



A Scandalous Affair

Karen Erickson

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Third in the Merry Widows series

From the moment Daphne, Lady Pomeroy, meets the mysterious Marquess of Hartwell at a masquerade ball, she's determined to seduce him. The handsome, charming man cannot possibly be the cold, calculating lord who Society calls "Black Hart." Risking everything, the lonely widow invites the elusive Hartwell to her dinner party . . . for two.

Hartwell's arrogant reputation is built on a lie. For he has a shameful secret that keeps him in the shadows: a stutter—his downfall since childhood. He'd rather keep his mouth shut than look the fool. But he's shocked to discover that in Daphne's company—and in her bed—his stutter vanishes.

After one wanton evening together, Daphne is hurt when the lord lives up to his Black Hart name. Yet his reasons for leaving surprise even him. Now he must confess everything or risk losing Daphne forever...

A Scandalous Affair Details

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From Reader Review A Scandalous Affair for online ebook

Jen Davis says

Daphne is a widow, enjoying the freedom that her new life has to offer, when at a masquerade ball, a man catches her eye. She boldly asks him to dance, not even knowing who he is. She is so taken with him, she makes it her mission to figure out his identity in order to pursue more time in his company.

Camden is a man who is very shy and works to hide his terrible stutter from the ton. He can't believe that Daphne is interested in him and he is quite enamored of her as well. But just because the attraction is there, doesn't mean the shyness completely goes away. Daphne must be bold and relentless in order to get them where they both want to be.

I like heroes with problems. I enjoy watching them learn their own value through the eyes of their heroine and this does, indeed, happen here. The romance is sweet and I was satisfied with the sexy time. My only concern is that Camden's stutter makes very little of an appearance in the book. He says his comfort with Daphne makes it easier to speak, but that was tough for me to buy, especially since he was so crazy about her. I think I would have liked to see him struggle more with the stutter on page and in front of Daphne to give it more impact. I also thought the love happened kind of fast.

But I enjoyed it for the most part. I like Karen Erickson's writing and I like the premise of the Merry Widows books. It's cool to have Historical Romance heroines who are not virgins and who are willing to reach and grab what they want.

Rating: B-

**ARC Provided by NetGalley*

Lynn says

A sweet story about overcoming limitations and challenges.

Daphne is a widow who is content to live her life on her own, but her brother, Hugh, has other ideas. He encourages Daphne to be social and find another husband, as she is not yet old and still has time for a family. Upon her brother's urging, Hugh and Daphne host a masquerade ball where she meets and dances with Camden Hartwell. Daphne does not know who the man is, but is instantly drawn to him. After their dance Hugh informs her that Hartwell is known at Black Hart because he is cold, elusive, standoffish and withdrawn. Hugh warns her off Hartwell, but Daphne is now a determined woman.

Daphne invites Camden to a quiet dinner party, which turns out to have only two guests- Daphne and Camden. The two spend a deliciously hot evening together, where Camden's inhibitions and shyness seem to melt away. Afterward, however, Camden disappears without a word. Daphne tries to give him the benefit of the doubt, but Hugh believes Camden is being his typically cold-hearted self and disrespecting his sister. When Hugh confronts Camden he finally admits his hesitations; and that his elusiveness is nothing more than shyness caused by a stutter and a cruel father. Once Camden is honest with Daphne, they are able to find happiness.

Dolce Amore says

Reviewed for Confessions from Romaholics

To See Review at Confessions from Romaholics

When Hugh tells his sister Daphne, the widowed Countess of Pomeroy, that she should remarry, she makes clear that that it's not simple, showing a delightful humor. I couldn't stop smiling while reading A Scandalous Affair. Wouldn't it be great if finding a husband would be like Daphne says?

You make it sound like a purchase. 'I'll take that gown, the straw hat, the beautiful lace gloves and one husband, please.'

But Hugh has decided to have her married so he convinces her to host a masquerade in her honor so she can easily find a man of her own choosing.

We can invite a herd of titled gentlemen who are in dire need of a wife and line them up for your perusal.

