



## The Midnight Rake

*Anabelle Bryant*

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**A gentleman by day...**

Phineas Betcham, Viscount Fenhurst is one of the country's most eligible bachelors...which - to the heartbreak of each season's new debutantes - is the way he intends to keep it. Because the broodingly handsome Viscount has vowed to keep emotions out of the bedchamber. And he is a man who always stays true to his word.

So when Penelope Rosebery arrives at his home, impoverished and in need of help, Phin is every inch the gentleman. But, beneath the surface, Penelope stirs a protective and passionate instinct within him. With her untamed beauty and lack of social ties, she's something of a wildflower – delicate, spontaneous, and rare. And before long, Phineas finds himself tempted to abandon his rule book...and leave etiquette behind until daybreak.

## **The Midnight Rake Details**

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Author : Anabelle Bryant

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## From Reader Review The Midnight Rake for online ebook

### Nicole Laverdure says

Who doesn't love a Rake?

Lovers of Regency stories will love The Midnight Rake, well written by Anabelle Bryant. I have read her two previous books Duke of Darkness and To Love a Wicked Scoundrel, and again, I wasn't disappointed! It kept me interested until the end. I loved her two main characters Phineas Betcham and Penelope Rosebery, two bruised souls who get a second chance for love. Will love be in the air for them? I liked her secondary characters Victoria and Aubry, who added a little touch of spice to the story. Phineas is happy being single, he doesn't want to take the chance of being hurt again. He once loved a woman, but she left him with a broken heart. Penelope, also, has a broken heart, having been left standing at the church on her wedding day. Now she wants to find him and make him pay! After, the death of their father, Penelope and Aubry, are left in serious need of money to survive. Along comes Phineas to their rescue! Will sparks flare to ignite a new passion for them? Will the attraction be too hard to resist? Beautiful love scenes with lines like these ones "You are edible from head to toe", "You look like a lion stalking his prey". Penelope was a seductress who had casted a spell on Phineas! You have to read their romantic story, filled with romance, mystery, betrayal and intrigue, to know what will happen next. Anabelle Bryant really wrote a charming love story that will surely please lovers of Regency romances. Received a copy from NetGalley!

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### Kiltsandswords says

The Midnight Rake by Annabelle Bryant

Phineas was the perfect man to curl up on the couch and read about today. He prides himself on his decorum and honesty. He's a gentleman through and through. It was delightful to watch him fall head over heels for the delectable Penelope. The internal battles he has with himself over wanting Penelope were a glimpse into a man's psyche. He adores Penny and will do anything to protect her interests and her heart. He truly was such a great character that made me wish more heroes in historical romance novels were written like him. He wasn't so uptight that his morals couldn't loosen for some messing around. Not only is he a great man, but he is one heck of a kisser and his fantasies reminded the reader that he is definitely a hot blooded man. Honestly, he is the perfect man.

Penelope is taken in by his mother, along with her younger sister. She has carried the burden and guilt of their family's fall from grace. She has been swindled by a horrible man who left her at the altar. She wants to cling to the remembrance of what a fool she was over Simon, but when she is with Phineas, she can't help but feel emotions she rather wouldn't. My heart went out to Penelope as her situation would be difficult in our modern age, let alone in the 1800s. I felt so relieved for her that she had a protector and a lovely family that was looking out for her.

Phineas' mother was a wonderful character. She is French and uses that as an excuse to meddle in her son's affairs and to pressure him to give her grandbabies. She keeps a parrot that torments Phineas by repeatedly reminding him to get married. She provides some great comedic relief.

There is no live and death situations in the book, but rather the angst and anxiety of two people deciding if they have found the one. It was fun to read about Phineas' friends and how they support each other. This is

the third book in the series, so for those who have read the other books, it will be great to keep up with characters.

This book was fun to read. I greatly enjoyed the time I spent reading about the relationship between Penelope and Phineas.

Reviewed for [www.kiltsandswords.com](http://www.kiltsandswords.com) Thank you to Netgalley for an advanced copy in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Margaret Sholders says**

Anabelle has written a sweet story. Yes there are problems to fix but all in all it was a happy book. Her people are mostly helpful but there are spoilers. Penelope and her sister Aubrey meet the Countess of Fenhurst when their coach breaks down and the Countess takes them under her wing. Penny is looking for the man who jilted her and stole everything she had. She meets the Viscount, Phineas, who is struck in awe of her. It is fun to see them argue about how he can't help her if she doesn't give him all the information he needs. Then they act like they aren't into each other. Spoilers. This story makes you think one way and then switches away. This is a good read. The time goes by quickly. I hope you give this book a chance. Please read it. I have this book for an honest review for NetGalley.

