



Beyond Scandal and Desire

Lorraine Heath

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At birth, Mick Trewlove, the illegitimate son of a duke, was handed over to a commoner. Despite his lowly upbringing, Mick has become a successful businessman, but all his wealth hasn't satisfied his need for revenge against the man who still won't acknowledge him. What else can Mick do but destroy the duke's legitimate son—and woo the heir's betrothed into his own unloving arms . . .

Orphaned and sheltered, Lady Aslyn Hastings longs for a bit of adventure. With her intended often preoccupied, Aslyn finds herself drawn to a darkly handsome entrepreneur who seems to understand her so well. Surely a lady of her station should avoid Mick Trewlove. If only he weren't so irresistible . . .

As secrets are about to be exposed, Mick must decide if his plan for vengeance is worth risking what his heart truly desires.

Beyond Scandal and Desire Details

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From Reader Review Beyond Scandal and Desire for online ebook

Lover of Romance says

This review was originally posted on Addicted To RomanceI received this book for free from Avon in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Lorraine Heath introduces us to a sensual love affair that takes us back in time to the spicy Victorian Era in London, England. A time of growth in the sciences, politics, and human rights. These two people come together and learn to fight with having all of society against them being together...

HOLY SMOKES!!! This book just blew me away here, and I just didn't want to put it away. I have had such admiration for Lorraine Heath, and over the years she has become one of my favorites here. She has such a solid talent in writing historical romances, and I got a kick out of her delving into the Victorian Era. This story introduces the reader to an aspect of Victorian culture that very few know about...baby farmers. This is actually a very heartwrenching aspect of society and one of the "skeletons" on England and I was really happy that Lorraine Heath did such great research here and implemented this aspect into the story.

Our wonderful key players in the story are:

Mick Trewlove, is a commoner, he was deposited and abandoned by his real parents to be thrown away to a baby farm, but his adopted mother took him in and raised him along with his siblings. Mick has created his own wealth and power but is out for revenge so his father will finally admit that Mick is his son.

Aslyn Hastings, is part of the Ton, her parents died and she was brought in and became the war of the Duke and Duchess of Hedley. Even though she has always has done what was expected of her, she dreams of adventure and passion.

Beyond Scandal and Desire is such a sensational romance and I totally got a kick out of this book and I honestly didn't want it to end. This story made me realize why I fell in love with Lorraine Heath in the first place and this book was pretty epic in its own way.

This story begins when our hero Mick, is out on his journey for revenge and to be claimed by his real father. So his plan is to make his "brother" lose everything including his almost betrothed. Aslyn has always known that her future is to marry the Duke's son, even though she doesn't love him the way that a woman should love the man she is supposed to marry. When she meets Mick in the gardens, she is intrigued because he stirs desire, passion that she has never felt before.

She could practically see it coming from him in waves that had the power to encompass everything around him--including herself. She wanted to experience that power, be drawn into it, captured by it, seduced within it.

Through a set of events, Mick and Aslyn run into each other and the chemistry between them is obvious even though Aslyn knows she is supposed to marry another man, she honestly doesn't feel like she can. Especially when her betrothed starts to change when his desperation for gambling takes a twist. The man that she really wants is Mick, a man that the Duke and his wife DONT approve of. But Mick is the man that she is beginning to love and wants to fight for them. But she will find out that Mick has a mission, one that could bring downfall to the family that she loves dearly.

Mick couldn't help but wonder if sometimes heartache was needed in order to move forward.

I was really intrigued by the turn of events that bring this couple together. There were such sensuality and endearing romantic qualities that pulled me into this story so completely. I just loved every moment that Mick and Aslyn have together. From the sexy flirting to Mick showing Aslyn another side to him, to a journey of forgiveness and redemption. I really was cheering for these two from the beginning. There was such class to their relationship. I really adored the way that they court and fall in love. There were so many tender moments that made me "sigh" in that sweet romantic way that gives you all the warm fuzzies. This is the epitome of ROMANCE and as I was reading this delightful story, I was reminded of this author, the reason I love romance in fiction and why it does so much for me. This book just made me happy, grinning all the way, and I immersed myself completely in this beautiful story.