When she meets Camden, the Marquess of Hartwell, she knows he is the man she wants. Excusing her boldness while chasing him because he could probably rival any Italian statue when unclothed, she is decided to have him. Only she can see the vulnerability and loneliness in his eyes. However, after they dance he leaves the masquerade.

A month later, after convincing her brother to introduce her to the marquess, Daphne tries to make him understand that she wants to know him better. Oh, gosh, I loved the scene where Daphne follows him from the ballroom and convince him to dance, one more time with her. This time just them alone, in the room where he is hiding.

"You're very graceful."

"And you're a flatterer."

"I merely speak the truth. You dance wonderfully."

"Perhaps it's my partner." Ah, and now he flirted, something he never did.

When Daphne invites Camden to a supper party, an intimate supper party, he never thought they would dine alone and would end up in bed. Daphne is a very persuasive woman and she charms him. Yet, when he disappears for two long weeks, is he hiding from her or is he having business to do?

I absolutely love Hugh. After seeing his sister sad since Pomeroy has passed, he wants her happy. He is sure that having a husband and children will give her the happiness she deserves. He is the perfect brother: protecting, loving and teasing, of course, his little sister.

"You make me sound like a cow about to be put out to pasture."

“I would never be so rude.” He glowered for a fierce moment before his lips curved into a grin. “At least, I haven’t been that rude to you in years.”

The Marquess of Hartwell was called many names: Black Hart, the cold, calculating marquess. Yet it is his stutter that keeps him from showing the warm and wonderful man that is inside the man. No one manage to see it until Daphne. And what man could resist a woman who can see who he truly is? No one.

Daphne, the widowed Countess of Pomeroy, is the perfect heroine. Beautiful, charming and daring (Camden, the marquess, is to blame for this change in her comportment), she goes after her heart’s desire, Camden. She ambushes him, she asks him to kiss her, and she invites him to a very private supper party where she expects to have him for dessert. Her belief in Camden is total, she instinctively knows that what she sees in his eyes is the truth and not the rumors everyone is bandying about.

“I don’t believe the rumors, Camden.” A thrill shot up her spine at saying his name. “I don’t think you’re cold or arrogant or rude. I certainly don’t think you have a black ‘Hart,’ as I’ve heard whispered about you more than once.”

If you didn’t realize already, I love the characters. They are deep and strong and full of passion. Ms. Karen Erickson had written a wonderful historical romance and I totally recommend it.5 couples.

Kathleen says

Review posted at: Swept Away By Romance

Story Rating-4 Stars

Character Rating-4 Stars

Romance Rating-3.5 Stars

Heat Level-3 Stars

Overall Rating-4 Stars

I really enjoyed this story, although I wished that it would have been a little bit longer. This is the second short HOT historical romance that I have read by this author. It's too bad, considering the talent she has, that she doesn't write full length books.

The story was interesting and I did not want to put the book down. The heroine, Daphne, was a 33 year old widow who has been married to an older man. Her husband had been kind to her, so it was not a bad marriage, but left Daphne feeling that passion just did not exist. That is, until she sees Lord Camden Hartwell and he takes her for a spin around the dance floor. Lord Hartwell has been nicknamed Lord Blackhart, because he stays to himself, and people think, he is snubbing them. Little do they know that he is just very shy, and has some other problems that make him uncomfortable in social settings.

It was wonderful reading how Camden came out of his shell with Daphne's attention. There was only one sensuous love scene in this novella, and it was very well done. I certainly wished there would have been more, but once again the length didn't allow it.

If you're looking for a quick HOT historical read, this book would certainly hit the spot!

Tracy says

Happily Scandalized

Lady Daphne Pomeroy doesn't concern herself with the ton's standards on scandalous behavior. As a widow, she's largely exempt from their collective censure. Even still, from the moment she meets the dashing and stoic Marquess of Hartwell, she pursues him with an intensity that would set the ton on its ear.

His reputation is forbidding, but the time they spent together while sharing a dance suggests to Daphne that he has been horribly misjudged. He's not the Black Hart his sobriquet would have her believe. In fact, Daphne suspects he's rather noble, but intensely shy and socially awkward.

