



His at Night

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Love is hottest in the darkness before dawn.

Elissande Edgerton is a desperate woman, a virtual prisoner in the home of her tyrannical uncle. Only through marriage can she claim the freedom she craves. But how to catch the perfect man?

Lord Vere is used to baiting irresistible traps. As a secret agent for the government, he's tracked down some of the most devious criminals in London, all the while maintaining his cover as one of Society's most harmless—and idiotic—bachelors. But nothing can prepare him for the scandal of being ensnared by Elissande.

Forced into a marriage of convenience, Elissande and Vere are each about to discover that they're not the only one with a hidden agenda. With seduction their only weapon—and a dark secret from the past endangering both their lives—can they learn to trust each other even as they surrender to a passion that won't be denied?

From the Paperback edition.

His at Night Details

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Author : Sherry Thomas

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From Reader Review *His at Night* for online ebook

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

His at Night was a very clever, multi-layered story. It is about two people who live their lives while playing out a role, 24 hours out of the day. Both Vere and Elissande have very good reasons for why they pretend to be someone that they are not. Vere does it to right wrongs, to exact vengeance when he could not save his mother so many years ago. Elissande does it for her survival.

I was quite impressed with how Ms. Thomas wrote this book that made me laugh myself giddy in some scenes, and feel a deep sense of sadness, frustration, and anger in other scenes. You see, Vere plays the fool, and he does it very well. He pretends to be what many called an idiot. I wonder how I would feel if I knew him. Probably, I would find myself loving him and wanting to protect him, since the world is cruel to people who are different and who don't live up to their standards. That's what his younger brother, Freddie did. Others simply treated him with contempt. I imagine that was really difficult for Vere. To be such an intelligent person, with so much to offer the world, and to be perceived by the world in such a negative light. Thus, he is a very lonely man. He has created a female companion, his perfect woman, who shares his life, and sees him as he truly is. That is his only solace, outside of his ability to see justice done, and taking care of his brother.

When Vere first sees Elissande, it's love at first sight, although he rejects this feeling. And when he sees that she is scheming to catch herself a husband, he becomes hardened against her. When she engineers being caught in a very compromising position with his brother, he arranges to be there instead, and his opinion plummets to an all time low--but he must marry her. Such begins their marriage.

Elissande turned out to be an equally complicated heroine. She's led a life of fear, living with her frail aunt and her cruel, wicked uncle by marriage. She learned to always smile and act as if everything is okay. Her sunny smile is a mask to hide her deepest fears and pain from the world. When she meets Vere and realizes that he's an idiot, smiling gets really hard. Physically, he's a dream come true. But, does she want to spend her life married to a fool, even if he represents freedom for her aunt and herself? Desperation leads to her trying to entrap Freddie, his younger brother, but she gets Vere in her clutches instead. She'll make do with him, make a marriage that helps her to gain her freedom.

Elissande doesn't expect to feel such passion with him, like she is coming home in his arms. He seems to be two different people: the idiot, and the demanding vital husband who will take all of her, or nothing. She comes to realize that being free from her uncle is not the only possibility from her marriage. Neither come to realize how much they will come to love each other. Watching their relationship unfold kept me riveted.

I must give Ms. Thomas my respect for capturing the late Victorian period so beautifully. Her prose is elegant and vivid. I felt like I was in the 19th century as I read this story. When I had to put the book down, it was with a sense of annoyance. I think this would make a wonderful movie.

The characters in this story are realistic, sometimes to a painful degree. The confrontational encounters between the characters made me wince, because it felt so real to me. I don't think Ms. Thomas is afraid of showing her characters at their ugliest, and I'm not sure that this would work well for every reader. At times, it was jarring to me, to see the cutting way Vere used words with Elissande, to push her away. How Elissande was not afraid to stab back with her own words. Conflict of this sort isn't comfortable for me. But, it felt authentic, which is something that I appreciate. I like a story that has elements of darkness, with

characters that are flawed and struggling. His at Night does have this element in spades. But, it's also a fun, enjoyable book. I liked Vere's cleverness, his ability to stay in character and get the job done, even when it was so hard for him. I liked seeing his covert capers. He stands out as a crusading hero who fights the good fight, and that endeared him to me. He is a strong, vital man--my favorite kind of hero in that regard. His willingness to make personal sacrifices for the good of others only made me love him more. If only he realized how well Elissande complemented him. She really wasn't so different. I wish he hadn't tried so hard to push Elissande away, afraid to let himself love her because it wasn't comfortable for him. I was glad that he came to his senses and realized that an honest relationship isn't always comfortable, that true love hurts. But some hurts heal us deep inside.

It was hard to say what I thought of this book, but to put it simply, I valued my reading experience with His at Night. This was my first book by Ms. Thomas, and I look forward to reading more books by this talented author.

♥?elody says

3.5 stars

I'm conflicted over this one. My feelings kept changing as I kept reading this. My first Sherry Thomas read and this book in particular kept coming my way so I caved and gave it a shot. The overall idea and story set up was intriguing and not typical. But the execution of it could have been better in some parts.

I started out enchanted with the hero and heroine's first meeting. Cliche in many ways yes. But still, these two people who are so lonely and have to 'playact' most of their life to hide something, I found it sweet and poetic that they would find solace and happiness in each other. But then things went all helter skelter when the heroine Elissande, who is in desperate straits, (view spoiler). I was pissed off and disgusted on the hero's behalf. That 'seduction' scene was hands down horrible and made me really uncomfortable. It near triggered (view spoiler) given the extreme lengths the heroine went to and wouldn't let the hero leave and kept throwing herself bodily at him. I hated her after that. But as the story progresses I warmed up to her again and I understood her desperation and motivation behind it. I mean I understood her motives before the set up, but I hated how she went about it and was not ok with that scene. But the author did a good job of internalizing the heroine's abject horror, fear, misery of having no other way out and the absolute guilt of forcing a man into marrying her. There was a nice mix of emotions that played into it and helped me empathize with her.

