



Wicked Becomes You

Meredith Duran

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She's been burned not once but twice by London's so-called gentlemen . . .

Gwen Maudsley is pretty enough to be popular, and plenty wealthy, too. But what she's best known and loved for is being so very, very nice. When a cad jilts her at the altar—again—the scandal has her outraged friends calling for blood. Only Gwen has a different plan. If *nice* no longer works for her, then it's time to learn to be *naughty*. Happily, she knows the perfect tutor—Alexander Ramsey, her late brother's best friend and a notorious rogue.

So why won't a confirmed scoundrel let her be as bad as she wants to be?

Unbeknownst to Gwen, Alex's aloof demeanor veils his deepest unspoken desire. He has no wish to see her change, nor to tempt himself with her presence when his own secrets make any future between them impossible. But on a wild romp from Paris to the Riviera, their friendship gives way to something hotter, darker, and altogether more dangerous. With Alex's past and Gwen's newly unleashed wildness on a collision course, Gwen must convince Alex that his wickedest intentions are exactly what she needs.

Wicked Becomes You Details

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From Reader Review Wicked Becomes You for online ebook

Quinn says

I recently picked up a bundle of eight holds from the library, and *Wicked Becomes You* was among of them. Strangely, this was the one I was least interested in reading, and it kept getting pushed down to the bottom of the pile.

Duran's The Duke of Shadows was one of my favourite reads of 2010. A wonderfully different historical romance with adventure and an exotic setting (if you haven't read The Duke of Shadows, by the way, you really should remedy that). I thought Duran was probably one of those authors who writes that one amazing debut novel, and never quite manages to reach those heights again.

I was sure that *Wicked Becomes You* was going to disappoint, thinking it was just another in a long line of forgettable Regency/Victorian romances; and the cover did nothing to dispel my perception.

Well, you know that saying about assumptions? So true. This was a wonderful book, and I loved every minute of it.

Gwen Maudsley is living the life her late parents designed for her. Being 'new money', they left one world to enter another, and belonged in neither. Their strongest desire for their daughter was that she be a welcome member of society, something that money alone could not guarantee. Nothing but marriage to a titled gentleman would ensure Gwen's place in society.

Gwen has done everything she can to ensure this dream becomes a reality. She has played by every single rule and succeeded in becoming society's darling, known and loved for being the 'nicest girl in town' Couple this with her beauty and three million pound fortune, and success in her mission should be easy. But Gwen finds herself literally left at the altar – again – and something has to give.

Gwen has known Alex Ramsay for years. He was her late brother's best friend, and is a notorious rogue. Surely he will understand that she does not intend for there to be a third time. She is independently wealthy and does not *need* to wed, despite her parents' and brother's wishes for her. But Alex has made his own promises to Gwen's brother – that he will see her well cared for – and *not* by him.

Alex believes Gwen to just be suffering the ill-effects of her second jilting, and is sure that she will revert to type – until they accidentally meet in Paris and Gwen sets out to demonstrate she is serious about no longer living by society's rules.

Don't let the synopsis fool you. This is not the shallow story of good girl going bad and taming the rake. It is a journey of discovery undertaken by both characters as they struggle to learn, understand and reconcile the truth about themselves and each other, and what this means to their past, present and future.

Alex and Gwen were both very complex characters who had each buried their true self behind a façade, and had been living in their lies so well and for so long, that they no longer knew who they really were at all.

They had undeniable chemistry together but fought hard to forge a relationship that went so much deeper than the physical. These two were true soul-mates although they were each unable to recognize the other as

such without some serious searching. Again, though, don't mistake this for being a dark, novel. Alex and Gwen were a pleasure to watch with their banter and witticism.

Duran is an wonderful writing talent. She has an amazing way with words and the ability to reel you in as she slowly and deliberately peels away the layers to show the depth beyond the surface, making the reader a participant on the journey rather than just an onlooker. I found myself fully immersed in the story as they traveled from London to the Moulin Rouge in France to the casinos of Monte Carlo.

