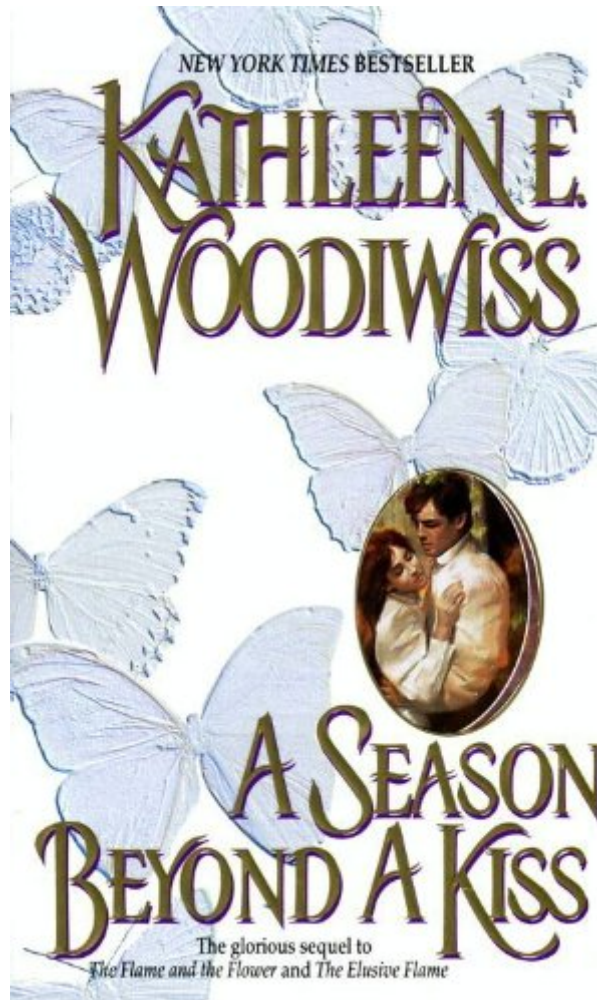




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A Season Beyond A Kiss (Birmingham Book 2)



Synopsis

Her marriage to dashing American shipping magnate Jeff Birmingham signals the beginning of a wonderful new life for Raelynn Barrett. In the loving shelter of her husband's embrace, the pain of loss is diminished, as is her anger over her family's tragic and undeserved disgrace. But try as she might, Raelynn cannot close her ears to the cruel accusations and whispered rumors about her new spouse that buzz around her head like bees. And she cannot deny what her own eyes see, though the images before her seem to brand her darling Jeff as the worst sort of criminal, forcing her to flee his desire and his love. Yet Jeff knows he is innocent--though he is unaware of the conspiracy that has shrouded his marriage in secrets and now imperils it with lies. And he will oppose the treachery with every fiber of his being in order to preserve his threatened happiness--to win back the trust of the woman he cherishes...and secure his place forever in his beloved Raelynn's heart.

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Customer Reviews

For those of you like myself who didn't know any better, this book is a continuation of an earlier short story. Not having read that piece, I can only review this novel on its own merits and leave it to others to review it as a sequel. While the author goes to great lengths to fill in the missing details for

her readers, the numerous recountings slow the book's opening chapters and detract from the story as a whole. A short prologue might have been a wiser choice to provide background information and set the stage for the current events. It might also have lent believability to the circumstances of Jeff and Raelynn's marriage. As presented, Jeff's proposal within an hour of meeting Raelynn and their intimacy so soon after are far-fetched. Since Woodiwiss has already introduced her characters elsewhere, that may explain why she fails to develop her main characters, especially Raelynn, in this novel. Our heroine comes across as a rash, foolish girl besotted with her husband and sex. She lacks depth or personality, unlike some of the colorful supporting characters. Jeff fares better, especially when the author uses actions to describe him rather than lengthy expositions on his traits, but I never felt as solid an understanding of him as I did Brandon in "The Flame and the Flower." The story is slow to unfold and lacks direction until a third of the way through. After that, the mystery and plot twists that readers expect and enjoy from Woodiwiss emerge, leading to the unmasking of the villain and final showdown. Unfortunately and strangely, the author robs her own book of some suspense by giving away her villain early. I was disappointed with "A Season Beyond a Kiss." The protagonists failed to hold my interest, even though Jeff was one of my favorite characters in "The Flame and the Flower," the plot took too long to develop, and the book relied on too much material from the prior short story to stand well on its own. The author's recent offerings have failed to match the richly textured stories and well developed characters of her early works. When her next book comes out, I may choose to check it out from the library rather than buy it.

Actually enjoyed the first and third novels in the series better than the above mentioned title but proved to be an entertaining read. Chronological order best for maximum enjoyment.

First, I have to say that Kathleen Woodiwiss was not only the "queen of romance" who started it all, but she was a true professional and her writing shows it. Having said that, while I enjoyed this romance, it's not in the 5 star category that some of her others are or even the first in the Birmingham series (The Flame and the Flower). This second one also suffers from being a follow on to two short stories. The entire Birmingham series is: The Flame and the Flower, 1972 (a novel) "The Kiss" in THREE WEDDINGS AND A KISS, 1995 (short story; with Catherine Anderson, Loretta Chase, Lisa Kleypas) "Beyond the Kiss" in MARRIED AT MIDNIGHT, 1996 (short story; with Jo Beverley, Tanya Anne Crosby, Samantha James) A Season Beyond a Kiss, 2000 (a novel) The Elusive Flame, 1998 (a novel) A Season Beyond a Kiss completes the story of Brandon's brother, Jeff Birmingham (a completely drool worthy hero) and his love, Raelynn, the daughter of an English

earl who died in prison after being falsely accused of treason. Though written after *The Elusive Flame*, it precedes it in time and should be read first. *A Season Beyond a Kiss* is set in early 19th century Charleston and tells the story of a couple who when they wed do not know each other well and have yet to build trust. Jeff is in his early 30s but Raelynn is only 19. Still, they love each other and that, together with their extremely good chemistry, sustains them during some dark days. There are plots galore against them and there is a side romance of note that I enjoyed. I did not read the two short stories, "the Kiss" and "Beyond the Kiss," that preceded this novel, but I could still follow the story. I am now reading the last in the series, *The Elusive Flame*, the story of Beau Birmingham, Brandon's son, and I'm really enjoying it. I have also read several of Woodiwiss' single novels and reviewed them, many received 5 stars. Among my favorites are *Shanna* and *The Wolf and the Dove*. So don't give up...she is so worth the read!

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