



## The Importance of Being Wicked

*Victoria Alexander*

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## **The Importance of Being Wicked** Victoria Alexander

For Winfield Elliott, Viscount Stillwell, finding a prospective bride always seemed easy. Perhaps too easy. With three broken engagements to his name, Win is the subject of endless gossip. Yet his current mission is quite noble: to hire a company to repair his family's fire-damaged country house. Nothing disreputable in that--until the firm's representative turns out to be a very desirable widow.

Lady Miranda Garrett expected a man of Win's reputation to be flirtatious, even charming. But the awkward truth is that she finds him thoroughly irresistible. While Miranda resides at Millworth to oversee the work, Win occupies her days, her dreams. . .and soon, her bed. For the first time, the wicked Win has fallen in love. And what began as a scandalous proposition may yet become a very different proposal...

## **The Importance of Being Wicked Details**

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Author : Victoria Alexander

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## From Reader Review The Importance of Being Wicked for online ebook

### Mariana says

Reread as pleasurable as the first time.

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### Flor says

2 stars for the heroine who truly deserved a better hero.

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### Donna says

This was a fun read. I'm quickly becoming a fan of Victoria Alexander. I loved Miranda, the main character, and her boldness in pursuing a "man's profession". And she has the nerve to be good at it, too! Of course, she's surrounded by the wonderful and quirky Hadley-Attwater family, who will be familiar to readers of the Effingtons series.

Winfield Elliott, Viscount Stillwell, is the rakish fellow who has scandalously had not one but three engagements, none of which has led to marriage. Peeling back the layers of his character is one of the main joys of this book.

My one complaint is the whole 'wicked' thing is overdone. I mean, OK, I get where the whole 'three engagements' debacle would result in his being labeled wicked. But in the pages of this book, the word 'wicked' is used to an excessive degree. It's probably supposed to be tongue in cheek, but I found it a little annoying. I checked the author's bio to see if she was from Boston, which would have excused it, but she appears not to hail from that area.

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### Caz says

I found this to be a thoroughly engaging book, filled with humour and warmth. Set towards the end of the 19th Century, *The Importance of Being Wicked* tells the story of how Winfield Elliot, Lord Stillwell finally makes it to the altar after the three failed attempts detailed in Lord Stillwell's Excellent Engagements.

Our heroine is Lady Miranda Garret, a twenty-eight year-old widow who, though ostensibly just the owner of her late husband's architectural business is actually running the business as well as being its chief architect. But this is the 1880s, and were these facts known, the business would quickly fail due to the reluctance of men to hire a woman to do such a job.

Miranda is sensible though, and knows she cannot keep up the charade indefinitely, and has therefore already made provision for taking care of her small staff when this happens.

She is forthright and independent – without being labelled ‘feisty’ (which often denotes a modicum of stupidity as well!) - and one of the things I really liked about her was the way in which she was gradually brought to realise how much she had changed since the death of her husband.

When she and Winfield meet, the sparks start flying immediately, and in fact, for the first part of their relationship, they are often barely civil to each other and eager to score points off each other. Winfield often comes off the worse in these encounters – in fact I rather liked the way he was thrown off balance by Miranda and became rather endearingly bewildered when in her presence.

The real heart of the book however is Winfield himself. I’d already developed a soft spot for him while reading Lord Stillwell’s Excellent Engagements - he’s handsome, charming, funny and caring, but beneath the witticisms is revealed a man who, despite his many attractive qualities and his ability to laugh at himself, is just a bit insecure about himself and wants to be loved for who he is rather than what he has. While he comes to realise he has finally fallen in love, he is – given that he has already been engaged three time - naturally cautious about becoming involved again.

I always enjoy stories with plenty of good verbal sparring between the hero and heroine, and there’s no shortage of that here. I also particularly enjoyed Winfield’s relationship with his cousin Gray (whose story was told in *What Happens At Christmas*); there is lots of affection beneath the constant teasing and the depth of feeling between them is evident.

