



The Duke's First Son

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Life is predictable for a Duke's first son

As eldest son of the Duke of Langford, Nathaniel Gresham sees his arranged marriage to Lady Violet Devere as just another obligation to fulfill-highly suitable, if unexciting. But as Violet sets out to transform herself from dowdy wallflower to dazzling young duchess-to-be, proper Nathaniel sets out to prove he's a match for his new bride's vivacity and daring.

Or so he once thought...

Oppressed by her family all her life, Lady Violet can't wait to enjoy the freedom of being a married woman. But then Violet learns her family's sordid secret, and she's faced with an impossible choice-does she tell Nathaniel and risk losing him, or does she hide it and live a lie?

The Duke's First Son Details

Date : Published January 5th 2016 by Sourcebooks Casablanca

ISBN :

Author : Jane Ashford

Format : Kindle Edition 352 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Historical Fiction, Regency, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Duke's First Son for online ebook

Donna says

Picked this up on a whim having never read this author. It was okay. It's a fast read. There are no bad grammar errors or plot discrepancies, I just don't have strong feelings about it one way or the other. Not a keeper.

Amanda says

Yawn. I mean when the supporting characters are more interesting than the leads... Flat characters, weirdly paced, and a weak conflict. Not my fav.

SmartBitches says

Full review at Smart Bitches, Trashy Books

Oftentimes the romance novel ends when the special license is procured and the vows are said, and the happily ever after is assured. This one begins when the very traditional courtship is over and the vows are said and the heroine goes, "Thank fucking god now I can be myself" and the hero goes "Wait what."

There are elements of both people I found really fascinating. First, as an eldest child (...sort of. It's complicated) I have also had this sense of responsibility for my younger sibling, so I get why Nate thinks that it's his job to take care of everyone's woes. Add the idea that he's going to be the duke, and he's going to be the head of the family, and the constant stream of younger siblings who all learn that he'll take care of everything.... Yeah, I can absolutely buy that he doesn't know how to have fun or how to let his brothers grow up on their own.

The resolution involves some secrets, and some parenting, and a lot of growing up and being less "family fixer" and more "head of the family but let your sequel bait brothers figure their own shit out (why do you need a bishop, anyway?)"

Delightful. Didn't give me a good book noise, but engaging and fun and hey, we don't get to go to Brighton a lot. Yay for new places!

- Redheadedgirl

Sonya Heaney says

This book was getting such terrible reviews, I didn't know if I wanted to read it. However, I was curious enough to try the sample, and then luck hit and I received a review copy. Free? Might as well give it a go.

Perhaps because of my lowered standards, I enjoyed this more than I expected to. Certainly, there're problems throughout, and for a book marketed as historical romance, the romance is far from the focus, but I

liked a few things.

The setting, for example. Even though Brighton is constantly mentioned in Regency era books, it is hardly ever visited. So I found that really refreshing. I also actually enjoyed that there was a lot of other stuff going on. You read so many historical romances and after a while everything seems to read the same. So I didn't mind that this wasn't exactly a grand romance. In fact, it read like a more realistic aristocratic marriage of the era.

I know I tend to be in the minority about period-appropriate behaviour. People don't want aristocratic marriages in romances to REALLY be like they were because they don't see it as romantic enough. I tend to enjoy it more when I can imagine the relationship evolving more realistically.

It is true that the title doesn't have much to do with the story. Yes, the hero is the heir to a duke, but the book is tipped in the heroine's direction, and is much more about her coming to terms with her past and her future than it is about him.

I was NOT thrilled with the way random plotlines kept turning up, and random stuff kept happening. For example, for no reason whatsoever, a character goes insane, turns into a stalker, and shoots someone. In another scene, a crazed maid runs into the room to declare a big secret at the EXACT moment the heroine was about to do the same. People have personality transplants, and nobody seems to end up like the character they were in the beginning.

Oh, and '*the old woman spit out at last*' = wrong! Try *SPAT!*

I can see that I enjoyed aspects of this book much more than most readers did. I suppose you could try the sample and decide for yourself if it's a style you can get along with.

Review copy provided by NetGalley.

Lindsay says

2.5 stars

Jessica Robbins says

For complete review check out my blog at <https://booksaplentybookreviews.blogs...>

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

******Full Review******

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Violet is set to marry Nathaniel and couldn't be happier. For twenty-six years she has been under the militant thumb of her grandmother, who constantly finds something wrong with her. In her marriage, Violet hopes to find the freedom that has thus far eluded her. Nathaniel is the heir and is at the age to marry, Violet seems like the sensible choice. As he gets to know her, he sees a spark that is slowly starting to come to life and he finds himself liking his wife more than he ever thought possible. If they can just shake off one evil grandmother they may find themselves in the unheard of position of loving one's own spouse.

