



Rakes And Radishes

Susanna Ives

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When Henrietta Watson learns that the man she loves plans to marry London's most beautiful and fashionable debutante, she plots to win him back. She'll give him some competition by transforming her boring bumpkin neighbor, the Earl of Kesseley, into a rakish gothic hero worthy of this Season's Diamond.

After years of unrequited love for Henrietta, Kesseley is resigned to go along with her plan and woo himself a willing bride. But once in London, everything changes. Kesseley—long more concerned with his land than his title—discovers that he's interested in sowing wild oats as well as radishes. And Henrietta realizes that gothic heroes don't make ideal husbands. Despite an explosive kiss that opens her eyes to the love that's been in front of her all along, Henrietta must face the possibility that Kesseley is no longer looking to marry at all...

91,000 words

Rakes And Radishes Details

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From Reader Review Rakes And Radishes for online ebook

Laura says

The premise of this book reminded me of Jane Austen's Emma, only much funnier and much better written, with just enough details to paint the world the characters inhabit and without being too heavy with information you don't want. It was at times hilarious and light hearted and at times intense, especially when Kesseley struggles with the demons of his childhood, living through the nightmare that his father left behind. I enjoyed the depths of these characters and how they energized each other in flawed but charming ways. I also enjoyed reading about how society and parties and beautiful people, etc. really haven't changed much through time. I loved the read. I read it in one day and that's the highest compliment I can give as I am a slow and fussy reader. Great stuff.

AR Thor says

When I started reading this book I was expecting a light and funny regency romance but BAM. . . This book is so full of drama and a little on the dark side.

I loved the hero and the heroin. There are moments where they are very frustrating. But I LOVED it. All in all this is a very good book!

Charleigh says

Not enough radishes

April says

RAKES AND RADISHES by Susanna Ives is a wonderful historical Regency romance set in 1819 England. It is well written with details, depths, twists and turns. It has astronomy, romance, lost love, agriculture, secrets, betrayal, finding true love, sowing wild oats, finding the truth about love and lost, and requiting lost love. The characters are strong, determined, believable and will tug at your heart strings. The hero, Kesseley, is strong, handsome, a country bumpkin, an earl, loves agriculture, seen his parents harsh marriage, his father is brutal to his mother, would rather be in his country estate than in London, knows he needs to find a wife but he is in love with his neighbor and has been since they where children, Henrietta. The heroine, Henrietta, is beautiful, strong, misguided, thinks herself in love with her cousin, Edward, who is a poet, doesn't notice Kesseley, her neighbor. To her he is a good friend and confidante. She learns of Edward's betrothal, for she believed he loved her and intended to marry her and take her away from the country to London. She enlists, Kesseley, to clean himself up, become a true rake and take Edward's betrothed away from him. After Kesseley, his mother, and Henrietta go to London for the season, she soon learns there is more to Kesseley than meets the eye, for he cleans up handsomely. She realizes she is actually in love with Kesseley, but to late, he decides his heart can no longer take her repeatedly refusal of his affection. We have country bumpkin meets London society. What happens is truly an adventure in love and finding your true love. I would recommend this book especially if you enjoy some sweet sensuality, adventure, love, wisdom, deception and coming to terms with your past and future. This book was received for review from Net Galley and details

can be found at Carina Press and My Book Addiction And More.

Tina Whittle says

I'm not a romance reader — I have nothing against romance itself, but as a genre, it's not one of my favorites. is the first romance I've enjoyed since Kathleen Woodiwiss's . Granted, Rakes and Radishes isn't a typical romance, not by a longshot. But it's an ultimately satisfying, intellectually surprising, dark-around-the-edges read for anyone bored with the usual will-they-won't-they? story.

Plus, if you're a fan of masculine pulchritude, Lord Kesseley is one of the sexiest males to ever make an appearance between the covers. He's not some bad boy being redeemed by the love of a good woman — he begins the novel as a truly decent human being, a gentleman farmer who loves discussing turnip yield and who usually has a manure stain somewhere on his breeches. Sweet, virile, and baffled — that's Kesseley. His depths are deep indeed, and dangerous — it is to Ive's credit that she doesn't back away from this aspect, which some readers may find disconcerting. But then, in reality, rakes weren't very nice men (much like pirates, you know, much more glamorous as an idea than a reality).

