



A Study in Silks

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Evelina Cooper, niece of Sherlock Holmes, is ready for her first London Season - except for a murderer, missing automatons, a sorcerer, and a talking mouse. In a Victorian era ruled by a ruthless steam baron council, mechanical power is the real monarch, and sorcery the demon enemy of the empire. Evelina has secretly mastered a coveted weapon - magic that can run machines. Should she trust the handsome, clever rake who speeds her breath, or the dashing trick rider who would dare anything she would ask?

A Study in Silks Details

Date : Published September 24th 2013 by Del Rey

ISBN :

Author : Emma Jane Holloway

Format : Kindle Edition 560 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Steampunk, Mystery, Fantasy, Historical, Historical Fiction, Romance, Fiction

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From Reader Review *A Study in Silks* for online ebook

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

A Study in Silks was a book I won from a Goodreads giveaway. Part steampunk historical mystery and part fantasy paranormal romance, I was initially drawn to the story's setting as well as its description of the main character Evelina Cooper as being the niece of the great Sherlock Holmes.

Eveline, however, is not solely defined by her famous uncle, and I liked how Emma Jane Holloway has given her character an exceptional background with which to distinguish herself. Thanks to her Granny Holmes, Evelina was plucked from a childhood of growing up with a traveling circus to be dropped into a world of lords and ladies, and here she must learn to live a life caught between two worlds.

But Sherlock Holmes' work has clearly also rubbed off on her, given how eagerly she aspires to follow in his footsteps. When a young servant girl is killed at the home of her best friend, Evelina does what she can for the investigation, going as far as to use her gift of the Blood, which allows her to communicate with minor spirits and recruit them to her aid.

At first glance, one would suppose there's a lot happening in this novel. In fact, one of the most noticeable features of the paperback when it arrived was how remarkably hefty it was. Coming in at more than 500 pages, it's much longer than I would have expected from a book of this genre and type, and my first assumption was that there would be a lot of world building.

In this, I suppose I was half correct. The setting is ambitious, definitely, in this world of steam barons, demons and devas, clockwork animals and automatons. A little too ambitious, maybe, seeing as I was left wishing more attention could have been given to both the steampunk and magical aspect, putting them in further context. I'd have loved to know more about the deva spirits, for example, beyond simply knowing that Evelina has the power to snare them in her mechanical toys and make them do her bidding.

The fact that *A Study in Silks* falls more heavily on the "paranormal romance" side of things might have something to do with this. Quite honestly, more emphasis in the story is given to providing juicy details about which character is fancying whom, rather than towards world building and setting up a murder mystery. In truth, if Sherlock Holmes were real he'd probably have a conniption fit over Evelina's methods. While I love her character, I don't actually think our heroine makes a good detective, as she often lets her emotional ties get in the way of her objectivity.

My take: The mystery plot spices it up well, but mainly check this book out if you like historical romance with a little fantasy thrown in, and extra bonus if you are a fan of delicious love triangles, which in itself provides a bit of suspense here. The book is definitely not without its merits, especially if you think you might enjoy the look into its elegant world of Victorian steampunk high society, complete with formal balls and debutantes.

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Sarah says

Buddy read with Ange

After really enjoying the prequel short story **The Adventure of the Woolaston Ritual** (you can read that for free on the author's website) I was really looking forward to reading **A Study in Silks**. Unfortunately although I liked the story it failed to live up to expectations and I didn't enjoy it as much as I expected to. I think my main issues were to do with the pacing, this is a long book (over 500 pages) and at times it really struggled to hold my interest. I think the main cause of the problem was the multiple points of view, I counted at least 7 different POVs and it seemed like you'd go multiple chapters without hearing from the main character. I loved Evelina's voice and I enjoyed the occasional chapters from her love interests and even her best friend Imogen but when you start adding more than that it just became too much and it gets to the point where the reader has too much information about what is happening. I wanted to be able to uncover the mystery alongside Evelina not find out everything in advance and I lost interest in her investigation because of that.

