



Scandalous Virtue

Brenda Hiatt

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What You See

Sheltered and more than a little naive, Lady Nessa Haughton was raised to be a model of English virtue. But beneath the inexperienced young widow's prim yet exquisitely beautiful exterior beats a willful heart longing for a taste of wickedness that would shock her proper sister and the rest of London Society.

Isn't Always

The new Marquis of Foxhaven, dashing Jack Ashcroft, is England's most revered war hero and its most notorious hellion. Though he's inherited his beloved grandfather's title, Jack must reform his rakish ways to gain his fortune. Vowing to earn respectability, he sets out to find a proper wife—a woman above reproach who can redeem his reputation.

What You Get

Irresistibly drawn together, Nessa and Jack each seem to be exactly what the other wants—or so they think. Will their mutual attraction lead to true love, or irreparable ruin for them both?

Scandalous Virtue Details

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Romanticamente Fantasy says

Nello scenario ricco di sfarzo e mondanità dell'epoca Regency, prende vita la storia di Nessa e Jack. Lei, vedova di un anziano nobile, austero ed estremamente vincolato dalle convenzioni sociali, nonché egoista e insensibile tra le lenzuola; lui, ex eroe di guerra, affascinante e seducente libertino. I due si incontrano per caso durante una festa in maschera, occasione decisamente inadatta ad una rispettabile donna dell'alta società che non ha ancora terminato il suo periodo di lutto. Ma Nessa è troppo avida di libertà per rinunciarvi, soprattutto adesso che non deve più subire il controllo e la disapprovazione del marito defunto né del proprio padre, così decide di sfuggire alle convenzioni che l'hanno tenuta legata per la sua intera vita, interpretando per una manciata di ore la cortigiana Monique. Immersa in un turbinio di danze e trasgressione, rimane incantata dal monaco Eligius, che si rivelerà essere Jack Ashcroft, appena diventato marchese di Foxhaven in seguito all'improvvisa dipartita dello zio Luther, precedente detentore del titolo nobiliare. Per godere appieno delle ricchezze e del prestigio del suddetto titolo, il giovane marchese dovrà dimostrare di aver abbandonato del tutto il suo passato e guadagnarsi quella rispettabilità sociale a cui non ha mai ambito e che ha sempre ritenuto un inutile accessorio. E quale potrebbe essere la migliore soluzione ai suoi problemi se non sposare una rispettabile vedova, dall'educazione impeccabile, che non ha mai fatto dubitare della propria integrità morale? Peccato che la vedova in questione si sia molto affezionata all'idea della sua nuova vita da donna indipendente, desiderosa di gustare tutte le opportunità che il suo nuovo status le concede, compreso esercitare sul genere maschile il proprio fascino e l'arguzia della sua mente brillante. Nessa si avvicinerà a Jack spinta dalla curiosità e attratta proprio dal fascino di quel passato dissoluto da cui lui deve riscattarsi, con l'obbligo di costruire agli occhi della bigotta società londinese un nuovo se stesso. In una serie di malintesi, baci appassionati, colpi bassi di ex amanti abbandonate, i due protagonisti costruiranno il loro mondo, donando l'uno all'altra quella parte mancante che li renderà un insieme perfetto.

La narrazione è ricca di dettagli e cenni storici che, alla pari dello stile dei dialoghi, la rendono vivida e realistica, dimostrando una grande conoscenza dell'epoca da parte dell'autrice. Molto originale il personaggio di Nessa, combattuta tra la rigida educazione ricevuta e la necessità di soddisfare il suo bisogno di libertà, costretta ad ignorare i suoi desideri per compiacere prima suo padre e poi suo marito. Una donna dalla personalità frizzante e maliziosa, ma allo stesso tempo inesperta e un po' ingenua, che riesce a tenere testa ad un uomo attraente e navigato senza mai risultare sgradevole o poco credibile. D'altra parte Jack rappresenta l'ideale di dissolutezza, fascino e ricchezza, che ogni donna desidera ma che solo l'amore può far capitolare, ottimo maestro per gli 'insegnamenti' che Nessa è ansiosa di acquisire. Godibili anche i personaggi secondari: la puritana sorella di Nessa, Prudence, e i due amici di Jack, Peter e Harry, ovvero le due metà opposte della coscienza.

Peccato per la prima parte della storia che ho trovato un po' lenta e che ha smorzato il mio entusiasmo iniziale per la lettura. Di sicuro un pizzico di maggiore vivacità mi avrebbe portato a dare un giudizio migliore.

Kathleen Ruggio says

Loved it

Great book with lots of beautifully developed characters. Romance with twists and turns. A real page turner. Truly enjoyable. Time worthy & quick read.