There were some story lines that seemed a little underdeveloped in comparison and could have been managed better or omitted completely, but the writing is so good that it didn't spoil my enjoyment and I was just happy to go wherever Duran wanted to take me.

I highly recommend *Wicked Becomes You* for anyone who enjoys well-written historical romance, and must thank my GR friend Catherine for recommending this book as my next Meredith Duran read – excellent choice, Catherine!

4.5 stars

Joanna Loves Reading says

3.5 Stars. This was a buddy read with Loriidae and Mariana in Historical Romance Book Club. Thanks ladies!

Ok, well, this book had some high highs and some low lows (saying that sounds much better than seeing it written). It had plot issues, but there was some time spent in Moulin Rouge and Le Chat Noir, which was fabulous. There was some great character growth moments, but sometimes that felt like it had no direction. The first half made great strides humanizing and lifting up naive and bratty Gwen while keeping Alex down, only to switch focus in the second half. As a result, Alex is the better drawn character in my opinion. I didn't understand her late-book antics much, and I didn't come away with a warm fuzzy happy feeling.

The thing is, I would read this again. I love the highs too much, the phrasing at moments that simply get to me. It has value despite the issues, which is why I read Duran. I highlighted 16 locations for crying out loud.

“But what you’re saying, then, is that you’ve always thought me a very clever hypocrite.”

“No. Well, perhaps,” he said with a grin. “But if hypocrisy is what the game requires, who am I to judge a hypocrite?”

“How flattering,” she said dryly.

Honestly, that is how I feel about this book. I don't know that I like it, but I sort of love it.

♥ Sam ♥ ~S2~Im made of awesomness says

First, I let me just say how much I love the cover of this book! THEN they even got Gwen's red hair right (Im a stickler for things like that). But pretty cover aside, I absolutely loved Wicked Becomes You.

Our heroine is Gwen Maudsley, the nicest debutante and also the richest. After Gwen's second fiance jilts her at the altar , she decided she is done with being nice and wants to experience life let say 'Wickedly'. And who better to guide her than her late brother's best friend Alex.

Both Gwen and Alex were really likable characters and as the story goes on you begin to see that beneath the surface there is more to them than being "the nice girl" and "the rake," which makes this book an engaging read.

Not like alot of other HR, this book is NOT set in London. Their adventures takes them from London to Paris and Nice and even to Monte Carlo.

This isn't a perfect book- Something that bothered me was that after being jilted early in the book, Gwen found a note from a "secret admirer" in her room and read it and tossed it aside without much thought. I thought, surely this is from Alex and she'll find out later that he'd loved her all along. In actuality, the letter is never mentioned again. Maybe this started out as part of the plot, but then got changed, but not removed from the entire story.

Other than the above mention, as far as I'm concerned, this was a great romance, and I can't wait to read more titles by Meredith Duran

Rane says

Everytime you pick up a Meredith Duran book you know your going to be in for a complex, and engaging read, this time around Wicked Becomes You was also fun and on a lighter tone compare to her other works.

Duran characters have many layers that peel away as you read, and no greater examples are Alex and Gwen, both running and trying to break out of the mold they've been placed in. Gwen has always tried to be the best society butterfly she could be, hiding her true self away, until being jilted a second time, she had enough and decides to break out of her shell and live.

Alex on the other hand has been running away from the past and himself and his heart, he felt so trapped in when he was a child suffering from asthma. While his rep is mostly hear-say and false he gets a kick out of all the tales of his rakehood. Alex has always noticed Gwen but because of a her brother being his BF along ago and a promise to him as Gwen's brother died to take care of his sister, Alex has kept he distance. That is until Gwen goes out on her own and he's having to keep an eye on her and his heart guarded as his discovers whom Gwen is.