To move on to the positives I have to say I really loved the world building and I'm hoping the teething problems were just down to this being the first book in the series. Evelina is a great heroine, she is intelligent and has her uncle Sherlock's curiosity and ability to tie clues together. She is still young and idealistic so she does make mistakes but her heart is in the right place and she always tries to do the right thing. I loved her magical abilities, I don't want to say too much about them because I'd rather let you discover them for yourselves so I'll just say her pets were one of my favourite things about the story. I really liked the strong bond that Evelina has with her best friend Imogen, the two of them are more like sisters in a lot of ways and I always appreciate strong female friendships in my stories. Imogen is Evelina's complete opposite in a lot of ways, she had a very different upbringing and her family have high expectations of her making a good match but she has a rebellious streak that makes her keen to help Evelina with her investigation. The two girls often get themselves in trouble but they always have each other's backs.

I was slightly disappointed when I discovered that this series was going to have a love triangle (I'm so sick of seeing them in pretty much every YA series I read) but I have to say I was impressed with the way this one was handled. For the majority of the book I couldn't decide which of the two guys I liked more, I kept switching back and forth from Nick to Tobias and it wasn't until near the end when I finally decided which team I'm on. The two men couldn't be more different to each other but I could see why Evelina was drawn to them both. Nick is someone she grew up with, someone she has always been able to rely on and who understands her completely, he is her best friend and they have a shared past that will always tie them together. Tobias on the other hand is everything she should be looking for in a husband, he is Imogen's brother and someone she has liked from afar since she first met him. He is a rake and a playboy but he is from the right kind of family and marrying him would assure her of her place in society, something that is important to her considering the scandal in her family history. I think Evelina is going to have to choose a guy based on what she wants her future to be like and I'm REALLY hoping she'll want to live a life of adventure with Nick!

Of course I can't talk about this book without mentioning Sherlock, Evelina is his niece and she contacts him for help when she has trouble with her investigations. He is absent for the majority of the book but I loved every scene he was in, I'd actually have much preferred spending more time with him than with some of the other characters we are subjected to! Although the issues I had with **A Study in Silks** turn this into a middle of the road read rather than the fantastic one it could have been I like the characters and the world enough to read the next book. The pacing of this story picked up considerably during the last 20% or so and if **Emma**

Jane Holloway can only follow that through into the next book I can see myself devouring the rest of the series.

Allison says

Re-posting review to coincide with book publication on September 24th, 2013.

A Study in Silks is still lingering in my mind. It ended up having depths to it that I really didn't expect from a historical mystery/romance. Often even when I enjoy a book, it's easy to move right on to the next one, but this is making me pause for a moment to absorb it all. I'm so thankful that I don't have to wait a year for the next two books, since they are all being released this year.

It's an intriguing mix of my favorite genres and this time I feel the mix worked really well. It has historical mystery, romance, and fantasy all mixed with Steampunk - a genre I'm beginning to explore.

The mystery is only a part of the whole, and isn't in the typical mystery style. Answers are revealed to the reader when the viewpoint shifts instead of when the heroine, Evelina, discovers them (and there are multiple viewpoints). At first I wasn't sure how I liked knowing more than Evelina, but it ended up having complexities that took me by surprise, avoiding easy answers and pat endings.

I should mention now that this is a Sherlock Holmes pastiche, and Evelina is the niece of Holmes. Enter murder in the respectable home where Evelina is a guest, and the underbelly of Victorian London takes on a new aspect. I'm not sure how well the Sherlock portion is done since I'm not an Arthur Conan Doyle aficionado. Without having a real frame of reference for the legend, I can't judge. But I can say this was a great story and his part was only a sliver of the whole.

The Fantasy and Steampunk version of London is very well done. I felt like it all fit together very well. Magic is pitted against Steam, and Steam against traditional political power. This is a dangerous mix in a city choked by the monopoly of Steam Barons, with Evelina caught in the thick of it, in danger of her own magic being exposed at every turn. Solving the murder could unravel everything. This makes for a much more dangerous London than we normally get.

With all the investigative drama and danger going on, Evelina is still a young lady in her first London season. She is a heroine who doesn't quite fit the social scene, having grown up in a circus and possessing outlawed magic. I was sure the romance was going to be typical 'regency' style courtship and manners (which was part of it), and it seemed ready to develop into a typical love-triangle debacle as well. But I was pleasantly surprised that even the romance didn't turn out as shallow as I feared. I'm ready to find out what happens next!