In short, he's irresistible to her. And she would be most pleased if any of her best efforts could at least snag his attention. Perhaps a less subtle approach...

Of course, any more obvious and she really will be scandalous.

~*~

Though much of the tale of this story is hampered by its extremely short length, I loved both Daphne and Camden so much that I couldn't find it in me to be overly critical. It was a fabulous role reversal, with the spirited and forthright Daphne doing just about anything she could think of to get Camden to notice her and Camden noticing, but being too shy and nervous to approach her.

Normally, insecure romantic heroes are a big turn off for me. I like both my male and female protagonists to be strong. Camden's speech impediment, though, and the trauma that was his childhood, made him more sympathetic and endearing than weak. I adored him.

The romance arc did feel a bit like a mile-high free fall, and love came into their relationship way too quickly for my tastes. I also wish there had been a little less page time spent on their one sex scene. I enjoyed it, but in this case I think those pages could have better served a slightly more robust conflict and resolution for the couple.

None of that detracted so much that I wasn't still able to heartily enjoy what I read. This is a short but very sweet historical romance novella that kept me engaged and entertained for a couple of hours. It was unique and charming. The characters were a dream. I enjoyed it all quite a lot.

Disclosure: An ARC of this book was provided to me by Carina Press via NetGalley. This rating, review, and all included thoughts and comments are my own.

~*~*~*~

Reviewed for One Good Book Deserves Another.

Tash says

Reviewed for Confessions From Romaholics

To see review at Confessions

When Hugh, her brother, the Viscount Huxley, suggests to his widowed sister that she should consider remarriage, Daphne, the Countess of Pomeroy, thinks that he's joking. At the age of 33 and having been widowed for two years, she has returned for the London Season for the excitement. But when Hugh suggests a masquerade ball as a kind of re-coming out, to add spice to the season, she is shocked.

But as soon as she realizes she will be planning it, she starts to warm up to the idea because Daphne, romantic that she is, doesn't want to have a silly old affair with fretting debutantes and worried mothers. She envisions a grown up affair which is perfect for her and her bachelor brother.

The Marquess of Hartwell, notoriously known as the Black Hart, usually avoids balls but the masquerade allows him to opportunity to fade into the crowd instead of bear the usual rumours that float around every time he makes an appearance. However, no one knows it's really a lie; his reputation is built upon a secret: he stutters. So a chance to be just a man with no reputation and no shunning by the ton is a chance he can't afford not to miss.

Black finds himself intrigued with the lovely Lady Pomeroy who he remembers from her debut season. Now she is utterly captivating. He has to be content with watching her, however, and not make an ass of himself. There are other women, all mature ladies, but Black only has eyes for Daphne. When the men outnumber the women, he makes the conclusion the ball is for Daphne to find a new husband and decides to leave.

However, Daphne is fearless with her mask in place and decides to approach the male who she thinks is the most interesting male specimen. Hartwall is at the breaking point; he is supposed to be a man with a black heart and his title is a burden to him. When the sweet voice stops him and provides him with a delicious view, he is consumed with lust.

I love that moment of lust, and this is the point where we see Black Hart as a man; before it is only words he says and they don't mean anything when they aren't backed up by actions. At this moment, we get to see the reaction of Hugh, oh boy! He is living up to the remarks that Black made and he isn't happy. Meanwhile, Daphne is getting more enchanted with the man who has spoke to her with the smooth velvet voice with its slight hesitation and is wanting more.

Daphne, bored of all of the other men who she spoke to or danced with and who exhausted her ear with an enumeration of their complete family backgrounds, finds this new man refreshing. There isn't one thing she doesn't like about him and drones on about it. But it gets back to being interesting when Daphne learns from her brother who he is and warns of her of the rumours surrounding him. It has no affect on her and she thinks a he is a 'most complicated puzzle she couldn't wait to solve.'