The heroine isn't typical either; readers desperate for someone they can identify with will be disappointed — at first. She's vain and immature and more impressed by appearance than reality. Again, Ives doesn't pull any punches — we see these aspects even as we see her intelligence, her beauty, and her deep affection for Kesseley, even if it's somewhat naive at first. But this is a realistic relationship for protagonists who were childhood friends — the transition from innocent buddies to fully sexualized sweethearts is not an easy one (and back then, there weren't therapists on every corner to help people navigate such).

So even if I'm not yet a fan of the overall genre, I am a huge fan of this book. It's literate, profound, funny and compelling, even if it probably should be shelved over in historical fiction.

Zoobaaruba says

Good God! All of the characters (the secondary one's too) were annoying, the story moved along at a snail's pace, the interactions between the hero and heroine were stilted and unnatural. They're "best friends" with no apparent adult supervision throughout their friendship and yet they're about as familiar with each other as strangers. I just can't explain how much I disliked this book, might as well be titled "A Tale of Selfish Idiots and Whiney Fools". All the characters took turns either pining after someone, or being a reluctant pinee (seriously, Henrietta/Kesseley, Kesseley's mom/Lord Damien, Sara/Edward/Lady whatsherface...e.v.e.r.y.o.n.e.). They also all realized that they didn't know who they wanted, trading partners like pokemon cards.

This opinion was formed completely disregarding the fact that I had to read the entire novel in a state of suspended disbelief, seeing as nothing that happened in the novel could possibly have happened in real life. No young, proper girl's parent's are going to let her romp around with a young man with no supervision all the time, no earl's parent's would let him spend all of his time with people of no social standing, no proper unmarried young woman would be allowed into a gaming hell, no Duke would beg a random gentleman he's only just met to marry his beautiful daughter who has no lack of suitors, etc. I could go on but won't, as it would be a waste of time...

OLT says

(3.5 stars) This is a well written and slightly different HR. The H and h have grown up together, as neighbors in the countryside outside London, and are very close friends. The H is in love with the h but she, unfortunately, loves her cousin, a man so unworthy of her love that you wonder about her I.Q., or, at the very least, her E.Q.

H is a wonderful, kind, thoughtful, caring earl. He is also careless about his looks and dress, although he himself is a fine specimen of a man. When h's cousin goes off to London and society columns link him with the daughter of a duke, H kindly takes h to London as his mother's companion. But that's not enough for h. She want H to turn himself into a well-dressed, handsome rake and seduce the duke's daughter so she can have her cousin back.

Anyway, what starts out funny takes a turn for the serious and even sad at about halfway in. It's a "be careful what you wish for" and a "you don't know what you've got until you lose it" story. Yes, there's the requisite HEA but it's a tough road to getting there.

Caz says

4.5 stars

This, Susanna Ives' début novel was published by Carina in 2010, and is one of the most unusual historical romances I've read. In fact, it sometimes doesn't feel like a romance at all; what it actually is is the story of a conflicted young man who has struggled all his life not to allow himself to be defined by his past, and who faces some very difficult – and perhaps even insurmountable – challenges in his attempt to find his true self.

That said, there is a love story running throughout the book, and it's definitely a romance in the sense that there is eventually a happy resolution for the central couple. But it doesn't come easily and both hero and heroine have to go through the wringer in order to get there, which makes for some uncomfortable reading. Both characters act in ways which could render them irredeemably unlikeable, but fortunately, Ms Ives is a strong enough writer to be able to turn that around in a believable manner and to show that both principals have grown as a result of their experiences. They aren't ready to be together at the beginning of the story, but they come through all the trials, tribulations and heartbreak that ensues as more enlightened and self-aware people who are ready to make a life together.