Heir to the Duke begins right away with our couple getting married, it was a bit of a rough start with a feeling that I was coming in a couple chapters late. Within the first ten percent of the story we had a wedding night, whether due to not knowing the characters or a general lack of feelings written in, it fell flat and awkward. It's mentioned that Violet and Nathaniel didn't spend any time alone during their engagement and the trend continues somewhat throughout the story. Violet gallivants around town trying to do it all after being smothered by her grandmother. Instead of claiming her own identity and becoming herself, Violet's actions came off extremely childish. She wanted to dance, party, and twirl in the streets. Violet also rekindles a friendship where the woman uses her to cheat on her husband. This secondary non-romance didn't add anything to the story but clog it with characters I didn't care about and useless storylines.

While Violet was trying to live it up, Nathaniel seems to do a lot of reading letters from his brothers and writing back trying to solve their non-problems. I think the author was trying to go for Violet showing Nathaniel how to stop and smell the roses but it had the opposite effect of keeping our couple apart. Our couple goes to balls together where Nathaniel pops up to defend Violet to her grandmother. Nathaniel sticking up for Violet and explaining/showing her how to stick up for herself was the best part of this book. However, for the most part, nothing happened. Ninety-five percent of this story is about Violet trying to be free from her grandmother's judgmental rule.

There were endless pages of Violet acting childish with her desire for freedom, a grandmother and her servant acting far fetchingly tyrannical, a friend and her husband cheating and hating each other, and our main couple developing a rather stale relationship. This was my first book by this author, perhaps the writing style isn't for me but this read mostly like rambling endless filler.

Janet says

I reviewed *Heir to the Duke* at Heroes and Heartbreakers. Here's my take on it ...

Imagine if you will that Cinderella has married her prince and that they have embarked on their life together. Will it be unalloyed bliss? Will the mysteries and miseries of Cinderella's earlier life eventually demand to be examined? Jane Ashford's *Heir to the Duke* examines some of these questions, in a surprisingly poignant and refreshing way.

Expectations can be the very devil: Nathaniel and Violet have certain ideas about married life that turn out to be widely off the mark. It all starts with an unforeseen pre-marriage-ceremony wake-up call. On his wedding day, Nathaniel opens his bleary, disoriented eyes in an unfamiliar bedchamber.

He was stark naked, on a large bed stripped bare of linens, covered only by a moth-eaten gray wolf skin... Then he remembered. He was staying at the Earl of Moreley's country house, because tomorrow—no, today—he was to marry the earl's daughter at their local parish church.

Nathaniel glared at the wolf skin, then rubbed his hands over his face. This was what it meant to have five brothers—five younger brothers—on one's wedding day. Or rather, on one's wedding eve, a night they'd

insisted on marking with bowls of rack punch.

Nathaniel is less than happy to wake up in such a state, although with five younger brothers, he's not surprised to be pranked. He and Violet had the most sedate, most monitored of courtships, however, so he is shocked by her response to him au naturel—after she opens the door to his room (Nathaniel's brother James told Violet that her bridegroom needs to speak with her “most urgent”).

“Oh!” Her mouth dropped open.

Nathaniel—stark naked, next to a bed sporting only a rumpled wolf skin—braced for a shriek, a shocked retreat, babbled apologies. But Violet just looked at him. Indeed, it seemed as if she couldn't tear her eyes away. He could almost feel her gaze travelling along his skin, as if it left trails of warmth. He saw something stir in those gray eyes, something he'd never observed before, and his body began to respond to the possibility of much more than he'd expected from his suitable marriage. Respond all too eagerly.

Violet is accustomed to being ignored, criticized, and controlled by her family, particularly her domineering grandmother and her severe lady's maid. At a bare minimum, marriage has to be better than the life she's used to.

At times, it had even seemed to Violet that her family valued their criticisms more than her future prospects.

Does that even make sense? Isn't the business of the aristocracy judicious marriages that are akin to mergers? Why would Violet's own family treat her so shabbily? Happily, a deliciously enjoyable wedding night (compounded with the abrupt departure of her controlling lady's maid) put Violet, for the first time in her life, in a position to ask for what she wants. If there was a Regency equivalent of “Girls just wanna have fun”, that's Violet's state of mind. She insists that they decamp to Brighton for their honeymoon and Nathaniel assures her that his efficient servant will find them rooms.