Please save me from more of those descriptions! The author gives us a description for all of Daphne's thoughts about Hartwall and it's distracting and infuriating as we get such descriptions about him you would think she was the one with lust and is acting like a lovesick puppy.

A month later at their next meeting, Daphne is still enchanted by the Marquess but he won't acknowledge her. She wants to return home to the country after dealing with a host of unappealing gentlemen who profess they want her hand and want her for her capacity to have their children to give them heirs. She cringes; they're all so much older and she hates their leering behavior. She tries to get Hartwall's attention, much to Hugh's dismay who tries to make her feel like she brings shame to the family. When the chance to get an introduction to Hartwall comes, she takes the opportunity and walks into Hartwall's life.

All that is only the first thirty pages of the story but it seems longer, right? Ms. Erickson has a talent for making pages seem longer than they are. From then onward, we have their first coupling filled with sexy images and a very satisfied couple whose secrets are slowly being unravelled. Afterwards, however, Daphne is left going over the moments of their wild night when there is no correspondence from Hartwall. This was a bit too typical for me. I would have liked to have seen Daphne take control straight away instead of waiting two weeks. Overall, this book is enjoyable so I rate it three couples.

Dee says

3/5 stars

I will start off by saying that I did like this story but had a few problems with it which for me were quite big and really interfered with my enjoyment of it.

To start off with I had a problem with the Hero. I like my men to be strong alpha males from the offset and not someone who prefers to hide quietly in corners. I might be being a little unfair with that comment as there was a good reason for the Hero not wanting attention but for me it just couldn't work.

I felt that the length of the story was just too short and everything felt rushed. A large period of time was skipped in the book as there just weren't enough pages to write about the actual events. Whether or not the author did actually write them and they were cut to shorten the book, I don't know, but if that was the case then the book definitely suffered from that. I almost felt like that I dare not blink as I will miss it. I don't even think it took me an hour to read, I know I am a fast reader but even for me that was far too short! It was not classified as a novella but I really think that it should be.

It was classified on Netgalley as 'Erotica' which is not the case. It had one mildly hot-ish scene in it and the content was nowhere near erotica!

Courtesy of Carina Press via Netgalley

Bells says

After being a widow for some time, Lady Pomeroy never thought that she would find love again. Most of the men that she has met haven't been all that interesting. That's until she sees the Marquess of Hartwell at a masquerade ball. He has an air of mystery about him because he's a man of few words. As Daphne gets to know him a little better, she realizes that there's so much more to him than what others have said. He's a guarded man for a reason and she wants to know why. Hartwell on the other hand isn't used to getting attention from women, so when Daphne shows interest in him he has to question why. But he finds himself

having a little more courage because he's wearing a mask at the ball and feel that he can be anyone. But when the mask is off and Daphne still wants to get to know him better, that's when things get interesting.

What I enjoyed most about the two characters in this book is the instant attraction that they had towards one another. Daphne is a woman that goes after what she wants and I applauded when she did! She knew that she had to since Hartwell seemed so shy and there was something about him that it was worth taking the risk of being forward. I enjoyed seeing Hartwell open up to her and allow her to get to know him better. Learning more about his past allowed the reader to understand why he was so reserved, but it was nice to know that he was able to get past some of the challenges he faced to become the man he was. Together these 2 were a great fit and this made their love scenes even more enjoyable!

I enjoyed Karen Erickson's storytelling so much that I plan on reading the previous 2 books in this series. A Scandalous Affair is a novella length story, and while I would have loved to read more about the characters, I feel that that author did an excellent job with the amount that was written. I could easily see this storyline being a full length one because I would feel the tension between the two characters build and I love that in the stories that I read. I'm very happy to have discovered a new author that I can look forward to reading more from in the future.

Evie says

This was an OK story for me.

Daphne, now a widow, is ready to get back into the swing of things and joins the *ton* for a season. After all where's the harm in enjoying one self, right?

Hartwell is a bachelor, who's feared by the *ton*. Everyone thinks he's uptight, and prefer to keep their distance from him.

From the moment Daphne sets eyes on him at a masquerade, she can't get him out of her thoughts, and the same goes for Hartwell.