Wealththeow says

Ever since the end of the first Napoleonic war, Jack Ashcroft has been living a life of dissipation and excess. Then his frail uncle dies and Jack is elevated to Marquis of Foxhaven, with all the attendant responsibilities and expectations. In order to gain full access to Foxhaven's resources, Jack must become respectable. He locks onto marriage with an eminently respectable woman to further this aim, and the newly widowed Lady Agnes "Nessa" Haughton is a perfect choice for this. She's young, pretty, and she and the rest of her family are famous sticklers to propriety. Jack doesn't suspect how much Nessa enjoys her newfound freedom as a widow, or how much decadent fun she wants to have while she can. (view spoiler)

I quite liked this! Both Nessa and Jack have defined, consistent characters throughout. Regency romance authors tend to give characters a single hobby, goal or fear and then consider their characterization work complete; not so here. I completely believed in their growing affection and trust in each other, and rooted for them to come together.

Gilgamesha says

I feel like Joey from the episode of friends where he thinks he asked a girl out he had already dated but couldn't remember.....because I had read this book as part of the Scandalous Brides series but completely forgot about it.....totally feeling like a promiscuous reader lol. Oddly enough it was not the main characters but the secondary story of Prudence and Charles that had remained memorable. The rest of the book was decent as well....I really enjoyed the reread. There were a few minor issues with the book and the end kind of derailed from the main plot a bit however it was a decent story with likable characters.

Kimberly says

I really like the characters in the book and the start and middle where great but the end seemed incredibly rushed. It went from the start of the adventure to a happy ending within a couple of pages and with no detail of the adventures in between which really let the whole story down for me.

Virginia Tican says

The transition of Nessa from a young, ignorant (of the joys of sex in the marriage bed because what she always experienced was a form of rape) and bereaved wife of a sanctimonious misguided old man much like her father, into someone with a separate and distinctly unique personality of her own separate from that of her father and husband. Jack was a rake trying to reform and move away from his past and in need of a respectable wife to mitigate his well earned reputation. Apropos to Nessa's catharsis was that she had also removed their father's hold from the grave on her sister Purdence's enjoyment of Phillip's love and experienced fulfillment in her own marriage by allowing the show of affection previously denied her by the anachronistic form of piety their father espoused and which had always governed both sisters' thoughts and actions most of their lives. A very empathic and relatable story complete with the confrontation and betrayal

of the women a reformed Jack now scorned, an interrupted working honeymoon and flight from France because of Napoleon's escape from Elba and a satisfactory ending for all.

Jamee Pritchard says

This was my first venture in the genre of historical romance, and I can positively say I thoroughly enjoyed it. Every aspect of Brenda Hiatt's novel was amazingly charming: the characters, the plot, the dialogue, and definitely the chemistry between the two lead characters. I loved the idea of romance in such a setting. Husband and wife are like strangers, treating each other so formally, afraid to show too much affection in public. People marry for money and status, but eventually find themselves falling in love with their spouses.

Nessi is alluring and quite brazen despite her strict upbringing. The rake turned faithful husband, Jack, is delightfully engaging, seemingly a bad boy at heart. The two are the perfect couple. There are so many good moments in this book that put me through such a range of emotions. One specific scene is stuck in my mind as one of the best and most amusing scenes I've read in a long time. Hiatt does a wonderful job with her description and historical relevance. I am a newfound fan of Brenda Hiatt and the genre in which she writes. I will definitely be reading more of her work and I encourage everyone else to do the same, starting with this book.

Iza says

Steamy historical romance, yet with good characters and a good plot : a discovery, I hadn't read this author before, but I'll surely remedy that ! Believe me, I'm reading historical romances by the dozen these days and I long for something less conventional !

A.M. says

A young widow, Lady Agnes Haughton, raised by an overbearing father and married off to an older man with puritanical tendencies is finally free of her mourning garb and decides she wants to be rebellious. Meanwhile, a rake, Jack Ashecroft, is told he must reform or not inherit his grandfather's estate. He decides marriage to a respectable widow might be just the ticket. Then he can cash in her dowry, leave her in England and dash off to spy for Wellington in Paris.

I think I've got whiplash.

She loves him. He loves her. [They'd actually be well matched.]

Then he asks her to marry him. She says no. [she was hoping just to be tumbled] But an old harridan has seen them together and tells Nessa's straitlaced sister Prudence, that she is no longer invited to any of the old dame's social events. Then she says 'yes' I will marry you to save my sister's reputation.

Then he decides excellent, I'll marry her and dump her - when half an hour ago he was falling in love with her.

frowns

[Hmmm... engagement rings are a modern invention. Regency peeps didn't wear them. Men didn't even wear a wedding ring. Marrying for love is also a modern thing for that matter, but HR readers let that one

go.]

(view spoiler)

I'm getting very annoyed with Nessa.

