



Gilded Lily

Delphine Dryden

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HIDDEN IDENTITIES, SCANDALOUS SECRETS...
DEADLY ATTRACTION.

Frederique Murcheson's introduction into society hasn't gone smoothly—some would even call it a disaster. Only Freddie considers her debut a success. Her scheme to become a makesmith has gone off flawlessly. The only thing that could upset her plans now would be if someone discovered that brilliant tinker Fred Merchant is, in fact, a lady in disguise.

Wooing a spoiled heiress is not exactly Barnabas Smith-Grenville's idea of high espionage. However, considering his brother disappeared on the job, supposedly into the most iniquitous of opium dens, he cannot expect much better. At least the assignment will afford him time to search for his brother, whom he suspects is in spy-related trouble rather than a drug-addled haze.

But when Freddie proves to be both irresistible and the key to the answers he seeks, Barnabas finds himself not only entwined in a scandalous mystery involving lethal submersibles and deranged dirigibles, but also in a dangerous game of the heart...

Gilded Lily Details

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Author : Delphine Dryden

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R..., Steampunk Romance

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From Reader Review Gilded Lily for online ebook

Jennifer says

"Gilded Lily", the third in the Steam and Seduction series follows previous tertiary characters Barnabas Smith-Grenville and Frederique "Freddie" aka "Fred" Murcheson. What I've always liked about Dryden's females in this series is that they really make the story. They are the ones who are in charge and get things done and are more the alpha in the story. We aren't given a specific time setting and according to Dryden's website it isn't Victorian. I originally thought perhaps Edwardian, but there's a Queen with multiple sons so perhaps the historical time frame is completely twisted who knows. While I've read the previous two books I felt like it's possible new readers might feel a little lost in this one. The storyline and plot is set up nicely but in terms of the world you don't really pick up that sense in this one. It also facts a, b, and c happened (major events from the previous novels) and quickly moves on to the main events here. For some readers they may like that because it sets a quick pace but others might not like the lack of buildup.

Regardless, in this book Barnabas finds himself a reluctant and pretty bad spy. He's known to be average everything - average looks, average personality, etc. While he's quick to take insult to that (because who wouldn't), his mentors (from the first book) think it's the perfect cover to be a spy. So when he's assigned to Freddie to not only be her keeper but also report on all of her activity, she describes him as bland and pleasant as pudding. Don't know about you, but I've never heard a leading hero described as pudding. Of course, first impressions often change and slowly but surely feeling change and from apathetic to curious to love. His agenda is to find out why happened to his brother. His brother Phineas worked for Freddie's father as a spy but perhaps turned into an opium addict. He's disappeared and Barnabas hopes to uncover the truth. Freddie on the other hand wants to find out about her father's activities. She jokes that he hopes he's on the right side of the law.

I think some readers may not like the role reversals for Freddie and Barnabas. He reckons he's the sidekick along for the adventure while Freddie is flying on the seat of her pants. While he is the sensible one often asking if they really should be stealing a submersible or should they really go somewhere she is the one who takes charge. Barnabas, while not the typical macho man, he's certainly endearing and a hopeless fool in love and in the spy business. I liked Freddie as a character. I'm glad that in the end it became more about who she is as an individual and making her own mark in the world rather than who she is within a couple.

I also like how Dryden creates the love scenes. It's not the most romantic setting nor the most hygienic, but she confronts that. I mentioned this in my review for her previous novel in the series. The characters have clearly had a smelly day and rather paint them as smelling like roses they don't smell fresh and that's mentioned during their scenes. So a tad more realistic and touching.

There were times I was more interested in Phineas story with Sophie. So I really hope they have a book because I think their story is still unresolved and could really be interesting.

Juliet says

Weakest of the trilogy. Felt forced. Could have been way better.

Talk Supe says

My fave Steam & Seduction so far. This time our "geek" hero is Frederiquè, or Freddie for short. Precocious, resourceful, daring, and unstoppable. Her curiosity led her, with some help from her friends, take down a major opium smuggling scheme. Love the understated action full of scheming and spying. Barnabas is a gentleman in every sense of the word except when it comes to Freddie's tight booty, then he loses reason and control. He's not too arrogant to take Freddie's leave and unlike her previous suitors, Barnabas (love the name!) finds Freddie's penchant for tinkering endearing. The side stories and secondary characters were engaging too! I wish we saw more of Freddie's parents together, her mother is a firecracker!

Michelle Leah Olson says

Our Review, by LITERAL ADDICTION's Vivacious Valkyrie - Marta:

*Copy gifted in exchange for an honest review

This is book three in the Steam and Seduction series, which is set within a steampunk type era. A landscape that resembles the Victorian, but feels quite twentieth century at times. A world where steam is the ultimate power, is closely guarded, but anything is possible. This is an alternative reality without the nuclear power or the technology we take for granted, and more importantly, a life that's set with rigid rules. Welcome to a new age of human imagination!