Now for the hero, Vere, he didn't live up to all the potential I saw in the beginning. And a big part of that was because of the dragged out ruse of playing an idiot. This just didn't work for me. And in all honestly not for good enough plausible reasons. Seeking justice or not, there is no way anyone can sacrifice their entire life (16 years to be exact), 24 hours-7 days a week- every waking hour-as playing the part of an idiot. Just NO way.

That makes no sense to me and showed gaping holes. You're telling me this guy gave up his whole life to work undercover for the Crown by shamming everyone into believing he's stupid? What exactly does that gain? It's explained away that no one will suspect him of anything if he's the 'dimwitted' friend... well yeah but....all the time? So he's working and 'on the job' even when he's home? Did the author seriously think her hero can't live a double life? Because that's pretty much what undercover agents do. They play their part, solve a case, go home and hang up the act. But according to this story and Lord Vere, there is no 'hanging

up' this act for anyone, ever, including his own family. I couldn't even wrap my head around that part. He let his poor brother go on thinking for YEARS that his older brother is a hopeless dimwit. *crickets* And for what? His job? Petty revenge? Bullshit. The reasoning behind why he never told his brother was so convoluted and immature that it just ruined the whole undercover appeal and 'seeking justice' angle the author tried to deploy here. Why did he have to go to such lengths to make everyone think he's stupid all the damn time? WHY ALL THE TIME? There's only so many times a hapless idiot can be at the 'wrong place at the wrong time'. Just saying. I wasn't completely sold on the explanation given at the end. (view spoiler)

Because of this uh...peculiar lifestyle choice, the romance aspect of this story suffered. I just didn't see or get enough page time of the MCs falling in love. It seemed very underdeveloped. I definitely saw Elissande falling for him and giving him moon eyes and guilt ridden over why he wouldn't forgive her. The constant pushing away didn't help.

Vere just came off too detached and closed off around her and at times unfair with her. Yes he was wronged, yes he was tricked and manipulated into a marriage he didn't want. But I do not believe Elissande is a vicious lying schemer he kept claiming her to be, if he actually *spent more time with her* he would have actually discovered that sooner. <_< And as for his 'fantasy' perfect woman, I wanted to peck her damn nonexistent eyes out for being an incredibly lame reason for him to push the heroine away. To actually claim he wants that "perfect" illusion of a sunny sweet mindless fantasy woman who doesn't have his pulse racing or make him feel things was just a cheap cop out. Lame dude. Really lame.

It also bothered me how the heroine kept labeling herself as a 'schemer' and 'not a good person' because of the one awful thing she ever did. Aside from that messy seduction trap, Elissande is as sweet and kind and innocent as you can imagine. You show her some kindness and she will love you with her whole heart. She was a desperate woman trying to get her and her sick aunt out of a house of horrors, she is not an anti-heroine.

But back to the couple, the underlying chemistry was still there between them, I felt it and saw it in small moments. It just never flourished to the full potential they had. What little moments they had was blanketed with antagonistic tension, awkward drunk confessions or quick love making ending with the hero leaving her alone and/or pushing her away. I just was left wanting more.

I liked this author's writing but I get the feeling she likes dark messy plots. But I will give her another try for sure, I love dark stories.

new_user says

His at Night will surprise readers of Sherry Thomas' *Private Arrangements* and *Not Quite a Husband* used to her regretful, subtly intense narratives and realistic characters and dialogue. Both novels follow the conflicts facing two fully realized people in a relationship.

In contrast, *His at Night* hinges on a more implausible premise unrelated to the central romance, where hero Lord Vere adopts the pose of an idiot for years as an agent of the Crown. Perhaps the rockiest leg of this foundation is that Vere adopts this pose even before his younger brother, who idolized his intelligence and competence before Vere's life-changing "accident" and afterward becomes his devoted keeper. On the one hand, Thomas spins us a terribly heartrending situation where a brother must every day hurt and disappoint the man who was once his best friend.

On the other hand, Vere's disguise is an *idiot*.

This undermines the gravity of Vere's dilemma. It's hard to take his pain seriously when he's so upset that he has to play a puffed-up fool. At one point Vere muses that he could have taken the disguise of an indulgent, self-destructive rake equally well if not for his scruples about harming his body. He has a "my body is my temple" attitude. I think it more likely Thomas simply didn't want to add to the body of rakes in historical romance. (Of course, this attitude towards his body *certainly* pays off. He's tall and strong, and for once, an aristocratic hero's fitness is believable and three-dimensional, excuse me as I ogle.)

Vere's "idiocy" was hilarious! He's not satisfied with simple blunders or social faux pas, he's a clever man and he amuses himself as he fools people, so we end up with brilliant dinner conversation like this:

"Have I told you the Edgertons' motto?" he asked, after a beat of silence.

"I do not believe so."

"*Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo.*"

On her other side, Lord Frederick coughed, a hacking fit of it, as if he'd choked on his food.

Without a care in the world, Lord Vere rose, strolled to his brother, and struck him a few times between his shoulder blades. Lord Frederick, red-faced, muttered a word of thanks. Lord Vere ambled back to his own seat.

"'We too have scattered arrows.' Isn't that what the Edgertons' motto means, Freddie?"

Vere's internal dialogue -and his orneriness as a drunk- smacked of Romancelandia when he denies his love for Elissande. Lamentably, I've read plenty of heroes fighting love. I humor the authors. Thomas' interpretation is the first that's actually convinced me, and let me say, the man-in-denial, non-romanticized, is another animal. Elissande is also flawed, and the hero knows it (thank you!). There are genuine, unscripted conversations.