I don't care. When I am with you, I feel as though, for the first time in my life, I am real, I am seen. It's difficult to explain, but I want to experience everything with you that a woman can experience.

I really fell in love with the siblings though, and seeing their eccentricities and their bond as a family even if it's not by blood. I love how protective Mick is of them and even though they frustrate him at times, he is all about giving them what they dream and desire. Especially to his sisters, he would do anything for even if it means buying a parasol or helping a sister set up a bar. And I felt that Lorraine Heath did a tremendous job in showing the tragic elements of Baby Farming. It definitely broke my heart seeing it in this story and how society viewed children born "on the other side of the blanket" as it were.

Overall **Beyond Scandal and Desire** is a stunning beginning to a new series, a story of true heart, hidden secrets and a true love affair that sings to your heart!!! INCREDIBLY HEARTFELT!

If I touch you, Aslyn, I'm not going to stop touching you until I've touched every aspect of you

[foogallery id="49161"]

Maddie says

4.5 Stars ?????

NOT FOR UNDER 18's

I am indeed having a jolly good time

Prologue:

...

London - 1840

“It’s a boy, Your Grace.”

Swearing harshly, he squeezed his eyes shut. The gender shouldn’t have mattered, and yet the pronouncement hit him like a solid blow to the chest.

“Have you seen him?”

Her head barely moved in a shake. “He’s a bastard. You know what you must do,” she rasped, then turned imploring tear-filled eyes toward him. “For me. We must be rid of him. You know we must.”

Then he took the babe from the bassinet in which it had been placed. It. It. He would not think of it as a child, but as a creature. It looked up at him with huge blue eyes. Carrying his burden, he strode from the room without looking back.

“I’m in search of the Widow Trewlove.” “You have found her.” Her dark eyes dipped to the burden he carried, her face impassive as though she, too, could not acknowledge what was about to transpire.

“Will you be paying by the month, or am I to take in your bastard completely?” Her voice held no accusation, no condemnation. He almost imagined he heard a bit of sympathy, of kindness, in it.

“Completely.”

“Fifteen pounds.”

“I’m paying ten times what you ask. I don’t want it to suffer.”

“Never you fret. I’ll take proper care of your by-blow.” Turning, she went inside and closed the door quietly behind her.

London - 1871

Mick Trewlove - a thug -self-assurance to such a degree that it seemed to overwhelm every other aspect

If he were any other man, he might experience a measure of remorse, but he’d learned early on there was no capital found in regrets

Lady Aslyn Hastings had always possessed a rather active and creative imagination - all of twenty and had never been kissed and obsessed with kissing

And Once again in a weeks time I am reading about a gowling male, just love it! ->

...
????

He growled, his vibrating chest sending ripples of pleasure coursing through her.

She needed to put a name to what she was feeling, to the sensations bursting through her.

An insane thought flashed through her mind.

The kiss felt like winning.

Kissing her was the best decision he'd ever made in his life. Kissing her was the worst decision he'd ever made in his life.

????
Why did this man have such an effect on her? Why did everyone else seem so small in comparison?

????

Will his father acknowledge his bastard son, and will a relationship between Aslyn ever work?

Read the book to find out!!

I will recommend to lovers of Historical Romance, this will be another top favorite of mine from Lorraine and over the years, I read them all!!

Mei says

Lately, I have problems with HR... Here they were not big, but I was still annoyed occasionally while reading.

What I have problem with is the insta-part, being it insta-lust or love or attraction. I like my MCs to become attracted, yes, but not blindly. There should be some developing, some growth...

Here we have a very sheltered heroine, Aslyn, who never ventured beyond the gilded cage here guardians have set for her. I cannot believe that a woman of 21 never had any hint of rebellion, but meekly stayed where they put her. They even decided that she will marry their son and when Aslyn try to tell them that she will not, they just ignore her. And she still justifies them!

She grew during the book, but I still didn't like her. She was too stiff, too sheltered, too a useless being for me to like. Maybe it is that I'm bored with heroines who attract the hero only because they're a lady with soft hands, with perfect bearing, with perfect pose and coiffured hair and nothing more. I prefer my heroines to be a little bit different, a little bit rebellious, a little bit more!