At times I really loved Gwen and Alex and other times I wanted to shake them. My love hate toward the leads ran through the book. While understandable why they acted this and that way, it still got on my nerves the way they kept stepping back instead of forward. While Duran writes this in a way that the leads must take these steps back in order to come to terms with things in their lives, like Alex guilt toward the death of Gwen's brother and his childhood. Gwen was the one I didn't understand why she kept acting like a child

and little so many doubts blindsiding her. This dragged on the story on and IMO been left out instead of dragging on the ending.

Many of the secondary characters were they were suppose to be in the sidelines, Alex's family where the best and pretty surprising, with a few twists Duran throws at the reader. This I added to the story in a good and ironic way, showing another caring side of Alex he tried so hard to read, and another layer to the lead. The adventure ride that Gwen and Alex take really took a backseat later on as the relationship between the two heat (way way) up.

Overall: another fantastic story by Duran, with two engaging leads in Gwen and Alex as they not only find out whom they truly are but finally find the love they've been longing and waiting for.

holly quigley says

This is a really fun, easy, fluffy read. I wanted so badly for it to be at least a 4-star book, though.

The good: The dialog and chemistry between Gwen and Alex is yummy, and pretty much drives the whole story.

The not-so-great: It's a good thing we have that dialog and chemistry, because about 2/3s of the way in, things just started to feel... cluttered. I can't really explain it very well. But especially regarding Alex's feelings for Gwen, there just seemed to be so much backstory that we just didn't get. Whether that's because of slapdash editing, or because their really *wasn't* much backstory to begin with and it was thrown in as an afterthought to lend validity to the relationship, it's hard to say. And this just gets worse as we reach the end.

The business with Alex's brother selling one of the estates, and all the intrigue - it's just kind of handwaved. Gwen's brother's ring, earlier in the book - same deal. Same with the fiances. There was a lot of anticlimax peppered throughout this whole story, come to think of it.

I found myself agreeing pretty hard with Gwen - why indeed should she have believed that Alex was in love with her? It seemed awfully random and sudden, after all. But "oh, btw," he apparently loved her all along? It's something I believed because we see inside Alex's head, but it was still sudden and kind of sloppily executed. Which is a shame, because again, the redeeming qualities were such that, if it had been 350 pages instead of 250+, and tied up more loose ends and gave us some of that lovely history, it would have easily been a 4.5 or more.

PS - Did I miss something? WTH was the deal with the "secret admirer"/love letters? Was that really never resolved and we're just supposed to assume it was Alex all along? Because it didn't exactly add up. Did I miss a chapter?

Still, all in all, it was a cute, light read - just what I needed to lift my spirits this week.

EDIT: ARGH. So, due to my using an e-reader and missing it, I failed to read the Prologue. This *really* irritates me, because it appears that the prologue had enough critical information in it that it would have colored my impression of everything else. And I just feel like, if it's THAT important, it belongs in a *chapter*, NOT a prologue. Bah. Definitely a 3-star, then.

FOLLOW-UP: After a while, I came back and changed my rating to 2 stars. Because weeks after having read this, I realized that my only clear memory of this book is how irritated I was by it in the long run. And it's very likely my ire stems from the letdown of so many people gushing over it. I re-read the prologue, btw, and it didn't really clear anything up, after all. And again, WHAT was the deal with the "secret admirer" love letters? Did this just get dropped? Did some pages get left out of the e-book version? Because it never got resolved or addressed in my copy. Comment me if you know.

Eve Perry says

This is the fourth Meredith Duran book I've read and I'm still so up in the air about her as an author. I can see why others rave about her books, but most of the time I find her prose confusing to read and her characters ever-so-slightly unbelievable. After reading great reviews of *Wicked Becomes You*, I thought this might be the book that would turn me into a fan-girl.

It wasn't. First off, the prologue was written in such convoluted prose that I had to read it through a few times to figure out what was going on. The best friend was dead, yes, but did the hero do it? If not, why all the guilt? And the somehow fought over the best friend's sister, but that's not involved at all in his guilt? Ugh.

