



When She Was Wicked

Anne Barton

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Some rules simply beg to be broken...

A dressmaker in London's busiest shop, Miss Anabelle Honeycote overhears the *ton's* steamiest secrets—and (occasionally) uses them to her advantage. It isn't something she's proud of, but the reluctant blackmailer needs the money to care for her gravely ill mother. To make up for her misdeeds, Anabelle keeps to a firm set of rules:

- Never request payment from someone who cannot afford it.
- Never reveal the secrets of a paying client.
- Never enter into any form of social interaction with a client.

Her list keeps her (somewhat) honest—until she encounters Owen Sherbourne, the Duke of Huntford. Not only does Owen nip Anabelle's extortion plans in the bud, the devilishly handsome Duke soon has the sexy seamstress dreaming of more than silks and satins. With Owen, Anabelle enjoys pleasures she never imagined . . . until a scandal from the past resurfaces. Now her rules could mean his family's ruin. Owen's searing kisses carry the promise of passion, but how will he react when Anabelle's most devastating secret is finally revealed?

When She Was Wicked Details

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From Reader Review When She Was Wicked for online ebook

Mary - Buried Under Romance says

A stunning debut by Anne Barton, with an original plot and engaging characters that have renovated the unacceptable-statuses trope.

Anabelle Honeycote is pragmatic and loyal to her family, she will do anything to save her mom and keep food on the table, including resorting to blackmail as her seamstress wages cannot support her mother's medical bills. Granted, her "blackmail rules" are a comical attempt at causing ambiguity in her actions, but it does well to show that she has morals, and really, what's wrong with being a Robin Hood to save her poor family?

Only due to the sheer stupidity of her first four clients that she wasn't caught, but Owen Sherbourne, the Duke of Huntford, does catch her and makes her a proposition: complete a set of dresses for his sisters or be sent to prison. And so, Anabelle moves into Owen's home and proceeds to prove how much of a Candy character she is.

Overall I greatly enjoyed the story. Anabelle takes on a confidante role to Owen's sisters, and becomes almost motherly to them by the end of the story. Her interactions with Owen are immensely sweet, a complement to their roles as care-takers of the family, and when they are together, all statuses are thrown aside and it's just them, two souls who found something lovely and admirable in each other. The secondary characters are great as well, from Owen's nice sisters (one of whom I hope will get her own book) to Anabelle's sister and mother, they are all quite nice and supportive, so the fulcrum of the book is internal and on Owen and Anabelle, instead of some evil villain hatching murder plots.

The one thing I didn't quite like was how Owen seemed to only accept Anabelle's potential as his duchess after he learns she's the granddaughter of a viscount. I know the realities of the time would not have allowed for such an uneven match between a dressmaker and a duke, but this is a romance story and Owen has already proven himself as a man who does what he wants, so the hesitation between his declaration of feelings and proposal of marriage leaves me annoyed at the man. Regardless, this is a great debut and I look forward to reading Daphne (Anabelle's sister)'s story, as she is such a sweet girl.

Vicky Dreiling says

I absolutely loved it! Anne is definitely a writer who is going places.

Katie(babs) says

Think of every stereotypical trope found in historical romance and it's in here. This is unbelievably unoriginal and dull, and I'm surprised it got published in the first place. There was few bright spots where the author shows she can be a skilled writers, but every thing from the ridiculous, unrealistic plot to the caricatures are basically "borrowing" from most of the historical romances published.

Big big pass on this one.

Norav says

J'ai beaucoup aimé. Malgré quelques incohérences (Annabelle myope au point de se cogner à plusieurs murs mais qui, quelques pages plus loin, arrive à réaliser des robes toujours sans lunettes, m'a doucement fait ricaner XD).

Hormis ces détails, je me suis laissée entraîner par l'histoire et je n'ai lâché le livre qu'une fois fini.

Kusanagi says

Je cherchais (et cherche encore ceci dit) une romance que j'avais commencé avec une histoire de couturière... résultat j'ai une belle collection de romances historiques avec des couturières XD.

