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Mary Balogh

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The Lady and the Libertine

Lord Edmund Waite was everything that Lady Mary Gregg despised in a man. He was lewd, lascivious, mocking—the most notorious and successful rake in the realm. Happily, Mary had nothing to fear from this lord of libertines. A bluestocking like her could never tempt a man whose taste ran to pretty playthings for his pleasures.

How startled Mary was to find herself the object of Lord Waite's determined desires. But even more surprising was her reaction to his shocking advances. How could she remain a lady with this man who knew so well how to make her feel like a woman?

The Notorious Rake Details

Date : Published September 1st 1992 by Signet (first published 1992)

ISBN : 9780451174192

Author : Mary Balogh

Format : Mass Market Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Regency, Regency Romance, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review The Notorious Rake for online ebook

Tina says

Mary Balogh can do a self loathing hero like nobody's business. Edmond is a jerk and a womanizer. He's a little mean and a lot cruel. And yet I still liked him. A lot.

In some ways, Edmond takes on role that the heroine traditionally plays in that we go on the emotional journey with him much more intimately than we do with Mary. We are privy to his dizzying, relentless fall into love and his uncertainty with it all and the steps he takes to protect his feelings. He has some truly revealing inner dialogue that we are very much privy to.

The heroine, Mary, otoh, comes off as the one who is a little more enigmatic and a little more distanced. Yes we get to feel her side of things also, but she plays her cards much closer to her chest than Edmond does -- at least from the reader's standpoint. Outwardly, Edmond is a sneering *enfant terrible* but we get why he is the way he is. It takes Mary some time to realize why as well.

It is her discovery of the real Edmond that makes for a good, affecting, romantic story.

Laura (Kyahgirl) says

3.5/5; 4 stars; B+

This story is really about redemption but the reader has to go through quite a few squirmly uncomfortable moments to get to a point where they can see Lord Edmond actually being redeemable. There were quite a few points in the book when I thought he was such a jerk that it was hard to believe he could be saved. Mary Balogh gave some pretty good insight into how inflexible and hypocritical 'polite' society could be. Her characters have flaws but they are still likeable. This book is loosely connected to A Counterfeit Betrothal as Lady Mary Mornington was platonic friends for years with Lady Sophia's father, although everyone assumed they were lovers.

Caz says

Okay, so the initial premise is a bit shaky - the heroine is terrified of thunderstorms and ends up having comfort sex with the hero during (and after) a storm - but if you can get past that, *The Notorious Rake* is a terrific read. Edmond Waite is the notorious rake of the title, a womaniser and drinker who is only just tolerated by the great and the good of the ton. Mary is a widow who is well thought of by all; she moves in the centre of society, he just barely at its edge. But he's an engaging character, nonetheless; from the moment he arrives at Mary's literary salon and proceeds to call one of her guests an ass (which he is) it's clear that Edmond is possessed of a sense of humour and a degree of perception. And I have to agree with what someone else here has said, in that Balogh has a real talent for creating truly flawed and tortured heroes. Edmond is full of self-loathing, and blames himself for the death of his brother and his mother - neither of which was really his fault. And even though Mary eventually begins to see beyond the mask Edmond

presents to the world, she is still determined to marry a "worthy" (read "boring") gentleman, because that is what she *should* do.

Safe to say that it all works out in the end, though! This is a hard book to find as I believe it's been out of print for some time, but it was definitely worth the hunt.

Sheila says

Whoa, I left a review on the wrong half of the omnibus. I did NOT really enjoy this one.

Technically everything in the book was consented to - that's what we were told repeatedly. But I had a really hard time believing it. The heroine was so emotionally compromised and the hero so incapable of hearing a "no" that it left a terrible taste in my mouth.

Georgie says

I did fall rather for Lord Edmond Waite, the Notorious Rake himself. He is self-aware, self-deprecating, and self-loathing, and it's his progress towards allowing himself some happiness that forms the plot of this delightful story. It's beautifully exemplified in this little extract,-

"So much for reformations of character, Mary. They just do not happen. I am sorry. The temptation was too great."

"Yes, it was," she said.

"I did try," he said. "If only the rain had not made my clothes so infernally wet. I think I might have had a will of iron if I had not had to remove all my clothes."

The plot is straightforward in the best way - lots of occasions for Edmond and Mary to get closer, with few interruptions - and I loved the secondary characters, particularly Edmond's Aunt:-

"You may run along and bully the servants, Edmond," she said. "They should have had all the tables set long before now. Growl at them, dear. You are so very good at growling. It will be far more effective than my nagging. When I nag at my servants, they invariably proceed to do exactly what they were doing before, which was not a great deal."