I'm trying to think if there's any reason I shouldn't give this 5 stars since I don't want to hand them out lightly. But for me it was the combination of favorite genres done well, it was entertaining, and didn't live down to my jaded expectations. I'm feeling generous.

***Received free arc for review.*

Jacob Proffitt says

Through most of this book, I couldn't make up my mind if I liked it or not. There were so many elements that could break badly so the jury remained out, even as the story was gripping enough to keep me going. Fortunately, my worst fears were never realized and Holloway even managed a deeply satisfying ending (though not in ways you'd think).

There are three elements that niggled at me the most. First was the love triangle. I *hate* these things and wish authors would just stop. And this one felt as contrived as any other. Two guys from opposite ends of the social spectrum, both interested in our heroine (who is, frustratingly, in a social middle ground that makes her realistically off-limits to both). Drama, drama, drama. And, of course, she likes them both for their individual qualities.

Unexpectedly, this element resolves at the end in a manner that surprised and delighted me. Spoilers would be a true disservice, so that's all you'll get from me. Suffice it to say that the eventual resolution was deeply, artistically perfect. I really wish I could burble on about it, but I just can't in a review.

Unfortunately, the other two remain niggles--enough so that I just couldn't bump this to 5 stars (or even 4.5). The first of these is the political background. I'm sorry, but the steam barons just don't survive scrutiny. They've usurped enough power and function from government that they are a *threat* to government--you know, the people with real guns and soldiers to wield them. They're like organized crime if the mafia decided to publish an org chart and carry out public meetings. You can see how that would end badly for the mafia. Now, this is a particular difficulty of mine with political machinations that don't survive close scrutiny. Still, while they're an important part of the story, the political setup really isn't. I had to keep reminding myself of this, which detracted from my enjoyment somewhat.

Oh, and in like manner, the whole "magic is illegal" doesn't hold up well, either. The barons seem like the type who would grasp at any and every advantage, but even if they aren't, France, Spain, Germany or any of the other unruly powers across the channel would just *love* to have a pronounced advantage by recruiting magical people to their cause. That's an arms race with way too clear an advantage to forgo on nothing but fear. Since we know from Evelina's example that magic isn't inherently evil, this is functionally no different from having guys around with any other natural endowment--like, say, Sherlock Holmes.

The final weakness had the biggest impact on pacing but was the easiest for me to get used to. I'm not a fan of frequent perspective shifts, particularly when those include opposing players in a drama. It feels like a new home owner who has to show you the attic *and* the crawlspace under the house just because it's all so very neat! If I'm invested in the heroine, that's the story I want to see and every other perspective slows things down, takes me out of her world, and there is rarely anything vital that couldn't have been (and eventually is) shown from her perspective, anyway. Holloway doesn't fumble this as badly as some as the non-Evelina parts are at least interesting, even if they're mostly filler.

So yeah, weaknesses. I still enjoyed the heck out of this book. Evelina is a wonderful protagonist with a delightful friend in Imogen. The world is vivid, even if both the magic and steampunk elements are something of an intrusion on a Sherlock Holmes tie-in. I'm actually impressed with how well both worked out. Yeah, there's hand-waving, but that's a given for steampunk and Holloway kept it to a minimum.

This was a solid three stars all the way through, though with the nagging proviso that it could easily screw things up and drop to one. And then it flashed up to four with the ending. I'll definitely be picking up the next

when I can.

Sabrina says

First off, let me declare that I strongly disapprove of fanfiction.

That being said, if we uprooted the fanfiction from this book, I could like it. It would still have its flaws, but it would be likeable.

As it is, it's been a dreadful experience.

When I picked up this from Netgalley, I was blinded by the cover and the words “steampunk”, “murder”, “sorcery” and “mystery”. So what if the heroine is supposed to be Sherlock Holmes’ niece? It will be just a little mention here and there...

That wretched kinship was all over the place. That was disturbing enough, until we came to the absolute horror that was Sherlock's parody.

In this book, I've seen Sherlock giving advice for a young lady's Season, Sherlock listening to a girl prattling, Sherlock submitting to blackmail, Sherlock asserting that he believes in magic...