She herself admits that she's useless and in the second half of the book my esteem of her grew and at the end I tentatively liked her.

As far as Mick is concerned, I admired his love for his mum and his brothers and sisters and his desire to help the less fortunate, but I didn't like his conviction that he's always right. I understand that he's a self made man, but he didn't took into consideration anyone else's opinion but his own. He is always convinced that what he does is what's right. It was a bit OTT for me.

During the book he changes his aim from revenge to love and I appreciated that he was ready to sacrifice for the heroine's love, but it came a little bit late for me.

Aslyn's guardians story plays a big part here and, while I'm first to admit that the duke's love for his wife was immense, I wanted to smack both of them for sheer stupidity and cruelty. (view spoiler)

With all the things that irked me in this book, the characters did grow and evolved, so I liked how the author managed that, thus a 3 star.

I will read Gillie's story because she seems more like a heroine I could like! She's dressing however she likes, she's managing a tavern and doesn't mince her words!!! :-)

Tracy Emro says

WOW, Just WOW! Anyone who follows my reviews knows I read A LOT of books, but rarely do I want to cry at the end of book as much I as did this one - not because it was sad, but because it was over! I LOVED, LOVED, LOVED this book! Ms. Heath has a way with words, she has the ability to draw a reader in and force them to become invested in her characters - their joy is your joy, their pain is your pain, their troubles become your troubles - it is a rare treat to find an author who has this talent and an amazing gift for anyone lucky enough to read the book.

This is the first book in the Sins for All Seasons Series, the series is centered around the Widow Ettie Trewlove and the children she raised, who are all illegitimate cast-offs. Ms. Heath sets up the series and introduces us to the future characters, but never does it feel like this book is just a set up for the series, Mick Trewlove and Lady Aslyn Hastings are truly the stars and the main focus of the book.

Mick knows that the Duke of Hedley is his father and wants to be acknowledged as such. He is a wealthy self-made man who literally pulled himself from the gutter and forged an empire. But he longs for the respect and acceptance of the nobility, he is sure if his father would acknowledge their connection, doors would be opened to him. He has written to the duke several times, but after responding that he has no bastard to the first letter, the duke has ignored him. Mick wants his acknowledgement more than anything in the world and hatches a plan. If the duke won't accept him, Mick will ruin his heir.

Lady Aslyn Hastings is the orphaned daughter of an earl and the ward of the Duke of Hedley. She has lived with the family since she was a young child and though it has not been officially announced, she and everyone in society assume that she will marry Hedley's son and heir, the Earl of Kipwick and affectionately known as Kip. Aslyn has been sheltered and knows little of the world, the duchess is a recluse and extremely over protective of her. Aslyn longs for excitement and begs Kip to take her to Cremorne Gardens. This is where Mick and Aslyn meet for the first time.

Mick along with his sister Fancy are at the gardens and "happen" to run into Kip and Aslyn. Kip knows of Mick and longs to gain entrance to his brother Aiden's club - The Cerberus Club. After a bit of friendly chatter, Mick tells Kip, he will take him to the club. Meanwhile, Aslyn is mesmerized by Mick, never has she had such a reaction to a man and it makes her question her feelings for Kip.

Over the next few days, Mick enacts his plan and plays on Kip's weakness for gambling, he also begins to "woo" Aslyn. He plans to steal her from Kip and bring Kip to ruin, thinking he will then be able to force the duke's hand. What he didn't plan for was Aslyn or his reaction to her.

This is an amazing story, it is well written, flows wonderfully, there are secrets, betrayal, moments of wonder and joy, moments of immense heartache, steamy love scenes, shocking twists that have even bigger shocking twists and a truly beautiful soul-mate type love. I cannot recommend this book enough, I will definitely be re-reading this one and cannot wait for the next book in the series.

I am voluntarily leaving a review for an uncorrected eARC that was provided to me by Edelweiss and the publisher

Pavlina Read more sleep less blog♥♥ says

4 STARS

This was a fantastic start to a new series and now I'm excited for the rest books! I enjoyed a lot this one, the premise was great and there was a twist that I wasn't expected!

Mick and Aslyn's romance was fun and flirty! I fell in love with Mick, He wanted the best for Aslyn! I like them together, and they make me smile a lot!