Having read Scarlet Devises I was very curious to see who the author would write about next and was quite surprised when this story turned out to feature Barnabas Smith- Grenville whose brother Phineas was previously mentioned. Barnabas wants nothing more than to serve his country and find out what really happened to his missing brother. Rumours abound that Phineas was heavily involved with opium but Barnabas wants so much to discover the truth about his baby brother. When asked to maintain a watchful eye on a wealthy young heiress whose father is heavily involved in political machinations it seems the answer to his prayers. Keeping tabs on Frederique Murcheson in the last place his brother Phineas was seen is the perfect assignment for Barnabas. He knows his brother served his country well and now he's determined to do the same but espionage doesn't suit everyone!

Freddie is a talented young woman who just feels so stifled by all the rigmaroles of society. As a young woman of considerable talents and ingenuity she's found a way to spend her days more profitably. Freddie sneaks out dressed as a young man and works as a Tinker, a man who fixes all manner of machinery and yes she's good at it! The only problem though is her father has yet again placed a watchdog in her life and his name is Barnabas ! He seems harmless enough and Freddie has no compunction about directing him to help further her own endeavours but when they both stumble across something that puts them all in danger suddenly Freddie sees a whole new side to Barnabas and boy does she like it!

These novels are set in an alternative steampunk world that imagines what life could be like if the American revolutionary war had never taken place and are just full of political intrigue and conspiracy usually. This particular story, however, featured a lot more about the corruption and greed that fuels the underbelly of society. Opium dens may seem fanciful, but are a part of this reality and smuggling is a highly lucrative and dangerous business. The author cleverly interweaves modern ideas such as the possibility of an underwater tunnel connecting the English Coast with mainland France whilst adding amazing and bizarre creatures to the mix. Fear not though if it's the technology that always hold you gripped as submersibles and dirigibles abound in this story, but this time it's the underwater world of possibilities that firmly take center stage.

I always enjoy the mystery of these stories, but obviously also seek to be entertained by the romance and this

time I was a little disappointed if I'm honest. Freddie is a plucky heroine but I thought she took advantage of those who trusted her and I didn't always like that about her. Barnabas is not the usual chest beating alpha male that so many authors seem to prefer. He was a more reserved type of chap, and I hate to say sensitive but he certainly felt a little weaker at times than I wanted. I have no doubt that the two central characters enjoyed their "games" but it just felt as if Freddie was always in charge and for me that took some of the thrill out of the romance. He certainly deserves to get his girl but I'm still not sure if Freddie deserved him! She's a loyal friend and as the story unfolds clearly sees all the good that is Barnabas but for this reader it wasn't my favorite pairing .

I'm not particularly a geek or anything, but I do enjoy reading about all the inventions in these books. Add a large dose of political intrigue and mystery and these stories are addictive. A fast paced, fun, and truly fascinating world that's filled with entertaining characters . These books are pure escapism and Gilded Lily was no exception!

Heather C says

***Gilded Lily* has to be my most favorite book of the Steam and Seduction series to date.** Filled with over-the-top antics, secret identities and killer cuttlefish, this book was A LOT of fun!

The Plot: We met Barnabas Smith-Grenville in the previous book, *Scarlet Devices*. Barnabas's search for his missing brother Phineas has led him to London and his first assignment for the agency is to pretend to court Frederique Murcheson, the meddlesome daughter of Rutherford Murcheson. Freddie spends her days in disguise as tinker makesmith Fred Merchant, and her social evenings as the wallflower heiress no one wants to marry. Barnabas is a bit too unremarkable and Freddie is a lot more perceptive than her father realizes. Both covers are quickly blown and blackmail ensues. Freddie's determination to uncover what her father is really up to with the *Glass Octopus* and the *Gilded Lily* leads her smack in the middle of the opium trade that supposedly swallowed up Phineas. And Barnabas can't help from being her accomplice in it all.

The whole plot was totally outrageous, but that is what makes it so great. The things that Freddie got up to...I can't go into any details and spoil all the fun, but it was one crazy plan after another. And poor Barnabas was too smitten and too deep into the mess to do anything about it. He was totally adorable, even though he mostly sat back and let Freddie run the show. I hate to say that Freddie and Barnabas were TSTL...but maybe they were just smidge. Surprising, they both survived it all in piece, mostly. I will say that this book was NOT predictable!