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### **Gilgamesha says**

Sometimes I curse my inability to leave books unfinished. I wasted my time finishing this book instead of enjoying another. I had purchased all three of the books in this series at the same time and came back to finish this despite my horrible experience with the first two books in the series. I don't understand Bryant's thought process. She tries to distract readers and introduce some bizarre out of the blue scenario to bring forth unnecessary suspense into the story line....like the back story of Phin with the woman and child....seriously what???? Everything else was typical Bryant as well. Dragging the conflicts until the very end and then trying to resolve everything in the last few pages in an unsatisfactory climax. Seriously all you to do is use the length of the book to build on and solve the issues in an effective way instead of filling the pages with "a litany of senseless dribble" and then abruptly end everything. Don't waste your time or money. Not worth a "Penny" lol

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### **????α [Punya Reviews...] says**

3 stars. This could've been a much better read. It had some hilarious moments involving a macaw and it's equally hilarious lines (very unsubtle attempt from the H's mother, the owner of the dratted bird, to get him to marry ASAP :p). However:

1. The h, Penelope, was a bit of a TSTL. She'd be perfectly fine, then do something that'd set my eyes rolling. She had a suitor that jilted her at the altar and rob her family off of money and valuable stuff, on the same day. When her father dies after the shock of being ruined (mother passed away long ago), she and her younger sister, Aubrey, are forced to come to London since they were in dire financial trouble. Her plan was to seek out that guy and confront him about the money and valuables. I understood she was desperate, so I didn't mind it at first even though she had no idea of what to do, no plans to speak of. I didn't mind it when Phineas's generous and kind mother, The Countess of Fenhurst, took them in but Penelope decides not to

divulge everything to veritable strangers. I knew she was ashamed as she held herself responsible for their ruin, so I thought it was fine. Then, she and Phineas finally acknowledge their feelings, with him knowing everything and trying to avenge her. He knew that man to be dangerous and made sure Penelope knew as well. She knew she isn't supposed to be going out, alone, and anywhere near him. Yet, in the end, why would she willingly step into that guy's trap just because he send her a letter stating she meet him urgently... alone? That was so..... \*SMH\* It didn't work that the author made it look like it was Phineas's fault somehow.

2. This reminds me of something that I forgot to add earlier; Phineas's butler calling the Countess 'Her Grace' in one scene in the beginning... er, isn't that something saved only for Dukes and Duchesses (Her/His/Your Grace)?

3. Why is this story titled The Midnight Rake? Phineas was an adorable H TBH; kind, honest and a veritable gentleman. Not even a womanizer from whatever I saw in this book and the previous installments; so far from what a 'rake' by definition is. The only woman I saw him panting after the whole story was Penelope, which is how it should be, so I don't see the point.

Now I need to know if poor Julia, Phineas's younger sister, has a story or not. After being ignored by her crush Devlin in book 2 and dropped by her spineless suitor in this one, she deserves her HEA! She may come off a bit strong sometimes but I don't think she has harmed anyone to have to suffer so. \*sigh\*

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### **Patty McKenna Van Hulle says**

A wallflower heroine on a quest to right some wrongs, a hero with the motto "No wife, happy life" & a misbehaving FAIRY GODMAMA, who will win the war?

Penelope Rosebery has always been a good girl & with only a dad, she has helped to raise her younger sister, Aubrey. She only made 1 mistake & it cost her family all their money, her being jilted at the altar, her dad's health & then his life & she & Aubrey have been living in poverty never knowing what will be their next meal. That life changing mistake was name Simon & now they are going to London to make him pay! But first they have to get there & mail coach axle broke!

Phineas Betcham, Viscount Fernhurst, has a motto that has defined his life, 'No wife, happy life!' His mom wants grandbabies ASAP & is always throwing her picks of wives in his path, but his heart was devastated once & now he keeps all his emotions in check. His biggest problem now is his sister's ex fiancé & he promised Julia he would find him & get answers. That should be easy since his meddling mom & her PITA bird are at their country estate for the London Season or is she?

Mama Victoria is looking at the starving & stranded sisters, but what she truly sees is Penelope, the perfect match for her Phin. She begins to plan with the overly helpful Aubrey, as they begin their journey to her London home as Penny sleeps. Penny can't believe their luck with Victoria taking them in, getting them invite to society & basically taken over their lives, but she knows going out in society will help her find Simon faster. Phin walks into his home, sees his butler freaking out, hears his mom's bird from HADES, learns his mom is home with 2 unknown guests & slams into a soft & vanilla yummy smelling female & his heart actually begins to feel a evil emotion, but Penny is speechless as she feels this hard male body of temptation!

