



Too Wicked To Kiss

Erica Ridley

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Too Wicked To Kiss Erica Ridley His Touch Holds Her Captive. . .

From the ravens circling its spires to the gargoyles adorning its roof, Blackberry Manor looms ominously over its rambling grounds. And behind its doors, amid the flickering shadows and secret passageways, danger lies in wait. . .

To His Every Dark Desire. . .

Evangeline Pemberton has been invited to a party at the sprawling estate of reclusive Gavin Lioncroft, who is rumored to have murdered his parents. Initially, Gavin's towering presence and brusque manner instill fear in Evangeline. . .until his rakish features and seductive attentions profoundly arouse her.

But when a guest is murdered, Evangeline is torn. Could the man to whom she is so powerfully drawn, also be a ruthless killer?

Too Wicked To Kiss Details

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Paranormal

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Alison says

Disappointing. Two and a half stars.

I have to confess I don't like historical novels where there is an element of the paranormal, in this case our heroine Evangeline has visions when she touches another human being except, conveniently, the brooding host of the ton house party she has been dragged along to by a distant 'friend' of her late mother's.

Gavin Lioncourt is generally accepted to be a murderer, his home is dark and ugly, the rooms have no windows and he is bad-tempered and brooding - can anyone say Heathcliffe?

When Gavin's brother-in-law Lord Hetherington is found dead in his bed obviously Gavin is the main suspect, especially since all his guests witnessed Gavin violently threaten him that night for hitting Gavin's sister Rose.

I don't think Erica Ridley nailed the gothic novel she was aiming for, the plot descended into farce with too many cute moppets running around, and frankly the ending was weak. I mean what happened to (view spoiler)? And why didn't anything happen after (view spoiler)?

Much longer than the other books by this author I have been reading recently but sadly not as good.

Kristi Hudecek-Ashwill says

This book was so good. I stayed up waaaay past my bedtime one night reading it and got up very early in the morning to finish it. My husband got up at 2:20 AM and came out of the bedroom and asked me, "Do you know what time it is?" I should have asked him if he had a date or something.

Anyway, the book had me from the very beginning. I didn't know what to expect from Gavin, thinking he was some sort of psycho-nut recluse and I could tell that Evangeline wasn't going to really take part in Susan's mother's quest to have Susan marry Gavin. As for Susan's mother, I wanted to hit her in the face with a shovel many times throughout the story. She was a witch with a capital B! She was an old crow!

The story was filled with mystery and intrigue and what a love story it turned out to be. It left me with a smile on my face and a warm fuzzy feeling.

I loved it and I loved Gavin and Evangeline. They just had it going on. :)

Sans says

I've had to think long and hard on what rating to give this. The book felt manic depressive to me, jumping from a gothic romance to a Regency romp in the space of a single paragraph, then back again with a sidetrack to social mores of the times.

The hero was all dark and broody and violent one minute, then a grinning, flirting buck of the ton the next.

Even my mood swings are that dramatic.

The heroine was some strange combination of naive yet lusty wench, capable psychic, logical detective and lonely little girl.

The plot was thin, the side characters kinda useless, the main characters couldn't find their arses with a map, both hands and the lights on half the time, and the whole murder plot fell far short of my gothic expectations.

Despite these problems, there were some funny lines and I did like Gavin and Evangeline together, even if things moved way fast even for a romance book. I just wish the author could have done more than pull up several handfuls of cliché to pad the story. Or even just stuck with one kind of cliché. I would have enjoyed it more if it wasn't all over the place.

ChloeLeeNH says

I stayed up late last night and then finished the last 10 pages this morning before work. I had such fun with this book. The h/h were awesome! The secondary characters were so robust. There was so much humor I actually laughed out loud at times and enough mystery to keep me guessing. This author is going to be on the must buy list for sure!!

Chris says

Erica Ridley's amazing talent is evident in this, her debut book *Too Wicked to Kiss*. This is the enthralling gothic tale of secrets and murder. Evangeline Pemberton finds herself invited to a house party of the rakish and reclusive Gavin Lincroft. Rumor and suspicion has surrounded Lincroft since the death of his parents years before. Evangeline finds herself drawn to the standoffish Lincroft even as rumors and suspicion surround him. When a murder is committed Evangeline endeavors to uncover the truth at her own personal risk as danger lurks in the halls of Blackberry Manor.