“Of course he will.” Violet threw out her arms, unable to stay still. She couldn't remember an occasion when one of her wishes had been so easily granted. “I feel like Cinderella,” she said. As a girl, she'd never tired of the transformation—from despised slavery to adored princess.

“Just for a trip to the seaside?” Nathaniel looked amused.

Abruptly, Violet felt foolish and, oddly, more naked than when she'd shed her gauze nightdress last night. “Oh, well . . .” She fumbled for the cool persona that had long shielded her from hurt. How had she allowed it to slip so far?

If we compare Violet to Cinderella in the first days of marriage to her prince, this is stage one: ask for what you want and be delightfully surprised by a favorable answer.

Of course with freedom and new opportunities comes the chance to make mistakes, to take risks, to unfurl one's wings—and drink a little too much champagne at a ball. If Violet is overly innocent for her age, Nathaniel is preternaturally staid and serious.

After supper, during their second waltz, Violet missed a step. He caught her. “Are you all right?”

“I'm fine. I'm wonderful!” was the reply. She gave a joyous little skip that nearly jostled them into a nearby couple. “Don't be stodgy, Nathaniel. I can't bear stodgy.” A bit insulted, he guided her through a turn. He was not, and never had been, stodgy. It was not stodgy to worry about her. That was the function of greater experience.

One of the joys of *Heir to the Duke* is how completely the author turns the table on her newlyweds. Violet eventually dials down the partying and examines her troubling past. She courageously confronts her family, on her own, and asks very difficult questions although the ever-assiduous problem-solver to whom she's married is eager to smooth out any difficulties. Violet's gentle probing and mocking of Nathaniel's compulsion to solve any and all problems eventually leads to the heir to the dukedom wandering off his straight and narrow path. After Nathaniel disappears for a few days, Violet hears her name loudly called by her husband. She wonders if she's "going mad with worry?"

This time she realized that the sound came from outside. But Nathaniel wouldn't shout her name in the street. It was quite improper.

"Violet!"

She rose and went to the open front door window. There below her—but not nearly as far below as would be expected—was her husband. He held the reins of a shiny new high-perch phaeton. Its great wheels and tall springs brought his head almost to the level of the sill.

Seeing her, he grinned like a boy. "How do you like it?" She didn't know what to say. It was one of the sportiest carriages she'd ever seen—buffed and lacquered and glinting with embellishments.

Violet and Nathaniel are likeable from the first moment we meet them. What is so delightful about the story of their relationship is the marriage itself—the change in their circumstances gives them the freedom to become more themselves. To throw off many of the expectations they had for themselves, both individually and as a couple. Like Cinderella, who found the courage to leave the kitchen hearth to pursue her dream, Violet, perhaps with love as her new backbone, stares down her demons and rides off to a more magical, serendipitous future than she might have imagined on her wedding morning.

Jaci says

I like this book as a whole, but was not impressed with Violet, the heroine.

I thought she was childish and irritating. Nathaniel takes his duties as the heir to a Dukedom seriously and chose Violet because she was a well brought up young lady who would one day be a fine Duchess. Violet is finally free of her harsh and demanding grandmother and is determined to live life to the fullest. Nathaniel comes to appreciate Violet's zest for life and unbends enough to make Violet happy. I wasn't a big fan of Violet, she seemed spoiled to me. But overall it was a nice read.

Caz says

I've given this a D at AAR, so 2 stars.

The blurb for **Heir to the Duke** sounded promising; the story of a young couple entering on an arranged marriage and adjusting to a life together, he needing to liven up a bit, and his new wife being just the young woman to help him to do it. But when I read an historical romance, I do expect it to contain some actual, you know, ROMANCE – and I don't see how this book can really be classed as one when the central couple spends so little time together and there is not much (if any) relationship development.

In fact, the story is much more about the heroine's trying to get out from under her tyrannical grandmother's

influence and live her own life than it is about her making a life with her new husband. And by that token the title of the book is very misleading, as it's not about the Heir to the Duke at all, but mostly about his duchess-in-waiting and her horrible family.

Nathaniel Gresham is young, handsome and, as the book's title states, the heir to a dukedom. He is the eldest of six sons, and all his life, his younger brothers have looked to him as their principal problem solver and get-out-of-scrapes-free card; and while he sometimes finds it a bit of a chore to be always sorting them out, he nonetheless rather likes being the one to whom they can turn in a crisis.