Overall it was a great story, There was so much to love about the story and the characters were lovable!

Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews says

This was a most unusual Regency Romance-yes, there's the requisite lady, but her lover isn't a member of the aristocracy-in fact, he is quite literally a bastard, and he's not above using others to get his father to acknowledge him.

Lady Aslyn Hastings is betrothed to the son of the Duke who took her in and raised her after she was orphaned-but she feels that there must be something more out there than the tepid interest he takes in her-and definitely more than the life she lives as the sheltered daughter of a house where the Duchess never stirs foot outside the home and insists that Aslyn take two footmen and two maids with her whenever she does venture out for a bit of shopping.

When Aslyn finally coerces her fiance to take her to the park for a visit, they run into Mick Trewlove, the illegitimate son of a Duke who was raised by a woman who took in the upper classes by-blows. Mick was fortunate to escape the death that awaited many children in similar circumstances and has risen literally from the ashes to become a wealthy businessman. But his ultimate goal is to have his father acknowledge him,-and he plans to ruin the Duke's legitimate heir, using Lady Aslyn as part of his plot. But what neither Aslyn nor Mick counted on was the fiery heat that drew them to each other, nor the admiration each had for the other-attraction that only grew as they spent more stolen time together. Things are not always as they seem, however, and a happily ever after seems more distant than ever when old secrets come to light. Can Mick forego his revenge and find a way to be with Aslyn?

Very seldom is the issue of the base-born aristocracy dealt with in books of this era, but it had to be a significant social problem. As is mentioned in the book, many of such children died or were killed in clandestine settings. The book doesn't deal directly with, but implies the case for nature versus nurture. If Mick weren't the son of a Duke, would he have accomplished what he did?

All in all, a very enjoyable read, with admirable characters, an intricate plot, and a real feel for a fascinating time in history.

Astrid - The Bookish Sweet Tooth says

Review @ Vanilla & Spice Books

★ ★ ★ 4.5 STARS ★ ★ ★

Lorraine Heath's introduction into her new series follows one of her well-loved formulas of unconventional heroes and/or heroines who often have the danger of scandal hanging above them. Even more fascinating is that the author often explores social deficiencies of that time which serves to provide a deeper experience and understanding as to how people lived in Georgian/Regency/Victorian times.

The prologue offers a tragic view on a moment in the life of aristocracy. I was appalled but also felt an odd sense of compassion because something just didn't sit right with me from the beginning. A baby born in sin, delivered at the door of a woman who very well could have let the child die. An aristocrat who is filled with grief for his love and raising walls so that he won't be overwhelmed by guilt for giving the child away. These people didn't sound horrible or callous. So I was completely captivated and could not wait to untangle the mystery.

Mick Trewlove is a bastard. He has come to terms with his status in life, yet he wants acknowledgement from the man who sired him. Being rebuffed once and then ignored only stirred his anger and calls for revenge. He is cunning, smart, wealthy and determined to use all the resources at his disposal to destroy the heir of his alleged father, the Duke of Hedley. A means to an end is Lady Aslyn, ward to the duke and soon-to-be-betrothed to his son, Kipwick. What he didn't anticipate was the enchantment Aslyn would cast over him. It was endlessly sweet to watch him fall for her, how defenseless he was and how she became his addiction. He still wants his revenge but all of a sudden he can't bear the thought of her falling with Kip, who had everything Mick wanted.

He'd once thought her crucial to his scheme of bringing about Hedley's downfall. Now he feared that she might very well lead to his.

Ironic, that Mick had everything Kip wanted. And all of the time Mick is acutely aware of how unsuitable he is, how scandalous it would be for her to be associated with him.

Aslyn grew up sheltered in her guardian's home. The duchess in particular feels extremely protective of her and there are lectures of morality in spades. There is an unspoken agreement that she will marry Kip, the man she grew up with and loves. At a not-so-chance run into Mick she is fascinated. The man who has risen above his origins calls to her but her guardians would never allow her to breathe the same air. I found it very satisfying that Aslyn showed that she had a good head on her shoulders and didn't blame the children for being born on the wrong side of the blanket but rather casting the responsibility on their parents, despite her coddled and sheltered upbringing.