Et donc j'ai commencé celle-là (parce qu'elle a un autre de mes challenge "lecture " ... y'a un Duc \o/).

Et j'ai franchement bien aimé. Ce n'était pas celle que je cherchais mais j'ai passé un bon moment ^^
L'équation est classique Annabelle est couturière, elle doit faire vivre sa famille ... et pour ça elle recourt parfois à une technique pas très honnête: le chantage.

Owen (je viens de me rendre compte que j'adore ce prénom et tout ça c'est la faute de Star Wars.... mais passons)est duc donc et très protecteur vis-à-vis de ses soeurs, et il aime moyen avoir à faire à un maitre-chanteur.

Même si celui-ci est plutôt charmante et lui fait un peu pitié. Donc il a trouvé un moyen de se venger: l'obliger à coudre les robes de ses sœurs à domicile. Oui vous allez me dire c'est un peu naïf et cousu de fil blanc ce truc (ah ah, elle était facile fallait que je la place :p). Et très crédible oui aussi(mais sérieux ON S'EN FOUT!)

J'ai bien aimé.... j'ai bien aimé la relations entre les deux, j'ai bien aimé leur rapport à leur famille aux deux, j'ai aimé aussi les soeurs des héros... du côté de la famille ducale on a quelques casseroles niveau papa-maman à gérer qui rajoute de l'intérêt à l'histoire.

Donc voilà, je vais lire le tome 2 ^^

Melody May (What I'm Reading) says

Originally Posted on What I'm Reading

Good morning everyone. Well, it was a late night. Sometimes I love when I can't put down the book, and sometimes I hate it. However, I'm excited to bring to you a new author who has a fantastic debut to read.

Anne Barton brings an exciting adventure of a seamstress who happens to extort some members in Society to help her family out in When She Was Wicked. It's not like Anabelle Honeycote has been doing it long. Being a seamstress, she tends to hear all the juice gossip and why not profit from these juice tidbits. After all

her family is in need, and they have more money than she does.

It's not like Anabelle goes into this willy-nilly, she actually has a list of rules that she follow.

List of Nevers

1. Never request payment from someone who cannot afford it.
2. Never request an exorbitant amount---only what is necessary.
3. Never request payment from the same person on more than one occasion.
4. Never reveal the secrets of a paying customer.
5. Never enter into any form of social interaction with a former customer.

However, it is amazing when these rules seem to fly out the window when she tries to blackmail Owen Sherbourne, the Duke of Huntford. Never goes well when you try to blackmail a Duke. As Anabelle hangs out with Owen, she realizes she needs more rules to keep herself safe from him.

I must say I really enjoyed this book, after all I stayed up all night reading it. Once Anabelle becomes the official seamstress for Owen's sisters, Olivia and Rose, the story started to really pick up the pace. It was neat to see the different types of relationship Anabelle had with Owen's family. You have Anabelle and Owen fighting their attraction to one another. After all Duke's do not marry servants, appearances are everything. Especially, when the family has a blacken history like Huntford.

Then you have Anabelle and her relationship to Olivia and Rose. This relationship is a little more complicated, when she gets to know the girls. Olivia and Rose are little unsure of themselves, and knowing their past it's easy to understand the reasoning behind it. Rose is even more special, because she has what we would call selective mutism. I can understand how her selective mutism was trigger. I would go mute if I saw what she saw. ICK!

You always need a snotty girl, who obviously thinks she's better than everyone. Seriously, Miss Starling is a manipulative little witch, who can't handle a little competition.

Honestly, I thought the story was creative and different from what I have read lately. I'm seriously looking forward to more books from Anne Barton. Seriously, an impressive read you might want to checkout when it comes out next week.

Copy provide by NetGalley and author

Kristina says

This is a silly book, but that's okay because I really needed to read a silly book today. It's not particularly well-written and the plot is clumsy and obvious, but if you're looking for light and fluffy, *When She Was Wicked* does the job.

