



The Innocent Auction

Victoria Sue

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London 1810.

Their love was a death sentence.

Deacon, Viscount Carlisle, was aware of the slums and gin-lanes of London. Just as he was aware of the underground traffic that furnished the brothels and bath houses with human innocents. He was also aware that the so-called justice system would hang the accused without much of an attempt at a defense, unless the unfortunate had deep pockets to pay for it.

He just hadn't expected to be directly involved in any of it.

It started with a plea for help and ended with forbidden love, the love between a Viscount and a stable-boy. An impossible love and a guarantee of the hangman's noose.

Will Deacon fight for Tom? Will he risk the death sentence and take that fight from the stately halls of his English mansion to the horrors of Newgate Prison and the slums of London?

Or will he realize that if he doesn't, death will be a welcome end to the loneliness of the sentence he is already living?

The Innocent Auction Details

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From Reader Review The Innocent Auction for online ebook

SheReadsALot says

Four Hearts--

"Their love was so forbidden that their very touch could wrap a hangman's noose around them. The very reason they had come to London should send a warning racing through his veins, but it wasn't fear that warmed his blood, it was desire that snaked such a salacious path."

If I have to describe "*The Innocent Auction*" by Victoria Sue in a few words: passionate, intense, forbidden and well plotted.

This is a story about forbidden love between a Earl and his stablehand that would have never happened if not for circumstances, or a fine writer's hand pulling the strings. The story begins with an innocent auction, a private sale of young "virginal" boys to molly houses. Caught your attention? Let's get the triggers out the way: **attempted non-con, death (minor character), kidnapping**. This tale mixes grit, some realism and snapshots of the persecution gays faced in the Regency era - imprisonment, pillory, hanging. Horrific.

Deacon is a rescuer. He is the heir to an earldom that is up to its ears in debt. But he will fight for what is right. He is kindhearted to his staff, he truly was a good man. A rarity in the gentry. Know what else he is? A closeted homosexual. He didn't acknowledge that part of himself until later in life, late twenties. It was a young man, eighteen year old Tom, whom he rescued from the innocent auction nearly five years ago, that gets him to finally realize something. The reason why he was perfunctory (if that) with hetero sexual relations, had to close his eyes to get hard...was because he was attracted to the same sex. And he is very attracted to supple, blonde Tom. For Tom, it was likewise.

The attraction happens very soon in the book, like before 20% kind of soon. When that usually happens in books, I get nervous. Can the author have enough talent to carry the story for a novel length? I had nothing to worry about. *The Innocent Auction* had twists, turns and action. And it's also not a PWP, it has plot for days. Some subplots got a little indulgent and angst happy (my biggest quibble is the last action/suspense subplot in the the final 10% before the epilogue - how could that happen so easily?) But the intensity of Deacon and Tom's attraction was the main plot pushing this story.

"How had it got to this? [...] That feeling that there was something missing. That everything you wanted in life was condemned as a sin. Who were other people to judge?"

The story alternated in POV, it waited a little long in the beginning to get to Tom's POV but it improved somewhere toward the middle, it's not a 50-50 but it definitely gets the points and subplots across. Tom had a harsh life, at first I thought his attraction was just misconstrued gratefulness from being liberated from the evil pimp, Samson. But thankfully his POV finally kicked in.

In between the harsh realities for both characters, fighting their feelings though it's apparent they're made for each other, Tom not thinking he is good enough, Deacon trying to rebuild through an unwanted marriage proposal (he needs cash that bad) and trying to save his family and their reputation, the romance is yummy, a little quick especially for two men who have never acted on their attraction to men before. It could be considered insta-love but they had the depth of feelings to back it up.

"I want you desperately. I want to feel your skin, naked, beneath me. I want to hold you in my arms while I taste every inch of your body. I want to sleep in your arms. I want yours the last face I see tonight, and the first one I see tomorrow. I want to wake up in the middle of the night and be able to kiss you while you sleep, because I can. Because tonight society doesn't judge us. We owe nothing to no man, except to each other."

When the sex did finally happen, it was hot - erotic, great dirty talk...delicious.