Soon evil is afoot with a new enemy, Ridley, to Phin as he pops in, causes a ruckus & steals HIS horse at

auction, but his friends, Con, Dev & Harold, circle their wagons. Phin is being tortured nightly as he escorts the desirable Penny to all the balls, with her gowns of seduction, but he keeps saying, "No wife, happy life!" over & over! Since they live in the same house, many nights with Penny in her PJs drive Phin's to his breaking point & nightly NAUGHTINESS begins with pantie melting kisses & tantalizing caresses, but Penny will not tell him who caused her problems. Soon Penny & Phin begin that emotional fall of LOVE, but a new & an old enemy begin endless mayhem! Will Phin pack his heart's wall with C4 & detonate? Can Penny let her ugly past go & allow herself to be loved? Is Penny able to make Simon pay for his crimes? How much chaos will meddling Mama Victoria cause?

This is my 3rd romance by Ms. Bryant & she continues with her awesome ROFLing HILARIOUSNESS, FIRE EXTINGUISHERS WORTHY ECSTASY & A FAIRY GODMA MEDDLING! Phin's Mama Victoria was a slightly naughty FAIRY GODMA filled with meddling love & caused endless situations that always seem to end in NAUGHTINESS, but she only did it to Penny & Phin because she knew they were made for each other. Penny was a wallflower at heart, but with Mama V in her corner, she was able to embrace & completely RELEASE HER SEXUAL KRAKEN! Ms. Bryant made Penny with a inner strength that she learned to whip out if needed & I love a heroine with some a\$\$ kicking traits. Now Phin was a tougher nut to crack with his mysterious nightly visits, damaged & boarded up heart & "No wife, happy life" motto, but with his friends Con & Dev & their wives in tow showed his hidden heart had emotions. Plus Con, Dev & their wives are from Ms. Bryant first 2 books & makes this romance even more delicious with the old friends popping in with a real purpose not just thrown in. My peeps know I absolutely love me some snap, crackle & KABOOM & Ms. Bryant had that & more. This romance was filled with decadent kisses that gave my spine shivers & quivers, hands that made a tantalizing SEARCH, RESCUE & SEDUCE their mission & a mutually excruciating pleasure geyser ERUPTING! So for her ROFLing with belly laughs style, (Simba gave me the 10 claws for laughing so hard), adding some old friend on a mission, a slightly naughty FAIRY GODMA, ridiculous situations & a h/h who didn't know what SLAMMED into their hearts, Ms. Bryant gets my too score of 5 fingers up & 10 toes! I do have to ask her is Aubrey & Julia will get their own romances, too?

NetGalley ARC given for my honest review.

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### Sonya Heaney says

Originally posted [HERE](#) .

I think I've reached a point where I've binged on so many Regency romances I expect something... more... when I read. *The Midnight Rake* had an interesting premise, and I really appreciated that more effort was taken to use British English (something too many authors in this genre overlook). However, there were a few points in the book where I asked myself if I wanted to continue reading – I felt like I'd already read this story dozens of times in the past year.

There's a reason the Regency is still the preferred setting for historical romance. It has the elegance and the manners and the balls and the pretty clothes. This book delivers on all those counts, and throws in the usual gang of titled hunks to boot. I liked the heroine and felt for her plight. Many people will really enjoy the story.

Something that annoys me in historical romance is the titled gentleman who doesn't want to marry. It's an anachronistic attitude; every man with a title knew he had to marry and he was raised to believe in protecting

the title at all costs (so, a wife and a houseful of sons!). It wasn't as if it hampered a man's lifestyle in any way – he still carried on with his socialising and mistresses!

Our hero was one of those anachronistic men allergic to marriage...

I feel bad blaming this particular book for my genre fatigue, but there you have it! I just felt that there was nothing here that made *The Midnight Rake* stand out from the crowd. The language was a little more formal, which was a nice change, and made scenes feel more period-appropriate. Though there were still *gottens* all over the place, a great deal of care was taken to eliminate other Americanisms (*pavement/sidewalk*, for example).

I suppose these days when I pick up a historical romance I'm looking for something original, and there just wasn't enough originality for me here.