That's pretty much how the whole book went. What's more, the characters - especially the hero - kept acting in unexpected, ridiculous ways. One minute he would be the overprotective alpha, while the next he's hatched some plan that has the heroine posing as his mistress so he can track down a villain. A villain who, incidentally, also seemed thrown in just to move the characters from place to place, instead of acting as an actual nefarious threat. The sub-plots were unnecessary, the characters acted very oddly, and she still hasn't grasped the clarity of writing that I normally expect.

This is probably the last Duran book I'll buy, even if the glowing reviews keep coming in. She is just not an author for me.

Angelic says

Alex Ramsey, reckless and carefree rogue, feels responsible for his best friend's murder. He tried to honor his friend by promising to look after Richard's perfectly nice sister, Gwen Maudsley. Most importantly, Richard wished for Alex never to corrupt the "nicest girl in London", Gwen, with his roguish ways. So Alex always kept far from her, traveling to distant countries at every chance. When Gwen is jilted at the altar for a second time, Alex realized it's time to take a more active role in caring for Gwen. On a journey together to recover Richard's ring, Alex realizes what a handful Gwen will be after she vows to stop being so downright nice.

Meredith Duran really excels at the subtleties of love and life. She can write about one small action or short phrase and it has such a deeper meaning. Also, Duran can really paint a picture of the setting, I truly felt like I was running through the Moulin Rouge and le Chat Noir with Gwen and Alex. Her writing style is unique and if you haven't read anything by this author, I suggest you do so as soon as possible!

I loved Gwen's character at the beginning of the book. She wasn't just a nice girl, she calculated every single action and word to be perfectly polite and nice. Alex was the only one who recognized how much strength and dedication it took for Gwen to be "the nicest girl in London." I was fascinated by Gwen's journey of learning to loosen up, that a misstep here and there was perfectly ok and made life worth living.

I wanted to know more about Alex. I was interested in his childhood asthma, but it wasn't dealt with very much. I also wanted to know more about his fierce love and dedication to his siblings, even when they treated him poorly. I liked Alex's cool, calm exterior, always letting rumors and insults bounce right off his back. But I wanted to see more of what laid underneath the surface.

The romance between Gwen and Alex never really caught fire for me. Sure, they liked each other, but I never really saw fireworks between them. They were missing that special spark needed to make them really star-crossed lovers.

Meredith's writing is mesmerizing, and I enjoyed the subtleties of the story much more so than the overall picture. I loved Gwen's journey to find out that it's ok to not be perfect all the time.

This book was provided for review by Pocket Books.

reviewed for <http://inthehammockblog.blogspot.com/>

Rachel (BAVR) says

3.5 stars

I would have given *Wicked Becomes You* 4 stars if not for the heroine's unfortunate encounter getting smacked silly by the Stupid Stick and acting like an asshat for about 50 pages. Sure, I'm a grumpy jerk for letting a character get to me, but it would serve romance writers well to understand that they can create conflict without turning otherwise rational and likable heroines into dithering morons out of the blue. I mean, we *have* reached a point in modern times when women aren't characterized as irrational harpies, right? RIGHT? Bueller?

SUMMARY:

So there's this sweet, perfectly nice Victorian girl named Gwen Maudsley who's super rich but untitled. She's been jilted not once, but twice at the altar and has had it UP TO HERE with all of this motherf--ing society and its motherf--ing rules. (Self censorship is a hallmark of Victorian times.) So she decides to enlist the help of Alex Ramsey, a seriously dreamy rascal who was best friends with her late brother. Alex is apprehensive at first, considering that he promised said late brother that he would keep Gwen out of trouble. But by the time they meet up in Paris, sparks have already flown, and Gwen embarks on a reckless journey toward all things wicked. She breaks a few societal rules, convinces him to take her to the Moulin Rouge, and SHOCKER! They totally end up shagging. But will Alex's dark, sad past keep him from being a man worthy of Gwen? And will the lobotomy Gwen presumably inflicted on herself during one of the chapter

breaks in the middle of the book ruin their chances of being delightfully wicked together?