What kept this from being a 5 Heart Read for me? The neat ending and insta-love (hey it's a double edged sword). The men struggle and at a few points, I could not see how a HEA could ever happen (it does) but after all of that, it felt like the chips got stacked pretty easily for that epilogue. There were a few editing mishaps for me like how one prisoner's sentence changed from hanging in one chapter to deportation in the next.

The story does a very good job of convincing the reader about Deacon and Tom's intense connection. They have a brief history where it was instrumental in making Tom into the man he became. His ending would have been far different and sad. I think the story's strongest points are the way the research didn't read like an info dump. We're taken to Newgate prison, we get to see the harsh realities for the poor and working class. We get to glimpse Regency London's underbelly.

Victoria Sue is a new to me author. And after reading *The Innocent Auction*, it most certainly won't be my last. I do love finding good MM Regency when I can, I think Regency period lovers might need to check this out...soon.

A copy provided for an honest review.

Lorraine Lesar says

Ohhhhhhhh yes! This I liked. I myself was held prisoner by invisible chains securing me to the book, as I tried to read as quickly as I could, to see how the author, against all odds, gave me the HEA I so needed. I was captivated from the very first page to the very last, I didn't want the book to end, but I found myself racing to that final page, the tension nerve racking, the suspense killing me, I had to know!

I love good historical romances, to hold my attention though, it has to be a good storyline, any facts mentioned must be correct and the research meticulous, otherwise the writer would be joining other unfortunate authors in Newgate Jail, to rot away or even see the Hangman's Noose, never to be read again by readers and especially me, but not Victoria Sue – she rocked this!

Firstly, I loved the cover "Their love was a death sentence" was so appropriate. The book is set in the early

1800's – to love another man and be caught, was literally a death sentence! The so-called justice system a farce. It was thoroughly corrupt, where enough "coin" could be used to bribe yourself out of most situations, or in this case, bribe the courts to ensure that the prisoner would never see the light of day again, either by rotting away or via the Hangman's Noose.

The blurb covers the story so well, so I won't repeat, but I'll add this – the author did a magnificent job of conveying that time period, her research was spot-on and the way she navigated her plot was clever, very clever. As I said at the beginning, I was captivated throughout, her sex scenes were so sensual and delicious, her characters engaging and I have to say, that she captured the essence of a "baddie" remarkably well – they were really bad!

Loved it, loved it, loved it.

5 "the author won this auction" stars from me.

****I would like to thank the author for the privilege and opportunity of reading this ARC. My review is an honest opinion of the book****

Lori says

Loved this book, even though it made very sad at times. I definitely need to check out more by this author.

Jack Byrne says

Loved it! It's well researched and a lovely authentic read. Victoria Sue doesn't shy away from the more intense aspects and dangers of being gay in that era, but it was also a lovely romantic read. I couldn't put it down. Definitely a favourite author for me now, and I hope to read more about Deacon and Tom.

Linda ~ chock full of hoot, just a little bit of nanny ~ says

DNF @ 25%

Contrived scenes to give the MCs forbidden but tepid smooching scenes, zero build up to any kind of relationship and zero chemistry despite all the lusting between them. Bored now.

There is an attempt at a plot though, so that's nice, but honestly, I've read much better master/servant fanfic than this back when I was absorbing every Frodo/Sam slash fic I could get my greedy little hands on. Plus, the constant bad grammar (was stood, had sat) and missing punctuation killed this story even before I got to this:

"...his skin taught..."

Um...sorry, honey, but skin cannot be taught. It has no brains to be learning with! It can however be taut.

Joyfully Jay says

A Joyfully Jay review.

3.75 stars

I liked the set up with the wealthy lord and the stable boy, in particular the way Beau's story runs in parallel to Tom and Deacon's relationship. It never overshadows them, but it does serve to illustrate the cautionary tale and the risks that Tom and Deacon face. It is a great way to show how precarious it is for two men to pursue a relationship, and to let us see some of the fallout of that, without having it all happen to our heroes directly.

I also think Sue does a nice job with the historical elements here, in particular the legal side of things. We get great detail into the prison, the punishment, and the greasing of palms that makes the system work. I found these details really enhanced the story and gave us a good sense of the time period. There were times when I felt like we were getting the modern day explanation of things (talking about the "current" law or speculating that the law would be repealed in 10 years), which took me out of the story a bit, but overall I think the historical elements were done well and the writing tight and easy to read.