Hartwell has a secret and he rather die than tell anyone what he guards so close. He never counts on Daphne being as persistent as she proves.

Daphne knows there is more to Hartwell than meets the eye, and she's determined to find out what it is, if that means she can have him for herself... and there you have it... the seduction begins.

As above mentioned, overall, this was an OK story. Why? Well, simply because to me it reads the same as The Duke and I by Julia Quinn. The heroine's name is the same, and the hero suffers a similar if not the same affliction as the hero in The Duke and I. I understand similarities in stories many times are completely unintentional, BUT here I thought it was pretty much the same story, just a shorter version with a few variances. And *no*, this is not a spoiler. Note I am not mentioning the hero's affliction.

A Scandalous Affair is a short, steamy, entertaining read.

Blurb:

Third in the Merry Widows series

From the moment Daphne, Lady Pomeroy, meets the mysterious Marquess of Hartwell at a masquerade ball, she's determined to seduce him. The handsome, charming man cannot possibly be the cold, calculating lord who Society calls "Black Hart." Risking everything, the lonely widow invites the elusive Hartwell to her dinner party . . . for two.

Hartwell's arrogant reputation is built on a lie. For he has a shameful secret that keeps him in the shadows: a stutter—his downfall since childhood. He'd rather keep his mouth shut than look the fool. But he's shocked to discover that in Daphne's company—and in her bed—his stutter vanishes.

After one wanton evening together, Daphne is hurt when the lord lives up to his Black Hart name. Yet his reasons for leaving surprise even him. Now he must confess everything or risk losing Daphne forever...

Amanda says

This review is also posted on Book Boudoir

-0-

A Scandalous Affair was a bit of a novella. Occasionally it's hard to get into a shorter book but Affair pulled me right in from the start. It's rare to read such a strong female lead in a period piece, which was part of the reason why I loved this story.

Daphne doesn't hesitate to go after what she wants, even when it's possible the man she's after doesn't want her in return.

Hartwell is said to be arrogant and cold. Treating women like they are nothing once he's done with them.

But when Daphne and Hartwell dance at a masquerade ball, she realizes there may be more to this man. She's determined to find out if she's correct; whether it means taking some risks with her own reputation or not.

Hartwell is uncertain, afraid really, of what Daphne's reaction will be when she discovers his "affliction". It's something he's struggled with all of his life, the emotional scars from his childhood still haunting him. But she isn't shallow enough to let that stop her. She sets out to prove to him that he's been wrong to hide from everyone. That he shouldn't hide from her.

The chemistry between the two is off the charts, both behind their masks and when they are removed. When they sneak around and are more out in the open, it's delicious. Daphne sees to it that she shows Hartwell what it's like to be loved by someone unconditionally.

My tiny complaint is that though we know Hartwell has a stutter, we don't really 'see' it in the story since the stutter doesn't manifest when he is with Daphne. I think it would have made my heart soften even more toward him if I got that somewhere during Hartwell's journey in this book. Otherwise, I thoroughly enjoyed it and sped through it rather quickly.

I've actually not read the first two books in this series since I received this from Netgalley. I'm incredibly curious about these books and want to pick up more.

Kelly says

3.5 out of 5 stars

First of all, I've got to admit that I love heroes with issues, and Hartwell is no exception. Those who like to read about strong male characters that will tell them what to do will probably find him to be a bit of a pansy, but I really like to read about characters who go on some sort of internal journey over the course of a book (novel, novella, short story, whatever). When you have a character who starts out with a major issue or insecurity and gets to discover his strength and value as a human being, you (the reader) get to read a story of the redemptive power of love, and that's my favorite kind of story. Regarding Hartwell's issues, I did find it a bit of a stretch to accept that no one else in his entire life (other than Daphne) had ever looked deeper to try to determine the reason for his apparent coldness. Yes, a lot of people are shallow and self-absorbed, but not everyone is...