Aslyn's growth from when she meets Mick, still under the influence of the obvious hypocrisy of two people of the ton, to when she falls in love with a bastard is remarkable. I was happy to see that she was able to shed her own status and accept Mick for the man he was.

“You’re someone’s son. What does it matter that your parents weren’t married? I don’t care how you came into the world. I only care that you’re here.

Miss Heath slowly unravels the threads of the mystery surrounding Mick's birth. While I was pretty confident to know about his parentage I was kept in the dark for a very long time about how that fit together

with him being a bastard. I commend the author for that successful twist in the story. Since that came rather late in the story, however, I felt that the end was slightly rushed.

This story is an intriguing social study of the late 19th century - baby farmers were real. It was their job to rid people of the aristocracy and those who had money of unwanted children by letting them die. It's horrifying to what lengths people went (and still go) to keep their reputation intact.

I got a kick out of getting a glimpse of Graves from The Last Wicked Scoundrel from the author's Scoundrels of St. James series. We are being introduced to Mick's colorful and merry band of adopted siblings who I'm sure we will see getting their HEAs. Towards the end it is mentioned that all his siblings born in sin would be accepted into the family which I found a little bit unbelievable, given the duke's and the duchess' previous opinion of illegitimate children.

In my (not so humble) opinion Lorraine Heath is one of the most underrated and under-appreciated Historical Romance authors of today. Her words are poetry with the taste of old yet still very readable and enjoyable. She is one of the most reliable authors to pull my heartstrings. Romance, angst, a scandalous hero and a heroine who will grow on you make up this wonderful story that will leave you completely satisfied and will make you swoon.

All his life he'd been searching for acceptance, and here it was in the form of a woman with a tilted-up nose and crooked smile.

kris says

Mick Trewlove, bastard, wants REVENGE and/or Lady Aslyn Hastings. So he sets about wooing her and ends up wooing himself? And then there's a confrontation with his bio father and setup for what will probably be a bunch more books including one about some guy named BEAST???

1. This wasn't very well edited and it *felt* like a rush job. I guess my feeling is that just because you can release multiple books a year is...should you release multiple books a year?

2. Mick was your stereo-typical "rich common man struggles with his need for revenge"—which is absolutely a fine trope!—it's just...so done. He's just so driven and so rich and SO GOOD because he helps others and has an orphanage and loves his mother... Yeah, and he's also planning to ruin a perfectly innocent woman just because she happens to be engaged to the legitimate child of his father, not to mention his destruction of Kip (legitimate child) just because he's...legitimate. I mean, these are not good things??

And while Heath leans hard on the "society views bastards as less than human" theme (including the near-drowning OF A CHILD), it felt almost too much like a PBS special. Especially paired with the "and she

started a home for illegitimate children and he adopted a bunch of illegitimate children and THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER" ending.

(I do want to say that the ending revelation was handled in an interesting fashion, though! Like, I honestly didn't expect things to fall where they did and was pleasantly shocked that they did.)

3. Aslyn (WHAT IS THIS NAME THE FU-) is fine? I didn't particularly like her, but looking back I'm not sure why. She's sheltered but with ~dreams of experiencing things. And then she begins to step outside herself, and then she kind of goes a bit over the top but in retrospect it doesn't seem all that egregious. But I was bored while reading her, and bored with her development, and bored with the final outcome. (She, IDK, "teaches" Mick an Important Lesson About Family or some shit and UGH.)

4. The twist was decently twisty except it was telegraphed a bit too loudly so I was a bit too ready for it.

Caz says

Lorraine Heath kicks off her new *Sins for All Seasons* series with **Beyond Scandal and Desire**, the story of a man intent on revenge upon the father who abandoned him and the young woman he intends to use as part of the scheme he has concocted in order to achieve that end. I'm not a great lover of the heroine-as-instrument-of-revenge trope, but I trust Lorraine Heath to deliver an engaging and emotionally rich story and know that she has the writing chops to turn a hackneyed plotline into something a little different. She certainly manages that here and crafts an intense, sensual character-driven romance with a final twist I didn't quite see coming.