There is also a very slender secondary plot thread surrounding the mysterious Mr Tempest, the investor in Miranda’s firm, although anyone with a passing acquaintance with Shakespeare will have worked it out by the time all is revealed.

I do have one niggle with the story, however, which was the continual mention of Winfield’s reputation for ‘wickedness’ – which was then countered by someone saying ‘you can’t believe everything you hear’ or pointing out that he was no better or worse than any other wealthy young man in his position.

Young men at that time were expected to sow their wild oats before they settled down (and many continued to do so afterwards as well) so the fact that Winfield was sexually experienced shouldn’t really have been made into such an issue. In fact, I don’t think he was wicked at all – just an incredibly charming and appealing man who didn’t have any problems attracting women – and I’m sure there could have been a less repetitive way of conveying both that, and the fact that Miranda is looking for something more than the sort of placid and civilised relationship she had with her late husband.

Finally, I’m surprised at the number of ‘meh’ reviews this book has received on Goodreads so far. I admit that I’ve read a number of rather disappointing historical romance titles recently, which has perhaps skewed my view somewhat, but this book delivered exactly what I’ve been missing in those others – engaging characters and the development of an actual relationship based on friendship and affection rather than the insta-lust and immediate bed-hopping which is such a poor substitute and which is sadly occurring in so many HRs at the moment.

*With thanks to Kensington Books and NetGalley for the review copy*

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**Melanie says**

I knew this story was going to be good because I had so much fun reading its prequel 'intro' novella 'Lord Stillwell's Excellent Engagements'. If you plan to read this book, I highly recommend you read the novella first because in it you'll get to know him and his life a bit better.

As for this story, it was again such a breath of fresh air to read a mature and slow developing friendship, courtship and love. The heroine is no simpering miss, but a grown woman, a widow that actually has is running a business, although naturally in the Victorian England, she's still hiding behind her husband's name and an alias male 'employee' name. That part of the plot was almost as much fun to follow as the relationship between the two.

When it comes to painting a Victorian Era picture, Ms. Alexander excels in making sure I 'see' the setting, the costumes, the language and I'm never disappointed as I 'enter' the world she creates for my pleasure.

If you're like me, a long time fan of Victoria Alexander, then you'll get this one for sure. For all of you bookworms that have never had the pleasure, may as well start with this one. This is a slow, simmering and chemistry filled sensual romance filled with great verbal, witty sparring between the main characters and I do recommend you read it.

\*Book provided by the publisher through NetGalley.

Melanie for b2b

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### **Becca says**

I got to 36% and stopped. I've been working on this book for weeks and I just can't get into it. Nothing has happened. It's a shame really. I enjoyed meeting Lord Stilwell in his novella about his three failed engagements, but in this book, that charming person is just not the same. VA is usually hit or miss for me and while I was really looking forward to reading this, I just can't get excited about it now. The writing is good as usual, but this one was just plain boring.

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### **Erika Williams says**

I'll admit, I picked up the book because the title was a direct play on Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest." Which is one of my favorite plays of all time. Not only do I highly recommend the movie version with Rupert Everett, but I did my dissertation on that and two of Oscar Wilde's other plays. So I was pretty excited for a book that played on the title, which is likely one of the reasons why I was so disappointed. Needless to say, despite the title, the book had very little to do with the play in terms of theme or style or pretty much anything.

What we do have is a man who just lost his family estate in a fire. Winfield Elliot, who apparently is also the hero of one of Alexander's other stories, is a man who has very set ideas about the world. Firstly, that his old house is just fine the way it was and needs nothing in the way of progress. And that women have a very specific place in the world. At home, certainly not out doing things like having a job. Pfft. Let me get one thing off my chest right now. I don't want our heroine to reform him. I want her to bury him somewhere. Preferably underneath that estate she's rebuilding for him.