The Romance: I absolutely LOVED Freddie and Barnabas together. Even though they were both nothing-but-trouble, I got a feeling of innocence (of love) from them. There was never any malice between them, but since their "relationship" stemmed from secrets and lies, trust was the biggest question on their minds. Was it an affair of convenience? Of course it was initially, but it wasn't long before thoughts of love started swirling in their heads. True to the series, the love scenes were as humorous as they were sexy...

"Perhaps it's a bit like riding a horse?" ~ Freddie

The Villains: Remember Lord Orm from *Scarlet Devices*? Well, his brother Rollo has taken over opium import and distribution in London. Rollo has a few little giant problems: the shoals of killer cuttlefish taking out his men and his product...and the nosy Freddie Murcheson who is set on proving her value to her father. Then there is Rutherford Murcheson, who is technically one of the good guys; I really liked him in *Gossamer Wing*. But oh does Freddie make him into one nasty villain!!! And I can't forget about Albert

and all of his blinky friends.

What's next? Will it be Phineas and Lady Sophronia? I'm not a big fan of reunited lovers but I will certainly read whatever and wherever this series takes me next.

4.5 stars

Reviewed for The Blogger Girls

Anne Dirty Girls' Good Books says

Freddie lives two lives. In one she's the privileged Frederique, an unmarried young woman with a large dowry, who nonetheless sits on the sidelines of all the ballrooms and has a habit of getting in trouble. In the other she's Freddy Merchant, a talented tinker and aspiring makesmith who works on the bad side of town.

Barnabas has several duties – he's a newly minted spy and who has been assigned by Freddie's father to keep an eye on Freddie by posing as a suitor for her hand. He's also looking for information on his brother's disappearance. Since his brother also worked for Freddie's father, this assignment suits both his purposes.

Freddie immediately realizes that Barnabas is yet another man her father has hired to spy on her, and that gets them off to a bad start. However, they're both surprised and intrigued by the other, and Barnabas is supposed to follow Freddie wherever she goes, so they are spending a lot of time together, and they grow more and more interested in each other.

I enjoy steampunk, but I'm pretty picky. I love, love, love Meljean Brooks Iron Seas series! I've tried a few other steampunk romances and most of them fell far short of the bar Meljean Brook set, which means after I tried those few I've shied away from steampunk. But then I saw that Delphine Dryden had written a steampunk romance! I've loved almost every Dryden story I've read – particularly her nerd stories – so I figured it was worth giving Gilded Lily a chance. I'm so glad I did!

Freddie is an awesome character, and the kind of female lead I wish we had more of in romance. She's intelligent and brave. She's as independent as she can be, given the rules of the society she lives in. She's also quite adventurous! She definitely would make a better spy than Barnabas. The really cool thing is, Barnabas realizes that, and it doesn't make him feel like any less of a man. In fact, he appreciates those qualities in Freddie and enjoys the excitement she brings to his life.

Barnabas is not a take charge alpha male, so that means he's not the typical romance hero. I loved that! He's still a strong man, and he's a perfect partner for Freddie. I really enjoyed the two of them together.

As I mentioned, Freddie and Barnabas don't immediately hit it off, and Delphine Dryden writes that very well! It's fun to watch them come to appreciate each other and then realize they are attracted to each other. Dryden's dialog is awesome, too!

“If that wasn't some sort of sensor array, my name's not Fred Merchant.”

“Your name isn't Fred Merchant.”

“You know exactly what I mean. The point is, there was some sort of nonstandard equipment, and that was no military vessel. You know that instantly, and I must concur. What's more, I've consulted a map my father had handy—

“He had it handy? Just lying about in a parlor, I suppose?”

“Don’t interrupt, please. I have my ways.”

The steampunk world is also really interesting. I enjoyed the giant squid like creatures, the submersible vehicles, and the steampunk take on the underground tunnel between England and France. I could tell from comments that I’d missed some flying machines in previous stories, and I’d really like to go back and read them!

So with all these things I loved, why not give it an A? Well, it had more politics in it than I enjoy. That’s definitely a personal preference and might be an added bonus for someone else. I got a little lost in all the who was spying for who stuff, especially concerning Barnabas’ brother.

Before I read it I looked it up on Goodreads and was surprised to see it was the third in this series. What?!? How did I miss the other two books? I went ahead and read this one out of order, since I really liked the blurb, and it worked just fine for me. There were moments where other characters who had clearly been featured in previous books jumbled up a bit in my head, but overall I had no problems following this story.

I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys steampunk or is interested in giving it a try. Freddie and Barnabas are unlike the usual heroine and hero we read in romance, and that was really fun! Please let me know in the !comments if you have any other steampunk or sci-fi/fantasy to recommend!

Jessica says

Steampunk is always a fun genre, but I never seem to read it as often as I’d like to. So every time a new Delphine Dryden novel comes out, I can’t wait to get my hands on it and lose myself in the world of exciting danger and steamy romance.