Daphne's character development throughout the novella is more subtle than Hartwell's but is still interesting to read. My favorite aspect of this novella is the fun relationship between Daphne and her brother. Both characters are likable (which is lovely and, sadly, unusual) and they actually behave like siblings who know one another on a deeper-than-superficial level and are able to tease. I'm a big fan of authors who manage to write engaging sibling relationships, and I thought Karen Erickson nailed this one.

The big conflict in the story was slightly underwhelming, but that didn't bother me so much in a novella as it would in a full-length novel. The emotional resolution to the story is extremely satisfying even though the conflict was a trifle lame. Bottom line: this novella will provide a delightful hour or two of reading entertainment and leave you smiling, basking in the glow of a happy ending achieved by worthy characters. It's worth the read.

Tanya Sridhar says

3.5/5 Stars.

I would have given it more than that if it was longer. The problem with novella's is that they aren't long enough to really get me invested into the pair. This faces the same problem, however it still is enjoyable - just not a book you'll sigh and think about much later.

The reason it still has a considerably higher rating is that the heroine pursues the hero in a pretty evident manner. While that is refreshing to see, I'm not sure how accurate that is to the society pressures in those days. Unlike young debutantes who are shown to be actively looking to trap a title, Daphne Pomeroy, a widow of 33 is determined to trap the man known as Black Hart. Only not in marriage, just in her bed. Hartwell of course is a Marquess who's given a nickname such as 'Black Hart' because of his ability to snuff peers and seem arrogant by never saying more than a few words.

This of course is because he has suffered a debilitating stutter since childhood and is afraid of making a fool

of himself. It's heartbreaking to hear how little he thinks of himself and how insecure he is. While Daphne manages to bring him out of his shell and helps him live without the crutches of his stutter. It's a great role reversal - as you know we usually have the heroine's meek and insecure about their abilities, while the hero is all bravado and confidence who helps bring her into the light.

I enjoyed that little play into the usuals of this genre. Plus the teasing banter and the ultimate culmination of their sexual tension was well done by the author.

RoloPoloBookBlog says

4 stars/5 stars

Source: NetGalley

Lady Daphne Pomeroy is a widower at the ripe old age of thirty-three. She has a fine if somewhat boring life living with her bachelor brother, Hugh. She has money, a bit of status, and absolutely no designs on bagging a new beau. And then one day her lovely brother mentions the possibility of a ball; a grand affair with costumes and masks that will allow his sister to re-enter London society. According to Hugh "We can invite a herd of titled gentlemen who are in dire need of a wife and line them up for your perusal."

At first Daphne is a bit scandalized by the thought of such an affair but as the planning continues and the date draws closer she begins to see the masquerade as a romantic affair that will provide her with an excuse to dance, laugh, and just enjoy the night. All is going according to plan until Daphne spots a wonderfully handsome masked man from across the room. At once Lady Daphne determines that this fine gentleman will be hers. The only problem with her plan? The masked man is none other than the Marquess of Hartwell or as London society commonly refers to him "Black Hart". Black Hart is well positioned in society, has loads of money, and absolutely no desire to socialize. They only thing anyone really knows about him is that he is openly rude and rarely ever speaks to anyone. If only they knew . . .

Daphne is bound and determined to know Hartwell! Breaking with all tradition and good manners Daphne pursues Hartwell first for a simple dance, then a conversation and a kiss, and then a night neither of them will soon forget. As a widower, Daphne is less concerned with a scandal attaching itself to her and her good name and more concerned with pursuing Hartwell and finally understanding the meaning of true passion and desire. Daphne is absolutely certain Hartwell is not the man everyone thinks he is.

Hartwell simply doesn't know what to think or do with the beautiful and intriguing Lady Pomeroy. She defies every standard set by 19th century London society when she openly pursues him. And, while Hartwell isn't actually the cold and heartless rat bastard everyone thinks he is, he is still gentleman and is concerned with ruining Lady Pomeroy's good name. But there is something about her that he just cannot resist.