Annabel Honeycote is a talented and hardworking seamstress who also happens to occasionally extort money from her wealthy clients. She has a sick mother and a sister to care for and her salary does not cover all their needs. However, when she attempts to extort money from the Duke of Huntford, she finds she has met her match (insert sarcastic exclamation mark).

This was vaguely amusing and interesting. I didn't care for Annabelle all that much--I mean, c'mon, she

blackmailed people, one of the sleaziest, most cowardly crimes. Just because she had the purest of reasons didn't really excuse it for me. Her list of rules she created to guide her sleazy crimes annoyed me too--especially as she constantly revised them every time she had another sexy encounter with Owen. *Owen*. That is the most un-sexy name for a duke ever.

This romance happened way too easily--I prefer a bit of a fight between the characters, some sexy Beatrice and Benedick-like banter. The duke, despite his manly muscles and manly fierce presence, is a bit of a soft touch. He was swept off his feet by her. Not that that can't work in a story, it just seemed rather sappy. He forgave her way too quickly at the end there. If she had revealed her knowledge, poor Rose would have been spared a disgusting encounter.

The plot lumbers along and anyone who's read a few of these can spot the author setting up the encounters between the two lovebirds. Rose freaking out from being drunkenly groped and running into the woods in her barefeet and nightie in the middle of the night was a bit much for me, particularly as she conveniently took refuge in a secluded romantic cottage. Guess who found her? Owen the Duke and Annabelle the Criminal. Naturally (after rushing his sister home), he comes back for Annabelle--and they engage in a night of sexy debauchery that results in the loss of her virginity. The sex scenes are kinda meh. I've read better.

The duke's sisters, Rose and Olivia, are enjoyable. Aside from Annabelle and Owen, no one else makes an impact.

Overall, this was enjoyable \$6 fluff. My brain appreciated the distraction.

Lily (Night Owl Book Cafe) says

Courtesy of Hachette Book Group, GRAND CENTRAL PUBLISHING, FOREVER through Netgalley in exchange of an honest review.

I truly love well done historical novels and *When She Was Wicked*, was the perfect fix for my recent historical need.

Anabelle Honeycote works as a seamstress at one of the London's busiest shop, she is also the reason for it's success. Known for her beautiful craft of work and dresses made for the ladies of the ton that fit their beauty and personality perfectly. Unfortunately, Anabelle does not make enough to survive, and with a very sick mother at home – Miss Anabelle Honeycote turns to extortion in order to make the extra money to pay for her mothers medicine and keep the roof over their head. The London's shop just happens to be the perfect place for all the steamy gossip.

Anabelle has a certain set of rules she follows in order to make up for her misdeeds, which protect her and keep her honest. When she tries to extort some money from the Duke of Huntford, not only does he catch her, but proposes her a job at his home under surveillance over the cold and dreary jail cell. Anabelle is to make a certain amount of dresses for his two sisters within three months, but the company of the Duke so close is more then Anabelle was willing to bargain for.

What a beautiful start of a series. I love the characters, loved the interactions, the storyline and Anne Barton's

wonderful and clever writing.

Barton knows how to lure you into the story and make you fall under it's spell. I couldn't put the book down, even when I should have been sleeping. I was so engrossed in the storyline and the attraction between Owen and Belle, that I couldn't put the book down. I knew I had to finish it and learn about Anabelle's happily ever after.

Owen is the Duke of Huntford who is a guardian older brother to two of his sisters. One of which Belle has threatened to expose her secrets of befriending a servant. A relationship between his kind and the servants is unheard of, much less a friendship. But when Miss Honeycote is revealed to be more beautiful and far more than he can handle, some rules are meant to go out the window. I loved his character. Loved that he wasn't really perfect. Thought he loves his sisters, he has no idea how to communicate with them. It is even harder with his youngest sister Rose, who stopped talking sometimes years back and he isn't all sure what had caused it. Their father committed suicide and their mother fled after an affair. He is also unsure of what to make of his relationship and attraction to Belle, and makes a lot of mistakes along the way, but their late night meetings and stolen forms of endearment squeezed my heart through the book.