So Thomas' realism is still present to some degree. Likewise, Thomas' singular -because I have yet to see another like her- smooth, concise style that sees whole chapters passing in a blink but every word potent, ixnay on the metaphors, superfluous rhapsodies on scenery and lengthy internal monologues. A prose and wordcraft lover like myself can glut herself on Thomas' writing, always.

Her narrative's sensual, as usual, through the placement of a few careful, unabashed details, so that we're riveted by the raw, earthy power of the stuff.

Her fast pace was slowed somewhat by the unnecessary scuffle near the end, and the powerful revelations which unravel Vere's character and affect our opinion of him ought better to have been seeded earlier in the narrative, but otherwise fans of Thomas will enjoy her interpretation of the historical romantic comedy and newbies to Thomas will enjoy this lighthearted romance, provided they also enjoy a flawed hero. ;)

PS. There's a bit of a spoiler for *Private Arrangements* in *Night*.

Eastofz says

Historical romance lover that I am, for some bizarre reason I've been avoiding Sherry Thomas on purpose because the stories just didn't seem all that interesting. Strangely enough I did the same thing with Shana Abé and now I can't say enough good about either author and they're exceptionally talented writing style. For a book that doesn't have much steam (just like Abé's) Thomas wrote a very original story that had me whipping right through the 417 pages in just a few short days.

The story is deftly put together seamlessly combining love story, mystery and thriller. Normally I don't like thrillers in my historical romances because they turn into silly capers, but not here. The novel opens with a spy powwow basically. They are trying to figure out how to get inside and the heroine's uncle's house without being suspected of anything. The hero, Lord Vere, an otherwise brilliant man, plays the role of a harmless idiot who's often underfoot and speaks a bit too frankly all the while oblivious to everyone around him –or so it seems. Vere is a secret agent for the Crown and no one would ever suspect him anything. The heroine, Elissande, has to find a way to escape her very scary uncle so she sets her sights on the hero's brother initially but ends up orchestrating a forced marriage with the hero. She thinks she's saved but this is where the juicy story is just beginning. She also leads a kind of double life because she's all smiles and acquiescence to her uncle but seethes with hatred and fear of him. Now you might be thinking, I hate spy novels, well rest assured so do I because the focus is on the spy stuff and not the relationship but this isn't the case here and the writing is so good that you just don't notice.

Vere reminds me of some of Anne Stuart's Ice characters the way he appears to be one thing but he's a dark mean bastard when you see him as he really is. I cringed more than once at how he treated the heroine. Yes you could argue that it was deserved to some degree because she did force him to marry her but he had no sympathy for her situation at all. As the story unfolds they develop a friendship and it's only during the night that she sees him for what he truly is and he realizes that she may not be such a conniving witch after all.

All things considered, the h/h aren't at the forefront all the time and I still really enjoyed the book. It was impressive the way Thomas showed Vere as a bumbling moron (who was really funny sometimes) and then as a very serious, cold, calculating man who planned everything about himself down to the last letter. What I liked is that the h/h weren't gushing over each other. They were both very apprehensive about how things would pan out. As for the mystery part, well-done! You get all these pieces of the puzzle and it takes a bit to wrap your head around it all which again shows some great writing skill.

It's a smart story that takes your standard tropes and shakes them up making it all seem fresh and new. There is a side-story with the hero's brother that felt like unnecessary filler which was why I could only go as high as 4.5 stars. This is my first Sherry Thomas and thankfully, she has a backlist :D

Kinga says

Every romance novel needs an obstacle. The idea is that the characters are perfectly suited for each other but there is something that is stopping them from being together - some misunderstanding or some dark secret for example.

The first thing to do if you want to write a romance novel is to come up with that obstacle. Sherry Thomas

came up with this: let's make the male lead really smart and handsome but let's make him pretend he is dumbshit because he is a secret agent and 'dumbshit' is his cover. Now the female lead is a clever girl so she is appalled by the fact that Lord Vere is as dumb as a box of rocks but also weirdly attracted to him because he has a six pack and a very big you know what (which she discovered when she accidentally sat on his lap). This is the situation I quite often found myself in so I could empathise. I usually gave those guys the benefit of doubt, because, you know, it might just be that they were undercover secret agents. Sadly each time it turned out that they were bona fide idiots.

I can't give this book five stars because that's just embarrassing.

Here is what happened. Karen started a Readers Advisory group on goodreads (<http://www.goodreads.com/group/show/4...>) and I wanted to be nice and posted a thread there asking for a romance novel that would fill all my requirements.

Marriel kindly provided recommendations..... Anyway, long story short - I woke up on Saturday morning and started reading it. Before I knew it was 4pm, I still hadn't taken a shower or eaten anything other than chocolate.

This is precisely the reason I don't read romance novels too often because I can't be trusted with them. I mean, thank God it was Saturday. Otherwise I would've probably called in sick or something.

Caz says

4.5 stars, but it feels closer to 5 than 4, so ...

I've been on a bit of a Sherry Thomas binge lately – I've devoured her two YA novels and listened to My Beautiful Enemy), and now, pounced on this new recording of one of her backlist titles, **His at Night**.

This is one of the small number of her books I haven't yet read, but Kate Reading's expert narration brings the story to life so vividly that I didn't feel I'd missed anything by not having read the book first.

The story centres around two emotionally bruised characters who have spent most of their lives living a lie – or at the very least, presenting a façade to the world which is very, very different from the real person beneath the mask.

The Marquess of Vere is known throughout society as a complete and utter idiot. He's happy-go-lucky, gregarious and rather sweet, a harmless, accident-prone man whose stupidity is accepted by all who know him. After all, the poor chap can't help that a riding accident some thirteen years previously damaged his brain, can he?

Except that there has been no such damage. Vere is a man of great intelligence, wit and insight, who has opted to hide behind an idiotish persona in order to conceal his work as an investigative operative for the crown. For thirteen years, he has hidden himself from everyone – even the younger brother who is his only family – because he has been obsessed with bringing wrongdoers to justice in order to make up for what he sees as his failure to protect his own mother years previously.