Maybe I'm a bit touchy. Sherlock was one of my very first literary crushes.

Every Sherlock lover out there will know that he was a genius as well as a drug addict, an utter misogynist, a probable sociopath and an overall bastard. I loved him with all the passion my adolescent self could have.

My personal touchiness aside, this rendition of Sherlock was so wrong, I can't find a single positive thing to say about it. To forgive yet another bad reenactment, it would take at least a Robert Downey Jr. (and maybe some scenes starring him half-naked).

If you think I'm being disrespectful here, think about how Nikola Tesla would feel being referred to as "some Serb".

Here's a bit of me being pedantic about some misspelled italian bits; nothing that will actually spoil you, but maybe you'd like to skip some of my worst rantings:

(view spoiler)

Last but not least, let it be known to all who dared to read this bitchy monologue, that I suffered throughout 488 pages (on my ADE reader) of terrible, and overabundant, similes.

She [...] felt the displacement of air—a light exhalation like the sound of a gloating smile.

shadows settled in the corners like sleepy cats

the row of doors stood like oak-paneled sentries

Anything, *anything* has to be compared with something else, better if this something else is utter nonsense like the sound of a smile.

Oh, there's also a love triangle; but in comparison, it didn't bother me so much as it usually does.

Cut the fanfiction, cut the similes and you get half the length of the original book. And it could be good.

Maria V. Snyder says

This book isn't out yet, but the editor sent me a copy to read and give a cover quote if I liked it. Well, I didn't read it fast enough to give a quote, but I did enjoy it.

The setting is very similar to the Parasol Protectorate series by Gail Carriger - Victorian England with steampunk and magic. While Gail's book has vampires and werewolves as part of the story, *A Study in Silks* has a different magic system. Also the main character, Evelina is younger and on the verge of her debutante season.

Evelina is smart and persistent and she gets involved with the mystery right away. She's also the niece of Sherlock Holmes...yeah, I didn't like this for some reason. And while Uncle Sherlock is off on his own adventure during most of the book he arrives about three-quarters of the way in and, in my opinion, doesn't add anything to the book. I'd rather Evelina solve the puzzles on her own or with the help of her friends rather than her uncle, and there's a number of questions left unanswered at the end, which just means there will be book 2 (planned to be released a month after book 1 and I think book 3 is coming the month after 2). So I'm okay with that even though I'd never leave my readers hanging....uh...yeah...never mind! ;)

I'd recommend this book to those who enjoyed the Parasol Protectorate series. There's plenty of romance between hunky Nic and handsome Tobias and lots of steampunk gadgets like giant squids.

Feminista says

Rating: 2.5 out of 5.

This could have been a lovely book, if it weren't for the characters.

From the start, I disliked the love triangle between Evelina, Nick and Tobias. I normally don't mind love triangles but I hated Evelina's crush on Tobias. I couldn't understand what she found attractive in him.

Was it his drinking, gambling or sleeping around ways? The slightest favourable thing about him was his ability to make things. But even that paled a lot next to his fickle character and his character is very fickle,

especially in the end.

I felt like Evelina was dazzled by his rakish charm and the fact that he had a title that Nick did not.

I honestly found her superficial. I won't say that about many heroines, but in this one, although Evelina kept on saying that she didn't care more about her respectability than Nick, I felt the other way. For example, there was a part where Nick gets hurt and they have a conversation where Nick asks her whether she would call a doctor for him, and she says that she would if she thought it would help. Of course it would help, he was bloody bleeding. But she decides to trust her own unknown powers of healing over a doctor's trusted methods.

There was one Shakespearean quote that came to mind:

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks."

Evelina was also very fickle. One moment she was wholly in love with Nick, the other with Tobias.

The setting and plot was good. But I felt the love triangle detracted me from enjoying the setting and plot too much.

ARC Courtesy of NetGalley and Random House Publishing.

Mara says

3 1\2

A Study in Silks has many readers as its intended target:

- Fans of Sherlock Holmes will appreciate the many hints to the classic works of Conan Doyle (starting from the title) and his cameos
- Fans of steampunk will cheer the alternate world Ms Holloway has created.
- Fans of UF will love the mix of magic and technology it entails.