I really like Duran's writing. Sometimes it gets a little too flowery for my tastes (literally, she references flowers A LOT), but the dialogue flows well and the character interactions are entertaining. Although Gwen's plunge into the more scandalous side of Paris isn't all that wicked, it is entertaining. I enjoyed the way Gwen savors every step of her new-found freedom. The setting also gives Gwen and Alex time to build up some pretty hot chemistry.

Alex is cool for the most part. He's jaded and glib most of the time, but I believed in his soft teddy-bear interior. I'll admit I laughed out loud SO HARD when his dark and wounded past centered around (view spoiler) Alex is open about his feelings and genuinely enjoys Gwen's quest to break out of her shell.

Gwen is a good time at first. Unfortunately, she slowly devolves into a woman with just a little less sense than I can handle. She takes off with a man she **doesn't even know** a couple of times. Wicked or not, that behavior's just stupid. Even *real* wicked women know better. At the end, (view spoiler)

Overall, the story was a quick read and definitely amused me in parts. It's a good candidate for lazy, easy reading. Just don't put too much merit in Gwen's misleading intelligence. You'll only be disappointed.

Juliana Philippa says

Absolutely fantastic - everything one could want in a romance, and more!

Wicked Becomes You is a fabulous read and I cannot recommend it enough. You know those books where you find yourself going back and rereading paragraphs or sentences and grinning stupidly and foolishly despite yourself? That was me with this book! This is my first Meredith Duran, though I own two others by her and just haven't gotten around to reading them yet. April 27 was a blockbuster romance day - both for contemporary and historical - and I'm not sure why I decided to start off with Duran's book, but I am **so glad** I did (though she ruined me for the others)!! I am a longtime historical romance reader and this book truly has it all.

My only fear about writing my opinion about this book - and thus a glowing review - is that when a person's expectations are so high they're almost invariably disappointed, and I want everyone who reads this book to enjoy it as much as I did ... Oh well, because I just have to share ;-) - especially since after a number of bad new romance releases, I seem to have miraculously stumbled upon a lucky streak with Sarah MacLean's *Nine Rules to Break When Romancing a Rake* , Anne Gracie's *The Perfect Rake* (which isn't new, but was to me), and now this utterly delightful read that is definitely joining my all-time favorites.

THE PROS

(I haven't written any cons, so don't bother looking for that section)

The leading characters were fantastic - complex, perfect together though believable, presenting one another with a challenge, and two of my favorite leads of all-time. The tension between them was charged, the chemistry sizzling, and the banter absolutely a delight to read. There were many, many scenes and exchanges that had me literally laughing out loud (and even now bring a smile to my face) and the historical backdrop was detailed (without being overwhelming), authentic, and vividly described.

The twists and turns were unexpected, keep you on your toes and unsure, yet don't overshadow the main feature of the hero and heroine's relationship and also don't seem obvious contrivances by the author (well ... I mean, taking into account that you are reading fiction of course - and historical romance fiction at that!). This is one of those books where you wish there was a sequel that continues the main characters' story so you can encounter and enjoy them again.

OUR HEROINE AND HERO, Gwen (23) and Alex (28)

These two characters were so wonderful, which in this case was completely essential, since it is really a character-driven book. You wouldn't think so, because there are other plots going on, questions lurking in the background, the story moves from London to Paris to Nice to Monte Carlo, etc. However, when it comes down to it, this book is about one woman discovering that she is not who she has been trying to force herself to be for so many years; it's about one woman actually living life for herself, instead of for others. And it's about the one man who has suspected she was different than she seemed, has seen glimpses of this possibility in her for years, and who joins her in her discovery and along the way faces his own fears. (God, could I make it sound cornier? But it's true! And need I say - wonderfully, skillfully done!).