Mick Trewlove has known for many years that his mum isn't his biological parent, and discovered the identity of his father, the Duke of Hedley, when he was fifteen. Knowing he had been consigned at birth to the not-so-tender mercies of a baby farmer (a terrible practice whereby women took in illegitimate children of the nobility and often ensured they did not live), Mick – who has worked hard to make something of himself and is now a successful businessman – is still fuelled by anger at the man who threw him away like so much rubbish. He is determined that his father should publicly acknowledge him, admit him to be worthy and regret his decision to cast him aside, but other than one unequivocal refusal, Mick's written requests have all gone unanswered. Furious at the duke's dismissal, Mick sets in motion his plan to destroy Hedley's legitimate son and heir, the Earl of Kipwick and ruin his ward, Lady Aslyn Hastings – who happens to be Kipwick's intended. "*She'd be to him (Mick) whatever the woman who had given birth to him had been to his father, and he'd throw the similarities into the duke's face.*"

Lady Aslyn's parents, the Earl and Countess of Eames, were killed in a train crash when she was just a girl. She has led a very sheltered life with her guardian and his wife, who rarely goes out into society and is of a delicate constitution. The two are clearly devoted to one another, and Aslyn can't help but hope that her own marriage will prove equally felicitous. Although nothing is official, it's widely known that Aslyn has been destined for Kipwick since the cradle. But Aslyn has become rather restless of late, and is chafing at the restrictions that are constantly imposed upon her by her gender, her position and the duchess, who dislikes going out and encourages Aslyn to remain home as often as possible. Thinking that perhaps an evening visit to the Cremorne pleasure gardens will yield a glimpse of something exciting, she hopes to persuade Kipwick to remain there until after dark, when, according to the gossip rags, the *naughty undertakings* that have titillated her imagination are... undertaken. Sadly however, it seems as though the place is rather staid, and she has just owned to Kip that Cremorne isn't quite what she expected when a young woman accidentally

bumps into them and promptly introduces herself as Miss Fancy Trewlove. When a tall, handsome, dark-eyed gentleman emerges from the shadows and is introduced as her brother, Aslyn – whose ‘understanding’ with Kipwick means she has never been courted or even experienced the mildest of flirtations – is struck by the sheer force of his presence and shocked at the strength of her physical reaction to him.

While Mick hadn’t planned for his sister to engineer the meeting, he makes the most of the opportunity, rather surprised to find that Lady Aslyn is not what he expected; unlike most young ladies of her class, she is approachable and easy to talk to. She is also, Mick notes with satisfaction, intrigued by him and has hardly taken her eyes off him since he first appeared – which is all to the good as far as his plans go.

This is the first of many encounters Mick contrives with Aslyn, over the course of which he finds himself growing reluctantly fascinated by her mix of intelligence, innocence and curiosity about the world around her. Before long, his desire for the woman herself far outstrips his desire for revenge against his father – but even if Aslyn were not promised to Kipwick, there is no possibility that the daughter of an earl and a bastard – even one with noble blood running through his veins – can have a future together.

The revenge plot hums along in the background but Ms. Heath focuses firmly on the developing relationship between Aslyn and Mick, whose immediate fascination with each other soon goes beyond infatuation and physical attraction and turns into a deep emotional connection that neither had expected. Both are engaging, well-rounded characters and I particularly enjoyed watching Aslyn coming to realise that while she cares for Kip, he is not the man who makes her heart race and her blood pound. Even before meeting Mick, she had begun to question the nature of Kip’s feelings for her and wonder why he’s never attempted to steal so much as a kiss – but her visceral reaction to Mick makes her start to question her situation even more. Mick is good-looking, self-assured, solicitous and charming; he’s like no-one else Aslyn has ever met but just as important as the physical attraction that draws her to him is the way he actually converses with her frankly, opening up a world of which she has largely been ignorant and showing her just how narrow her world-view really is. More than that, he listens to her and encourages her in her own opinions, something the men of her own class never do.

