

Fraught with danger, the staff have their own agendas plus suspicion is rife that there is actually a traitor within their ranks.

Margaret has a love for detective fiction what was her father's link, instilled by her dead father, and whole-heartedly joins them, never sure of the outcome and who is really who.

A very well written novel with a great mix of characters that seem to jump off the pages at you.

Enjoy!

Phyllippa Smithson

Wonderfully atmospheric story set in 1905 London with a most

intriguing plot involving a mid-20 year old woman, an intelligence agency and family strife.

The Unlikely Agent is the somewhat naïve, Margaret Trant whose life has taken a turn for the worse since her Father died. She is left dealing with the frustrations of a demanding mother who expects Margaret to be at her beck and call. A need to maintain employment at a time when women in the workplace meant, at best, a secretarial and non-stimulating role. And being forced to live with her Mother in a dreary boarding house run by an equally dreary Housekeeper.

But when forced to leave the employment of her departed Father's friend due to his relocation, Margaret finds employment with what turns out to be an intelligence agency who are working to avoid the resurrection of politically motivated and murderous anarchists.

As it turns out she proves to her employer that she has a natural inkling for the role of Secret Agent and with this moves from secretary to becoming more and more directly involved in the investigation. What she thought to be a team of colleagues united in the cause are in fact somewhat disconnected with the implication of a traitor within the ranks. And what she read in her fictional detective's story is very different from the reality of an intelligence agent. And why are some of her colleagues very aware of how her Father spent his final months?

Fore sure there has to be a sequel given the dramatic ending?

Sarah Webb

A very entertaining spy story.

Margaret is the unlikely agent of the title. It's 1905 and in London, Margaret and her mother are struggling financially after the death of her father. On a tram home from work one day, a stranger gives her a newspaper with a job advert in it. Margaret gets the job, on the face of it as a secretary, and only then does she discover what the job really entails: working for a branch of the intelligence services. As she gets drawn more and more into her "secretarial work", she finds that she's linked closely to one of their cases.

*It's a very entertaining story by this first-time author. The characters are well-drawn and Margaret develops nicely during the story. The plot has more twists than something with a lot of twists in it (as someone once nearly said). It's a **romp of a story and the nearly 400 pages flew by. I'll definitely look***

out for future books from Jane Menczer.

Alison Burns

'An Unlikely Agent' is Jane Menczer's first novel. Set in London in 1905, it is the story of Margaret Trant and how she finds herself working for the mysterious Bureau 8.

This is not a book I would have picked up in a bookshop, but I loved it. I found Margaret a delightful character. Her transformation from her staid life as a spinster living with her frail mother, to an agent working undercover to unmask The Scorpions is thoroughly enjoyable.

*Menczer's style is easy to read and draws the reader in at every step of the way. Who is the mysterious Mr Smith, who can Margaret trust, what is the truth in her own family history? **From the opening pages to the drama of the final ones, I was hooked.** The book's ending suggests that there will be further episodes in the life of Margaret Trant, I hope that will be the case.*

Laura Rowland

A captivating and progressive story about the adventures of a young woman and her desperation to find adventure and the all-important answers which have surrounded her family life.

'The Unlikely Agent' is a book centred on a young woman's introduction to the world of espionage within the early 20th century. This story sucks you into the life of a woman named Margaret Trant, enabling you to become invested very quickly with her welfare and her success to become invaluable within what appears to be a very male dominated world.

This novel is captivating and surprising with the twists and turns as the story develops. I especially loved how descriptive the book was throughout, the author set the scenes beautifully which gave the reader the power to imagine themselves deep within the streets of early Edwardian London.

I am excited to see what the author Jane Menczer has in store next, and if she will continue the tale of a Miss Margaret Trant.

Sue Mooney

Transporting you back to the early 1900's this is cleverly written in

an appreciative way of the era.

Loved it...it's slow pace thoroughly befits the time & setting.

Margaret Trant is very much at the forefront and you cannot help but become absorbed in this wonderful book

You can follow Sue on Twitter: @truckermercedes

Kathryn Whitfield

A perfect mystery story set in 1905 London that I think everyone will love.

*A slow paced detective /spy mystery story set in 1995 London. I really enjoyed this story and thought it was well written. I enjoyed the character development of our main character Margaret Trant, who starts off as a secretary but finds herself as an Agent, which is just the most perfect job for her as she has a love of detective fiction. **The story ends with opportunity for a sequel so I hope for more to come in the future.***

You can follow Kathryn on Twitter: @kathreenieA

Rosie Watch

*I wasn't sure from the introduction just what to expect, but I really enjoyed the read. **The pages came to life from the first chapter and I felt the whole time that I was reading a film script, I could so picture the scenes, the dingy offices, the gloomy bedsit and early 20th century London.** One just needed the smoke machine and the dimmed gas lighting.*

Margaret was such an interesting character, a real mixture of a spinster stuck in the role of carer, mixed with an evolving spy, was a wonderful contrast. I liked too the very subtle undercurrent of her blossoming friendship with MacIntyre. In true detective, spy thriller fashion, the reader was led from hero to villain, never quite knowing who to believe. The ever-changing story lines and aliases kept up the pace of the story making it move swiftly along. In the first chapter I was convinced MacIntyre was killed, but by the final chapter and all the twists along the way, with characters being recreated or not killed off as we were led to believe, I am not so sure he was.

I would say the last few pages hinted at a sequel!!

Edel Waugh

*The story is set in 1905 and centres around a Mrs Trent. Margaret Trent lives in a boarding house in London with her mother and lives a very normal if somewhat dull and predictive life until one day she gets the opportunity to change all that . I love a story where a normal person for whatever reason has their life changed suddenly, goes on to do extraordinary things and experiences the most unexpected changes to their future. Mrs Trent is likeable and capable of much, her previous job did not bring out the most of her talents but this new job is an eye opener. Mixing with colourful people and learning new skills, this is a whole new world for Margaret which is great fun to read about. **The fast paced plot and red herrings keeps you from wanting to put it down so it was definitely a one sitting read for me. Loved it!***