Having to hide his true nature from everyone has taken a terrible toll on Vere. He is a very lonely man,

unable to reveal his true self to any but a few trusted colleagues, one of whom, Lady Kingsley, will be working with him on his latest investigation into the affairs of the wealthy diamond-mine owner, Edmund Douglas.

Elissande Edgerton has lived her life in fear of her uncle, a cruel and vindictive man whose twisted idea of love has kept his wife and niece more or less housebound for years. She dreams of freedom, but her aunt has faded under Edmund Douglas' harsh treatment, and has become an invalid, dependent on laudanum. Elissande has learned to put on a brave face and a charming smile for her uncle – any show of weakness from her and he would ruthlessly exploit it, so she fights for herself and her aunt the only way she can, by hiding her fear and loathing and pretending they are a happy family.

One day out of the blue, she receives a visit from Lady Kingsley, who is hosting a house party at Woodley Manor, which is nearby. Her house has been overrun by rats and she is in desperate need of somewhere to house her guests, and she asks Elissande if she could trespass on her hospitality for the three days it will take for the manor to be rid of rats and made habitable again. She makes it clear that her guests include a number of eligible men, including a marquess – and Elissande hears freedom beckon. If she can – somehow – manage to catch herself a rich, powerful husband during their stay, he will be able to protect her and her aunt from her uncle's wrath.

Both Vere and Elissande are immediately captivated by each other – until he realises her intention to manipulate him into marriage, and she realises her golden Adonis has nothing between his ears.

But when caught in a compromising situation, there is no alternative but for Vere to offer marriage, at which point, he realises he's been blind to the truth of the situation, and that Elissande is not a fortune hunter but a desperate woman. Even so, Vere is furious at her deceptions and machinations and determines to seek an annulment at the earliest opportunity, while Elissande finally believes she has secured freedom and safety for her and her aunt.

His at Night is a compelling story that had me hooked from start to finish. Elissande is immediately drawn into sharp focus, a young woman driven by fear into deception, but Vere's motives remain shrouded for most of the book. When his story finally emerges it's brilliantly and subtly shaded, his motivations far from the black-and-white reasonings one might imagine could have driven such a fiercely intelligent and honourable man to live the life he has led for the past thirteen years. He's a superbly complex character – his alter-ego as Vere-the-idiot supremely loveable, the man beneath a mass of vulnerability, resentment and overwhelming loneliness.

My heart broke for him repeatedly – when he has to act the moron around the woman he is coming to love and even more so when he has to maintain the act around the brother he adores. The scene where he finally fesses up to Freddie is possibly the best in the entire book; Freddie's heartfelt outpouring of anger and grief for the brilliant older brother he'd "lost" so many years earlier is beautiful, poignant and utterly gut-wrenching, and I had tears in my eyes.

His at Night is a multi-layered story full of complex emotions, many of which aren't always pleasant. Vere's resentment at being trapped into marriage leads him to say some very cutting things to Elissande and to behave poorly toward her; while she finds herself becoming increasingly confused by the man she has married, a harmless idiot one moment, capable of biting sarcasm the next. But there's no question that these two people need each other. Vere rescues Elissande from the clutches of her evil uncle, but she rescues him right back by showing him that it's safe to let her see the real him, and giving him reason and courage to reclaim his life.

I literally squealed with delight when I saw Kate Reading listed as the narrator for this audiobook. I've not yet met a performance of hers I've disliked, and she's someone whose name on the cover of an audiobook is guaranteed to make me take a second and third look. Her performance in this is as accomplished as one would expect; all the characters are clearly delineated, and the subtle differences she employs in pitch and tone to portray Vere-the-idiot and Real!Vere work very well to show which persona he's inhabiting each time he speaks. She also has a terrific way with the humour and irony in the story, delivering pronouncements such as this:

She had been married four hours.

She'd describe her marriage thus far as hushed.

She'd also describe it as long.

In a wonderfully dead-pan fashion that is absolutely perfect.

In short, **His at Night** is as close to audio perfection as it's possible to get, and I recommend it most highly.

Verity says

Vere has led an exhilarating but exhausting & lonely double lives as a secret agent for the crown. Justice in the name of Queen & Country is his tru' calling. His & fellow comrades' latest conundrum is how to infiltrate the house of Ellie's uncle, the main suspect in a diamond extortion case. When Vere suggests the idea of releasing rats in 1 of his collaborator's rented house, he has no inkling the pandemonium will be in the form of an ocean of rats (if U hate rats as much as Indiana Jones does, I'd advise U to skip Ch 2). Vere has cultivated a useful façade, as a lovable, bumbling, klutzy idiot, whose memory resembles a Teflon pan (nothing sticks). Even Freddie, his bro, calls him by his nickname, Penny. Freddie & Vere are protective of 1 another, their brotherly bond is endearing, they look out for each other. Freddie was Gigi's luv interest from "Private Arrangements".

Thanx to a neighbor's plague of rats & the ensuing evacuation to her uncle's domain, Ellie's given a tiny window of opportunity, to escape her & laudanum-addicted aunt's imprisonment. Ellie has lived an isolated life, thanx to her slick, abusive uncle. Vere's smitten w/ Ellie @ 1st sight, blinded by her sunny, dimpled smile & momentarily fails to play his bread-and-butter role, until he's quickly reminded by his partner in crime of his mission. He's dumbstruck that here's his imaginary luv come to life in all her glory. Alas, Ellie's initial elation @ finding her long-awaited dashing rescuer is short-lived, as she soon realizes that Vere is the epitome of a village idiot, whose roaming eyes more often than not zoom in on Ellie's spectacular bosom during their interactions (which make her gnash her teeth in frustration). He's tone-deaf & has a penchant for breaking into lyrics-butchered songs & is cursed w/ the most appalling sense of direction. In short, he goes on a tear in his idiocy & his seemingly-oblivious rampage grates on her nerves. To her utter despair, he's supposed to be her last lifeline, what's a desperate gal to do when her lifesaver's a babbling airhead who can't keep his trap shut even if his life depends on it, whose mental acuity / cerebral prowess is the size of a toothpick ? Set her cap on the other bro'. Vere & Ellie end up in a marriage of convenience.