I thoroughly enjoyed this gripping and passionate story. Erica Ridley has created rich and intriguing characters while weaving a thrilling story of secrets and twists. I was captivated from page one and pulled into the action through Ms. Ridley's descriptive refreshing style of writing. I look forward to reading more from Erica Ridley.

Katie(babs) says

Erica Ridley tries to bring back an atmospheric gothic romance with *Too Wicked To Kiss*. The blurb on this book states, "A skillful blend of Gothic mystery and steamy romance" from Karen Rose. This is a mystery with a romance, but not so steamy and skilled as I was expecting. My main issue that caused me not to finish this book is that Erica laid it on a bit too thick with the whole atmosphere of what a gothic romance is. There's a castle that makes a perfect dark setting, a hero who may or may have no killed his parents and is in seclusion, and a heroine on the run from her degenerate step-father who abused her mother. The hapless heroine also has a secret power at her fingertips that would have probably gotten her burned at the stake as a witch if this were Salem, 1692.

Evangeline Pemberton is forced to go to a house party by a truly wretched woman and her annoying twit of a daughter. Mommy Wretch wants Annoying Daughter to snag the alleged parent killer, Gavin Lioncroft. The stage is set much like out of the movie Clue where we have many outlandish characters. Not only does Gavin brood and snarl, but his countess sister, who is married to a faithless abuser, actually smacks her so hard, that she has a very noticeable mark on her cheek. At a dinner party, where the one-dimensional suspects are on display, there is an unneeded extended scene about this horrible display of spousal abuse that really doesn't set the mood or add tension to the overall story. It just shows how a barely restrained Gavin is close to beating his brother-in-law into pulp. Gavin does eventually get his revenge by strangling his brother-in-law to the point he has his own bruising. This seemed odd to me since Gavin has such disdain and disgust for his sister and her family.

But then Gavin's sister's fink of a husband is found murdered in his bed and because of his throat bruising, the guests all assume Gavin must have killed him. From that moment on there is lurking around dark halls, Gavin cornering Evangeline where he tries to kiss her even though she is a sacred rabbit around him. And because she is so scared of him, he takes his anger out on her and acts like a wounded bear. Poor Evangeline, who I really wanted a much better written story for, is doomed from her evil step father who's on his way to take her back, the staff who crosses their fingers whenever they walk by her because they know all about her special powers and the Lady Wretch and her Annoying Daughter who walk around making snide comments.

I'm not sure if Erica meant to poke fun at the Gothics of the past with her own story, but the characters' actions and plot failed to excite and had me rolling my eyes as I turned each page. Unfortunately because of this, I didn't care to know who the killer was and if Gavin would carry Evangeline of the magic hands away to his tower to protect her as well as ravish her in all his angsty, brooding glory.

Wendy says

I really liked this book. I've never read anything 'gothic' before, so it was alot of fun to read. I will admit, as others have suggested, that it isn't 'steamy', but definately a fun read.

Lorka says

This book started off great for me! It seemed as if it would be a retelling of Beauty and the Beast. The hero was a perfectly grumpy, angry beast with the unannounced arrival of the heroine and her entourage to his house. Then a few hours later, when the house guests arrive downstairs for dinner, he is suddenly a smooth talking rake trying to flirt with the heroine. Insta-lust gone wrong. The author should have dragged out the grumpy beastly part a wee bit longer in my opinion. Besides that, this seemed to be a very dark story with several murder mysteries going on at the house party and I do not really enjoy suspenseful stories (it does a number on my anxiety!). Oh, and there is a little paranormal element that felt over the top to me. Anytime the heroine touched skin to skin with someone she would see into their emotions/past, and of course she kept forgetting to wear her gloves, so it seemed to strike her often, leaving her with horrible headaches. But this might be a great story if you do enjoy murder mysteries :)