The author has very successfully turned one of the most commonly-used tropes in the genre upside-down and inside-out. The story of the hardened rake who eventually settles down with the love of his life to become a doting husband and responsible member of the community is reversed, as the hero - the Earl of Kesseley - travels in the opposite direction. He begins the book as a loveable and kindly gentleman farmer – and later plunges into a life of dissipation when his anger and frustration at both himself and the heroine become too much for him to bear.

In fact, **Rakes and Radishes** could easily have been subtitled *Be Careful What You Wish For*, as most of the conflict in the story stems from the heroine's desire to turn her oldest friend into a fashionable man-about-town – and all because of something *she* wants rather than for his own benefit.

Thomas, the Earl of Kesseley has been in love with Henrietta Watson for as long as he can remember. They more or less grew up together, and he would frequently take refuge at the Watson's home to get away from

the miserable atmosphere at his own. His father was a hardened libertine who abused his mother and the young Thomas grew up seeing things no child should ever have to see. Even before he inherited his title, Kesseley was determined never to become a man like his father, and, at the age of twenty-five, he has succeeded. He has devoted his life to the management of his land and estates, and has finally managed to reverse the damage done by his father's neglect.

Henrietta knows how Kesseley feels about her, but although he's her dearest friend and has always been there for her, she isn't interested in him romantically. In fact, she imagines for herself a glamorous London life at the side of her cousin Edward, a handsome poet. Edward has recently travelled to London in order to further his literary ambitions and believing herself in love, Henrietta is on tenterhooks awaiting a letter from him. He has been in London for six weeks, and hasn't written once – and when Henrietta reads of his betrothal to the beautiful Lady Sara, she is in despair. She's fully aware of what she's doing when she uses Kesseley as a shoulder to cry on – but she can't help herself. She is so completely self-obsessed that she doesn't even try not to hurt him, even as she recognises what she's doing and feels bad about it. But all she cares about is winning Edward back from Lady Sara, and suggests to Kesseley that he should make Lady Sara fall in love with *him* instead and steal her from Edward! Kesseley is aghast at such an idea – but Henrietta is insistent. He's so much more handsome than Edward anyway, and if he just cut his hair and dressed like an earl instead of a farm-hand, he'd have the debutantes swooning at his feet!

She manoeuvres him into taking her to London as his mother's companion – something about which Lady Kesseley is not at all happy, not liking the way Henrietta takes her son for granted. But Henrietta is too focused on her goal of getting Edward back to care very much about that and blithely continues to insist that if Kesseley would just smarten himself up, and perhaps act like the darkly brooding Lord Blackraven, the hero of her favourite novel, that perhaps he'll have a better chance of finding himself a wife, regardless of whether he helps Henrietta with Edward or not.

By this point, Kesseley is disgusted with Henrietta but even more disgusted and angry with himself for the way he lets her walk all over him. Having suffered humiliation at various social events, he eventually snaps. He's had enough of Henrietta's machinations and needs to get her out from under his skin. In doing so, he does all the things she's been urging him to – going to a good tailor, getting himself a decent valet and a good haircut – and even emulating the ennui and mystery embodied by the fictional Lord Blackraven. Kesseley isn't stupid – he realises that what attracts young women to this romantic hero in droves is the air of mystery he exudes – and decides that that's the way to play the game.

No one is more stunned than Henrietta at Kesseley's transformation; she's always thought him handsome but now he's devastatingly so – and he immediately sets about wooing Lady Sara and every other young woman in sight. But this isn't Kesseley – overnight he's become a stranger to Henrietta, and the truth hits her like a ton of bricks. This isn't the man he should be – and it certainly isn't the man she now realises she loves.

Sometimes this is a hard book to read. Henrietta is blinkered and selfish and is an easy heroine to dislike at the start of the book. Granted, that's the way the reader is supposed to respond to her, and Ms Ives has done a good job in showing her to be an immature young woman who can't tell the difference between infatuation and love. The reader can see quite clearly that what Henrietta feels for Kesseley is more than friendship. She's deeply attracted to him (there's a point at which she finds herself thinking about him in the bath – all wet, naked, bulging muscle!) and has responded enthusiastically to the odd kiss they've shared. But her familiarity and easy relationship with him blinds her to the true nature of her feelings for him – and when she does realise them, it's too late.