Subsequently, Vere feels resentful of Ellie's manipulative ways in her desperate attempt to gain freedom from her uncle's evil clutch, thru' holy matrimony (the premise is parallel to PA = Gigi's cunning machinations gained & lost Camden). Their bumpy journey to HEA is not all fun & games.

This book isn't solely centred on heavy heart-wringer dwama like ST's previous efforts. It carries a different, lighter tone & is more hee-larious than expected. She's once again proven herself as 1 of the most talented wordsmiths in romancelandia. I read her previous books in a backward sequence, from NQAH to Delicious to Private Arrangements. I liked PA well enuff & could understand why ST's much touted as the 'It' author of the year, but it's NQAH that blew me away. After reading this sumptuous blend of heart, humor & romance (I felt that it's the most romantic book she's ever penned so far), it's easy peazy to say that HAN has become my fav ST & 2010 fav (so far), 1 that I'd revisit time & again if I feel like reading an insta' mood lifter. Suffice it to say that Vere & Ellie have become 1 of my fav couples evah, next to Phin & Mina (Meredith Duran = Written on your skin). This book was just a dream. Everything that I could ever want & expect in a romance : espionage, a creepy villain, blistering, mirth-inducing dialogues & exquisite prose, her trademark 2ndary romance, H/H whose personalities conquered my attention from start to finish w/ their much-practiced masks, gritty resourcefulness, aching & longing for what seemed to be the unattainable. Their dueling match in outdo-ing each other & esp Vere playing his dimness up to the hilt @ Ellie's uncle's home was a scream, I almost peed in my granny pants. I was disarmed by ST's wicked wit. I luv a fun Scarlet Pimpernel-esque romp & I had a blast. Vere & Ellie have a dynamite chemistry. The book has less angst but it's still character driven, w/ a gripping conflict. It's worth staying up for & exceeded my expectations. All the elements were interwoven so effortlessly. It made such an indelible impression on me that I wondered if the following books I'll be reading next will even match it. Of all the endings in her books, I liked the ending in this book the best, a fitting cap to a beautifully-penned tale =^2

Didi says

3.5 STARS

Shannon says

Let it be known that I don't normally read historical romance. I'm not an expert on the genre and I don't claim to know everything, **but this story was BAD.**

The hero was as stupid as the premise, and I wish I had never bought this book.

The entirety of this novel revolves around the concept that Lord Vere, the male protagonist, is a complete idiot. He was given the opportunity to work for the Crown undercover and he chose to use a riding accident as his reason for his current less-intelligent state. He has fooled his friends and family for 13 years now. 13 years! I find it hard to believe that he could somehow manage to convince everyone of his idiocy for 13 years without any slip-ups. **I also don't understand the need to make him an idiot in the first place, other than to somehow set this romance apart from the pack.** Why couldn't he lead a double life as a normal guy and still solve crime on the side? Some say that the reason he continues with his stupidity is so that when he shows up in the wrong place at the wrong time, or is present at so many crime scenes, he won't be suspected of any foul play. I think that's a poor excuse though and one that ultimately ruined the whole book

for me.

Lord Vere's idiocy is supposed to be funny but the humor fell flat for me. There was one part where I cracked a smile at some dirty Latin, but aside from that I didn't find another humorous part within. Most of the time when he was acting like an idiot I imagined him talking like Goofy; "Gawrsh, what are you guys doing out here, gyuk gyuk," and obviously this didn't make him seem sexy like a romance hero should be. I suppose that's my own imagination playing a part though. Humor is subjective, so it's possible if someone finds him to be hilarious then they won't hate this book nearly as much as I did.

Elissande is the heroine of the story, and even though I didn't hate her as much as Vere, I also didn't respect her. Elissande lives with her Aunt and Uncle; she takes care of her invalid Aunt while in a state of continuous fear of her Uncle. Now her Uncle doesn't beat her, he doesn't even raise his voice in her presence. He chooses to subjugate her by being horrible to her Aunt; he's forced her Aunt into an addiction and by doing so keeps them both under his thumb. I found Elissande's fear of her Uncle to be unjustified and contrived. I can understand anger and disgust, but not fear. She doesn't even witness him physically abusing her Aunt, she just assumes something else must be going on that she just hasn't seen for herself. **Throughout the novel she's literally petrified of a man that has never done anything terrible in her presence, only done unspeakable things offstage - allegedly.** I just never understood her level of fear, although I *could* understand wanting to get away from him.

Elissande's reasons for going after a husband make sense; she wants to leave behind her oppressive Uncle and save her Aunt. **After she has said husband though, she acts like he's her savior, which really sickened me.** At one point she all but begs Vere to take her virginity so her Uncle can't claim the marriage wasn't consummated. He gets drunk and is horribly rude to her, thrusts once to break her hymen, and goes to sleep. Oh yeah baby, now that's sexy. What does Elissande say afterward? "Thank you, sir." Ugh, the whole thing just made me sick.