The attraction was there, and it was both sweet and steamy. I couldn't help but feel bad for Anabelle, especially the secret she was harboring and her relationship with Owen – since he didn't want others to know about their attraction. But his caring gestures had touched my heart.

There were some sad parts, especially involving Miss. Sterling. I hated Miss Sterling, a woman who everyone assumed would end up as the Dukes wife and her hostility to Belle. But the ending ended up being sweet and wonderful and made me squeeze the book from sheer happiness. The Duke really shined and made me fall in love with him myself. I hated Miss Sterling, a woman who everyone assumed would end up as the Dukes wife and her hostility to Belle. I loved Olivia and Rose, and hope that eventually Barton will write books about them, because I would love to see their stories and how they panned out as well. Looking forward to more from this series and this wonderful author!

Shauni says

There once was a girl who when she was good she was very good but When She Was Wicked, she was even better! *grins* Couldn't help myself. When She Was Wicked is a wonderful story of dreams of life and love coming true. And Anne Barton crafts a delightful tale of deception and delight..

Annabelle Honeycote spent her life in service to the women of the ton and their less than polite counterpart. What was she? She was a seamstress.. rather she was the secret weapon of the ton's favored modiste.. Her designs delight the women and she has made her boss a veritable fortune. Sadly, she is working for pennies and doesn't make enough money to pay to board her ailing mother and her sister, who can't work because she stays home to care for their mother. What she doesn't make enough money for is to pay for the doctor and the medicine that is keeping her mother alive. So she does a bit of creative conniving. She listens to her clients then when she is desperate enough she uhmm blackmails them. Now don't hate her too much, she only blackmails those who can afford it, she never blackmails them for much and she never goes back for seconds. Yes, a blackmailer with ethics. Money is once again running short when she hears a secret that could help her family through the next few months. Unfortunately, or fortunately depending on how you look at it, she chose Owen Sherbourne, the Duke of Huntford as her next victim.

Owen Sherbourne, the Duke of Huntford, is certainly not going to succumb to blackmail but he did need to know who the cretin was and what secret they had. So he of course hid and captured the criminal.. Needless to say he was astounded to see the considerate dressmaker he had spoken to just that afternoon. Astounding even himself, he makes her an offer only an idiot would refuse. He will pay her mother's doctors bills, medicine bills, a salary large enough to pay for rent and food.. all she has to do is make his socially inept sisters entire new wardrobes. Figuring that keeping her under his roof would likely put an end to any further blackmailing attempts.

Of course Annabelle is so much more than a mere seamstress and immediately draws his sisters in.. Her warmth and friendship helps these two wonderful girls find their own feet. With a scandal in their past Owen is determined that none of them would do anything to further the family's disgrace, which includes not being too friendly with the servants. Of course he didn't count on falling for the seamstress. What he never knew was that he too needed a friend, someone to share things with and yes someone who loves him.

Annabelle works her magic on the family helping them to learn to lean on each other and slowly falls totally and completely in love with her Duke. Sadly, their stations are too far apart and Annabelle knows nothing will ever come of it. Add to it the current "Diamond" who wants Owen, well the Duke, for herself. Sure she is the "proper" match for him. Yech, what a snot.. Makes me ever so glad I was born in America in the 20th century.. where class doesn't quite matter.. Sadly, I would have probably scratched the twit's eyes out but our Annabelle was a true lady..

This wasn't quite My Fair Lady but it certainly had some Pygmalion aspects to it. Never the less it was an excellent read and for my Historical Romance readers out there.. you will enjoy it. Get the bubble bath, the candles and a bottle glass of wine and prepare to indulge.

Shauni

This review is based on the ARC of When She Was Wicked provided by netgalley and is scheduled to be released January 29, 2013

For more reviews by Shauni check out Tea and Book and Bodice Rippers, Femme Fatales and Fantasy

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

Sweet, fluffy read. Not much steam or romance. The heroine is admirable and not out of character for her time. The hero is a nice guy, not a rake, just a genuinely good person trying to do his best to raise two sisters and maintain the family's social position and watch out for their best interest. He is not too overbearing, not too much of an alpha male, and I really liked his character. There's not a whole lot of complexity, there is a mean and beautiful anti as there always is, but the romance overall is sweet and genuine, if not slow and unbelievable. Even if she is the granddaughter of a viscount fallen on hard times, a Duke would be hard pressed to fall for a seamstress and actually marry her. An enjoyable, if forgettable read.