Our heroine is Miranda Garrett, a sensible young widow who has since taken charge of her late husband's architect firm. Mostly because she was the one who had been doing the building designs in the first place and her husband had just been covering for her work. Yeah, don't worry, I hate her too after a bit. At first I liked her for being progressive and not letting the man's world dictate what she should be doing with her life even if she wasn't allowed to do it openly. But then Winfield convinced her she needed new clothes, and she eventually gave up her business because he couldn't stand the thought of her still being connected to her late husband in any way, shape or form. Honey, when your husband is jealous of the dead guy, he's going to have insecurity issues about everything, and he's totally not worth it in the first place.

Which brings me to the relationship development. There is none. Two hundred pages later, their relationship is in the exact same position it was in the beginning. What changed? Oh right, it certainly wasn't his attitude. It was her clothes. And then suddenly porn. If we were going to get to the sex without much relationship development, we could have just started with the sex. It might have actually made the book more interesting.

The only conflict in the relationship comes from Winfield's ridiculous notions about women and his insecurities about her dead husband. Which leads me to my least favorite part of the book. Alexander spends several pages with two of her characters discussing whether or not it's possible to love two people at separate times equally to which the answer was yes. It took us several pages to get there, but the general conclusion was that her relationship with her husband should have no bearing on her relationship with Winfield and vice versa. Which is a notion I can really get behind, because widowers and divorcees need love too. Then she turns around and ruins it by deciding that Winfield is much better in the sack than her late husband, so it doesn't really matter anyway.

My face, when I read that. Actually, I just really wanted to use that gif.

So you know what, I didn't like this book. At all. I didn't like the characters, I didn't like the relationship development, and I certainly did not like the final conclusion about the late husband. However, Victoria Alexander is by no means a bad writer, even if I disagree with her plot and characters. If none of my above complaints bother you, then by all means, read the book, because there are plenty of other people out there who love this book. It's just not the book for me.

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### **Laura the Highland Hussy says**

Review posted on Demon Lover's Books & More

3.75

*"It could be worse."*

Winfield Elliott, Viscount Stillwell, has just had his heart ripped out-and it's not from another failed engagement (he's had 3!). It's because his home, the family's home, has caught fire. And it's devastating. It hits Win hard, but he keeps up his mantra of "It could be worse."

Miranda Garrett is a lady. But she's also an architect. One of the best out there, in fact. But she's been hiding behind her late husband's name and business for far too long, and when she has the opportunity to rebuild

Fairfield she has to go in person. Her normal male liaison can't leave London, and so many men won't work with a woman, so she's risking more than just her reputation and a job she loves. She's risking her employees' livelihood. With every intention of stepping carefully and tactfully, Miranda meets Win.

Win, the legendary charmer, can't seem to charm his new architect's liaison. She doesn't find him witty, she doesn't laugh at his jokes, and she keeps him off-kilter. And this irritates him. The two of them are off to a fun start full of witty banter and snappy comebacks.

Their romance was fun, and sweet and everything I've come to expect from Victoria Alexander. Towards the end, Miranda's determination to keep her architecture secret from Win is what causes a rift between them. This is the only part that I felt was a bit too drawn out. Win had known for a while and was holding out for Miranda to trust him. Miranda knew how Win felt about ladies staying in their place (and out of the workplace-ouch), but it was based off an asinine comment he'd made the first or second time they'd met. While I can see why she wouldn't tell him, I also think he more than proved his change of heart.

Now, that being said, **this was absolutely a fun romance and a delightful couple of characters. I recommend this to anyone who enjoys Historical Romance and sassy heroines.**

\*\*\*ARC courtesy of Kensington

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### **Beth says**

Lady Miranda Garrett has been the secret behind her husband's, John, successful architectural firm until the day he was accidentally killed on a work site. Then she had to come up with a way to continue supporting his employees, keep up business as usual, without her husband to take the credit for her work. You see, London would never accept a lady architect and although she has been the designer for years to keep the business profitable she must maintain her secret. She now has the opportunity to work on a large job for Viscount Winfield Elliot. He is known to be wicked, engaged 3 times and somewhat of a lady's man. Miranda must maintain her secret while keeping Winfield Elliot in the dark or all will be ruined.