Kesseley begins the book as a very sympathetic character, even though one can't help but agree with his own assessment of his relationship with Henrietta – namely that he lets her take him for granted and is spineless for doing so. The author does an excellent job of showing and building his frustrations and conveying his desperation to stop himself from enduring further hurt at her hands. She then proceeds to turn him into a rake

of the first order – and one of the things I appreciated about that section of the book as a whole is that Kesseley really *does* become a rake. There's a line of Henrietta's where she admits *she'd had no idea what being a rake truly meant*, having only a fictional character to go by – which is a surely a comment on the genre as a whole. There are so many books around with the words “rake”, “rogue”, “devil”, or “wicked” in the title in which the hero is actually no such thing. So while it's perhaps not his most shining hour, it's important to the story that Kesseley really does plumb the depths – drinking, gambling, whoring, even attempting to drunkenly seduce a friend's wife – as I think he needs to go there, to the edge of self-destruction, in order to be able to appreciate the honesty and openness of the life he'd led before. And I think Henrietta needs to see him like that in order to realise the depth of the damage her thoughtlessness has wrought – how asking Kesseley to act the part of a rake, *she'd opened up all the old wounds inflicted on him by his father*.

Rakes and Radishes is a very strong début novel, and kudos to Ms Ives for daring to challenge and upend some of the most beloved tropes in the genre. The writing has a few rough edges to it here and there, and there is the usual (and unfortunate) smattering of Americanisms, but the author's handling of difficult subject matter and the emotional complexity of the story more than make up for those deficiencies.

Carol *Young at Heart Oldie* says

Once in a while, I read a book that's so emotive that I find myself thinking about it long after I have put it down and *Rakes and Radishes*, with its theme of love and forgiveness, is such a book. I am sure opinions about this book will vary greatly; some readers will love it and others will hate it. I am definitely one of those readers who love it. I found it refreshingly different probably because it doesn't conform to the usual norms of the Historical Romance genre.

Thomas, Earl of Kesseley, is more likely to be found digging in the fields of his beloved estate in Norfolk than dancing in the ballrooms of London. Although he has been in love with his neighbour, Henrietta Watson, for as long as he can remember, Henrietta does not share his feelings. She is in love with her cousin, Edward, an aspiring poet, and regards Kesseley as a very dear friend only.

Edward has gone to London in the hope of becoming famous and, every day, Henrietta waits for the mail coach, hoping for a letter from him but none arrives. One day, she is mortified to see a picture in the newspaper of Edward with the beautiful Lady Sara, daughter of the Duke of Houghton, with an article referring to a foiled attempt to run away to Gretna Green.

Hoping to put Henrietta out of his thoughts, Kesseley decides to go to London in search of a wife. However, Henrietta proposes to accompany him, perceiving it as an opportunity to try and win Edward back. She convinces Kesseley that he could be very handsome and dashing if only he adopted the correct dress and demeanour. He could then easily lure Lady Sara away from Edward.

However, Henrietta's hopes are shattered when Edward admits that he has never loved her. Forced to re-examine her feelings for Kesseley, Henrietta now realises that she loves him. Kesseley, however, now relishing his new rakish life of drinking and debauchery, will no longer be "*a fumbling, cabbage-headed sap*" for her. He has become cold and unapproachable.

Henrietta finally realises that her ill-conceived plans have had unforeseen consequences and she may have destroyed all chances of a future with Kesseley.

I absolutely adore books that engage my emotions and this is one of the reasons why I enjoyed 'Rakes and Radishes' so much. I was immediately drawn into the story and felt a real connection to the characters as a result of Ms Ives' excellent writing.

I must admit that my first impressions of Henrietta were not very complimentary, emotionally immature and callous. She has built up a fantasy of how she wants her life to be, marriage and the excitement of London away from her boring existence in Norfolk. Edward, her cousin, is the romantic figure she believes will fulfil that fantasy and, in her naivety, she imagines herself in love with him.