Mojca says

Nothing is more important than family for Anabelle Honeycote. She's willing to do anything to save her ailing mother, even extort money from unsuspecting members of the *ton*. Anabelle's job as a seamstress doesn't bring much money and her mother's medicine is expensive, not to speak of rent or food...She has no other option. Still, she has rules; she never blackmails someone who cannot afford it, she only does it once per person, she never reveals the secret and she never socialized with her "victims".

But the fourth time everything unravels. Not only does her mark, Owen Sherbourne, the Duke of Huntford, lie in wait and catches her, he literally imprisons her in his home as a personal seamstress to his two younger sisters.

Soon a strange relationship blossoms between the mark and extortionist, a relationship that somehow blurs the lines between their opposing social standings and make them dream of possibilities that aren't meant to be. Not only can a union between a duke and a lowly seamstress never be, no matter their feelings and wants, Anabelle has a secret that might ruin her star-crossed romance with Owen and destroy her friendship with his sisters forever.

I loved this story so much, I don't know how to write an adequate review. I guess it's all still so vivid in my mind, but I have to write something, or I might just burst.

This was yet another impulse buy for me, but boy am I glad for it. I started reading without much expectations beyond hoping it wouldn't suck.

Not only it didn't suck, it blew me away!

The characters were so well-developed and depicted so vividly, I felt like they were in the room with me and we were old friends. Every scene was painted so masterfully, I felt like I was watching a movie, experiencing what the characters did, seeing what they saw, feeling what they felt, laughing and crying alongside them. Not many authors can make me tremble with excitement with each scene they write, but I can safely say, Ms. Bennett is one of them.

I rooted for Anabelle and Owen despite the cards stacked against them, I loved Owen's sisters as much as he and Belle did, I suffered with them, despaired against the odds alongside them...It's such a cliché to say that two characters are perfect together, but Belle and Owen *fit*. They were both layered characters with hidden depths, both wearing masks in their lives, masks that only the other could see behind and embrace the real person underneath the persona of the duke and the seamstress.

Their strange relationship and budding romance were beautifully portrayed, and the conflict stemming from the social chasm between them was heartbreaking in its realism. But I loved the fact they came from two different ends of the social spectrum and how they both learned (but especially him), that nothing is more important than love and one's happiness.

And yes, the scene at the ball made me sniffle. It was just so perfect.

The supporting cast offered a lovely backdrop to the main story, from creating the opportunity for Belle and Owen to actually meet, offering support, friendship, care and family ties, to throwing obstacles in their path (the little perfect would-be duchess was so delightfully mean, it was a pleasure to discover her true nature and in the end cackle at her metaphorical demise).

This book was a real pleasure to read, literally unputdownable (I read it when I was supposed to be doing

something else), I kept turning the pages, wanting to see what happens next, hoping against hope for a happily ever after. Yes, it's a romance story, so a HEA is pretty much a given, but the fact I trembled anxiously, the fact that I had doubts, speaks to the author's skill. She was able to transport me back in time, she made me fall in love with Bella and Owen...I was invested and I loved every second of it.

Thank you, Anna Bennett/Anne Barton!