Viscount Winfield Elliot's family home has been ravaged by fire and only the firm owned by Tempest and Garret can handle the rebuild in a timely matter. But all isn't what it seems about the mysterious Lady Garrett. Not wanting to trust her firm to the rebuild, Win hires an investigator to find out all he can about Garrett and Tempest. Although there is mistrust and secrets both are inexplicably drawn toward each other. What begins as a combative relationship soon becomes so much more. The question, can their secrets destroy it all?

This was a sweet and enjoyable story filled with witty banter and lots of verbal feuding. I found the story interesting but felt the narrative between characters was quite extensive and the relationship was an extremely slow build. I also had trouble feeling the "wickedness" but found Win, our hero, charming and often reasonably befuddled. **The Importance of Being Wicked** was a charming, slow building historical romance. 3 stars.

This ARC copy of **The Importance of Being Wicked** was given to me by Netgalley and Kensington Publishing Corp. - Zebra in exchange for an honest review. Publish Date January 29, 2013.

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### **Suzanne (Under the Covers Book blog) says**

Winfield Elliott, Viscount Stillwell has had three fiancees but has yet to see the altar and has no current desire to look for his fourth, especially now that his family's home has burned down. So the last thing he expects when he hires an architect firm to rebuild his country home was the widowed Lady Miranda Garrett to step out of her carriage, in her ugly shoes, and start to take charge of not just the rebuilding of his home, but his heart as well. Miranda has always secretly wanted a wicked man, and Winfield Elliott does have a certain reputation but instead of finding him charming and flirtatious he was rather...annoying and stodgy, why hasn't he kissed her yet?

I am newly converted to Victoria Alexander, I love her brand of light hearted and funny historical romance. Although I have only read a few of Ms Alexander's books with each one she has created likable and dimensional characters, which just proves it doesn't all have to be doom and gloom for you to have a book containing a well drawn hero and heroine. What she also excels at is dialogue, the banter was witty and funny, even when the couple argued (which happened a lot) making a perma-smile appear on my face whilst I was reading *The Importance of Being Wicked*.

However, if you are looking for a truly wicked hero then you have come to the wrong book, although Winfield was charming and a flirt he didn't strike me as at all wicked. When it came down to it he was just a very nice man who has previously had very bad taste in fiancees, luckily I have a soft spot for charming yet nice men. Of both of them, it was Miranda who was the most shocking (for her time) being a woman of business. Miranda also went through an ugly ducking-esque transformation as she gains more confidence and I liked seeing her stand up for herself; my favourite parts of the book are seeing her tell various people off, including Win.

The only part of the book I didn't like was towards the end where all sorts of misunderstanding happen that seemed to pop out of nowhere and didn't serve any kind of purpose and to me read a lot like page filler. Luckily by then I already liked the book and the people in it so it baffled me that this was put in.

A great read, I am definitely going to continue exploring more of Victoria Alexander's books and look forward to the next book in this series.

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### **Lover of Romance says**

*The Importance of Being Wicked* is the second book in the Millworth Manor series. Victoria Alexander has been one of my favorite authors for years, and I have really enjoyed the theme of this latest series of hers. Not my favorite stories from this author, but very enjoyable. The series is based on this family that resides at Millworth Manor. This installment is about Winfield Elliott, the Viscount of Stillwell. The format of this book was in audio form, and I thought since lately I haven't listened to many historical romances, I thought that this one would be a good one to do. I have been meaning to continue with this series, and so I do love audio books. I did have a hard time sticking to this audio book though, I am not sure if it was the narrator or the way the book was written, but I have a feeling I would have enjoyed it a bit more in paperback. Despite that fact, I really enjoyed the style of this story and it had many qualities to this story that pulled me in and left me fascinated.