I just hated the way she callously used Kesseley at every opportunity without any regard for his feelings so much so that I couldn't imagine ever liking Henrietta. However, following Edward's admission that he has never loved her, I saw Henrietta begin to gain in maturity. Her realisation that she loves Kesseley may seem rather sudden but I think Henrietta has always been attracted to him but was so absorbed in her fantasies that she never stopped to analyse her feelings for him. I see her attraction to Kesseley revealed in the scene where, having arrived in London, Kesseley decides to take a bath and Henrietta can't help imagining:

'The image of the naked Kesseley with water running down his wet sinewy arms flashed in her head.'

Hardly the imaginings of a friend!

The fact that I actually felt sympathy for Henrietta, when she declares her love and Kesseley treats her with such derision, owes much to Ms Ives' ability to make me care about the characters. Henrietta's subsequent actions reveal how much she has changed from the selfish person she once was. She saves Kesseley's mother from a very difficult situation and her concern for Kesseley and the way he seems bent on destroying himself is sincere.

I love Kesseley because he is my favourite type of hero, a truly tormented one. This is not apparent when we first meet him dressed in his '*muddy doeskins and worn green coat*', a gentleman farmer who is happy spending his time on his estate in Norfolk. However, we soon learn that his life has not always been so idyllic and that his father was abusive to both himself and his mother. During this time, Henrietta represented his hope and I can well understand why he fell in love with her: '*You taught me to dream when I was afraid of the world.*'

I think his love, although unrequited, keeps him from succumbing to his fears that he is destined to be just like his father. It is a sort of lifeline for him, but once he rejects Henrietta's love and fully embraces a life of excess and debauchery, he becomes what he has dreaded, a virtual carbon copy of his father. Ms Ives did a wonderful job of depicting a really unpleasant rakish Kesseley and one who is in real danger of destroying himself. In quite an original plot twist, it is words of wisdom from an unexpected person that makes Kesseley realise that he is not his father and is worthy of Henrietta's love:

'You may be your father's son by birth, but how you live your life is your own choosing.'

I was so pleased to see that Eleanora, Kesseley's mother, find love at last. I really think she deserved some happiness after suffering years of such a terrible marriage. Then she has to watch her son apparently turning out to be just like his father and treating her with such contempt. This scene is particularly heart-rending to read.

I guessed that the mysterious painter/philosopher, Danny Elliott, whom Henrietta meets in the park, would come to play an important role in the story but when his true identity is revealed, it is a total surprise.

I must mention that incorrigible pair, Lady Winslow and Princess Wilhelmina, whose antics I found very amusing and Kesseley's one-armed, colour blind valet, Baggot, who also supplies some funny moments.

If you are looking for a Historical Romance with a difference, then I can definitely recommend 'Rakes and Radishes'. This is Susanna Ives' debut novel and I look forward to reading more of her books.

<http://www.theromancereviews.com/view...>

This review was originally written for The Romance Reviews

Michelle Witte says

Originally posted at Libri Ago

When I started into this book, I was expecting a fun, light read like Jane Austen's Emma. Oh no. I got Wuthering Heights. While Wuthering Heights is a great book, its moody and near-violent overtone doesn't lend itself well to the label of "romance." Indeed, it could be considered the antithesis of romance, with the anger and revenge of the lovers destroying their lives and those around them.

That's why I was somewhat surprised with the dark turn of the novel about a third of the way in. The flap copy doesn't really give an indication of what this story is. By the time I realized where things were going, it was too late for me to stop. I was already hurting for the main characters, and I had to know that things would turn out okay.

It's not a bad book at all; my problem is that I was emotionally unprepared for what I got. Let's just say that I stayed up until 4 am to finish the book because I honestly felt sick to my stomach with what was happening, enough that I couldn't fathom sleeping until I got to a good resolution.

In the end, things worked out, which saved the wall from having my Kindle chucked at it. It also saved the book and the author from landing on my list of I-hate-this-book-so-much-because-it-sucked-all-the-happiness-out-of-me. Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure is the only book to occupy that space so far. I'm really hoping to leave it that way.

To sum up: it's a good book, but it's also a dark and emotional read. Know that before going in, and you'll likely appreciate the story. Just don't expect a light romance novel cause you aren't gonna get it.