*Review copy provided by NetGalley.*

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### **Kimberly Rocha~ Book Obsessed Chicks says**

Penelope Rosebery and her younger sister have been left in an untenable situation since the death of their father. Penelope was left at the alter and has had her livelihood stolen from her by the rogue she thought loved and cared for her. Living on their own with little means has left the sisters in desolation, but Penelope has a plan to find her ex-fiance, Simon, and make him return all he stole from her family. On the road to London however, Penelope and Aubry have some difficulties when the mail coach they are traveling on becomes disabled.

Victoria Betcham, the Viscountess of Fenhurst, traveling the same road as the Rosebery sisters comes upon the ladies in distress and immediately takes them under her wing and into the safety of her son, Phineas Betcham, Viscount Fenhurst's sprawling home. Her daughter, Julia, is away recovering from her own heartbreak, and the viscountess welcomes the company of the ladies in need.

The handsome bachelor, Phineas, is content to remain single, even as he sees those around him fall in love and marry. His past heartache has left him not wanting to get close to any other female who could turn his life upside down like his last love did. When Phin meets the Rosebery sisters however, he feels a pull toward Penny like he has never felt before. Thankfully, Penelope has declared she must find a certain someone and Phineas believes it is a lost love, which would make Penelope off limits to him as his honor would prevent him from encroaching on her relationship with another man.

The more time he spends in her presence the more sparks begin to fly and Phin is having a hard time putting Penny out of his mind. Helping her find the person that left her in dire straits throws each other in the same company thus preventing Phin from running from his feelings. Penelope also attempts to deny her attraction to Phineas, but it's a lost cause.

Penelope's quest to find the man that stole her very lifestyle consumes her, to the point of placing her in danger and also of losing the only man worth anything in her life. When Phin finds out the extent of the secrets Penny has been keeping, he will stop at nothing to help her find the culprit and show her that his

feelings are true.

The Midnight Rake by Anabelle Bryant is a sweeping tale of betrayal and romance. Phineas, so wronged by the one he thought he loved, realizes that the past is of no importance once he meets and becomes fully acquainted with the lovely Penelope. Penelope, on the other hand, is somewhat blinded by the task at hand to see that Phin is opening his heart to her. Phineas' mother, Victoria, adds to the aura of this tale like no mother in a historical romance I have ever encountered. She is witty and lovable and knows so much more that's going on than she allows us to know. Her parrot is a nuisance and Phineas' butler is a welcome addition to the menagerie of colorful characters. I simply enjoyed The Midnight Rake by Anabelle Bryant and hope you will as well.

~KIMBERLY~

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### **Amy ~ Love At 1st Read says**

Anabelle Bryant is absolutely killing it with this Regency Rogues series. Her vividly drawn characters and setting bring the Regency world to life right before my eyes. The Midnight Rake is so indescribably good, I feel almost incoherent trying to capture all the things I love about it. But love it, I did. Everything from the heartbreak of rejection, to the hilarious annoying bird and meddling mother, to the supportive friends, and the wondrous romance. All the twists and surprises that happen in this story along with the wonderfully loveable cast of characters grabbed my heart and my interest and kept me glued till the end.

Phineas Betcham, Viscount Fenhurst, was one of the country's most eligible bachelors. Despite his mother's unrelenting desire to see him married, Phineas was "happy to remain unencumbered and thoroughly entrenched in bachelorhood". He'd believed true love was possible once. Until he'd tried it and failed miserably. His experience with love had been brief but had left him bitter. And now, dealing with his sister Julia's courtship woes and chasing down the beau who had broken her heart, just solidified his motto of "No wife, happy life". Relationships were dangerous. Why would anyone invite sorrow if it could be avoided? Penelope Rosebery's life had become a mess. She'd foolishly believed herself in love but the scoundrel had played her false, tricked her family out of their savings, and left her standing at the altar while he burglarized their home. Her father, devastated by the loss, had died shortly after, leaving Penelope and her sister Aubry penniless and heartbroken. Regret and guilt gnawed at her and so she was determined to find the reprobate and demand he return their money and family treasures. En route to London to accomplish her task, their mail coach broke down leaving them stranded. But thanks to the kindness of Countess Victoria Fenhurst, Penelope and Aubry found themselves in the home of the countess's son, Phineas, where the countess assured them that Phineas would help solve the matter.

For both Phineas and Penelope, there was a sudden shot of awareness at their first meeting. But the past had taught them not to trust their feelings. Penelope had received nothing but trouble the last time she'd opened her heart to emotion. And Phineas had vowed that never again would anyone have control of the direction of his life. But something about this new houseguest ignited all the wrong desires. What's more, she made him feel protective. This unexpected attraction was an irritation. His desire for her gnawed at him no matter how much he repeated his mantra. "No wife, happy life. How stupid to believe denial would be as simple as four words."