Where I struggled with this story was the relationship between Tom and Deacon. I just had a hard time feeling the romantic connection that was supposedly taking place. The sexual connection was clear, but I felt like they went from virtual strangers to having this deep emotional connection with no time to get there.

Read Jay's review in its entirety [here](#).

Trio says

Whoa, that was intense! Definitely *not* for the squeamish. A few incredibly memorable scenes regarding the dark and horribly unfair world of 19th Century London. Both how the poor children of the time were treated and those convicted (or even just accused) of homosexual activities. Gah, seriously intense and graphic.

The story was very, very well thought out and beautifully paced - this is the best thing I've read by Victoria Sue.

I did the audio version and had the always extremely pleasurable treat of listening to Joel Leslie for 6-1/2 hours. He's just brilliant and this was one of those books that he does better than anyone else. The variety of his voices, his accents, inflections, and incomparable skill was well suited to this story. Do yourself a favor and if you're even remotely interested in this wonderful story, go with the audio version.

Eugenia says

I was voluntarily provided a free copy of this audiobook by the author, narrator, or publisher in exchange for an honest review.

I love historical romances. I love MM romances. Put the two together and you have something not only wonderful, but heart wrenching, as well. Life for gay men was extremely difficult. I find it difficult to read these books and not despair that they cannot live free and open lives. This book not only focuses on that very issue, but adds the complexity of love between social classes in Regency England.

I truly cared for the MCs and found them absolutely enticing together. The plot and action captured my attention straight away, although the conflict near the end seemed a bit forced (no spoilers). The two MCs reach as possible of an HEA as they can being where and who they are.

What truly made this story for me was the narration by Joel Leslie. His portrayal of the MCs brought them to life. His ability to perform different accents added variety and richness to the story.

This was my first story by Victoria Sue and I loved it. This was not my first audiobook by Joel Leslie--he is one of my favorite narrators.

Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says

I'm not sure how I got it in my head that this was slavefic but I did. I'm guessing I saw what I wanted to see. Because weirdo.

If your brain works like mine and you see the word "auction" and automatically think "slavefic" **this is not that book**. But it's still really good

Deacon gets wind that his cousin Beau has gone to an innocent auction and hot foot's it after him. Beau has a tendency to be impulsive and his being there could sully the family name so Deke to the rescue! An innocent auction is, apparently, where young boys are sold to god knows who for god knows what reasons. Why Beau went to this thing in the first place eludes me. I'm thinking maybe he was drunk and therefore suggestible. Because YUCK! Just yuck.

At the auction Deacon spots a boy with the bluest eyes on stage, eyes that pierce him and is consumed with a visceral need to protect him from what's surely coming to him if he's auctioned off. So he buys him in a melee just prior to the police busting up the whole thing. The boy's filthy, malnourished and terrified and Deacon wants to wrap him up in bubble wrap and make it all better. He sends him to his father's country estate with his trusted employee Joe where he'll be safe and out of London.

Four years later his father dies and when Deacon arrives at the estate to get his ducks in a row he finds it on the brink of bankruptcy. There's also a boy who's all grown up now.

Tom reminds me of Westley: sweet, devoted, earnest and a hardworking stable boy. Tom hasn't forgotten Deacon. The longing they both have is intense with UST galore. The age difference matters not to either of them, but the class difference is another matter altogether. Plus there is the issue of Deacon needing a sizable

amount of money to get the estate back up and running. For that he'll likely need to marry Harriet to acquire her 30 pieces of silver.

I thought the class difference was handled well as both men seem evenly matched in all other aspects and well suited to one another. There's no discernible power differential aside from the obvious, but Deacon treats all his servants with respect.

Both are virgins which doesn't really do much for me but I thought it was sweet that they lost their virginity together. Their relationship is fluffy without being saccharine and a dash of smut thrown in to keep things lively.

There is sadness to this narrative though by way of Beau which segues to the action plotline that maybe was a tad OTT but entertaining nonetheless. The Harriet thing is the only plot point that I thought was weak though it did lead to a heartwarming HEA. So whatever.