The highlight of this novella is far and away its characters. Daphne is a woman after my own heart: she is unashamed by her desire and willing to fly in the face of tradition to pursue her desires. She isn't wanton or low-class by any means but sure of herself, her desires, and her ability to win over the gorgeous Marquess. Daphne is also kind and caring and despite a few bumps in the road is patient and understanding where Hartwell is concerned. Hartwell is never really portrayed as a heartless or black-hearted character, just a man with a secret that he is not willing to share with just anyone. Hartwell is, in all actuality a good if lonely man with a kind heart and a burning desire for Lady Daphne. Daphne and Hartwell's lust-filled night together is

quite fun for everyone, including the reader. The only problem with their night together is Hartwell's sudden and extended disappearance the very next day. Didn't I just say he isn't a cold-hearted rat bastard?? Well, I am not spoiling this for you; you'll just have to find out what happens for yourself.

The bottom line: This is a quick (30-45 minute) historical romance for adults only that is sweet, lusty, and full of fun. Daphne and Hartwell are both good and relatable characters that the reader can care about almost immediately. The only thing keeping me from rating this as a full 5 stars is length. (There is so no pun intended here!) Since I did like both characters so much (and their sex) I would have liked to have known more about them; that is, I would have liked a longer story with more naughty bits.

Ning says

3.5 stars

I didn't realize how short this was when I first requested it, but for a novella (80 pages), it's a really enjoyable read. It had all the elements I enjoy in a historical/regency romance: a daring heroine, a titled lord, and endless rounds of ballrooms and dancing and the gossipy ton.

Considering how short it is, the connection between Daphne and Hartwell's is pretty believable. I love how daring Daphne is. Since Hartwell is kind of shy, she had to be the one to make the first move. Seeing her chasing after Hartwell was really entertaining. As for Hartwell, the reason for his shyness wasn't very believable to me, but probably because I'm not accustomed to society's expectations at that time period. It kind of makes sense that if his stutter was widely known, then the ton could be pretty harsh about it. Since he's shy in that way, he just wasn't the kind of historical romance hero I'm used to – the super dominant men who could care less what society thought of them.

The sex scenes were pretty hot! For someone so shy, Hartwell sure knows how to pleasure a woman! But I don't really think it should be considered erotica, since I've read similar sex scenes in other romances.

A Scandalous Affair is worth it if you're looking for something short and sweet in the historical romance genre!

Jennifer says

One of my guilty pleasures in romance novels is misunderstood main characters. If there is a hero/heroine that is thought to be snobby or aloof when they are truly shy, I will read it and, more than likely, love it. That is what attracted me to Karen Erickson's latest historical romance novella, *A Scandalous Affair*. This book is the third in Erickson's Merry Widows series though I read it as a stand-alone without any trouble.

Our hero is Camden, Marquess of Hartwell, who has obtained the nickname of Black Hart due to his seemingly cold nature. Unfortunately, his reputation covers up a great shame (according to Camden). He is extremely shy and deals with a pronounced stutter especially when he gets anxious. This has led him to become wary of talking to strangers and interacting with Society as a whole. I really felt for Camden as Erickson depicted how lonely he was and how ashamed of his affliction. The masquerade allowed him to become comfortable with social interactions and brought out the true charming side of his personality which

is what attracted our heroine, Daphne, to him.

Daphne is a lonely widow who is being hounded by family and friends to find another husband. But, she only has eyes for the quiet, handsome marquess that she dances with at the masquerade. I wish that I had been given a little bit more about Daphne's character through the course of the story. It seemed like there was little time spent on her personality besides the fact that she was a widow and very lonely. Her actions were difficult to predict because of a lack of knowledge on my side.

This story is fairly short and moves along at a quick pace. There are some cute interactions between Daphne and Camden that made me care about them as a couple. The love scenes are appropriately spicy without being too erotic. I think that I would have preferred this book to be a full-sized romance rather than a novella. The concept is wonderfully done and the characters had definite potential so I wish there was more to it. Overall, I did enjoy the story and found it to be a nice way to spend a few hours.

****Thanks to Netgalley and Carina Press for providing me with an ARC of A Scandalous Affair in exchange for an honest review.****

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