After meeting Phineas in the second book of this series, I was eager to read his story. He was such an affable and charming fellow. Devlin called him "Never Man". Never rude or inconsiderate. Never one to disappoint. The perfect gentleman. I wondered at the time what kind of woman would be right for him. Penelope was perfect. His lucky Penny. Both had similar histories when it came to love. They'd both been manipulated and then cast aside. That kind of treatment leaves one a lot more leery of relationships than just a breakup does.

It's hard to trust your emotions and intuition again when they failed you so miserably before. They both tried to deny it, ignore it, and fight it, but they both found themselves snared in the very trap they'd vowed to never fall into again. And watching them get snared was such a delight. I loved every moment.

This entire story was utterly brilliant. Almost everyone had a secret. The endless twists and surprises combined with the quick witted characters and a villain who was so slick and smarmy and proud of it, kept me riveted, hoping that Phineas and Penelope would trust their feelings and each other and find the love they'd both thought impossible.

Though part of a series, this book can be read as a stand -alone. But believe me, you'll want to read them all. These Regency rogues are beyond charming. And there's just something about Anabelle Bryant's writing style that makes me lose myself in her stories. She writes with such exquisite detail I can almost taste the air the characters are breathing.

Though, so far, there are only 3 books in this series, I'm hoping there are more to come. Harry, the last of the group of friends, needs his own story. And Julia definitely deserves a story after suffering two heartbreaks. Whatever is next, I'm more than ready to get lost again.

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### **Linda Sims says**

Penelope Rosebery and her younger sister Aubry are travelling to London they are going to seek out the man who has stolen all of their family fortune, they are alone in the world since the stress had been too much for their father who had died.

Fortunately they are rescued when their coach has an accident by Victoria Betcham the Countess of Fenhurst, who is on her way to London to stay in the family townhouse. The countess is lonely, her husband is away travelling, her daughter is staying with family in Brighton after having her heart broken by a suitor. But her son Phineas Betcham Viscount of Fenhurst is in London whom she longs to see. The countess decides to take these two young women home with her.

I knew I wasn't going to like this book very quickly. The countess was a loud and irritating character, her name Victoria Betcham made me laugh I kept wanting to read Victoria Beckham! Penelope and her sister Aubry were nothing but a pair of scroungers who accepted this family's hospitality, including clothes and a tutor for the youngest sister. Phineas wanted to help them find the man who'd stolen their money and jewels, but the two girls refused to divulge any info about him. Phineas spent most of the story mentally appraising Penelope's physical attributes. The title is misleading, Phineas is not a rake nor does he turn into one at midnight.

I found the premise of this story unbelievable and OTT, a bit like the Countesses constant use of French phrases, that reminded me of Del Boy from only Fools and Horses. In the Countesses own words at the beginning of this story quelle horreur, sums up what I thought of this!

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### **Lorraine Oliver says**

The Midnight Rake is the third book in the Three Regency Rogues Series and was every bit as good as the first two! This is the story about Phineas, Viscount Fenhurst and Penelope Roseberry. There is also a cast of great supporting characters, two of them being his two best friends, Lord Constantine Highborough who we met in the first book in this series, To Love a Wicked Scoundrel, and Devlin Ravensdale, The Duke of

Wharncliffe, who we also met in the first book but book two was his story, Duke of Darkness.

Phineas has always lived by his mantra- "no wife-happy life." As we saw of his character in the first two books he was extremely handsome, a favorite of the debutantes every season, but known to disappear after an hour or so. He hated attending anything that had a crowd, the ton was in attendance, and mothers' on the hunt for a good match for their daughters! Phineas's idea of a good day is fishing and boxing and hanging out with his friends, which recently has not been too often since they both are now happily married! While he is happy for them, he is glad it is not him!

Phineas has just gotten back home after going to see about his sister, who was in love and the man disappeared and left her heartbroken. He pulls up to his house walks in and his butler greets him with the info that his mother has arrived-with two young women and worst of all-her parrot! He does not mind his mother, but she has a one track mind-which involves him with a wife and her grandchildren- he is not happy about that! He is going upstairs and runs right into Penelope, and the first thing he notices is how good she smells!

His mother is quick to inform him they will be there for a while, and she brought these two young women with her, who she met while on her way to his house. They are homeless and destitute and she has taken them under her wing. He also finds out that Penelope is looking for someone and will not say why, just says it is a matter of great urgency. He is quickly drafted by his mother to escort Penelope to all kinds of events, balls and soirees.