I do have a couple of reservations about the book. Mary is less clearly drawn than Edmond - she's not characterless, exactly, but Edmond talks very much more than she does, and her responses are often as bland as shown above. He falls for her very quickly, and while Mary Balogh convinces me that he *is* in love with her, I don't think I quite get *why* he is. The tragedy in Edmond's past is a very real one (the death of his brother and mother) although you may feel, as I did, that his reaction to it and his family's was more extreme than perhaps was warranted. [There are also, at least in the version I read, numerous misprints, and some stray references to Sir Edmond Waite.]

But overall, a book I will re-read with pleasure.

Marita says

The hero was an utter ass with stupidly self-loathing and noble ulterior motives and I still loved him.

The heroine was so quick to judge him inferior and irredeemable, and yet I thought she was beautifully flawed and real, and I loved her.

Mostly, I loved that when these two cast all the unnecessary masks and angst and bullshit aside, their chemistry and need and love for each other was undeniable and incredibly sweet.

Ultimately, this book just goes to show how much your family can shape your character and your future. Here, when Edmond needed his family's unconditional love most, they chose to vilify him for something that wasn't his fault. It's not hard to see how he turned so jaded and cynical when the people who should have loved him no matter what chose not to. It's a shame though, because young Edmond had so much promise that was utterly wasted, and his family didn't get to shoulder nearly enough blame for ruining him like that IMO. Of course, he made his own poor decisions, but damn can you blame him?!

So yeah, Edmond is the King of all Tortured Heroes, and damn it if he isn't freaking irresistible because of it.

LuvGirl says

3.5 stars. I was a little disappointed at first with this book that I had heard such great things about. It's on so many "best rakes" list. Why I ask? I did not see it in the beginning. First of all, the hero's sex appeal was hampered by all the women that did not want him. The heroine despised him after using him for sex in a thunderstorm, he was used and then jilted for another man by the heroine of the former book that he was still pining for, and woman did not even seem to enjoy sex with this rake. I thought rakes were supposed to know how to do the deed? The main reason why he became so obsessed with the heroine in the first place was because he was so surprised at how much she enjoyed sex because women usually don't. He's a rake of the highest order and he's never met a woman that enjoyed sex? He's obviously not doing it right, lol.

The heroine's animosity towards him did not help matters either. He relentlessly chased her like a stalker while she relentlessly abused him with lines like these;

"You make me sick" she said. "Physically sick. Nauseated. Are you so perverted that you like to pursue woman who can vomit just at the thought of you?".

I can't remember a time where I felt sorry for the rake. feeling pity for a rake is never a good sign. You're supposed to want to bash them over the head with something...remember? Maybe, just maybe if he didn't stalk the other heroine in The Trysting Place I would have had a little more respect for him but it seems he did the same thing to that young lady without success, and now since Mary's milkshake brings all the boys to the yard he's after her too. The one good thing I can say about the book is that the hero was very witty, which I loved, and MB's refined writing style was prominent, so it wasn't all a waste. Anyway I knew pretty early on that this book was not going to go on any of my "best rakes" list.

I was in a fit of pique at how the hero was being treated by the heroine at the time I wrote the top part of this review and I wanted to give this book 2.5 stars and was ready to dnf it, but I found that I couldn't put it down

because the writing itself was so well done, and the hero and heroine had some really great banter between them and it was fascinating to behold. Although I still wouldn't say the hero was the best portrayed rake ever, I cannot deny that this was an engrossing read. MB made me forget all the things that bothered me at the beginning of this review. I didn't want to erase it because it's honestly how I felt at the time, but I definitely had to change my 2.5 stars to 3.5 after finishing the book. Don't write reviews when you are peed off, lol.

Ana T. says

After meeting Lord Edmond Waite in The Trysting Place and Lady Mornington in The Counterfeit Betrothal I couldn't wait to get to their book. I was hoping to find a winner and I wasn't disappointed, this was my favourite book in the trilogy.

Lord Edmond is a rake with a really bad reputation, he is lucky that he is still received by the ton. Lady Mornington is a learned lady who likes to organise literary salons at her home and to spend time with like minded friends to discuss literature and politics. When they are paired up during a visit to Vauxhall Gardens none of them is very enthusiastic about the company. Not only that but when they are caught by a thunderstorm that leaves Mary terrified, Edmond finds that the best way to calm her down is though sex. I thought Balogh wrote a powerful and violent scene and for a moment I worried where she was going with this story... They end up spending the night together and on the next day Lord Edmond is determined to make Mary his mistress, while she is quite determined to forget him... and so starts the pursuit.