Mick is a sexy, diamond-in-the-rough hero who is perhaps just a little too good to be true in spite of his plan to use Aslyn, bring down Kipwick and force Hedley to recognise him. Everything Mick has, he’s worked bloody hard for, and his many business interests encompass housing, hotels and shops, the latter two providing badly-needed employment for people living in the less prosperous areas of London. He is devoted to his ‘family’ – other illegitimate children ‘farmed’ out to Ettie Trewlove – and believes everyone deserves a chance. But Mick doesn’t see himself as a philanthropist or benefactor – he just thinks he’s a bloke who did what he needed to do to get on in life, and is touched when Aslyn calls his achievements – calls him – remarkable. The trouble is though, that I couldn’t quite credit that a highly successful, self-made man of thirty-one with so much going on in his life would still be craving validation from someone who had made his disinterest so clear. I suppose one could argue that revenge is never rational, but Mick’s determination to get the duke to acknowledge him didn’t really ring true, and as that’s the driving force behind plot, I’ve knocked my final grade down a notch.

In spite of that, however, I enjoyed the book, and am intrigued enough by Mick’s ‘siblings’ to want to continue with the series. **Beyond Scandal and Desire** is a solid, if slightly flawed start, and I’m sure fans of the genre and the author will enjoy it.

Mandi Schreiner says

First of a new series, and I always love to try out new series but I might not continue with this one. Beyond Scandal and Desire has a great set-up, but it fell flat for me.

In the prologue, we have a gut wrenching scene as our hero takes his newborn son, born to his mistress, away in the middle of the night to a common woman who for a small payment, who will raise him in a good home. Or as good as she can provide. This woman takes in several children this way, supporting herself with the money the rich pay her when they hand over their unwanted children.

Thirty-one years later, Mick, that unwanted baby, is an adult, and a pretty wealthy one at that. He rose up from being dirt poor, to opening up businesses and investing in real estate. When he was just eight years old, he found the blanket with the Hedley ducal seal buried in the backyard. He knows this seal comes from his birth father and from this day on, he wants acknowledgement from his birth father, the duke. He sends him letters, and never gets a reply. When he is an adult, with money, he decides to go a new route. To get close to the duke's legitimate son, Kip, and steal away the woman he loves as revenge.

Lady Aslyn Hastings parents died when she was young, and she was taken in by the Hedley's (Mick's birth parents) and has grown up with Kip. Everyone just assumes the two of them will wed, since they've been fond of each other for most of their lives. But Aslyn wants adventure in her life. Kip on the surface is very prim and proper, not even trying to kiss her once during their courtship. She is extremely protected by her guardians. And then she meets Mick. As he is "stalking" Kip, and as those two men start to get closer, Aslyn can't keep Mick out of her mind. He is the danger and the naughtiness that she wants to experience. When Kip's gambling obsession becomes known and continues to grow out of control, Aslyn turns to Mick for help and an eventual romance.

I like that Mick knows who is real father is, and that he has built this life for himself of riches and he is very close with his other "adopted" siblings. I wanted him to be fierce and ready to burn down London for his father to acknowledge him. But I waited and waited and his personality just didn't come through. It was like he was played too safe. He couldn't decide if he was going to be a gentleman or a hell raiser. I wanted some passion out of him - instead he fell flat.

Aslyn too just didn't have a lot to offer. She isn't in love with Kip, although in a relationship with him for at least half the book. She desires something a little more dangerous - and Mick is supposed to provide that. But this want didn't transfer to any type of passionate romance. Too slow for me.

Grade: C-

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

3.5 stars

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Mick grew up knowing he was illegitimate and experienced all the society pitfalls because of it. All he has

ever wanted is for his father to publicly acknowledge him but when his father refuses, he decides to ruin his half-brother heir.

Aslyn has been the Duke of Hedley's ward for most of her life after her parents died. With it understood that she would eventually marry Hedley's son and their very protective nature, Aslyn has been sheltered. Starting to feel stifled, she begins to push for more freedom. After meeting Mick, she senses a freedom she has never thought to experience.

Mick wants revenge but how far will he be willing to get it?

"I intend to take from him everything he holds dear---including the lady at his side."