Gwen and Alex are so perfect for one another, though you (definitely) wouldn't think it at first. She's the nice, proper, darling of the ton, whom everyone loves. Gwen lives strictly within the rules of society, afraid to vary from the norm in any way, living a careful balancing act and playing a part that she has come to believe - or wanted to believe - is true. Alex lives to confront and deviate from any strictures or society guidelines he meets, and of course holds nothing but gentle contempt and amusement for people like Gwen. He runs from any hint of ties or roots to people or places (what she yearns for above all), has traveled the world, is from the aristocracy but earns (very successfully) his own living, and is comfortable in his skin no matter where he is.

Gwen is from "new money" and was sent off to school at a young age to learn how to be a proper young lady, her parents died shortly after, and then her brother died a few years later. She is utterly alone, and yet/therefore has surrounded herself with people whom she has made/charmed to like her. Honestly, in the first two chapters she seems spineless and weak, her friends are vapid and twittery, and I was afraid that Gwen was not going to be a likable heroine. This was not at all the case!

Gwen's transformation is wonderful and believable and a rocky roller coaster ride that the reader experiences along with her. Alex's contempt and condescension for what he sees as an urge she will quickly repress is invariably turned on its head. She challenges him at every turn, while at the same time Alex also challenges her, betting she won't take the plunge and then surprised when she does - though always with her own twist and still tentative, trying out her newfound wings. He is overprotective yet not wanting to be, anxious to see her change while at the same time afraid of no longer being able to stay away from this "new Gwen," and in the end so sweet and tender towards her. ::Sigh:: Basically: JUST READ IT!!!

UPDATE, 5/3/2010: Just finished Duran's *Bound by Your Touch* - was also fantastic and definitely a five-star read, though in some ways *Wicked Becomes You* was better (mainly because the relationship was tenderer/sweeter and the book was so laugh-out-loud funny).

Jan says

3.5 rounded up to 4 stars. I liked the settings of the book, which took place partly in Continental Europe, including belle époque Paris (think Moulin Rouge). The MCs were also interesting, and well-suited to each

other.

Alex is a little difficult to get to know, but that is part of his charm. He is certainly an intriguing character, and far from a cliche. He has hidden depths. Gwen, an heiress, is struggling emotionally with a number of issues. A child from plebeian parents who wanted something better for their daughter, she is always trying to 'do the right thing' and fulfil everyone's expectations. But as a result, she hardly knows her own true self, which is hidden deep below many layers.

But for reasons that aren't revealed till much later, Gwen has been dumped at the altar, not once, but twice. As she struggles to recover her equanimity, Gwen decides it's time to be a little bad, instead of the Miss Goody Two-shoes which hasn't gotten her anywhere. And so she tries out her wiles on her deceased brother's best friend. Alex. He's taken aback by her daring behaviour, but at the same time, the feelings for her that he'd long repressed start to surface. One doesn't dally with one's best friend's sister..... but, temptation rears its head.....

There is a slightly complicated plot that I found a little hard to follow, actually. It involves a dodgy acquaintance of Alex's brother, and some fast-moving adventures that take place in Europe. Alex and Gwen are thrown together, but it's not all over till almost the very last page, with a few little twists almost to the very end. I did feel a little frustrated by the plot, and I still don't really understand exactly what Barrington and Gerard were up to. And, I'm not really interested enough to bother trying to make more sense of it.....

But I did like the romance. It just wasn't Duran's best book. Still enjoyable, though.

Andrea says

My second book by Meredith Duran, and I had the same issues as last time, so it's safe to say it's all me. While I have no issues with the writing or the plot, I couldn't connect with either of the characters, and ended up skimming a lot.

Basically, the heroine reminded me of Katy Perry's "Honey" on How I met your mother, because almost every time she opened her mouth, I'd go "Oh, honey...". I know she was supposed to be naive to better show off the hero's wickedness, but someone whose parents made millions in trade should be more realistic, right? I mean, she scoffs at the well-meant hint that a woman worth 3 million pounds shouldn't go running around Paris all on her own because someone might kidnap her or worse? And is insulted because someone chases off a fiancé of hers who had syphilis???