*The Importance Of Being Wicked* begins with Millworth Manor, being caught in a fire, and the main living

areas being burned although the outer edges remained untouched. So they are in desperate need of a architect hoping to have the work finished before their yearly ball that is a well known event among society. Win has been searching for a good architect to do the work, and seeks the help of Miranda Garrett who has been running the business since her late husband passed away. But what is not known is that she is the main architect and has been since the company first began. But because she is a woman, that fact can't be made known to the public or the very attractive Winfield. As Win and Miranda are thrown together in trying to complete the manor before the ball, and attraction forms between the two, sparks fly, and desire flames hotter than any house fire. I really loved the idea of the heroine being a talented architect, and how she somehow keeps it a secret, while keeping a priority on those that work for her. Not even her own family knows, and I enjoyed seeing the secret slowly come out, and I enjoyed the reactions of the fellow characters involved in the story.

This story was a sensational read, and I loved the romance that develops between Win and Miranda. It was a bit different, since they couldn't stop arguing or doubting the others intentions, but eventually they started to really come together, and I enjoyed the bickering banter between them. Very amusing to the reader, and keeps you interested in the story. There isn't a huge major conflict other than both keeping a few secrets, but other than that, its a fun and simple love story you can relax into. There isn't much suspense or intensity, but a calming effect of a beautifully written romance that leaves a feeling of contentment once you reach the ending. A STUNNING TALE!!

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### **Charlotte says**

I wanted to like this based on the title alone “The Importance of Being Wicked”... a play on one of my favorite plays about a guy named Earnest. Alas it was not to be.

Victoria Alexander fails to draw me in or create a story that I can invest in. The concept is charming enough, it just doesn't go anywhere. It is hindered greatly by awkward conversations and a generally pedantic feel to the writing.

And then there is the word “wicked”... I was ready to scream every time I read it by the middle of the book. At times it seemed as if the author had no other descriptive word to use. And in using “wicked” so much it seems to lose any meaning or impact at all. It becomes a silly throw away word.

Our erstwhile lovers are Miranda and Winfield. Neither one ends up being overly compelling and since there is no dangerous situation or shadowy intrigue to form the plot this is a problem. There is no compelling dynamic between them.

Winfield spends most of the book coming across as a pompous misogynist who appears clueless the majority of the time.

Miranda seems to be 2 different people and not in the choosing to show 2 different sides kind of way. It honestly feels at times like she was perhaps 2 different characters combined into 1 for some unknown reason. The idea that a woman who can create detailed and well done plans for houses including new modern plumbing and electricity would somehow be completely clueless as to the financial situation of her business but still have the foresight to put aside money for her employees – it just doesn't ring true.

There just seemed to be no there there.

I was provided a free copy for review.

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### **Jessica Adams says**

Pretty sure this was another new author for me , and I'm hooked. Great characters. I'm also a sucker for a strong female lead, and Miranda was awesome. Funny and sweet story as well. Definitely reading more of this author and this series.

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### **Nakeesha says**

Victoria Alexander has a great grasp of prose in her historical romance, "The Importance of Being Wicked." However the exposition left me feeling like an overworked bartender. You know the stereotype: someone gets drunk at a bar and winds up telling their whole life story to the bartender who won't remember any of the details. That's how I felt while reading the Prologue, which introduced Lord Stillwell, and Chapter One, which introduced Lady Garrett.

The Prologue sets up the catalyst that brings these two together. That catalyst is that Lord Stillwell's homestead has sustained major damage from a fire and he'll be in need of an architectural firm. I gleaned that Stillwell was devastated but hopeful as a result of this catastrophe, and that he was the responsible type and up to the challenge of the repair efforts. This story is written in 3rd POV, staying close to Stillwell. In the prologue, Stillwell's cousin Gray is introduced. A lot of writing focused on Gray, and Stillwell and Gray seemed very similar. So much that I often forgot who was speaking and had to reread. The two men talked about a lot of characters while out surveying the damage; a lot of characters who we had yet to encounter. Add that to a male lead and a male support who were very similar and it became overwhelming for me.