Penelope has come to London in order find the man who left her waiting at the alter, in front of the whole town, while he robbed her of everything of value, and her father as well. Her father passes away from grief, and this left Penelope and her sister with nothing but her father's pocket watch, which they are taking to London to sell to get rooms while they look for the man. This is how Phineas's mother found them, their coach had broken down and so she asked them to ride with her. She finds out from the younger sister what had happened, and she is quick to take them under her care!

This is how Phineas and Penelope wind up spending a lot of time together, and Phineas has started having feelings for this young woman, and he is conflicted as he never wanted to marry, but this woman is getting under his skin in a way that he can't believe. Penelope is falling for Phineas as well and soon things happen that cause Phineas to be very possessive of Penelope.

In the meantime all kinds of things are going on and a man comes to London that is a rotten and uses people and goes out of his way to act like someone he is not! He is a thief and a user of women. and causes a lot of havoc when he bids on a horse, a horse Phineas wanted and he wins the horse in the auction when Phineas had gone off in a daydream- which causes him to lose! One evening Penelope sees this man at the ball while she is with Phineas and she goes to talk to the man and Phineas stops her, knowing what that man is capable of! He finds out this is the man Penelope is looking for! He insists Penelope go home and wait for him there, and she is so mad!

You will have to read this book to find out what happens! There is so much going on and the plot keeps going one way and then another so it keeps you guessing and keeps the book moving at a good pace. There are other things that happen and it comes to a climax when Phin has found out the man Penelope is looking for is none other than the terrible man everyone wants out of their town! The man who bid on a horse and won, but did not have the money!

1 Will Penelope get her money and jewelry back from the man who left her at the alter?

- 2 Will she trust Phineas enough to let him take matters into his hands while she stays on the sidelines?
- 3 Will Phineas be able to do what is needed to make things right for Penelope?
- 4 Is Phineas ready to quit being a bachelor and living by the motto "No wife, happy life"?
- 5 What happens with Phineas's sister?
- 6 What happens to the man that has taken everyone's valuables, and lied to everyone about who he is?
- 7 Will the butler or Phin murder the parrot?
- 8 Will Phineas ever be able to get back to his peaceful life of fishing every morning?

Read and find out! I promise you will be surprised at the way everything turns out. This has been a really good series and I encourage you to start with the first book and read them in order so you will be able to follow the characters from the beginning to the end!

I gave this book 5\*\*\*\*\*perfect stars!

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### **Jackson D'Lynne says**

I want to start this review off by thanking Anabelle for gifting me this book and her friendship. I am now and will always be her biggest fan. With that said...I gave this book 3 1/2 out of 5 stars because I just couldn't feel any passion for the story (unlike the other two books in the series which I devoured over two nights while on vacation in OBX).

What I liked about this book:

- Phineas
- Seeing old friends
- Ridley

What I didn't like about this book:

- Penelope
- Lady Fenhurst
- POV switching
- Conflict didn't have to be a conflict
- Weak overall story

I really liked Phineas. He was a sweetheart who was just an all-around great guy. He's the kind of guy I'd like my own daughters to meet and marry (without the pre-marital sex, of course). I liked that he wore his heart on his sleeve, and wasn't so prideful he was unwilling to admit his feelings to his more macho friends. It was a refreshing change from all the brute alphas in stories today. Bravo, Ms. Bryant, for creating a hero who made me smile rather than brood.

Speaking of Phin's friends; it was great to see him and his bosom beau's together again. Actually, it makes me want to reread Con and Devlin's stories again, lol. Well played, Anabelle!

Another man I appreciated in this story is the villain, Ridley. Ms. Bryant did a great job creating a villain I could actually hate. Usually, the villain is just a dude I tolerate because he adds tension and crisis to the story. This time around, I really, truly hated the villain. He deserved exactly what he got.

So, what I didn't like...well, unfortunately, there is a lot I didn't like or just didn't get about this book. Penelope is a sweet girl, but she is a flipping idiot! Come on! Did she really think dragging her sister to London on a wing and a prayer hoping to gain entrance into the vaunted circles of the ton to find some guy who may or may not actually be nobility so she could call him out in the middle of a party in the hopes that he would admit his guilt like a good little boy and give her back her mommy's jewelry was an idea with any merit? Seriously? ARE YOU FREAKING KIDDING ME?! She is SO very lucky the pushy and annoying Lady Fenhurst stopped to help and basically gave them a ticket into the very circles they hoped to enter. Even then, why in the hell didn't Penny just tell them who she was looking for? It would've been so much easier if she set aside her pride and just told them the story. Why not? Well, the whole story would've been over the second Phin spotted Ridley's white streak of hair, that's why not.