Other than that, there was a lot going on that took focus off their relationship: (view spoiler). To me it just felt like the story veered off course a lot, with the hero and heroine driving aimlessly through Europe, so, meh. Not for me.

Catherine says

I was a bit leery when I started this book. My first Meredith Duran book was The Duke of Shadows and I absolutely loved that book. I couldn't wait to read the next two, Bound by Your Touch and Written on Your Skin. I did enjoy them, but I never had any connection to the story. I felt very removed from the characters and their issues. When this came out I hesitated, but in the end I bought it anyway. I am so glad that I decided to! Once again I felt that connection that immerses me in the story and makes me become invested in

the characters and their relationship.

When the story opens you might think that Gwen and Alex are an unlikely pair. However, as the story progresses the author shows us more and more of their layers and we realize just how perfectly they do fit. Alex and Gwen have a sizzling chemistry between them. What's even better than that is way they develop into friends. I'm so glad that the author made them meshing personality-wise just as important and their sexual chemistry. There were some great scenes in this book, and some excellent banter between the protagonists.

While trying to explain this book to a friend of mine I realized how cliched and trite it sounds to explain how Gwen decided to live for herself and stop trying to be so nice after she's jilted for the second time. I realize that the good girl gone bad seems like it's been done a million times before, but that's not how this storyline came across at all. It's not a story of Gwen going bad and starting to hang out with a rake, it's a story about Gwen growing up and dealing with her issues and learning who she is as a person. Along the way she falls in love with a man who is so much more than his surface personality would suggest.

I loved the scene toward the end where everyone was gathered in the library (trying not to give spoilers). I loved watching Alex try to deal with all his assumptions turning out wrong. I felt bad for him but also found it rather humorous. I sympathized with them both but was also kind of proud of Gwen. Toward the end when I found out why she did that I was kind of surprised. That wasn't what I thought the issue was, but oh well it still worked for me because it made sense.

I highly recommend this book, but I do have to admit it wasn't perfect. The whole situation with property was kind of a letdown. At the end when everything was figured out it still didn't seem that intelligent to me. I guess I just expected that to make a bit more sense.

Laura the Highland Hussy says

4.5 stars-the writing was really good, but a little wordy for my taste.

I have been looking at this book for a month or two, then apparently all of my GR friends read it at once, because there were updates everywhere. So, after reading a few really good reviews (and one or two crappy reviews) I came to my friend Catherine's review:

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

Her review made me want to read this book. In face I'm almost tempted to cut and paste hers here for you instead of me writing.

Catherine's review is one of the only ones I saw that pointed out Gwen's change. She is a beautiful and extremely wealthy debutante, who has been jilted twice at the altar. Goodness me the scandal! But she has through it all remained London's sweetheart. Very kind, always perfect in society, never a cruel word, and always the epitome of all a lady should be.

The back of the book makes it sound a bit like Nine Rules to Break When Romancing a Rake, and while I loved that book to death, I don't want to read the same story by a different author. But I was wrong. It's not similar at all.

The back blurb basically says that Gwen is tired of being everyone's sweetheart, so she decides to be wicked. Okay, yes and no.

Gwen is worth 3 million pounds. A freaking fortune, and yet twice, she's been jilted and both grooms were flat broke, so thinking it's her, poor Gwen behaves more flawlessly amongst Society. By the second jilting where the groom literally leaped over the balcony and ran off, she is done being nice. If (my favorite) Lady Anne (one of her bridesmaids) volunteers Gwen for knitting sweaters for orphans then Lady Anne can bloody well knit them herself. That tiny rebellion cracked me up!