Margaret Sholders says

I like to read Erica's books. She always comes up with the best story lines. This is no exception. She has

given us a touch of paranormal in a dark castle. I fell for her characters here. Spoilers! Gavin is an outcast after his parents died. Spoiler. He meets with Evangeline when she arrives with Susan and her snooty mother who wants to compromise her daughter with Gavin. Spoiler. There is a house party for Jane, Gavin's 13 year old niece. Now it gets tricky. Everyone needs a dead body in the creepy castle and sure enough someone is murdered. Surprise. Evangeline has a Gift to help find the murderer. Major Spoiler. It gets complicated the farther you read. It pulls you in and doesn't let you go. There is death, a snooty mother, a daughter who doesn't want to marry and a birthday party. Oh, did I forgot the secret passages? I hope you are curious enough to chance reading this story. Enjoy! PS there is a second book! I have this book for an honest review for NetGalley.

Dilushani Jayalath says

Kindly received an ARC from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review

This was nothing like what I expected. I was looking forward for a Judith McNaught or Johanna Lindsey type book but that wasn't what I got. For more than 80% of the book that is.

Let me say the first half of the book stayed true to the gothic romance style. I got the same feelings I had when I first read Jane Eyre. The same eerie feeling. At first I wanted to stop the book but then I continued. It was a pretty curiosity inducing book and I loved every second of it. I loved how the mystery that ran through out the story with hint of subtle romance. But then everything turned around about 80% into it. Then it began to be one of your usual historical/regency romance novels. I guess that's the reason I won't give the book a 4 star rating. Other than that the whole thing was pretty good.

A job well done for the author for providing us with such a good book.

Actual Rating= 3.5 stars

Olivia says

Excellent! I was hooked and could not put this book down. Everything about this was top notch, the writing, the setting, the story. . . . I love tortured heros and strong heroines.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

3.5 stars

An interesting, entertaining romance that flits between gothic and classic recency in style, but ends up being a mash-up of both.

Overall, I think Erica Ridley did a nice job with this one. Regency romance is beginning to be my favorite sub-genre in romance, and books like this one reminds me why. It was romantic, with a good helping of sexual tension, with a passionate, strong female MC and a misunderstood male MC. It set up to be a great story, but it had a few very **peculiar** twists and turns.

It isn't extremely common to read historical romance with **paranormal twists**, but this story has one. Evangeline has "visions" that she can't control, and when she touches someone she can see snippets of their past or future. Only Gavin, the male MC, seems to not generate any visions when she touches him (shocker). I'm not sure how I felt about the paranormal elements in this story. Evangeline's visions were sort of central to the plot, but I don't think it really helped my enjoyment of the story. I prefer paranormal elements to be more in-your-face, more like a full on different magical world (The Magpie Lord) than just a sprinkle here or there.

I also wasn't crazy about the endless twists and turns, the mystery element of the story. It is sort of like a **whodunit**, where you are trying to figure out a killer for the whole story. I'll admit that I was really clueless who the culprit was, so kudos on that, but mystery isn't really my thing. I think that the plot went on for way too long, and I wish it was cut down a bit with some of the mystery elements cast aside.

So what did I like? Well, I really enjoyed the dialogue between the two MCs, and really all of the dialogue in the story. I think Erica Ridley has a way with words, and I thought that the banter was really on point. I also liked how she gave the scenes great descriptions and atmosphere, and I could picture the setting and people very easily.

The romance was also successful, though not epic by any means. However, I liked the initial attraction morphing into a slow-build romance, and I thought that Evangeline and Gavin were a well-matched couple. I started off reading this story in little bits, putting the book down and then picking it up again, but as I moved further into the story, I found myself wanting to read on and on to find out what happens in the end.

I'm excited for where this series will take me, and I think Erica Ridley has some great ideas. I think this is a series that will continue to grow and improve as the author gets into the groove.

Copy provided in exchange for an honest review

Sissy's Romance Book Review says

'Too Wicked to Kiss' is book one in the Scoundrels & Secrets' Series. This is the story of Evangeline Pemberton and Gavin Lioncroft. When I see Ms. Ridley name on a book I know I will be getting a really good story and this one did not let me down.