I don't like stories where the whole plot is based on a single bit of information that, when just admitted at the very beginning, would've cleared up most of the problems that occurred throughout the rest of the book. This is one of those stories that wouldn't have a conflict if the hero and heroine would just sit down and have an honest conversation with one another.

She could've told Phin about Simon, Phin could've told Penny about the brooch—wow, problems solved, story over. This book could've been a novella.

There are a few plot mud puddles that really bogged me down and took me out of the story. For one, there is some woman in Phin's past that supposedly turned him against marriage forever. I wish I knew more about what happened between him and...I don't even remember her name...which sort of speaks for itself, doesn't it? Anyway, apparently, he courted her, she made a scene in front of people at a party, and he was humiliated. Mmmkay. What did she say? What was the fallout? How did he really feel about her? It's like it was just thrown in to add a background for him—giving him a reason to want to stay single. Lame. Also, the mystery of who he was visiting on Kent St. was interesting enough to carry my regard for a while, but the reveal lacked tension. Ms. Bryant passed up the opportunity to create more tension in the story by putting this meandering, lackluster subplot into the main story, instead she wrote an unnecessary storyline. This subplot didn't add to the main plot even the tiniest bit. I think Ms. Bryant was trying to show more of Phin's honorable character, but it wasn't necessary. I never once for a single second thought he was anything less than a total gentleman.

The title for this book gives the wrong impression—Phin wasn't a rake who ravished at midnight (although there was a rather tepid love scene after the midnight hour, but he wasn't very rakish about it. The whole scene was sort of...Hallmark channel sweet, and not HBO hot), he was so NOT rakish, his love making was actually tame. For the first time in a long time I actually skipped over the love scenes in a book. They were boring. Didn't draw me in at all. It didn't help that most of the love scene happened "behind closed doors". One minute where in an alcove and Phin has taken her in his mouth, and the next second were greeting guests in the parlor with only the glossed over memory of last night's seduction.

Another issue I saw throughout the story was odd head hopping. One minute I'm in Phin's head, the next I'm in Penny's—and I didn't notice the transition. There as one scene in particular that totally threw me:

*"You don't recognize the Rosebery name?"*

*Her delicate brows drew together as if she wished him to know something he did not.*

*"Should I? You mentioned your father was a baron with holdings in the Cotwolds. I am afraid I never made his acquaintance." **He couldn't know she meant because of scandal,** instead the silence stretched on before*

*she spoke again.*

We're in Phin's POV so how does he know what she meant or didn't mean?

Also, I don't know if it was just my copy, but the very last sentence of the whole book is missing the period.

I wanted to LOVE this story as much as I loved the other two in this series, but I just couldn't. Sorry, Anabelle!

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### **Brian Benson says**

Her best yet. Anabelle Bryant continues to amaze. She has taken several characters from her first two novels, To Love A Wicked Scoundrel, and Duke Of Darkness and deftly blended them into her newest release The Midnight Rake. Penelope Rosebery bilked of her families savings and left near penniless at the alter, heads to London in search of the con-man who stole her families fortune and a priceless heirloom. In the course of her search, she connects with Phineas Betcham aka Viscount Fenhurst. Phineas, has vowed to never marry, his mantra 'No wife, happy life', is torn asunder when he meets Penelope. What ensues is often comical, and also filled with drama. I loved the chase scene near the end. As always, Bryant's book have a happy ending. I recommend this book to all fans of historical fiction.

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### **Caz says**

**Let's crank up the snark-o-meter, shall we? This one got a D+ at AAR. What can I say? I liked the parrot.**

**Incidentally, the title of this book bears almost no relation to the content. For one thing, the hero isn't a rake, and for another he doesn't suddenly turn into one at midnight and go about debauching innocent maidens.**

**Also - in the cover shot, the heroine looks like she's wearing a curtain.**

I found **The Midnight Rake** rather hard going at first. Not because it's difficult to read, but because I spent so much time shaking my head at the author's tortuous sentence structure and instances of incorrect word usage that my progress was quite slow!

Once I'd given up expecting the book to be written in a version of the English language that didn't read like it had been written by a teenager trying to impress someone by using big words without the aid of a dictionary, I started to read it at a normal rate and to concentrate on the story.

Which is, unfortunately, about as well-formed as the sentence structure.

The book opens with two sisters, left stranded by a carriage mishap, being rescued by a rather grand lady who insists on taking them home with her. The Countess of Fenhurst explains that it's no imposition – her

daughter, Julia, is currently away from home, and the countess will be quite happy to have some substitutes to spoil for a while.