Frederique Murcheson is different from your typical lady in society. While everyone thinks she’s a failure in society, Freddie loves being single so that she can live a double life as a tinker named Fred Merchant. But her father isn’t too happy with his daughter, so he hires Lord Barnabas Smith-Grenville to pretend to court Freddie in order to spy on her. Barnabas thinks watching Freddie will be no problem, and will give him the time to look into where his brother has disappeared. But Freddie isn’t the flighty heiress Barnabas thinks she is and he finds himself falling for her fearless attitude and impeccable skills with machinery.

After the ending of *Scarlet Devices*, I was dying to see what would happen next in the world of steam and seduction. Right away, I loved Freddie’s character. In a society where women have such strict roles, Freddie doesn’t let that stop her from doing what she loves with her life, which is working with machines. And in a steampunk novel, Freddie has a ton of machinery in her hands. Throughout the novel, she runs across some pretty cool machinery that actually lead to huge, dangerous secrets that include her father and opium smugglers. While the story did revolve around Freddie and Barnabas’s relationship, I loved the intrigue, mystery, and danger behind the submersibles that instantly captivated and intrigued the tinker inside of Freddie.

The entire steampunk world of this novel was fascinating, but I truly loved the characters that Delphine Dryden created. When we first meet Barnabas, he’s described as perfectly ordinary, just the person to spy on Freddie without seeming suspicious. But as Freddie spends more time with Barnabas, she sees him as beautiful and far more intriguing than her father pegged him to be. Freddie truly keeps Barnabas on his toes and ends up helping him solving his own mystery involving his missing brother. The only problem I had with this novel was the chemistry between Barnabas and Freddie. When they first get together, I felt like it

was kind of out of nowhere and I wish there was more chemistry and intensity to their relationship than what we got. Other than that, though, I really enjoyed their story.

With mystery, machines, and romance, you can't go wrong with Gilded Lily. The mystery and danger behind the strange creatures destroying ships and what exactly Freddie's father was doing with his business make it hard to put this book down. I'm definitely looking forward to what Delphine Dryden has in store for us next!

Dark Faerie Tales says

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: An unconventional noblewoman and an awkward gentleman discover that romance can happen in the unlikeliest of circumstances in this entertaining installment of the Steam and Seduction series.

Opening Sentence: Rollo Furneval was in a position to make demands.

The Review:

Frederique is not your typical noble Englishwoman. For one, she prefers to go by the name Freddie. She also has always wanted to be a makesmith, a profession no genteel woman would ever aspire to (if they aspired to a profession at all). Oh, and then there's the fact that she often goes out dressed as "Fred Merchant" so she can make her makesmith dream come true. Definitely not your average noble!

Barnabas has come to England looking for his brother. He's made contact with his brother's former employer, who has given him a task: play suitor to his daughter in order to keep her out of trouble. This task does not fill him with excitement, to put it mildly. Imagine his surprise when the noblewoman he's been asked to look after drags him into her world of makesmithing. Maybe this won't be as bad as he thought...

If you've seen my review of *Scarlet Devices* (located [here](#)), you'll know how much I absolutely adored that book. I was extremely eager to dive right in to book three. Unfortunately, this installment wasn't as magical for me as the previous book, but it was still highly enjoyable, mostly due to the characters of Freddie and Barnabas. For those new to the series, this book could technically stand alone, but the storyline involving Barnabas' brother is carried over from *Scarlet Devices*, so it wouldn't hurt to read that first. As far as the steampunk aspect of the novel goes, it's definitely very easy to understand, so those new to genre shouldn't have any problems diving right in.

Freddie and Barnabas have wonderful chemistry together, and their every interaction just felt so real to me. Their banter with each other is simply wonderful and full of humor. I had a smile on my face most of the time I was reading. My only complaint would be that there is an instance involving a misunderstanding where their reactions felt a bit off/out of character to me.

I honestly wasn't super interested in the mystery plot, but watching Freddie and Barnabas investigate kept things entertaining. Even though I wasn't drawn in by the mystery, I was certainly never bored!

So, I guess overall, I'm saying that while this installment of the Steam and Seduction series wasn't as thrilling as its predecessor, it's still a fun time and is full of humor and a wonderful romance. If you're looking for a quick and fun read, look no further! Personally, I'm hoping that if the series continues, the next couple featured will be Phineas and Sophie. I'm keeping my fingers crossed! Meanwhile, I'll go back and

read book one so that I can experience all this series has to offer!

Notable Scene:

He took the still-warm mug from her hands, placing it carefully on the table by the bed, and drew her off to stand in front of him. The buttons of her shirt seemed to melt open under his fingers, but he stopped cold when he saw what lay beneath once the shirt dropped to the floor.