Now Elissande tricks Vere into marrying her, that's apparent if you read the back of the book. When Vere first met Elissande he was captivated by her. He was also upset that he was going to have to be a clumsy idiot because he thought he'd finally found the girl of his dreams. But Vere quickly comes to the realization that Elissande smiles at him simply because she sees him as a viable option as a husband. Vere is playing this idiot character and so it's easy for him to spot Elissande's acting; she smiles and acts happy because that's how she has to be around her Uncle so he doesn't attack her or her Aunt. **This pisses Vere off, apparently he's the only one that's allowed to have dual personalities.** He's also pissed because she's ruined his image of the dream girl that he had in his head, and so he decides he's going to be the biggest asshole to her that he can be, bringing up embarrassing facts about her family and dragging her back to her Uncle after they're married. And even when Vere realizes that Elissande acts the way she does to not enrage her crazy Uncle, he doesn't think any differently of her. She apologizes for deceiving him and he doesn't care. He acts like a petulant child and for the life of me I can't understand why he did this. He kept comparing Elissande to this dream girl in his head and when she didn't measure up he decided she wasn't good enough for him, he even shut the door in her face when she asked to sleep with him. Who acts like that?

Vere is a petty bastard almost to the end, and I found him completely void of any redeeming characteristics. Elissande and Vere's romance is stale, they barely know each other, but somehow by the end they're soulmates. There is no passion, and what few romantic scenes we get happen for the most part off-stage, although we are treated to one unexpected boner, oh ho ho, *naughty*.

There's a secondary romance as well that I sort of enjoyed, but it almost felt like it had been thrown in as an afterthought. Also, this secondary romance spoils the ending of another one of her novels, *Private*

Arrangements, so if you plan on reading that I'd suggest reading this one after, if you still want to.

There was no climax for this novel, what happens with the villain and the twist at the end was stupid and pointless. Obviously I can't explain more without spoiling things, but I lost count of how many times I rolled my eyes reading the last 50 pages or so.

What's really sad about everything is I actually think the author writes very well. She has a fluid style that's easy and quick to read. I really just wish she had written an entirely different book because now I'm not sure I could ever read anything else by her again.

Juliana Philippa says

Couldn't bring myself to believe they fell in love - or really even knew each other (2.5 stars)

[End of the Victorian era - England:]

His at Night is Sherry Thomas's fourth book, but the first of hers that I've read. Although I did not enjoy this book, I think Thomas is a talented author who has the ability to create interesting and complex characters. *Not Quite a Husband* has very good reader reviews, so I think I will be checking it out from the library and reading it before deciding that Thomas isn't for me.

SUMMARY (from back cover)

"Elissande Edgerton is a desperate woman, a virtual prisoner in the home of her tyrannical uncle. Only through marriage can she claim the freedom she craves. But how to catch the perfect man?

Lord Vere is used to baiting irresistible traps. As a secret agent for the government, he's tracked down some of the most devious criminals in London, all the while maintaining his cover as one of Society's most harmless - and idiotic - bachelors. But nothing can prepare him for the scandal of being ensnared by Elissande.

Forced into a marriage of convenience, Elissande and Vere are each about to discover that they're not the only one with a hidden agenda. With seduction their only weapon - and a dark secret from the past endangering both their lives - can they learn to trust each other even as they surrender to a passion that won't be denied?"

OPINION

Elissande (24) and Penny/Vere (29) were interesting, multi-dimensional, and complex and if this book had been a regular non-historical-romance book of fiction, they would have made for excellent character studies and I think I would be giving it a much higher rating. This *is* a historical romance, however, and for me it just did not fulfill what I want from books in this category.

A positive aspect of the book, aside from the engaging main and supporting characters, was the mystery subplot. It was interesting with some very good twists and even though I guessed some, there were others I was not at all expecting, but that made sense when revealed.

My main complaint is that for me, the romance was just not there. First, this is my first Thomas book so I don't know how sensual her stories normally are, but other than one scene, *HIS AT NIGHT* was sadly lacking in sexual tension and chemistry (there were other instances, but they weren't very inspiring).

Second, I don't find a romance very believable or enjoyable when for over half the book the heroine thinks the hero is - literally - an idiot and the hero dislikes the heroine. Second, I don't find a romance very believable or enjoyable when for over half the book the heroine thinks the hero is - literally - an idiot and the hero dislikes the heroine. They didn't spend enough time with one another as their "true" selves, without the masks and fake personalities to hide behind.

Another point of contention for me was that the book takes place over just a few weeks, yet in that time two strangers meet, think the aforementioned negative things about one another for half that time, and then fall in love while still pretending to be/think those negative things - this didn't at all ring true to me. Though they're supposed to share a sense of kinship and have a miraculously deep understanding of one another, it felt forced and unbelievable.

Do I think the characters of Elissande and Penny could fall in love? Yes. Do I think they could have a very happy and fulfilling marriage? Yes. But all of that is something I can picture post-book and I don't know about other readers, but I don't read romances to enjoy a great set-up: I want instant gratification, everything settled and in HEA-mode by the end of the book.

Final note: the marriage between Elissande and Vere was *not* - as suggested by the book summary - one of convenience, but rather a direct result of Elissande's manipulation and scheming. Yes, she has a very good reason to go to such lengths, since she desperately wants to get her aunt and herself out of her uncle's house, but this duplicity still made me very uncomfortable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Marriages of Convenience

- ~ *Slightly Married* (Bedwyn Family, Book 1) by Mary Balogh, 5 stars
- ~ *The Devil in Winter* (Wallflower Quartet, Book 3) by Lisa Kleypas, 4 stars
- ~ *At Last Comes Love* (Huxtable Quintet, Book 3) by Mary Balogh, 4 stars

Heroines Escaping Bad Home Situations

- ~ *The Perfect Rake* (Merridew Sisters, Book 1) by Anne Gracie, 5 stars
- ~ *Honor's Splendour* by Julie Garwood, 5 stars
- ~ *Always a Scoundrel* (Notorious Gentlemen, Book 3) by Suzanne Enoch, 5 stars
- ~ *His Wicked Ways* by Samantha James, 5 stars

Heroes are Spies

- ~ *Lord of Fire* (Knight Miscellany, Book 1) by Gaelen Foley, 5 stars
- ~ *Scandalous* (Banning Sisters Trilogy, Book 1) by Karen Robards, 5 stars
- ~ *Irresistible* (Banning Sisters Trilogy, Book 2) by Karen Robards, 5 stars
- ~ *Angel Rogue* (Fallen Angel Series, Book 4) by Mary Jo Putney, 4 stars