The mix of steampunk and UF was well blended and created a world-building in which I was elated to sink my teeth into. You will find a historical mystery, a touch of romance, and fantasy all mixed with steampunkish elements.

Except for the pacing, a little on the slow side, I loved almost all aspects of *A Study in Silks*. But the world was what intrigued me most. The mob-like Steam Barons are at war with both new tech and magic, there's hint of a possible revolution against them. The gentry is undecided about where to stand.

None of the characters is blameless or completely black or white, if only because so much is forbidden that it's difficult to stay on the side of the law. (Witches are still burned at the stakes or, worse, sent to labs as specimen).

The only problems I had with the story was a disorienting moment at the beginning (I'm still wondering about) and the changing Povs that take same time getting used to. But all of this is well balanced by depth of characters and plot.

Even without any cliff-ending, when I finished I was left with a strong need of getting my hands on the sequels :D

ARC courtesy of publisher via Netgalley

Cora ? Tea Party Princess says

From the very start I was hooked. This is steampunk world building at it's best. The writing is great, the characters are great and the sense of mystery is entrancing.

A superb, complex and believable Steampunk world comes to life on these pages. The technologies are inspiring, the world a dark, dark place, especially if you fall foul of the steam barons. The author has taken inspiration from Sherlock Holmes and really made it work, weaving it wonderfully into this story - the result is quite splendid.

The characters have depth, with flaws all round, and they grow and change so much throughout this book. It was slightly infuriating knowing more than each of the characters at times but the narrative really works for this story.

The ending was not what I expected, which is actually excellent. It kept me thinking, wondering... And what a twist! It left me quite sad and surprisingly bereft. Is it any wonder I picked up the second book straight away?

A splendid steampunk tale infused with magic and darkness.

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

If I have a literary guilty pleasure, it's steampunk. I'm not a huge fan of science fiction, but there is something about the sub-genre that appeals to me in a way I can't explain. It's fun, it's imaginative and I get a kick seeing what authors are capable of when allowed to play in an alternative time period littered with retro-futuristic gadgets.

Generally speaking, I gravitate toward adult titles like Steampunk Darcy or How Beauty Met the Beast, but I've learned to roll with it when something catches my eye which is how I came by Emma Jane Holloway's *A Study in Silks*. A young adult piece, I knew it was hit or miss going in, but I ultimately enjoyed the title for its unique blend of automation, adventure and whimsy. The love triangle didn't really work for me, but Holloway gets points for downplaying it in favor of the steam barons and the underground power battle between mechanical engineering and clandestine sorcery.

Several readers have thrown up their hands and cried foul over Holloway's incorporation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classics, but I can't say I had a problem with it. *A Study in Silks* is no competition for the Sherlock Holmes canon, but I think it important to recognize it isn't meant to rival the original series. Like Jasper Fforde, Holloway is extending an appreciative nod, not reinventing the wheel.

On that note, it should also be acknowledged that *A Study in Silks* isn't meant to be a standalone publication. Several elements of the story contribute to plot twists later in the series, leave the reader wondering and feel incomplete. I can certainly understand the frustration this causes, but I feel it best if readers at least attempt to appreciate the author's vision.

Kara-karina says

This was really pleasurable steampunk fiction, ladies and gents. Not steampunk-ish which is pretty popular these days, but something that was full of delightful cogs and gadgets, and with a whole empire running on steam. Loved it!

Steven Harper, Meljean Brook and Pip Ballantine and Tee Morris come to mind. So if you enjoyed their books, you shouldn't have a problem liking *A Study in Silks*.

There are three elements which made this book for me.

First of all, British Empire is ruled by a council of greedy corporations providing steam, electricity and gas to all the households. They stop any other inventions from being patented and ruthlessly suppress all progress in the name of their profits. Reminds you of something else?

Secondly, Evelina and other characters are proper inventors. They create something awesome and bizarre because they are obsessed with science, but at the same time they have to keep it all quiet so not to get on the radar of steam barons.

Thirdly, the magic exists and is reviled or prohibited to use because again steam council doesn't want magic competing with their services. You can burn or made into a laboratory rat if you are accused of being a witch.