Mary, a widow, as decided to remarry, she acknowledges she spent a pleasant time in Edmond's arms but she wants a husband not a lover and besides she doesn't think they would suit. They meet at the same events and Edmond even makes an appearance at one of Mary's salons much to the annoyance of her new beau but their relationship is difficult at best.

Edmond finds himself more and more captivated but he doesn't always conform to society rules and when people think the worst of him he can't help but behave according to those expectations. One of the things he has been accused of is the death of his brother and his mother and he acknowledges to Mary that he was indeed responsible. He tries to show her his good side on a one day visit to his aunt and while Mary can't help but feel that the real Edmond is hidden and might be a lot more honourable and interesting that he lets on she still decides not to accept him. But they do meet again at a house party for his aunt's birthday (that Mary attends with her new fiancé) and when Edmond is confronted with his estranged family it is to Mary that he turns as a friend.

I really loved this story and the fact that both characters start with an idea of the other one that soon will change. Edmond thought Mary was plain and common but after spending time with her he sees her in a whole new light and can't stop thinking about her. Even when he decides not to pursue her anymore to obey her wishes he still thinks about her and decides to change his rakish ways as they give him no more pleasure. Mary thinks he is cold and unfeeling but throughout their relationship sees glimpses of the man behind the mask. Since there are so many mixed signals she takes longer to realise who he is and how she loves him. I

also liked that Edmond had a real reason for his self destruction, 15 years seems a long time to be that way but I could accept that it was so. I liked Edmond more than Mary maybe because he seems more human, more fragile, despite his bad behaviour than her, who seemed at times a bit too perfect. Because of whom they are, and how unlikely it seems at times that they will get their happy ending, this was an angsty and poignant story, my favourite kind!

Grade: 5/5

Kristen says

The Notorious Rake by Mary Balogh is another testament to the author's skill. A must-read for fans of Balogh or fans of the genre. And yet, that does not necessarily mean it is an enjoyable must-read; depressing more like. I find that most of Balogh's works leave me emotionally drained and unsatisfied. She has talent; there's no denying that. Her writing is fundamental for any historical romance reader. But frankly, the woman's use of pathos is simply sadistic. I have never felt so many negative feelings at one time from one book. I would not call *The Notorious Rake* an emotional roller coaster, it is more like one of those rides that free-fall from 100 ft in the air. Your stomach drops straight to your butt (not in the nice way) and the feeling relentlessly gets worse and worse until the ride is over. If you like books that really provoke strong feelings, look no further. If you prefer light, romantic books, you had better look elsewhere.

The titular notorious rake of the novel is so confused, tormented, and self-loathing that he is beyond cruel to the woman he loves. She, on the other hand, is a paradoxical mix of prudish and sexual. This causes a mass of conflicting signals and illogical actions between the romantic leads. As for their chemistry, I can perceive little-to-none. Most of the interactions and dialogue between rake and lady is at best rather frustrating, and at worst completely nauseating.

(view spoiler)

The story line, as Malcolm Tucker would say is like "*The Shawshank Redemption*, only with more tunneling through sh** and no f***ing redemption." The level of hardship and drama before the unsatisfying climax is not proportional to the rather lukewarm resolution. This results in a lasting feeling of suffering for the reader. If Balogh's storytelling style in this novel was not quite so sombre or so grim, I would say that reading *The Notorious Rake* is a pleasure. However, I am afraid it is more of a necessary evil.

Amarilli Settantatre says

Oh e oh. Alla fine valeva la pena di leggere i primi due (non eccelsi) volumi per arrivare a questo. Decisamente un romanzo con i fiocchi.

A parte l'inizio che mi ha fatto cadere la mascella (ma per l'ammirazione verso Mary Balogh!! - un'avvio così mi ha turbata e intrigata), è stato un libro insolito, anti-romantico, quasi cattivo.

Entrambi, Mary e Edmond, sono cresciutelli, vissuti, pieni di rimorsi per quello che è stato (lui per un incidente di gioventù che gli ha sconvolto la vita, lei per aver perso non uno, ma ben due uomini che amava). Sono perfettamente compatibili dal punto di vista fisico, ma si detestano reciprocamente a livello di personalità. Eppure...