Wicked Incognito Now says

This is a typical historical romance, which leaves me feeling rather disappointed. Sherry Thomas is one of the more original and talented historical romance authors writing today. I always wait anxiously for her new releases. However, with this novel, she trotted out all of the typical historical romance story devices:

1. the dastardly villain
2. secret past, mistaken parentage
3. suspense plot-line

4. the forced marriage due to being caught in a "compromising position" by the ton gossip
5. the virginal marriage bed
6. hypocritical hatin' on the heroine by the hero
7. angry sex of the "I don't want anything to do with you and would love to be rid of you, but you are making me want you so get under me woman"

Sherry Thomas writes angst well, and I love the way she writes it. But there is a fine line for me between angst of the sort that makes me sigh and starry eyed and of the sort that gives me heart-burn and makes me deeply angry. Judith McNaught is famous for writing the latter type of angsty romance. She writes it well, but the heart-burn is difficult to take and sometimes the angst relief comes a little too late in the story to be worth all the discomfort through the reading.

While reading THIS novel, I experienced the latter type of angst. I don't like it, but I have to admit that it was very well written, interesting, and highly readable.

I still expect a different style from Sherry Thomas, one that does not make use of all the typical story devices, so I can't help but feel disappointed.

Sarah Mac says

Admittedly, I'm hard to impress when it comes to standard romance novels. But I can't stand it when these books are peddled as something they're not. *His At Night* is another in that oh-so-risque clump of romances -- the ones that want to be Hardcore Fiction in ways not dictated by Tab A/Slot B sex.

...But it didn't work.

Novels like this are terrified of offending their audience. They're desperate to reassure the reader that there's a familiar path, regardless of changing this trope or that angle of seduction. And that desperation leads to the same boring subplots of secondary characters...the same spoonfed emotion-laden monologues...the same fakey relationship rollercoasters & shorthand character development, regardless of whatever bizarre backstory or villainy is wedged between scenes of psychological lint-picking. However, since Vere feels free to gnaw on overwrought bits of angst re: his undercover persona, I thought it only fitting to compare his efforts with a favorite escapist drama of yours truly: **Miami Vice**.

Remember -- they're all perfectly capable of kicking your ass. (And look at the awesome juxtaposition of dates. 1890s! 1980s! Break out the *Twilight Zone* theme.)

Truly, *His At Night* demands an absurd & utterly incomprehensible suspension of logic -- an unbridgable gap that left me reeling in a perpetual fog of disbelief. I didn't buy for one second that Vere was a legit government agent. Why? Because his cover is absolutely ridiculous, & everything about his toddling spymaster gig has the feel of a terrible one-act play. Her Majesty might as well have sent Bingo Little to solve the Great Train Robbery. Undercover work is dangerous. Undercover work requires balls. Undercover work requires a believable persona. Posing as drug-dealing pond scum is one thing -- but keeping that cover week after week is something else entirely, even for a pair of badasses like these guys.

Unleashing uber-fashionable justice on dealers & ped0s the world over.

...So how does Vere's technique compare?

snort

Let's put it this way:

Lieutenant Castillo, retired special forces military assassin & professional asskicker, thinks you're an unrealistic moron.

As if "Idiot Vere" & his spywork wasn't insulting enough, we have a small army of characters who are completely fooled by this pathetic undercover gig -- which means the reader has no choice but to put up with it. Somehow this stupid disguise has managed to fool not only Vere's acquaintances & social network, but also *his family & closest friends*...FOR THIRTEEN YEARS. Yup. Apparently Vere's convinced everyone that he's a harmless idiot -- completely brainless & devoid of common sense (because he walks into the wrong bedrooms & spills food & knocks over vases & thinks people melt in the bathtub & discusses cow udders in mixed company), but he's not so stupid as to be Special Victims material. He keeps several houses & has servants & enjoys an occasional roll in the hay with merry widows. His idiocy is charming! His idiocy is cute! His idiocy is sexy!

...Relax, Larry. It's just Vere blowing up an office filled with vitally important documents. How charming!

In the long run, I suppose it's important to establish Vere's idiocy as the half-assed slapstick dumbassery that it is...otherwise Elissande's obsession over his manly physique would label her a sexual predator. Even with the reader understanding Vere's undercover guise, Elissande's initial battling against lust for his body ("omg, his luscious shoulders & giant dong make my ladybits tingle") & disgust at his mental failings ("holy shit, I've married a fucking moron") is somewhat on the creepy side. But no worries -- it's only a moral quandry until midway through the book. The guise that fooled his closest friends & family for THIRTEEN YEARS doesn't fool Elissande. She's known him for less than two weeks & is suddenly noticing patterns to his idiot remarks & the way he deliberately knocks things over. *Are you fucking kidding me?*

Crockett & Tubbs are horrified at such piss-poor undercovering.

The icing on this cake of WTFery & wasted suspense is the romance itself. Boring sex, thin plotting, talking head dialogues, & wooden characters equal a MASSIVE ROMANCE FAIL. Let's break it down, shall we?

- 1) I didn't buy into these people hating each other.
- 2) I didn't buy into these people loving each other.
- 3) I didn't buy into these people healing via lukewarm sexual encounters.
- 4) I didn't buy into the Big Bad Villain's villainy.
- 5) I didn't buy into the Big Bad Villain's downfall.
- 6) I didn't buy into the schmoopy secondary friends-to-lovers subplot.

And that's not to mention the gag-worthy cheeseball closing chapters of repetitive navel-gazing. Even after the Big Bad Villain plot is concluded, we spend another 40 fuckin' pages on sifting through emotional belly-button lint.

Awesome times, yo!