The brightest of the bright spots however was Joel Leslie. He knocked this out of the park! Breathing life into these characters, giving them each their own distinct voices and bringing a passion and vivaciousness to this story. Hell, he even threw in a Scottish brogue in there on top of the kagillion British voices he had going. Incredible. Really incredible. I'll definitely be on the lookout for more of his work in the future.

If you're in need of a sweet historical give *The Innocent Auction* a try.

A review copy was provided.

Kara says

To start of this review I have to say I thought this author did a amazing job with the time period in this book!

Deacon ends up at a auction trying to help his brother when he sees Tom and knows he must save him. This book has forbidden love between these two men with the time period they are in if their relationship is found out could be a death sentence for both of them.

There is angst in this book along with steam and some sweet parts too. I really thought the author did a amazing job with this story and these characters. I was grabbed from the start and could not put this down until the end. There were so many on the edge of your seat moments and I also really loved these two MC's together. I do not want to give away any spoilers so I will leave this review with... I really loved this book and would definitely recommend it!

I received this book free in exchange for an honest review from Inked Rainbow Reads.

Mindy says

This is the 4th book, that I have read by this author. I have loved all of them. Victoria Sue is becoming one of my favorites now.

This book was awesome. It has everything Danger, forbidden love, rescues, innocent love, ect. I recommend this for everyone. If you like book that are in the 1800s, Then read this.

Petronella Ford says

Wow!

Loved this, good plot, I could almost smell Newgate prison (yucky) it was so well described, I want to cry several times. Just fantastic. I've read Victoria Sue's other books and she just seems incapable of writing badly even when changing from contemporary BDSM to paranormal and now historical!

WhatAStrangeDuck says

The book is well written, the story works for me but, dear me, it's brutal. If you are looking for a fluffy, little Regency romance, this is not for you.

I'm pretty sure that the depiction of this time period is a lot closer to the truth than a lot of books I've read but still, it is a very bitter pill to swallow. I applaud the author for going for a story where the characters' biggest problem isn't that they have to fake a properly fashionable kind of ennui and boredom or being on time for their little pleasure jaunt through the park. This is about life and death and the very real possibility of spending your life in hell just because you are poor and pretty. Or being killed because you are gay. Which, let's face it, is in not a small part of the world still a part of reality.

It's Romance (tm), so never fear, there is a HEA which actually kind of works (which is a tricky thing to do in a gay historical romance) but the tears I cried along the way were not of the ultimately pleasurable angst variety but more over the fact that humans as such really, really suck a lot of the time.

Still, highly recommended.

Misty says

This was excellent! The author definitely knows how to play with your emotions and feelings.

I'm always on the look out for something different and *The Innocent Auction* is definitely a very unusual and rather dark Regency novel and **I L*O*V*E*D IT!**

It is a captivating story with a great plot and character development ; it grabbed hold of my imagination straightaway. All the characters feel so alive! Tom & Deacon are just wonderful. I love their vulnerability and the way they struggle with their desire and physical attraction. You can't help but root for them.

At that time sodomy was a crime punishable by death and here you feel and experience the full force of what those men went through and it's never glossed over.

The description of the Newgate Prison conditions seems dreadfully realistic and it assails the senses ; one can almost smell the dankness and the stench of the place ... it was horribly vivid!

Do yourself a favor and read this book!

CrabbyPatty says

A well-done historical, set in England in the early 1800's. When trying to warn his cousin Beau that a police raid is coming, Deacon rescues a terrified young boy from an "innocents auction" and sends him to his country estate to recover. Almost five years later, when he learns of his father's death, Deacon returns only to find the estate in ill repair due to an disreputable estate agent and his father's drunken state. Deacon also finds Tom, a strong healthy man with golden hair and brilliant blue eyes -- the lad he rescued earlier.

Deacon is torn between his lust and longing for Tom, while trying to restore the estate, knowing the only way he can achieve this is to marry Harriet, a rich heiress. When Deacon learns that his beloved cousin Beau has been arrested and charged with sodomy (punishable by death), he and Tom goes on a mission to save him.

The story really held my interest, with a solid love story between Deacon and Tom and enough subplots to keep the suspense going. There were a few subplots and characters that seems extraneous, however. There is a HEA and an epilogue that is very satisfying.