Thanks to NetGalley and Carina Press for a review copy of the book.

Gail says

This was a nice read--the heroine has dreamed of leaving her boring little town and living in London. She's in love with Julian, a poet and cousin--and then she reads about his involvement with one of the year's beauties. The hero has a title, but he's mostly a farmer. He's been in love with the heroine for years, but she's already turned him down once. She's devastated when she learns about her beloved Julian, and decides to turn the hero into a gentleman the beauty will fall for, so she'll have the one she wants. But, of course, things never turn out like one wants.

I enjoyed this book, despite wanting to smack the heroine upside the head occasionally. I could understand how she got ideas in her head that were hard to get out. The hero needed a thump or two himself. I did have trouble with the writing--it leaned toward the flowery and often got in my way. I want the writing to be at the

service of the story, and if it tangles me up--which this did--I'm annoyed. But not enough to stop reading. Overall, I liked it.

Caroline The HEA Lover says

*(This was originally posted on **Book Lovers Inc**)*

Rakes & Radishes surprised the hell out of me! With a title like this it could have easily turned cheesy, lucky for me it didn't (ok there IS one allusion to 'her feminine petals' or something like that, which made me roll my eyes). I have to admit that when I saw the title I was reluctant but the cover screamed READ ME, I'm so pretty look at me, look at me! (don't you find it pretty?) So here I was starting a book without really knowing what to expect and BAM...I was hit by its awesomeness. I really loved this book!

From the first page, I knew it would be amazing. The writing is perfect, never did I think 'hey that's not something they would have said at that time!'. Nope, I would even go as far as to say I enjoyed it as much as reading a Lisa Kleypas book (You heard right, ladies and Gentlemen!!). I'm not the ultimate Historical romance reader but I've read my fair share of those and I can say Rakes & Radishes has something more. Something that set it apart from other Historicals.

I loved that the hero, Kesseley is close to his land and his tenants. He is an Earl but he can tell you more about pig breeding than how to dress properly. Kesseley has been in love with his childhood friend for years but she fancies herself in love with another. Henrietta is the daughter of 2 astronomers. She's really good at Mathematics and loves reading sensational gothic novels. She is young, a bit immature and is interested in appearances a bit too much. Henrietta believes herself in love with her cousin Edward and she is devastated when she learns he is 'nearly betrothed' to the daughter of a duke.

Kesseley has decided to find a wife and will go to London for the Season. Henrietta starts plotting to win Edward back. Her plan is to transform the rural Kesseley into the rakish and mysterious gothic novel hero loved by every woman in the country. She wants Kesseley to seduce the daughter of the Duke to have a chance with Edward again. As I said before Henrietta is a bit immature and doesn't really understand the consequences of her demands. She lives in her fantasies and the wake up is brutal.

This book is full of drama! This could have turn farcical but it played out well. I'm not saying I couldn't figure out the plot quite early in the book but it was still a pleasure to see it happen. I loved Kesseley, the real one, he was so awkward in a ball room- I felt for him. I found his transformation a bit easy and radical but it was funny to see Henrietta realize that she'd created a monster (I'm heartless). I will warn you though, not much smexing, no no don't leave yet I didn't say there wasn't any!

I loved that the heroine was good at counting cards and helped her father in his researches. It brought something to the story. She is not the helpless wallflower we're used to. The same goes with the hero, he is very different from the rest of the aristocracy. When we first meet him I thought he was a peasant. Ah!

All in all this is a very good book I would enjoy to reread. It might not be the most original story but it has a little something that set it apart from other historical romances. Susanna Ives is now on my list of authors to follow closely.

I give Rakes & Radishes 5 Bookies.

Catherine says

I received this book as an ARC!

This author took a bold risk with this story. I think that the reaction to it will be very polarized. People will either love it or hate it.

Henrietta spends literally half of the book convinced that she is in love with someone other than the hero. She finally believes she's not in love with her cousin, Edward, and a day later she has an epiphany that she loves Kesseley. I agreed that she loved him, but I wasn't convinced she was *in love* with him.