The second half pacing is really off. What is the point of his mother? And I keep waiting for it to have ANYTHING to do with the Saint of seven Dials - but it doesn't. There is one paragraph at p130 where Luca is looking for Marcus and that's it. It matches the one line about Jack and Lady Houghton in book 1. [I went and looked it up] It's pretty tenuous.

Jack is a spy who does no spying. And is so out of touch with world events that they go to Paris just as Napoleon is marching on it.

2 stars

Rebecca says

There was not quite enough story for all these pages. Tension resolved long before the book ends, manufactured crisis thrown in as a post-script. Still, not as tedious as some of its ilk. 2.5 stars.

Sheila says

The wicked and the reputable

The heat and the challenge these two wonderful and well developed. The give and take between them was a pleasure to read.

Edwina " I LoveBooks" "Deb" says

Scandalous Virtue was a delightful well written Historical Romance. The story is believable mild sensuality and creative enjoyable characters. I loved the H/H Jack Ashcroft, Marquis of Foxhaven and Lady Nessa Houghton, young widow.

Jack has recently inherited the title of Marquis and must now reform himself from a Rake into a honorable member of Aristocracy or he will not receive the Unentitled Portion of the Foxhaven Wealth. Jack sets off to find a respectable wife who can make him acceptable to the Ton. He will look for a wife with high moral standing. But he has meet an interesting female at his Masquerade Ball and they share a very nice kiss before parting ways.

Nessa Houghton has always lived a protected staid boring life. Her father was a Puritan Prude who didn't allow his daughters any pleasures such as dancing in life. Then Nessa's Father married her off to a man twice her age. The few times they had sex was painful and just for the pleasure of Lord Houghton and those few episodes were few an far between and eventually none existent. Now he is dead an Nessa what's to

experience life and have a bit of fun. She sneaks out of her sister home and goes to a Masquerade Ball, where she first meets Jack. Neither know who the other is and when they meet again at a ball given by one of the upstanding member of the Ton the chase is on. Jack wants Nessa for his wife.

The story is well crafted with a cast of enjoyable supporting characters. The story moves along at a good pace and is never boring. There's a few action scenes that will have you on the edge of your seat. I really enjoyed *Scandalous Virtue* and *It Was a Freebie* on Amazon!! I Highly Recommend You Read It.

Ali says

For the most part, I liked Nessa and Jack as individuals. I could empathize with her desire to enjoy her freedom after years in a puritanical household and I appreciated the combination of naïveté, desire, and burgeoning confidence, even if I didn't always believe it. I'm a sucker for a reformed (or rather, reforming) rake and I thought Jack filled the role very well. He had compelling reason to change--more than one, in fact--and he experienced temptation to reverse course, despite his best intentions.

Nessa and Jack's relationship, particularly in the weeks immediately after their marriage. With the exception of his (view spoiler) proposal, I could believe their courtship in the nineteenth-century context. For the most part, I liked the ways that her naïveté slipped through. I thought her relationship with Prudence--and the relationship between Prudence and Philip--was really sweet as well.

Having said that, I'm sceptical that she'd discard her reputation so quickly or that she'd be so naïve about the consequences thereof. Her determined flirtation is all the more bizarre because she doesn't want either marriage or physical intimacy until *after* her marriage to Jack and she cared enough about her sister's opinion at the novel's outset that she sneaked off to a masquerade ball, content to have a single adventure before she returned to normalcy.

I would've shrugged it off, but after she learned that Jack (view spoiler), her behaviour became even more outrageous and the (view spoiler) incident seemed entirely out-of-place in a historical romance. On a side note, The author didn't seem particularly sympathetic to the vast majority of the women in the novel--(view spoiler).

The last-minute action plot seemed like an unnecessary addition to an otherwise decent story, but I found the book quite readable, if over-long for the plot (or lack thereof). While the author used the occasional anachronistic or repetitive phrase, I think the writing was fine overall. *Scandalous Virtue* is a fun way to spend a couple hours, especially since it's free from Amazon.

Cecily says

Hmmm. Bit of a strange one. Whilst I quite liked the idea of a book that (mostly) focused on the development of the relationship between Jack and Nessa the quality of the writing, characterisation, and dialogue wasn't of a high enough standard to sustain the approach. And then there were just some very odd (in the sense of either eyebrow raising or just a bit TOO outlandish) detours that left me thinking 'eh?' rather than 'awww'.

Elsa Carrion says

The start was a little slow, but if you hang in there around 40% into the book it starts to pick up. I thought the ending was rushed, and some parts in the middle should have been speed up. Keep in mind that it's HR so it's a little more modest on the intimate scenes. The characters are likable, but I didn't really understand or found the connection with the name of the series. I'm still not sure what "the saint of seven dials" is supposed to mean.