Add to these awesome elements Evelina's circus past, her famous uncle Sherlock and her magical abilities, and this girl really knows how to get into trouble!

Secondary characters are not one dimensional and quite intriguing as well. Tobias and Imogen Roth, Bucky Penner (who absolutely charmed me), Dr. Marcus, Keating and of course, Nick. Great bunch, and I'm pretty sure they all will have their own stories developed along with Evelina's in following books.

My only complaint is that there are a lot of slow passages and inner monologues in the book interspersed with action, and while they might be good on their own, I was way more invested in finding out what happens next and skimmed through quite a few of them.

Otherwise, knock yourself out and read this. I'm on book two now.

K. says

Trigger warnings: murder, death of a family member, creepy af robot doll things?

I've been wanting to read this book for YEARS, but for some reason it was never available in the Australian Kindle store. And then the other day, it mysteriously WAS available. So I bought it. And perhaps I've been building it up in my mind too much over the past few years, but this was...meh.

It was almost like it was trying to be one too many things? Like...it was a steampunk book. But it was also a crime book. But it was also a Sherlock Holmes adjacent story. But it was also a historical fiction book about teenage girls making their debuts and debating which hot guy to fall in love with. But it was also a fantasy book with magic and sorcery. And for me? There were just too many things happening and it didn't really deal with any of them adequately.

Add in the fact that there were a few too many perspectives for my liking and this balanced out to blah. Sigh.

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

I'm a somewhat impatient reader. I don't mind a long book, but it has to be worth the investment, and I felt that this very, very long book was **not worth the time and effort that I have devoted to it**.

This book has the feel of Anne Perry's Charlotte & Thomas Pitt series, without the sensible plot development, without the complex character portrayal, with a largely forgettable cast. What it does have (to its detriment), is **a predictable and stupid love triangle, a boring main character**---who, I must be honest, doesn't even feel like a main character, because she feels sidelined by the **needlessly large side cast, an overly complicated plot, and a cliffhanger**.

There are several rather...questionable words used to describe people of certain races. Words like **Negro**, and **Chinaman**. Fine, I accept that those words were probably used quite freely during that time era, but I do question the author's choice in including such words in her work, particularly in this day and age, when they are so offensive. It's just my personal pet peeve.

Don't be fooled by the cover...our heroine is nowhere as cool in the book. Evelina Cooper is the niece of Sherlock Holmes, whose connection is tenuous and barely mentioned throughout much of the book. She is caught between two worlds, the one she was born to: that of the Gypsy and their traveling circus, and one to which she was adopted: that of upper-middle-class respectability. Evelina has a secret, she has magic (also referred to as having the Blood); this is a dangerous skill to have, and one that must remain hidden, because in this steampunk version of Victorian England, magic is illegal and the discovery could lead to her execution.

During an extended stay with her friend Imogen Roth, daughter of Viscount Roth, Lord Bancroft, she finds some highly illegal automatons (robots), and is involved in the discovery of a servant girl's death, all in one night. She sets out to solve the girl's death, with an ulterior motive which has me gritting my teeth---she merely doesn't want her beloved best friend to be embroiled in scandal during her Season, despite the fact that someone in the household may be the murderer. So much for impartiality; **Sherlock Holmes would be so disappointed in his niece**.

But wait! That's not all. I only wish that Evelina's determination to solve the murder mystery was the only plotline...then this book might have been tolerable. Nope nope nope. We have numerous other plotlines to be resolved, which ultimately ends in me having a headache.

The plot

The book is told from a third-person POV, with multiple narratives. **You may think this is Evelina's book. You would be wrong.** Her character and story feels completely sidelined by the much overly complicated plot and numerous side narratives of the other characters. For example, we get the narrative of: Nick (Evelina's former love, from her old life), Tobias Roth (golden son of Viscount Roth), Imogen (Evelina's best friend), Jasper Keating (a steam baron), Lord Bancroft. Most of the narratives just added to the confusion of the plot, and some--like Imogen's, added absolutely nothing more than giving us insight into a young woman's view of the Season and her potential suitors. The first half of the book was frankly, a pain to read through, because the various plot strings have not yet come together, and **it just added to my frustration to have to follow multiple conspiracies from multiple perspectives.** The book is far too complicated, and far too long.