Henrietta convinces her childhood friend, the Earl of Kesseley, to take her as a companion for his mother when they go to London. Kesseley's mother has finally convinced him to ignore his feelings for Henrietta and start looking for a wife. Henrietta has come up with a plan that she is convinced will lure her beloved, Edward, back from the woman he tried to elope with. Kesseley lets himself be talked into it, which doesn't help Henrietta's opinion of him. She can't help but feel that she would respect him more if he would stop letting himself be used by her.

Here is when the risk starts coming into play. Henrietta is very unlikable for a large chunk of the story. She feels extremely young and selfish. She knows that she hurts Kesseley, and she knows that she uses him, but she just doesn't care. She also has a really bad habit of saying things that crush him and then expects him to comfort her as she sobs about her lost love. She is the kind of girl that is mean and rude but is always baffled when people don't like her. Kesseley's mother for one.

Kesseley starts out as an honest to goodness farmer. He's unfashionable and more than satisfied with living in the village he grew up in. He's confused and hurt by Henrietta's constant scorn toward his satisfaction with his life and his comfort with the village. She longs for London and a dark and mysterious rake like she reads about in her gothic novels. She feels that Kesseley is too much of a country bumpkin to realize what he lacks. She seems so young.

Poor Kesseley had a horrible father. He was witness to things that no son should ever see or hear. He came to regard Henrietta's house as a haven. He grew up feeling that all the things his father prized weren't what mattered in life. Honesty and loyalty and love are what should matter. Who cares how you were dressed or how your hair was cut? The poor man finds out that his opinion is the minority in the ton and grows more and more jaded. Finally, an action of his mother's and more typical harshness from Henrietta push him over the edge.

He says to hell with people and decides to show everyone how like his father he can be. He changes his look, his manner, and his values. He goes to the Courtesan Ball and fights with people and finds his comfort with courtesans. I can see why he snapped, but I think he really couldn't see the forest for the trees. His anger at Henrietta shouldn't make him throw away his money and morals.

Kesseley's mother was a very messed up soul. She had good cause to be, I have to admit that. But she had no right to be so judgmental of her son and he had no right to castigate her for longing for pleasure. Their attitudes toward each other just widened a split that could have been a small thing if handled correctly. His mother won my respect for her dislike of Henrietta and her wish to protect her son, but her atypical behavior toward the end made my sympathy dim. She didn't like Henrietta until Kesseley was mad at her and then she clung as hard as she could.

So, the angst and the circumstances just kept piling to keep Kesseley and Henrietta apart. Up until the last 30 pages I still wasn't sure if they were going to end up together. They seemed to spend no real time together

and what time they did spend together was tempestuous. They didn't even have a relationship. Kesseley had more action with courtesans than with Henrietta.

This story really helped clarify something for me. I always long for the person passed up to move on. Seeing it here made me realize that I really don't want that. Even though Kesseley and Henrietta weren't in a relationship, and it wasn't cheating, I didn't like seeing the hero playing the field. It also left little time for me to believe in their relationship.

This book was compelling, and I read it quickly, but it didn't work for me as a romance. If it was advertised as Kesseley's struggle with self-identification and the story of him losing his way, it would have better results. Then I wouldn't have expected a romance and a *relationship* to be the focus of this story.

Denise says

What I really liked about this book, is that it took a very different path than most of the historical romances I have read. Henrietta and Kesseley have grown up together in the English countryside. He is an Earl who has loved Henrietta always. She thinks she is in love with her cousin Edward. When she finds out that Edward, who has gone to London for the season, has been courting someone else, she enlists Kesseley's help in winning Edward back. You just want Henrietta to open her eyes and see the great love that has been there right under her nose.

Heather says

This was such an unusual historical; the heroine comes across at the beginning as self-absorbed, and can only see her "true love." What she doesn't get is that her "true love" might have been standing in front of her all along. The hero was strong, capable, focused on his family and his lands, and it made me gain such respect for him, but at the same time, he had a softer side that he shows with his relationship with her and his mother. I respected his mother a lot too, for not bowing and forcing Henrietta to recognize her selfishness and act like an adult. The irony is that in giving up her supposed HEA, she finds something even better.