Her son, Phineas, Viscount Fenhurst (and yes, if she's the Countess of Fenhurst, then he should be Viscount SomewhereElse, given that the heir's courtesy title is not usually the same as his father's) is also in residence in London and is not pleased by the fact that his mother has descended upon him, as he will now have to suffer her repeated hints and outright suggestions that it's time he got married and gave her some grandchildren.

But Phin's mantra is "*no wife, happy life*", so it seems that her ladyship is destined for disappointment.

We learn early on that Penelope Rosebury (early twenties) and her sister Aubry (sweet sixteen) are travelling to London to find the bounder who not only jilted Penny at the altar, but also robbed them blind, stealing everything – including their mother's jewellery – and thus hastened their frail father's death. Phin and Penny literally bump into each other at the end of chapter one and from then on, the mental lusting is in full swing.

Penny has already mentioned to Lady F. that she has come to London in search of someone, and that she's sure she'll be able to locate him if Lady F. would be kind enough to introduce her into society and take her to some society events. She also confesses to Phin that she's looking for someone and he offers to help – but she won't give him a name or physical description, or even tell him precisely why finding him is so vital to her very existence – which renders his offer completely useless right off the bat.

There are the bare bones of a decent story in here, but there is too much contrivance and anachronistic behaviour to make it an even half-way decent book. To begin with, Penelope drags her younger sister on a long journey on the slight off-chance that they'll be able to gain an entrée into good society to track down the man who cheated them. Fortunately for them both, not only does Lady Fenhurst pick up two complete strangers from the side of the road, she takes them into her home indefinitely, feeds them, clothes them, arranges tuition for Aubry and takes Penelope about in society. What luck! Penelope is looking for someone but she refuses to tell anyone with more than a snowball's chance in hell of helping her what his name is or what he looks like. (Had she done so, of course, there would have been no book!) And on top of that, when she finds him, what does she think is going to happen? She'll give him a good scold and he'll say sorry, beg her forgiveness and give all the money back?

Then there's the fact that Phin is another in a long line of historical romance heroes who is determined not to get married, when in reality, men in his position had it drummed into them from the cradle that if they did nothing else in life, they had to procreate in order to secure lands and title for future generations. Admittedly, the genre is littered with such confirmed bachelors, and some have better reasons than others for their stance. But Phin's is never fully explained; we learn he'd once been in love with a woman who seemed determined to wipe her kid half-boots on him and who made some sort of public scene which caused him deep embarrassment. Huh? That's it? As for the anachronisms...Phin and Penny travel alone together in a closed carriage. Men who know each other hardly at all greet each other with handshakes. Phin takes off his waistcoat and hands it to a servant in the foyer of his home, when it wasn't the done thing for a gentleman to appear without a coat, let alone in just his shirt! Phin kisses Penny in a public park in full view of anyone who passes by. Those are just the ones I can remember without having to look them up.

And then there's the writing. 60% of the time it's okay, but the rest of it is peppered with sentences like this:

*His mother wished for grandchildren, despite he was not reticent in his announcement he'd no wish to settle down.*

Or this:

*Although his mind twitched with the question of why he liked the sound of his name in her voice.*

And this one is a doozy: "... attending social events as a favour to Penelope will also lend me to abide your wishes." Um. What did he just say?

And it's filled with words which, while they might make technical sense, are not idiomatic or with words that are incorrectly used. For instance, the heroine thinks Phin the picture of "effortless eloquence" (which should surely be elegance?) His mother says she is "consorting to arrange a match for Phineas." At one point, *With brief execution, [Phin] contemplated the scenarios that might ensue.* He tells his mother (who is nagging him about marriage) that he's only thirty-one and *"not at the end of his rope"*. He does not *"intend to sound braggadocio"*. I could go on, but I'll spare you that.

The author could also have done with a "dictionary of commonly used terms in Historical Romance". Had one been available, she'd have realised that a "domino" is not a mask, it's a cloak, and that a "Tiger" is the lad who rides behind the carriage, not the person at the reins.

**The Midnight Rake** is obviously not a book I can recommend. The story is poorly thought-out and overly contrived, the villain only wants a cape and twirly moustache, the heroine makes too many poor decisions, there's no sense of time and place, and the central relationship is sorely under-developed. The best things about the book are the hero – Phin is a lovely guy, despite his ridiculous mantra – and Lady Fenhurst's pet parrot.

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### **Laura says**

This was the first book that I had read by Anabelle Bryant. I loved it! Please read my full review at my blog: <http://letague.blogspot.com/2015/01/t...>

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