- We have Evelina trying to solve the mystery of a servant's death.
- We have Evelina concealing evidence and trying to solve the mystery of the various items she stole off the corpse, as well as detecting the traces of magic on it.
- We have the steam barons seeking to consolidate their power.
- We have one particular steam baron seeking a magical artifact.
- We have Lord Bancroft plotting against the steam barons.
- We have a mysterious shadowy figure with an unknown motive.
- We have magic and demons in play.
- We have Sherlock Holmes drawn unwittingly into the scheme at some point.
- We have playboys involved in juvenile bets, like almost setting a fucking theatre on fire and killing everyone for the sake of amusement.
- We have side characters doing their own investigation while investigating yet more things for someone who hired them.
- We have a love triangle.
- We have Evelina trying to go about her Season and being presented to the Queen
- We have Evelina's best friend trying to find a husband

It is just altogether too fucking much.

The Setting

The world building is interesting; it is a steampunk version of England in every sense of the word, because

steam rules the day. The steam barons are a council of very powerful men and women who control England behind the scenes because of the power, literally, that they wield. England runs on power, on steam, and these people hold England more or less hostage.

The steam barons ran their companies and, by extension, certain towns and neighborhoods with a combination of bribes and threats.

"Can you imagine what would happen if Parliament challenged them, and the Steam Council stopped supplying coal and gas?"

"There would be riots in the streets. If it went on long enough, the government would fall."

"Steam may be the engine that drives the Empire, but the steam barons are the knife at its throat."

Magic is hated and feared, particularly by the steam barons, because its mysterious origins run contrary to their investment. If magic could power things, then the steam barons would be run out of business. Thus, magic is illegal, and to be tried as a witch is a surefire sentence of execution. Steam barons can also show their power to those who disobey by Disconnecting---or effectively cutting off electricity and power---to a household it deemed unworthy.

An intriguing premise...but the delivery is not so effective. **While the explanation of the power of steam is quite grandiose...the extent of how steam and electricity is used is, well, not so impressive.** The power of the steam barons is mostly told, not shown. From what we see in the book, steam is mostly used to power tea trolleys in the house, in sauce-dispensing machines for dinner parties, and for pretty decorative lights outside of wealthy people's houses.

There is a slight inclusion of magic, there are elemental creatures called *devas*, which are largely controlled by Evelina for the purpose of spying. There are hints of demonic possessions. The use of magic is there, but the inclusion of it just didn't interest me, and it didn't really feel like it meshed well with the plot overall.

The Characters

Evelina: She is smart...but her investigative skills leave a lot to be desired. She is completely biased, she sets out her investigation with a purpose in mind: to save her friend's family from scandal, so in this case, her skills as a credible detective is highly questionable. Evelina doesn't change at all throughout the novel. Her character lacks the development and the complexity, we see her doing a lot of things, but there's very little insight into her mind, and I personally do not feel that she matures at all. I like that she is intelligent, I like that she wants to pursue her education, and that she likes mechanical things and tinkering around with engineering, but there is a serious lack of depth and insight into her personality.

To be honest, Evelina feels like a Mary Sue at times, she is too perfect...and she never feels like she fits in. "She was caught between, half gentry and half vagabond, two halves that never knit properly together." She knows how to act like a lady, and she knows how to walk on a tightrope. She is...

...a beauty. Skin like the moon and hair like a starless night

Evelina is too much. She is unbelievable. It is not that she is an annoying character, Evelina is quite tolerable, even if she does incredibly stupid things (like hang upside down outside a window in the middle of the night), but I'm just not attached to her character.

Tobias & Nick: I'm going to lump the two love interests together, because they are such horrible tropes. Nick is the Indomitable Niccolo, the circus knife-throwing man. The mysterious, dark, handsomely swarthy bad boy who loves Evelina from afar and is too far beneath her socially to entertain dreams of having a future

with her. Tobias is the golden-haired playboy, a secretly brilliant engineer, the son and heir of a Viscountancy, completely out of Evelina's league. He knows that she's beyond his status, but of course, he selfishly pursues her anyway. **I hated both of them; both men are completely unoriginal, and can be found in various reincarnations in 99.7% of the substandard PNR/fantasies in existence.**

Apparently, Tobias and Nick can be compared to ships! Shiiiiips!