Eppure c'è qualcosa. Merito di uno o più temporali, merito delle incertezze del destino.

Mi sono davvero commossa. Il celebre libertino mi ha spiazzata per la sua ingenuità, al limite della

tenerezza.

Anna says

really disagreeable characters, very rapey, not enjoyable at all

Virginia says

This book is super stalkery and rapey. What woman allows a total stranger to have sex with them in the gardens just because she is scared of a thunderstorm?

And WTAF with the hero's inability to hear a No?

Super rapey. Yuck.

And yet. The last 20 pages are beautiful and so terribly sad and moving. They are Balogh at her finest.

If only they were part of another book.

Miranda Davis says

Turns out, my favorite Mary Balogh, *Slightly Dangerous*, has a precursor. In this earlier book, we have an analogously difficult, unbending man (a truly dedicated rakehell with a tragic past) and a widow who gets under his skin (this one has a storm-phobia and despite rumors is an upstanding, less than merry widow), whereas *SD* features the uptight head of a noble family and a bubbly, accident-prone widow who does not know how to act.

The stories are two sides of the same valuable coin. This is a darker, angst-ier, more emotionally difficult reverse, while *Slightly Dangerous* is by nature a brighter obverse, a sunny tale of an uptight, quizzing glass-toting nob loosening up.

I liked both for all the reasons Mary Balogh is such a great storyteller.

Sex in *The Notorious Rake* happens with all the warning of a lightning bolt. Literally. She's phobic about storms and gets intimate with the black-sheep/rake in a Vauxhall shelter while reacting to a sudden storm. Either you decide to go along with the premise or you jettison it at this point. I continued. And I'm pleased I did.

He is a man so seemingly lost to proper feeling and so unrepentant about his social ostracism, he himself refers to having killed his brother and mother offhandedly. But he is not what he seems, and as the onion's layers are peeled away, the source of his guilt and fear is ultimately exposed (and the widow returns the favor of seeing him through it). These two characters were far more difficult to one another, she didn't like him, though she was drawn to him; he didn't want to crave her, an unprepossessing woman, but he did and he pursued her with no finesse, just chutzpah. And out of a sense of despair and his love for her, he used the

same crude tactics to try to chase her away, for her own good.

Though this pair of lovers were carefully and fully realized, I'd rather spend time again with the Slightly Dangerous pair. But I am as deep as a puddle.

Shabby Girl ~ aka Lady Victoria says

The Notorious Rake was my first Mary Balogh book, so I didn't have too many expectations going in. I was either going to find a new good author, an average one or one I didn't like.

Well, of course it turns out that Balogh is one beautifully talented writer. I quickly realised I'd found an author that I was going to read each and every one of her books. And, oh joy, a huge body of work to explore.

I've since read quite a number of her books, still quite a few to go, however, I still think this is the best book of hers I've read. That's saying something as she has so many wonderful books.

I was a little shocked by what happened in the first "meeting" of the H and h, I did a double blink and went back to read it again to see if they were actually having sex during a storm, and yes, there is was - and they didn't even like each other! It was a strange moment, and I wasn't sure what to expect after that!

I kept reading and found a really moving, angsty, beautiful love story. A couple who didn't even like each other at the start, had many preconceived ideas of what the other was, and came to love each other so much over time, with much anguish in between. This is just the sort of story I LOVE and was overjoyed to find an author who does it so well.

The Notorious Rake is a wonderful book, with a H and h that are sensible, well-lived and make real decisions I can understand based on real ideals. It is a book I think I will go back and read again in time and I know I'll love it just as much the second time. Highly recommended.

P. says

A depressing book. For 9/10s of it the hero is consumed by guilt and the heroine completely absorbed in herself. Poor Edmund carries the guilt of his brother's death even though his entire family was to blame but drove him out like a scapegoat of yore out into the wilderness [London] rather than face their own guilt. He is supposed to have made a wreck of his life, although from the flimsy descriptions of his evil ways they seem not one iota different than any other rascal of the ton but in his case it makes him 'evil'. The heroine, Mary, OTOH is a self-absorbed prig and a complete goody two shoes. You can't like her even when at the miraculous 90% mark she starts to think of someone else besides herself. Unfortunately this is Edmund, and you are saying to yourself run Edmund run! But for the sake of the plot poor Edmund has to fall in love with her - it's not believable and you are still saying to yourself run Edmund run. Then there is the general reconciliation all around. Edmund's family take him back to their bosom, and Mary decides she loves him. And you're still saying....