Lisa says

Miss Annabelle Honeycote has had to turn to a very unsavory way to get money to pay her mothers growing medical bills-extortion from some of her clients. As many of the woman who are getting new dresses pay her no mind, they openly talk about some of scandalous stories about the ton. So while it pains her to do it, Annabelle uses these secrets to her advantage to get some money (never exorbitant amounts!) to help take care of her mother and sister. Unfortunately, her latest target, Owen, the Duke of Huntford, refuses to just hand over some blackmail money and sets out to trap her instead. He will not tolerate any secret of his beloved sisters to be put out in society but he is very intrigued by the bespectacled woman he catches. He decides the best way to keep an eye on Annabelle is to have her make new wardrobes for his sisters while staying at his home. As much as it pains Annabelle to leave her sister and mother, she has to agree and quickly strikes up a wonderful friendship with Owen's two sisters...and finds herself desperately attracted to a man far, far above her station. How will Owen and Annabelle find a way to be together, while Annabelle holds her shameful secret from his sisters and the full truth of it from Owen? Can Owen forgive her when her secret keeping almost hurts his sister?

I thoroughly enjoyed this lovely debut! I love stories with dressmaker heroines as they fall for someone above their current lot in life and also the attention to detail about dress construction. So much work and time for one garment-and all by hand! Annabelle is determined to do what she can to help her ailing mother, who seems to be fading away and while it pains her to turn to blackmail, it works to help pay for the medicines needed. She is proud, clever, feisty, strong and loyal and I loved watching her fall for Owen. I wish she had explained the full extent of her blackmail schemes as it comes back in a big way but that added some nice drama to the storyline. Owen was a delicious gentleman who takes his responsibilities to his family seriously and I loved the way he took care of Annabelle and her family...even though she tried to resist his help. His love for his sisters was wonderful but the subplot with one of them was a bit odd (how she came to stop speaking) and dragged on a little too long for my taste. The banter between Owen and Annabelle was lovely and the writing crisp and enjoyable. Recommended for fans of determined, feisty, loyal heroines who work for a living and fall for someone above her class, a hero who is protective, sexy and also determined mixed with lovely attention to details and fun banter and sizzling tension. I know I will be picking up more from Anne Barton! 4 stars

eARC provided by Grand Central Publishing, Forever, by netgalley.com

Melliane says

4.5/5

Mon avis en Français

J'ai ce roman depuis quelques temps mais je n'ai jamais pris le temps de le lire. Pourtant, j'ai un attrait particulier pour les romances historiques et c'était donc avec plaisir que je me suis lancée cette fois-ci dans l'histoire. Je ne me rappelais plus des avis concernant le roman, et c'est sans idées préconçues que j'ai commencé l'histoire. Je peux vous dire que finalement, je suis contente d'avoir attaqué ce premier tome car j'ai passé un excellent moment avec le roman et ses personnages. Avant de commencer, j'ai toujours un peu peur d'avoir une histoire assez commune mais j'attends toujours avec impatience de voir si l'auteure est parvenue à présenter quelque chose de différent de ce qu'on trouve habituellement et je pense qu'Anne Burton a complètement réussi son challenge ici et même plus que ça !

Nous découvrons dès le premier chapitre Annabelle, une jeune couturière qui essaie de subvenir aux besoins de sa famille... Hélas, son salaire seul n'arrive pas à combler les besoins pécuniers de sa sœur et de sa mère gravement malade. Alors, pour arrondir ses fins de mois, notre chère héroïne n'a rien trouvé de mieux que de faire chanter des personnes influentes grâce aux commérages de sa boutique. Le peu qu'elle en récupère parvient à financer les médicaments si précieux qu'elle désire, ou c'est en tout cas le cas jusqu'à ce qu'elle s'attaque à plus fort qu'elle et qu'elle se retrouve attrapée par sa victime. Le deal : éviter la prison mais venir travailler pour le duc de Huntford afin de confectionner des robes pour ses deux jeunes sœurs. Mais voilà, Annabelle ne pensait pas tomber sous le charme de son employeur et inversement. Hélas, même si le duc cherche une femme, Belle ne peut prétendre au titre dû à ses origines. En plus de cela, notre couturière se retrouve aussi au cœur d'une histoire dont elle ne sait se dépêtrer et qui met en scène les deux sœurs du conte. Leur dire la vérité pourrait les aider, mais elle a promis auparavant de ne pas le faire....