In Chapter One we meet the heroine, Lady Garrett, while she's at lunch with her sister who is prattling on as Lady Garrett details her entire backstory, her secrets, and her future motivations in internal monologue. Its very interesting that Lady Garrett is secretly a business women in a man's world. Its even more interesting that her prattling sister wants a divorce and Lady Garrett sanctions something so scandalous. But I had already lost interest by the time we learn all this near the end of Chapter One. There was no room left for foreplay or finding out anything new because Lady Garrett told me her whole life story and future endeavors, including hinting at her willingness to be seduced by the Hero. Even though the "cherry" hadn't been popped, as a reader I knew it was loose and that released a lot of potential dramatic tension.

I decided to give the story until the Lord and Lady met. I didn't have to wait long because that happens at the top of Chapter Two. Yet when these two characters came face to face, they read to me like two totally different people. Lady Garrett came off cold and distant "reminiscent of a governess that said, far louder than words, that this was a woman not to be trifled with," and Lord Stillwell turned his devastated, responsible eyes from his ruined property and was fixing her with a charming smile that labeled him a rake. Perhaps if the work had started with Chapter Two and I could have discovered these two and their backstory in action I would have maintained my buzz instead of acquiring a hangover.

ARC courtesy of Netgalley.com

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### **Katherine ??? says**

Sebenarnya aku kasihan pd Winfield alias Win yg sdh 3 kali gagal ke pelaminan. Jadi pas kehadiran

Miranda, janda yg terjun ke bisnis konstruksi (pd abad 19 blm lazim wanita bergerak di bidang bisnis apalagi konstruksi yg lebih cocok sbg pekerjaan pria) menggugah hatinya, tapi Win bersikeras dgn menggunakan trauma 3 kali kegalannya tsb sbg alibi. Pdhl seluruh anggota keluarganya mendorong bahkan berkomplot agar Win bisa jadian dgn Miranda. Saat akhirnya mereka bercinta bersama, setelah hal tsb, giliran Miranda yg ogah<sup>2</sup>an (capek deeehh) yg kekeuh tidak mau mjd tunangan ke-4 tapi tidak memungkiri kemungkinan pernikahan.

Ini novel kedua yg saya baca dr author. Dan lagi<sup>2</sup> msh blm klik dgn gaya penulisan author. Saya analisis kemungkinan besar saya gak suka gaya dialog antar tokoh<sup>2</sup>nya yg muter<sup>2</sup> ngunyer<sup>2</sup> perihal itu<sup>2</sup> saja dan kadang<sup>2</sup> hasil akhirnya adalah tanpa solusi. Jadilah saya capek membaca novel setebal 550 hlm tanpa konflik yg penting apalagi karakternya.

Oya, omong<sup>2</sup> soal karakter, saya bingung dgn seringnya di-sebut<sup>2</sup> bhw Win bajingan, pdhl tidak tersirat sedikitpun di novel ini sifat bajingan Win. Mungkin tafsir dan definisi bajingan pd abad 19 berbeda jauh dgn definisi bajingan abad 21. Bagi saya, Win pria baik<sup>2</sup> yg biasa saja.

Begitu pula si Miranda di-sebut<sup>2</sup> berulangkali sbg governess. Setahu saya, governess itu pengasuh sekaligus pengajar. Dan lagi<sup>2</sup> saya gak menemukan Miranda sedang melakukan pekerjaan sbg governess ini. Miranda ini cuma wanita lebih cerdas sedikit dibandingkan umumnya wanita pd zamannya. Kalau kadar ngeselinnya sih nyaris 11-12 dgn tunangan<sup>2</sup> gagal Win tsb.

Kesimpulan: novel ini membosankan.

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