Padding. Layers of it, bandaged into place. All sodden, heavy, and now dripping seawater onto the floor by his feet. "I'd forgotten all about this. How can you stand it?"

"At least it's kept me warm. Here, I'll do that."

He plucked at a knot where she'd tied a bandage off. "No. I'll unwrap you."

It sounded more intriguing than it turned out to be. In truth, the bandages were tricky to remove, and the prurience Barnabas had started out with was quickly subsumed by more practical thoughts. Such as whether to find a knife and simply cut through the entire mess, saving time and effort. Freddie refused to allow this, however, as she needed the stuffing and wrappings intact to wear again the next day.

The soaked linen seemed to have congealed where it was knotted, however, and Barnabas was yawning by the time he got the first one untied and began unwinding it, passing the wad of bandage around Freddie's midsection with quick, efficient movements. She was already at work on another knot and kept having to move her arms out of his way. It made an odd ballet, the two of them working at cross purposes until they found a rhythm that allowed them both to operate.

"This is a great deal less lascivious than I had hoped it would be."

FTC Advisory: Berkley/Penguin provided me with a copy of Gilded Lily. No goody bags, sponsorships, "material connections," or bribes were exchanged for my review.

Lynn says

Today's post is on Gilded Lily by Delphine Dryden. It is the third in her Steam and Seduction series. It is 296 pages long and is published by Berkley Sensation. The cover has the two main characters looking very steampunky. The intended reader is someone who likes steampunk, romance, and fun time. There is mild foul language, sex, and mild violence in this book. The story is told from third person close of the two main characters. There Be Spoilers Ahead.

From the back of the book- HIDDEN IDENTITIES, SCANDALOUS SECRETS...
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Wooing a spoiled heiress is not exactly Barnabas Smith-Grenville's idea of high espionage. However, considering his brother disappeared on the job, supposedly into the most iniquitous of opium dens, he cannot expect much better. At least the assignment will afford him time to search for his brother, whom he suspects is in spy-related trouble rather than a drug-addled haze.

But when Freddie proves to be both irresistible and the key to the answers he seeks, Barnabas finds himself not only entwined in a scandalous mystery involving lethal submersibles and deranged dirigibles, but also in a dangerous game of the heart...

Review- As the last in the Steam and Seduction series, this was a nice send off. The missing brother was found and innocent, Barnabas get someone to love, and Freddie gets to live her own life. That said the villain was not great and I wanted Freddie's father to have to really deal with that he has done. I found the love story between Freddie and Barnabas to be very believable. They both want someone to share their lives with and they found that in each other. the steampunk stuff was more in the background for this final novel than in the previous two but I am okay with that. I think that this story was more about stopping the technology from being used badly than the other novels so that made it take more of a background. A nice, solid ending.

I give this volume a Four out of Five stars. I get nothing for my review and I borrowed this book from my local library.

Diana says

This was kind of random...

This had an interesting blend of scientific fact and fiction. I can honestly say I haven't seen a steampunk romance with a bad guy quite like this one.

Full review to come

Roberta says

This was the third book in the Steam and Seduction series and once again was a thoroughly enjoyable romp through a world filled with invention and mystery, gadgets, romance, and intrepid characters who risk all for Crown and Country. It's a really engaging, fun series with lots of action and romance. (Gets a little scorchy in spots, just saying...Whew!)

A great read to wind down my birthday.

Marlene says

This joint review was originally published at The Book Pushers

Marlene: I picked up Gilded Lily because I generally like steampunk, and because I'd already read both of the first two books in the series, Gossamer Wing (reviewed at Reading Reality) and Scarlet Devices (jointly reviewed at The Book Pushers with E) We both enjoyed the first two trips to Dryden's alternate Victorian world so much that we're back!

Even though this is book 3 in the series, I don't think that readers absolutely must start with book 1. There is some background that fits, but I completely forgot that there even had been two before when I started this one, and had to catch my memory up a bit. Book 2 knocks out one of the big evils, and takes place on a

different continent, so there aren't a lot of major continuing characters.

E: Yes, I really enjoyed the first two trips so I was very glad to team up with Marlene to discuss this third installment. I also agree that this would work as a standalone the only characters I remembered were either briefly mentioned in this story or briefly mentioned in the previous one. I am glad to say that Dryden remains on my list of steampunk authors to auto-buy with this installment.

Marlene: I love Freddie. She is tremendously fun as a heroine, because she is so unconventional and surprisingly unashamed of that fact. She seems to be maintaining the appearance of conventionality more because she would miss her friends and family than because she can't make a go of it on her own. (Or so she thinks, and nearly gets her comeuppance in a scene worthy of a penny-dreadful, until she subverts it)

There is a trope about the spy's daughter who wants to follow in daddy's footsteps, no matter how much daddy would prefer a "normal" or "safe" life for his child. The idea that his own profession has made that impossible in one way or another never seems to occur. So Freddie's father thinks that he has pulled the wool over her eyes about his true profession, and Freddie thinks that she has him deceived about her alter-ego Fred Merchant the tinker.