Lady Violet Devere is the daughter of an earl, and thus an excellent match for Nathaniel, not just because of her lineage, but because she is quiet, demure and dutiful. Theirs is not a love match, but both look forward to their marriage; Violet is pretty and graceful, despite the horrible clothes her grandmother forces her to wear, and Nathaniel is not insensible of his luck in finding a suitable bride he finds attractive. And Violet can't wait to get married, either. She likes Nathan, and has no reason to believe they won't be happy together, but mostly, she is looking forward to the freedom she will gain by being married and out from under her grandmother's portentous shadow.

Violet decides to start as she means to go on, giving her new husband a nice surprise on their wedding night by proving herself ready to be an adventurous lover. Shortly after that, she persuades him to take her to Brighton for a few weeks, where she sets about making herself anew, firing her lady's maid (having discovered her to be her grandmother's spy), throwing out all her old, unflattering dresses, buying a whole new wardrobe and generally setting about throwing off the yoke of oppression under which she had lived for so many years. She does all this with Nathaniel's full support, and very quickly starts to cut a dash in Brighton society, even attracting the notice of the Regent himself. Nathaniel is a little confused to discover that Violet isn't the staid, demure young lady he thought he was marrying, but isn't complaining, given her newly revealed loveliness and that she is enjoying their sex life as much as he is.

While Violet is throwing herself headlong into gaiety, Nathaniel doesn't appear to do very much other than to read and answer an interminable number of letters from his brothers, all asking him ridiculous questions or to do something for them that they could easily do for themselves. I think this is supposed to show the reader how responsible Nathaniel is, how dependent they are on him and how he has let them become so by practically wiping their noses and arses for them all the time, but it just makes him look spineless.

Something Nathaniel says almost in passing suddenly makes Violet start to question exactly why her grandmother was so unpleasant and overbearing towards her, so she sets about cornering her mother to find out the truth. When she does, she almost wishes she hadn't, as this is a secret which could jeopardise her fledgling marriage. Then, when Nathaniel takes to heart a comment Violet made about his needing to learn how to have fun, the couple find themselves spending even more time apart, misunderstandings start to arise and the whole story becomes so frustrating that had I not been reading for review, I would have been tempted to abandon it.

While at the outset, I was cheering Violet on for her determination to live her own life once she was married, she very quickly started to seem flighty, immature, and too naively stupid to see the sort of traps she was falling into. The hero is sweet, but a bit of a stick-in-the-mud, and his best moments are each time he stands up to the dreadful dowager. There are stupidly frustrating misunderstandings and melodramatic threats from the tyrannical granny, but ultimately, **Heir to the Duke** is nothing short of very boring. There are much better ways to spend your money and your time than this, so do yourself a favour and give it a miss.

Sheila Melo says

Not Much of a Romance Here

FINAL DECISION: I found the heroine shallow, immature and unlikeable and didn't feel a connection between the hero and heroine. Despite its promising and funny beginning, I could barely make it through the remainder of the book.

THE STORY: Nathaniel Gresham, Viscount Hightower and oldest son of the Duke of Langford is respectable, reliable and takes care of those around him. At the age of thirty, he has decided it is time to get married. Not having found the woman he loves, he agrees to an arranged marriage with Lady Violet Devere, a respectable twenty-six year old wallflower, daughter of an earl and seemingly a good match for the steady Nathaniel. Violet is looking forward to her marriage and the freedom it will allow her. After a lifetime of being under the thumb of her family, especially her controlling grandmother, Violet wants to explore things that haven't been allowed her -- choosing her own wardrobe and friends, drinking and flirting and having fun. Just when it seems like life is going well for Violet, she discovers a family secret that threatens her newfound freedom and her marriage.

OPINION: This was not a book for me. The heroine annoyed me from the beginning. I found her to be immature and selfish. While Violet has married Nathaniel and knows what he expected from their marriage, she decides to make a spectacle of herself and resents her husband's mature instincts. I understand the the book is attempting to show that Violet will bring fun into Nathaniel's life, but for me, assisting friends in committing adultery, considering flirting with other men, putting herself into scandalous circumstances is not about fun but about being a child. Even worse, her husband is nothing but kind towards her and yet she resents him. Violet also insists that she is attempting to break free of her family's control and manipulation and yet she allows herself to be manipulated by everyone around her -- except her husband.

For me, there was no real connection between Violet and Nathaniel. They begin the book the day of their marriage and there is no emotional development between them. Instead, this is a book about Violet's insecurities and immaturity. The sex scenes are tepid and since that is the only part of their marriage that works for Violet and Nathaniel, they are disappointing.