Evangeline is headed to a party along with other guest to the reclusive Lioncroft estate. Gavin has been rumored to have killed his parents but nothing was proven. Evangeline is attracted to Gavin as he is with her when they first meet..but now there has been another murder. Has Evangeline let her heart rule her mind or does Gavin just have bad luck? This book got me in from the first few sentences!

I received an eARC, from NetGalley and the publisher, in exchange for an honest review.

JoAnne Kenrick says

WOW! This is, hands down, one of the best books I've read in a long time. It surpassed my expectations, delivering a gritty historical, paranormal romance and a hint of Clue. I'm not typically a fan of historicals, but Erica's clever website and blurb had me intrigued. When I saw the cover I knew, right then and there that I had to read it. Even better, I won a signed copy of it! I read it, slowly, soaking in each and every single

word. Her descriptions had me hooked into the story. I could leave it for days, get back to it and feel I never left it. This is a book I'll read again, and have just purchased an ebook copy so I don't damage my signed copy by over reading it.

Will there be more? Oh I am hoping!

Smokinhotbooks K.C. says

If you would have spoken to me six months ago and asked me to read a historical romance I would have laughed and said...that's so 10 years ago for me. See, I cut my teeth on Julie Garwood, Amanda Quick and authors of the like when I first started reading romance. I don't want to say that I outgrew them, just that I had a change of heart. *Too Wicked to Kiss* brought me back to why I used to love historicals. The meeting of romance, a little magic and a love story all wrapped up in one pretty package. I forgot how much I enjoyed feeling a part of two characters discovering their attraction for each other, falling in love and creating an enthralling love story out of the experience. After being on a steady diet of contemporary and paranormal romances, it was nice to change up the dynamic of the falling in 'lust' and then love for the opposite.

Ms. Ridley, exceeded any expectations that I had for this book! If you've ever been a fan of *Godsford Park* then this is the book for you! Although the time periods are different, I loved the similarities of the stuffy sophisticates all coming together to solve the mystery of just who murdered one of their own. Through many twists and turns we begin to see that first impressions can prove to be misleading and to not assume that anyone is innocent! The only hint I can give you is that it was the Colonel Mustard with the rope in the billiard room. (evil laugh ensues)

Evangeline is desperate to escape her stepfather's evil clutches. She places her life in the hand of her mother's childhood friend in hopes that she can help her escape. She is unaware of the manipulative tendencies of Lady Stratford until it is too late! Now Evangeline must help Ms. Stratford trap mysterious Lionsheart into marriage with her daughter. Little does Evangeline know that this is no ordinary gentleman but a man with a reputation for murder. She is to spend two weeks trapped in the house of an alleged killer and she has given her word to Lady Stratford that she will help or else. A murder has been committed, all eyes turn immediately to Gavin Lionscroft and given his public displays of temper, it will take a special someone to help prove his innocence. Miss Evangeline Pemberton must use her special powers to unlock just who is the killer.

Evangeline is a character you can really connect with, passionate, caring, you really empathize with her situation. Running away from her abusive stepfather, only to be misled by the selfish Lady Stratford, you can't help but want to read along and see what becomes of Evangeline. Gavin is a character you want to sink your teeth into. Intimidating, closed off, he sees something in Evangeline that the others cannot and she in him. Gavin without Evangeline's assistance will be blamed for the murder if she doesn't help him by using her gift. When he finds out that Evangeline is a part of Lady Stratford's plan he corners Evangeline into helping him find the murder, despite the toll it takes on her. Crushed, Evangeline only wants to leave and get away from people that use her.

This fast-paced, page-turner examines how an error in judgment can lead to cataclysmic events that will possess a person for the rest of their lives. It is in the love and forgiveness of another that maybe we can be good again. That maybe our own sense of failure and guilt can be washed clean just by someone believing in us. For anyone who is looking for a great mystery and poignant love story, this is a story not to be missed. Here's looking at you kid.

P.S. I loved that we got a little paranormal with Evangeline's Gift and I liked how intensely I connected with the story but not in a crazy Danielle Steel kind of way.

Rating 4 Smokin' Smooches