Overall, it's a fantastically dull story...though in the hands of someone else, it could have made for decent romantic suspense. I know some readers consider Sherry Thomas to be hardcore edgy for massmarket Regency Clone audiences, but I'll say it again: **You can't be afraid to offend the overly tender sensibilities of some readers & still offer real drama, tragedy, & fear** -- especially with the sort of story this wanted to be.

Larry is amused by your failure, but only because there's nothing better on television.

2 stars. Barely.

N.B.: This was the fourth installment of an epic Buddy Read Square with these three ladies. I think it's pretty safe to say none of us will be reading ST again.

FlibBityFLoob says

Ahhh... Reading this was sort of like slipping under a warm and comfy blanket. I had read Sherry Thomas' previous three novels and been very impressed, so I eagerly went out of my way to purchase and read this one when it was first published. I knew I was going to enjoy it as much as her previous novels after reading merely the first page and seeing her use the word "abstruse". Sherry Thomas has a very unique writing style in the genre of historical romance, with her intelligence and sharp wit shining through.

This novel was a combination of all sorts of good things. There were some heavier topics to contend with - abuse, opiate addiction, murder. There were plenty of laugh-out-loud moments with the hero playing a moronic farce of himself to fool people away from his secret espionage. There were rats. Hundreds of them. And, there was *very* dirty latin. Oh my. In fact, I first read this latin sentence and said to myself: *Hmmmm... I can't translate that. Perhaps I'll ask my dad what it means.* Thank God I did not ask him, and took a chance googling the phrase to see if it was something that was translated online. After finding a wikipedia entry, I lost it laughing so hard that my husband had to know what I had unearthed.

I really enjoyed the novel and highly recommend it. I also recommend Sherry Thomas' other three novels as well. Read them all and enjoy them! :)

Fani *loves angst* says

I absolutely loved this book! I'm not sure anything can surpass my love for *Private Arrangements*, but after reading this one back to back with *Not Quite a Husband*, which I also adored, I think this one's my second favorite after all!

HaN starts lightly enough: Lord Vale is a Crown's agent pretending to be an idiot, working on a case about the heroine's uncle. Ellisande on the other hand wants to escape her uncle's home anyway she can. And the opportunity presents itself when Vale and a group of other young men and women ask for refuge in her house while her uncle is away. If only she can get someone to marry her before her uncle comes back, she'll finally be free!

But light and humorous as it seems, there is darkness hidden beneath and it slowly but steadily reveals itself. Vale is a man who's extremely lonely because of his charade, hiding his true self from everyone. He dreams of someone gentle and kind whom he can trust and who can see the real man behind the mask. But his wife, beautiful as she may be, is no gentle lady; she's an actress herself and a unfeeling manipulator, right? Ellisande on the other hand has suffered incredible psychological abuse in the hands of her uncle. She has always been alone, fending for herself and her aunt, and wants someone on whom she can rely at last. But can her husband forgive her for using him? And even if he can, can an idiot be the man she needs?

This was a story that had me smiling, sighing, worrying and actually crying while reading it. It had me enthralled the whole time and kept me up until very late to finish it. The characters were flawed, in classical Thomas' style, but that didn't keep me from caring deeply for them, perhaps because I could see the reason behind their actions. There is also a secondary romance about Vale's brother, Freddie, who also appeared in *Private Arrangements*. I'm sorry to say that as much as I liked him in PA, I could have done without his story here, but maybe it's just because I didn't like the spotlight moving away from the main couple:) A highly recommended book, for those who like their stories with a lot of depth and many layers.

Rane says

My first Sherry Thomas book, and while some say this book has a lighter feel to it, it still packs a big emotional wallop, that had me going through a major range of emotions from anger, to tears and cheers.

Sometimes it can be hard to feel for the characters, and for me it took sometime for me to really feel and understand where Vere was coming from. At first glance he comes across as a loveable idiot. But as an agent of the crown, he can move more freely when everyone just thinks you don't have any brains in your head. This works so well for Vere that he even convinces his own brother, whom he sees the hope die each time they meet that he would one day be the amazing man he once was. Vere at times was a hard pill to swallow. You felt for him, but it was hard to understand where he was coming from, but slowly the layers are taken away and Vere the selfish man behind the idiot is shown to be a man broken by his past and not being able to let go of the past and forgive not what happened, but to forgive himself. Vere hung on to his anger and grief after the death of his parents. Letting go of anger and even grief is hard for many of us, and I finally understood where Vere was coming from as I cried for the young man Vere was and what he finally saw what he was missing in his life and seeing his bright future in front of him.

Ellisande, I understood very quickly, she was the mirror image of Vere, in the way she acted to hide her fear from her evil uncle. While Vere played the fool, Ellisande hid behind her cheerful smile. Instead of breaking under her uncle's cruel watch, she was a fighter, she may have been beaten, but she was unbroken and willing to keep on fighting, so I cheered when she kicked her uncle's butt. Ellisande saw herself as weak and frail, but

I saw a woman whom was willing to move mountains and hold on to that hope, while she crawled herself out of the darkness and into the light.

Thomas plays with the darkness and the light within her story, with you guessing what may be in the light, may not be what's really the truth hiding in the darkness. Both Elissande and Vere fight their own darkness but with each other they see a mirror of the other, and while Vere fights this at first he sees how much he's fighting his love for Elissande and Elissande fighting her love to be with Vere. The sensual level was high between them, but not the sex scenes between them wasn't graphic, but sensual.

While there was many dark moments in the book, and the continuing mystery/crime going around Elissande's uncle, there was also some very light and humorous moments with Vere acting the idiot and some of the things he would do make me laugh out loud many times, and the blooming romance Freddie (Vere's bother) and his best friend as the woman she is and the love she's held for him for so long.

Overall: Sherry Thomas writes a great dance of light and dark with His At Night, with strong leads with understandable troubles they face. This maybe my first Sherry Thomas book, but it won't be my last.