E: I enjoy how Dryden has unconventional heroines and their methods of rebelling are different in each installment but no less shocking for the particular time and place. The trope Marlene mentions above is always a fun one. I have seen it used with the father supporting the daughter and also as in this case with the father trying to keep the daughter as far away from his real life as possible. Freddie was a lot of fun. She led a double-life and enlisted the assistance of several other people to help keep her secret. The way she tried to get around her father and how he tried to ensure he knew what she was doing. It was almost like a game of strategy until things got serious.

Marlene: Barnabas was such an interesting choice for the hero because he was so very beta. In the modern sense of "checking one's privilege" Barnabas is absolutely certain that the world works in the way that things "ought" until he finds out different, over and over. He's not just never really seen how the "other half lives" but he doesn't have the concept that justice and fairness follow the money. He's never seen anything less than fair treatment because he's his father's son and heir.

Freddie's first impression of Barnabas is that he's a "pudding". She eventually discovers that he's nowhere that bland, but he is rather impressionable. And he's perfect for Freddie because he's willing to let himself be influenced by her, where a traditional alpha hero would forcibly pull the reins out of her hands.

E: Barnabas was so very innocent. He wanted to find his brother and serve his country at the same time. Being assigned to keep an eye on Freddie without her knowing, in other words undercover as himself, was the first step in his path to greatness. Or so he thought until he had his first real conversation with Federique. I think I giggled my way through the entire scene and it certainly set the tone for much of their interaction. Watching his innocence become tarnished as he spent more time around Freddie and her adventures was a treat. Just as I enjoyed those moments when he was the one teaching Freddie a thing or two.

Marlene: I loved Freddie and Barnabas in that first scene. He thinks he has the upper hand, and she proves that he doesn't. There was also a kind of sadness for me that her father seemed so set against letting her have the life she wanted that he kept assigning bodyguards she neither wanted nor needed.

Freddie and Barnabas play off each other quite nicely. She's the "fool who rushes in where angels fear to tread" but he's always ready to stand at her back and get her out. His wide-eyed innocence hides a desire for adventure; but he's all too willing to let her lead the charge.

E: In addition to enjoying Barnabas and Freddie spar with each other as they both led double lives I was also

rather interested in the mysterious circumstances involving a severe shortage of fish, murders, disappearances, glowing lights, and earthquakes. Dryden had so many different stakeholders and players all of whom were speculating and trying to manipulate or turn the situation into their favor. It was as if the schemes had spawned schemes of their own who were running amok. As I started putting the different pieces in place, Dryden still managed to introduce a few wild cards so I remained invested in the mystery elements until the very end.

Marlene: Gilded Lily spouted steam and plot-lines in every possible direction, and in a few directions that didn't seem plausible at first. The disappearing fish, fishermen and equipment started out as competing interests, and ended up in a place worthy of Jules Verne at his finest. Everyone involved had a theory, and none of them went far enough!

I was very happy that although the villain was appropriately villainous, he didn't go over the top into crazy BWAHAHA the way the villain did in Scarlet Devices. And he brought along a character that we've been waiting to see for a couple of books now.

E: Overall Gilded Lily was a lot of fun to read. I did have a moment or two when I reached for a tissue and a few times when I gasped in outrage but those balanced so nicely against the adventure, attraction, and overall mystery I almost needed their inclusion. Dryden also laid hints of a potential secondary romance that I would love to find out about maybe not as a standalone but as a continuing thread in future installments. With Gilded Lily Dryden remains on my list of authors who can meld steampunk elements into a world populated with vastly different characters without allowing one or the other to dominate. I am looking forward to seeing what she comes up next in this alternate world.

I give Gilded Lily a B+

Marlene: Freddie is absolutely my favorite type of heroine. The story fit with her established personality, that she is the alpha in this romance and Barnabas is the beta. It would not have worked nearly as well if he had taken over. There were some appropriately sad moments, not just with the secondary romance, but also in Freddie's relationship with her assistant and especially with her father. Dad is acquiring more dimensions, and getting darker. He's an "ends justify the means" kind of guy, and his means run roughshod over too many people, including Freddie and Barnabas. I could not figure out Freddie's mother's behavior at all.

I hope that the next story gets into the secondary romance from this one, which I'm desperately trying not to spoil. I can't wait to see what future plots Dryden will uncover in this world.

I give Gilded Lily a B.