This book started well with a very funny prank committed on Nathaniel by his brothers who steal all his clothes the morning of his wedding and leave him naked. After that, however, the book went downhill for me. I think it is a difference in philosophy. I like a man who is concerned about his responsibilities and I don't think that it is necessary that responsibilities be ignored, shoved aside and neglected in order to have fun. I found Violet's worldview shallow and immature and unlikeable.

WORTH MENTIONING: There is a very funny scene where Violet and her friend go bathing in the ocean.

CONNECTED BOOKS: HEIR TO THE DUKE is the first book in The Duke's Sons series.

STAR RATING: I give this book 1.5 stars.

NOTE: I received an ARC of this book via Netgalley in order to provide a review. I was not required to write a positive review. All opinions contained herein are my own.

KindleJo Jo says

Violet and Nathaniel's story is a wonderful journey of self discovery and love. These two are a wonderful couple and the story highlights Ms. Ashford's writing abilities. You won't regret this regency romp.

Kimberly Rocha~ Book Obsessed Chicks says

Nathaniel Gresham, Viscount Hargrove and future Duke of Langford, has his life planned out carefully. He has selected his bride and is content that she will be a proper duchess. One of five brothers, he has always been the one to take charge and assist his family where needed. Ever the essence of duty, Nathaniel's staid existence is about to change.

Lady Violet has always had to be perfect. Her Grandmama has always chosen her modest clothing, her severe hairstyle, schooled her on her manner and scolded her to no end. The very day she marries Nathaniel, Violet decides to end the dowager's reign over her and the results are staggering. Once the vows are said and the wedding breakfast done, Nathaniel and Violet continue on to their new home where they begin their new life as a married couple.

The wedding night goes far better than Nathaniel ever hoped for believing that his prim and proper Violet would continue to carry on as she did under her family's thumb. But this is not so and Nathaniel is pleased for the intimacy but confused with Violet's new outlook on life. When the lady's maid who has taken care of Violet all her life attempts to crush Violet's new found freedom, Violet does the unthinkable and gives the angry and disrespectful maid her walking papers. Said maid runs to Nathaniel believing he will side with her, Nathaniel quickly comes to understand what Violet has been up against all her life and allows her the freedom to chose what she wants to do.

Always on the outside, trying to overthrow her happiness, the dowager clearly shows her disdain for her granddaughter. Nathaniel becomes Violet's hero every time he stands up to Grandmama and she quickly falls hard for her husband who not only is the perfect match for her desire in the bedroom, but becomes her perfect helpmate. When Violet discovers the main reason why the dowager dislikes her so, Violet realizes her future hangs in the balance and if her husband finds out something that has been kept a dirty little secret, all may fall apart. Even though his wife is a conundrum to him, she is fast becoming his reason for breathing and once those vows were said and done, Violet became is in every way and giving her up isn't an option.

Jane Ashford's first book in the DUKE'S SONS series, HEIR TO THE DUKE is a solid read. Nathaniel is a great character whose strength is understated but always there. When he defends his wife from her family's insults, he solidifies his place as alpha male hero. Violet's transformation from mouse to tiger is fabulous and I really enjoyed her journey into awareness. When Violet's own friend uses her as cover in her game at infidelity, Violet finds herself second guessing herself . Trusting Nathaniel to help her through this wrong is one of my favorite parts in the book. I am definitely looking forward to the next book in this series.

Daniella says

**An ARC was given in exchange for an honest review. Thank you to the writer and the publisher for the*

*opportunity to read this.**

DNF@50%. I'm sorry, but this was just **boring**. It had a few flashes of entertainment—like when Nathaniel's brothers played a prank of him at the beginning—but that was it. **I waited and waited for something—for ANYTHING—to happen but nothing did.**

This was just a story of Violet, a girl whose life was controlled by her pernicious grandmother, and how she eventually got her freedom once she married Nathaniel, the future Duke of... something. I don't see why this has to be 300+ long; the story barely held my interest the first 100 pages. And it didn't help that a doornail had more personality than Violet and Nathaniel combined. At least Nathaniel's brothers were relatively more interesting. Sigh. What I disliked the most, though, was **how this whole story seemed revolve around the grandmother and not on the central characters**. Hell, they even *had* to mention her a few times **during their honeymoon**.

I cringe.

While the writing was fairly passable, the story was not even remotely interesting. I'm not inclined to continue reading this, and have no plans to do so in the future.

Linda says

I liked the hero and his family a lot more than the heroine. I found Violet to be annoyingly naive and stupid. But overall it was a good read.