And this is where I started to see Catherine's point from her review-

"While trying to explain this book to a friend of mine I realized how cliched and trite it sounds to explain how Gwen decided to live for herself and stop trying to be so nice after she's jilted for the second time. I realize that the good girl gone bad seems like it's been done a million times before, but that's not how this storyline came across at all. It's not a story of Gwen going bad and starting to hang out with a rake, it's a story about Gwen growing up and dealing with her issues and learning who she is as a person. Along the way she falls in love with a man who is so much more than his surface personality would suggest."

Keeping that in mind while watching Gwen not just become wicked (or wickedly becoming) but watching Gwen find herself was the true joy in this book. And watching Alex see Gwen for the first time, not as his friend Richard's little sister, but as a woman, and a sensual, sexual one at that, it was fabulous. I loved how he realized that he'd been in love with her since she was a teenager, and how obvious it was to him that all the times he'd encouraged Richard to speak of Gwen, it was for himself as well.

Alex both infuriated and intrigued me. I loved the scene in the library, and I loved seeing Gwen grow. Alex needed his expectations of Gwen shot down, and the way he handled it was great.

There was only one part that seemed a bit off to me.

small spoiler ahead

At Gwen's second wedding, Lady Anne seemed desperately in love with the groom, and it was said that she'd nursed feelings for him before, and she was super bitchy to Gwen.

So at the end when she visits Gwen to tell her why her groom had turned tail and run, it's because he's in love with a German man. I could care less that he was interested in men, I feel it was built up to look like Anne and he would get together. I was certain that Anne was there to tell Gwen that they'd gotten married. I don't mind a twist or a surprise , but it felt so random.

Other than that, it was a great book, and I cried at the last line. It was very touching. I only wish I'd seen Gwen actually get a wedding. Maybe an epilogue?

<http://www.demonloversbooksandmore.co...>

Pamela(AllHoney) says

Gwen Maudsley is an attractive woman, quite nice, very proper, and extremely wealthy. It makes no sense why she is jilted for the second time. Alex Ramsey promised Gwen's brother, Richard, to watch out for her before he died. Even though he travels a lot, he takes that promise seriously. So when Gwen decides she's

tired of being a good girl and wants to try being wicked instead, Alex must show her that being wicked isn't what Gwen really wants. It's not in her nature.

One of those books that had its moments. There is quite a bit of dialogue between the two main protagonists and while much of the dialogue was witty and cute, I found myself getting bored. Still, it did have its moments as I said. As Gwen and Alex travel from England to Paris to the Riviera (Monte Carlo) and back to England again, they discover much about each other and even more about themselves. There was a few surprises but, ultimately, I got a satisfying ending.

Wicked Incognito Now says

Entirely wonderful.

Meredith Duran said that this book is "light" compared to her others. It reminds me of Laura Kinsale saying that *Lessons in French* is light, comparably. Both books featured the tortured heroes and heroines, both books are plenty angst. Of course, compared to *Shadowheart* of *The Duke of Shadows*, then yeah, these books are light.

However, that is what I love about Meredith Duran (and LK). Her books are chock full of the emotions. She underlines the details that make her characters tick. She brings out reasons for their actions, and in the process I get involved with the characters.

The story features Gwen in the Victorian age of England. A three million dollar heiress and orphan whose parents wanted nothing more than for her to marry into nobility. She has spent her life working towards that goal. Learning all the social mores. Sacrificing personal wants and desires for the dream of a family, and a title. Now, however, she has been dumped at the altar for the second time and she's had it. She's tired of respectability. Tired of chasing the dreams of dead people. She's ready to find who she is without the guise of social acceptability.

Then there is Alex. Her dead brother's best friend. He promised her brother that he would see Gwen safely married. He considers Gwen his responsibility, and he doesn't want to see her ruin her chances for a respectable future.

Both characters have emotional baggage and fears like all good romance novel heroes and heroines. But they are so darn much fun. Yes, these characters have a certain lightness of spirit, and *joie de vivre*. I love that! I love Gwen. I love her pluck and her character. I completely understand all of her reasoning, who she is, and the choices she makes.

This is the first book I've read in weeks that I've had difficulty putting down.