Sophia says

I enjoyed the last book in this series with its Great Race backdrop and each one has been different so I was eager to see what type of Steampunk backdrop this one would have. It was submersibles and espionage- so cool! I loved the balanced blend of romance, intrigue and steampunk.

The book was loosely tied to the books that came before. It can easily be read as a standalone though the mention of people and a few incidents that came from the previous book do get a little page time so the ideal is to read it in order.

The story opens with Barnabas Smith-Grenville recovered from his illness and back on the hunt to find his

younger prodigal brother, Phineas. The last sight of his brother was that he was working for an Opium Lord and an addict, but Barnabas still has hope of finding Phineas so he takes the offer to join The Agency and act as a spy for Phineas' last employer. Much to Barnabas' surprise, Murcheson, his employer, gives him the charge of watching over his daughter making Barnabas wonder if he is being underestimated with such a piddling task.

Frederique Murcheson has her foot in both the world of high society and that of a makesmith tinker. She loves working with engines and machinery, but wishes she didn't have to disguise herself as a man to do it. Her father is caught up in his inventions, but always saddles her with a series of 'babysitters'. The latest is something out of the usual in that Lord Smith-Grenville makes a deplorable spy, but a good companion in her ventures to find out what secret thing her father is up to that is making all the fish and some of the fishermen disappear.

Barnabas slowly starts to appreciate his assignment to watch Freddie as his respect grows for her sense and skills. He isn't used to her dangerous adventures, but he's game to try to keep up with her. They discover a secret military base, experimental submersibles, and evidence of smuggler activity. Freddie is determined to prove her usefulness and cunning to her father so that she can persuade him to take her seriously so she talks Barnabas into helping her with her own secret mission. In the meantime, the attraction between Barnabas and Freddie grows stronger and stronger making them worry what will happen when their mission is over and Barnabas goes back to run the family estate and Freddie continues her career as a makesmith.

The plotting kept my attention from cover to cover. I really enjoyed both the romance and the adventure sides of the plot. The steampunk was not as strong an element, but it wasn't minimal either. I loved how this one took things under the sea and featured different gadgetry.

The romance was slow developing and it was fun. These two are an unusual pair. The story is told from both main characters' perspectives. Freddie is the more feisty, intrepid of the two while Barnabas is a cautious beta-style hero. He is just your average guy that is comfortable being the support. I liked seeing Freddie appreciate Barnabas' understated qualities like his loyalty and his lack of intimidation in having Freddie as the lead. Barnabas is like a calm anchor to keep Freddie grounded. Again, when it comes to this series, I'm going to mention how refreshing it was the way that the author portrayed a virgin as a true inexperienced virgin that struggled with her first encounters with kissing and the other physical acts before getting up to speed. My only real niggle was that things were left open at the end because I'm one that prefers relationship stuff to be tidily tied up.

The intrigue and action were a strong side. I loved the element of tension as Freddie and Barnabas snuck around snooping to find out what was going on. The only thing that would have kept the tension up even better would have been to keep the villain's identity remain in the shadows instead of knowing who it was from the beginning since he got part of the narrative. Truthfully, I felt a bit sympathetic to him as a result of being privy to his thoughts. The last few big scenes were exciting and poignant.

I'm not sure if things were left open-ended with Phineas' story on purpose, but I'm hoping he gets his own story now. He was an interesting character and nearly stole the show when he appeared in the story.

So to wrap it up, this was delightful segment of the series and I actually enjoyed this one the best of the books so far. Those who enjoy steampunk romance that's gentle on the steampunk and a little spicy on the romance should give this one a try.

My thanks to Penguin Group for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an honest review.

Marta Cox says

This is book three in the Steam and Seduction series which is set within a steam punk type era. A landscape that resembles the Victorian but feels quite twentieth century at times. A world where steam is the ultimate power and closely guarded but anything is possible. This is an alternative reality without the nuclear power or the technology we take for granted and more importantly a life that's set with rigid rules. Welcome to a new age of human imagination!

Having read *Scarlet Devises* I was very curious to see who the author would write about next and was quite surprised when this story turned out to feature Barnabas Smith- Grenville whose brother Phineas was previously mentioned. Barnabas wants nothing more than to serve his country and find out what really happened to his missing brother. Rumours abound that Phineas was heavily involved with opium but Barnabas wants so much to discover the truth about his baby brother. When asked to maintain a watchful eye on a wealthy young heiress whose father is heavily involved in political machinations it seems the answer to his prayers. Keeping tabs on Frederique Murcheson in the last place his brother Phineas was seen is the perfect assignment for Barnabas. He knows his brother served his country well and now he's determined to do the same but espionage doesn't suit everyone!