The first in a new series, Beyond Scandal and Desire focuses on the eldest child of Widow Trewlove, a woman who took in unwanted babies. While we are introduced to Mick as a very successful business man, he alludes and mentions how tough it was growing up poor and with the taint of being a bastard. The revenge he seeks is a bit different; he simply wants his father to acknowledge him and hopes this will open higher society doors to him. It's a little heartbreaking that Mick obviously just wants to feel acknowledged by his father, making him feel meaningful since he was given away. Mick was the hero where circumstances force him to have a tough outer shell but is angry and hurt over feeling abandoned. He was somewhat romance hero trope (a bit more sensitive) but how he fell for heroine made him very enjoyable to read.

Why did this man have such an effect on her?

Why did everyone else seem so small in comparison?

Our heroine Aslyn starts off very sheltered and buttoned up but with some inner thoughts that hint at a will striving to break free. I, personally, thought Aslyn stole the show a bit with her living in quiet desperation. Her journey and growth from accepting her gilded cage, to starting to question, finding herself, and finally expressing and owning what she wanted was so satisfying. Usually it is the hero who stands tall during the declarations of love but, here, oh the heroine brings it and I was cheering her on. Aslyn could have taken the easy road but she spoke her truth and I delighted in following along on her journey.

Never before had he ever been so weak-willed.

He was a man of strength, and yet he thought for her he'd go to his knees.

With a mysterious painful beginning, I was sucked into the story right away. I took pleasure in the slow buildup and burn Heath provided, we get to know Mick and Aslyn (does start to feel a smidgen too slow as the anticipation for reveals starts to settle in). There are some scenes with Mick interacting with his family that helped fill out his character (and introduce future series heroes/heroines) and I wished there had been more for Aslyn. The Duke and Duchess of Hedley don't get as flushed out as I would have liked and their son definitely gets too much of a thinly veiled villain w/ maybe future redemption arc. While I enjoyed the slower buildup, the story had too much of a top heavy feel, the ending felt rushed. I would be lying if I didn't say I started watching the page count after I got around 60% waiting for a reveal that would have repercussions in Mick and Aslyn's relationship. The reveal was extremely needed too, but with how late it finally happened, I was left feeling a bit bereft and missing some crucial emotional angst and growth between the two; my favorite romance components. At minimum, this story needed to be 100 pages longer (my old romance reading heart would have delighted in a full sequel book finishing Aslyn and Mick's story with working things out after full reveal).

The buildup and getting to know characters first half will have you engrossed into the story but the very late reveals give the ending a rushed feel. Some secondary characters felt too thin but Aslyn's growth and journey along with her instant connection and simmering romance with Mick will have you appreciating and taking

pleasure in the story.

All his life he'd been searching for acceptance, and here it was in the form of a woman with a tilted-up nose and crooked smile.

Vashti says

Very strong 4 stars!!!!

Will review soon.

Esther says

ARC provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Review to come.

Enjoyable read. Great character development, storyline and pacing.

Jultri says

2.5/5. This took me a relatively long time to finish, but I was determined not to DNF a Lorraine Heath book. It's not the worst of hers that I have read, but damn, it came a close second. Let me say it loud and clear: I detest insta-lust in HRs, especially when an extremely sheltered, virginal girl suddenly has sexual awakening at first glance and immediately starts to have lubricious fantasies of a touchy-feely nature, she could not possibly have any knowledge of. Of course women are entitled to sexual feelings too, but the thoughts she had of him were just not that of a cloistered innocent, which LH made clear she was. Okay, I understand the heroine's fascination for the masculine and supremely confident hero. What I did not get is his equal attraction for her, when she was just another naive, pretty face with a rather bland personality. I also didn't get why the Duke would wrap the baby in a blanket with the highly identifiable ducal crest, when the whole abandonment was supposedly hush-hush to protect the Duchess from scandal. I certainly did not follow the giant career leap he made from brick boy collecting ash to a brick factory owner. I was also highly perplexed at the hero's early childhood starvation when the Duke supposedly gave the hero's adoptive mother a fair bit of cash to ensure his comfort. And his adoptive mother killed 2 babes? And did we and the heroine really need to hear his over-sharing of his sexual past.

However, even these ponderings of mine did not stop me from constantly drifting off to sleep every time I tried to read a few pages, which made it a real struggle to finish, particularly when my focus continued to shift to other more interesting endeavours (pretty much anything else) during my waking moments.

Christie«SHBBblogger» says

[Yes (hide spoiler)]