J'ai adoré l'idée de la jeune femme qui essayait d'escroquer les gens surtout que quand on la connaît bien on se demande comment elle a fait avec son tempérament si gentil et doux. Ce qui m'a assez étonné c'était le désir du duc d'être avec elle sans qu'il n'y ait plus et qui malgré les conséquences n'essayait même pas de se retenir. C'est aussi grâce à cela que l'on assiste à des moments très drôle et des discussions animées. Pour ce qui est de Belle, on comprend son envie de plus, surtout qu'elle est à présent considérée comme une égale et plus comme une domestique. C'est aussi pourquoi sa relation avec Olivia et Rose est très touchante, surtout quand on voit qu'elle désire vraiment agir au mieux pour elles et que les deux jeunes femmes étaient devenues très chères à son cœur. Pourtant son passé la rattrape aussi et elle devra faire des choix difficiles.

Comme je le disais, j'ai passé un excellent moment avec l'histoire, les quatre personnages principaux sont tous adorables et j'ai pris grand plaisir à les découvrir chacun à leur tour. Les idées nouvelles amenées étaient intéressantes et j'étais vraiment curieuse de voir comment l'auteure allait nous présenter tout ça. Dans tous les cas tout est très bien écrit et j'ai eu du mal à reposer le livre avant de le finir. Je suis assez curieuse à présent de lire la suite et de découvrir l'histoire de Daph, la sœur de Belle !

StScho says

Despite the book blurb the whole book was not about extortion. Okay, lemme back up a bit. Annabelle is an impoverished seamstress that desperately needs funds to support her younger sister and ailing mother. The doctor and her medications are costly and she can either have shelter and food or her mom passing away but not both. Against her better judgment, she starts to blackmail her clientele anonymously.

Never more than one.

Never revealing their guarded secrets.

And never someone who cannot afford it.

These rules are what keep her from feeling too guilty about her illegal endeavors. Unfortunately, her next mark does not care for extortion.

In comes Owen Sherbourne, the Duke of Huntford. It is one of his sisters that is being threatened and instead of paying, he catches the blackmailer instead. The narrative hook needs a little leap of faith to believe. (view spoiler)

If you can get passed the beginning, the rest of the novel is actually quite good. They both fight their attraction for each other because of their vast social differences. And even though the attraction is immediate, the love is gradual. Their romance was sweet. Although, you hurt for them as they struggle against their love due to social stigma.

Writing: good

Dialogue: good

Heat: medium

Will I read the rest of the series? Yes, and I think the second one is going to be better than this one. The hero sounds a little darker.

Jill says

3.5 stars

Debut

Anabelle (Belle) Honeycote's work as a seamstress in a Bond Street dress shop, pays her barely enough to live on. With her sister and her ill mother to support, other means of income are necessary. Being privy to all sorts of gossip as she tends the ladies of the *ton* in the dress shop allows Belle to add to her pitiful income....by blackmail. Not for gain, but only enough to pay her debts. When she overhears a scandal concerning one of the Duke of Huntford's sisters, she intends using this bit of gossip to extort money from the Duke to pay for her mother's ongoing medical costs and other bills.

Owen Sherbourne, Duke of Huntford doesn't take kindly to extortion. After his father's suicide and his mother's desertion he was left to care for his two sisters Olivia, 19 and Rose, 17. When he catches Belle, instead of turning her over to the authorities, he decides to take her in and reform her. His sisters afterall, are coming out into society and require completely new wardrobes.

This is a nice historical romance debut. Though the plot is highly unlikely it's an enjoyable, light read. The chapter sub-titles are really clever -

Bolt: (1) An amount of fabric wrapped around a cylinder.

(2) To flee; one's natural inclination after behaving like a lightskirt.

In a genre that's almost overpopulated with authors and overflowing with talent, an author of historical romance is going to have to stand out. Although this is a good story, the prose is average and some of the plot points are simply too implausible.

However, readers of historical romance who enjoy new authors will enjoy *When She Was Wicked* which is a solid debut, without offering anything particularly new.

Steam: 3

ARC courtesy of Grand Central Publishing (Forever) via NetGalley