Tobias would have been something beautifully crafted and elegant with lots of white sails—the meeting place of tradition and innovation.

Nick, on the other hand, would have been a sleek pirate ship. He already had the gold rings in his ears.

Romance

Broken record here, but the romance and love triangle is stupid. For Nick, Evelina has "always been the only girl who'd ever made his whole being come alive just by walking into a room." Um. They grew up together, they last saw each other when she was 14, and he was 17. That's a little creepy. And for Nick to continue feeling that way about her 5 years later...it's unrealistic.

And Tobias, well...trope aside, they had **a lovely little moment of attraction...**

The top buttons of his shirt were undone, his collar gone. She could see the smooth pale arc of his throat. Beneath the scent of brandy, she could smell smoke, as if he'd been standing next to a steam engine.

He crouched next to her. He was so near, she could feel the heat of his body, and it was all she could do not to lean even closer.

Cute, right? Well, not exactly. Because they're both hovering over a mutilated corpse.

...a dead body. Not just dead, but violently dead. The straggling hair was matted with blood...The dead woman's face was obscured by the tumble of her hair, but Evelina could see the throat had been slashed from ear to ear.

Sooooooooooooo romantic! Yeah, you can see where this goes.

Not recommended. Too long of a book for too little return in pleasure of reading.

Angela says

2 September 2015: \$0.99 on Kindle

2.7 stars is where I think I end up.

I expected a lot from this book when I started it - it's hard not to when the author puts Sherlock Holmes in the mix, even if we are dealing with his niece. While in some aspects it didn't disappoint, in others it sorely left me wanting.

See my full review on my blog or booklikes

The last 15% of this book were what I was hoping for from the entire thing. I need to write my review to figure out where I stand all together though.

Review to come.

Gwynn White says

I love stumbling upon books which leave me longing for the next in the series. *A Study in Silks* is definitely one of those. Happily, I don't have to wait too long because the next two books will be out before the end of the year. I will definitely be reading them.

I saw *A Study in Silks* on Netgalley and was beguiled by the premise. . .

In this steampunk whodunit, Emma Jane Holloway weaves an imaginative story around Sherlock Holmes's niece, Evelina Cooper. Evelina is a girl caught between two worlds: her childhood spent as a trapeze artist in the circus (a legacy from her father) and her opportunity as a young debutante facing her first season in London to find a gentleman husband (a legacy from her mother who happened to be Sherlock Holmes's sister). Add Evelina's bright, inquiring mind and her magical abilities - kept secret because she lives in an age when knowledge of magic is a crime punishable by death - to the mix and we have a rollicking read.

The book opens with a murder at Evelina's best friend Imogen's family home where Evelina is staying for the season. Encouraged by Imogen's rakish brother Tobias, whom she is secretly crushing on, Evelina quickly becomes embroiled in the investigation. To add to the confusion, Evelina's childhood sweetheart Nick, a circus performer, appears in her bedroom moments before the murder is discovered. But for all this, Evelina's only concern is to protect the reputation of Imogen's family and to keep her magical abilities hidden. Her task is greatly challenged by Imogen's father who seems to be deeply implicated in the murder, and a whole lot of other clandestine activities involving sorcery and a collection of fascinating, but dangerous steam-driven constructs.

The many other characters who share the stage with her are richly depicted and interestingly flawed. There isn't one of them - including Evelina - who comes off squeaky clean and sparkly. Everyone has an agenda, everyone has a price, usually exacted by the powerful steam barons who virtually control life and death. Even Sherlock Holmes, who makes an appearance, is successfully blackmailed by them!

A Study in Silk is a fun read that kept me riveted for my entire plane flight from Cape Town, through Dubai, and onto Newcastle. I just couldn't put it down. Even better, the story stayed with me for days afterwards as I pondered how each character's motives added to the convoluted plot. The more I thought about, the more excited I got for the next book: *A Study in Darkness* due in October.

So if you love steampunk, mysteries, bitter-sweet romance, and fascinating characters, then this one is definitely for you.