Freddie is a talented young woman who just feels so stifled by all the rigmaroles of society. As a young woman of considerable talents and ingenuity she's found a way to spend her days more profitably. Freddie sneaks out dressed as a young man and works as a Tinker, a man who fixes all manner of machinery and yes she's good at it! The only problem though is her father has yet again placed a watchdog in her life and his name is Barnabas! He seems harmless enough and Freddie has no compunction about directing him to help further her own endeavours but when they both stumble across something that puts them all in danger suddenly Freddie sees a whole new side to Barnabas and boy does she like it! These novels are set in an alternative steam punk world that imagines what life could be like if the American revolutionary war had never taken place and are just full of political intrigue and conspiracy usually. This particular story however featured a lot more about the corruption and greed that fuels the underbelly of society. Opium dens may seem fanciful but are a part of this reality and smuggling is a highly lucrative and dangerous business. The author cleverly interweaves modern ideas such as the possibility of an underwater tunnel connecting the English Coast with mainland France whilst adding amazing and bizarre creatures to the mix. Fear not though if it's the technology that always hold you gripped as submersibles and dirigibles abound in this story but this time it's the underwater world of possibilities that firmly take centre stage.

I always enjoy the mystery of these stories but obviously also seek to be entertained by the romance and this time I was a little disappointed if honest. Freddie is a plucky heroine but I thought she took advantage of those who trusted her and I didn't always like that about her. Barnabas is not the usual chest beating alpha male that so many authors seem to prefer. He was a more reserved type of chap and I hate to say sensitive but he certainly felt a little weaker at times than I wanted. I have no doubt that the two central characters enjoyed their "games" but it just felt as if Freddie was always in charge and for me that took some of the thrill out of the romance. He certainly deserves to get his girl but I'm still not sure if Freddie deserved him! She's a loyal friend and as the story unfolds clearly sees all the good that is Barnabas but for this reader it wasn't my favourite pairing. I'm not particularly a geek or anything but I do enjoy reading about all the inventions in these books. Add a large dose of political intrigue and mystery and these stories are addictive. A fast paced, fun and truly fascinating world that's filled with entertaining characters. These books are pure escapism and *Gilded Lily* was no exception!

Stacey says

Gilded Lily is an entertaining, sweet steampunk romance (definitely more steampunk than romance). The third installment of the Steam and Seduction Series, it works very well as a stand-alone novel, with only one

or two obvious references to previous plots and romances.

Fred (Freddie) Merchant is really Frederique Murcheson, a young lady of quality in steampunk London who prefers to spend her time in trousers, fixing mechanical tools and appliances. Her father, in his attempts to keep her safe and out of scandal, has assigned Lord Smith-Grenville as her latest minder. In short order, the secrets of each are exposed to the other, and they begin a partnership based on mutual extortion.

Barnabas Smith-Grenville is searching for his younger brother, Phineas, reported last seen in an opium den. While he is prepared to find his brother dead or an opium addict, he refuses to believe it could be true. To find out what's happened to Phineas, Barnabas applies for a job with Freddie's father, who used to employ Phineas. When he and Freddie sort out their mutual supposedly hidden agendas, they decide to work together to investigate Phineas' disappearance and Murcheson's clandestine doings. In the usual manner of stories about amateur sleuths, they stumble upon deeper secrets and conspiracies than they have prepared for, and are soon dealing with an opium smuggler, earthquakes, underwater science stations, and deadly squid-like creatures.

Gilded Lily is a light, fluffy, funny steampunk romance that checks all the usual boxes. The interactions between the characters were for the most part convincing and the characters themselves were fun to follow. Uniquely, the hero of the novel, Barnabas, is not really the hero type at all. While he is determined to find his brother, the consummate spy, he is terrible at hiding his thoughts and feelings, cautious about going into dangerous situations, and anxious about just about everything. He's stuck on propriety, but open-minded enough to support Freddie's lifestyle choices. I enjoyed his nagging, worrying, and uncertainties as a refreshing change from the Hero trope. Phineas, his brother, is more suited to be the hero of the tale, but he remains a secondary character throughout (I'm pretty convinced that he will be the protagonist in a sequel).

The other stand-out feature from most steampunk novels I've read so far is the focus on submersibles, instead of airships. There are airships, and they support the action in this story, but the majority of the action takes place in or around submersibles. While earthquakes in the Channel kept throwing me off stride (the British Isles not being a place one often hears about earthquakes causing damage), I did enjoy reading about alternative underwater technology, as opposed to the more common alternative air travel technology.

Without being very original or complex, this novel still succeeds in being exciting, fun, and just slightly ridiculous (in a good way). I thoroughly enjoyed it, and recommend it to fans of the steampunk genres.

As always, check out my post on The Book Adventures (out on Monday, July 14, 2014) for Read-Alikes.
