



Wicked, My Love

Susanna Ives

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A smooth-talking rogue and a dowdy financial genius

Handsome, silver-tongued politician Lord Randall doesn't get along with his bank partner, the financially brilliant but hopelessly frumpish Isabella St. Vincent. Ever since she was his childhood nemesis, he's tried-and failed-to get the better of her.

Make a perfectly wicked combination

When both Randall's political career and their mutual bank interests are threatened by scandal, he has to admit he needs Isabella's help. They set off on a madcap scheme to set matters right. With her wits and his charm, what could possibly go wrong? Only a volatile mutual attraction that's catching them completely off guard...

Praise for *Wicked Little Secrets*:

"With *Wicked Little Secrets*' intriguing plot, quirky characters, witty escapades, and heartfelt dialogue, Ives has created a read that's as thought-provoking as it is romantic." -RT Book Reviews, 4 1/5 stars and nominee for Best First Historical Romance

"A fresh voice that reminded me of Julia Quinn's characters." -Eloisa JAMES, *New York Times* bestselling author

Wicked, My Love Details

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Author : Susanna Ives

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From Reader Review Wicked, My Love for online ebook

Jaclyn says

Wicked, My Love contains the zaniness that I often enjoy in historical romance, not because it's historically accurate, but because it fits the bill of pure escapism. *Wicked, My Love* was a fun, entertaining and funny on-the-road romance between two childhood nemeses who consequently discover something to actually like about the other. While there are many madcap adventures in the course to happily-ever-after, the author does a good job of including a lovely emotional depth that balanced out the lighthearted tone of the book.

Lord Randall and Isabella St. Vincent have known each other since childhood, and it was not a sweet, childish friendship. Neither liked the other and they continue to be at odds with one another into adult hood. Now both Randall and Isabella have taken over the bank that their fathers' established together. Isabella in particular is the financial wiz that and Randall is the charismatic face of the bank. However, when it seems that the bank has been swindled these two enemies are going to have to work together if they want to keep themselves out of the poor house.

Wicked, My Love started off as a really strong read. From the first page, you knew that any interactions between Randall and Isabella would be hilarious. Randall's the charismatic one and Isabella's, well, a little clueless when it comes to dealing with other people. She's smart in a numbers sort of way, but struggles to read people and would much rather distance herself from her own unruly emotions. Randall, unlike Isabella, is all about emotions. He's a politician and he actually cares about his causes, but the question is whether he cares enough to risk the possible alienation from his peers.

I really liked the characterization of both the hero and heroine in *Wicked, My Love*. There was an unexpected depth of emotion that worked well to counter the silliness of the plot and the antics of Randall and Isabella. I loved the silliness to the story, but I think the characterizations and conflicts facing both Randall and Isabella personally is what made this a strong read. For example, Isabella becomes this unlikely face of women's rights and independence, when her aunt gets her to write a financial advice book for women. While Isabella certainly believes in independence, she craves her own family: a husband and children, which her bluestocking aunt urges her to avoid. Obviously the two can coexist, but I liked how this created a conflict for Isabella and saved her from being a one-dimensional character; she was a more than a public face for a cause. Randall too had unexpected depth since the reader learns why he craves adoration and attention in his political career. The characters in this one won me over and kept me interested from beginning to end.

The reservation that I have about *Wicked, My Love* is the instances when I was jarred from the story with modern language. I found, especially in the second half of the book, that the novel took a much more modern approach than I would have expected in a historical romance. The relationship between Randall and Isabella suddenly felt like I was reading a contemporary romance and this was a little disappointing. I don't think *Wicked, My Love* is for readers that expect a strong adherence to historical norms. You need to take this one for what it is, a fun story in a historical setting, with characters that don't exactly behave in a way you would expect at that time. It's a fun read and it does the job in offering a tale of escapism.

I liked *Wicked, My Love* for its humour and zaniness and that alone will have me coming back for more from Susannah Ives. While the sense of fun is certainly not something that will appeal to all readers, I think it will to those that like their historical light and fun in the same vein of Tessa Dare and Julia Quinn.

Originally reviewed at The Book Adventures.

*Review copy provided by the publisher via NetGalley.

Annie says

4.5

I laughed out loud so many times in this book!! The women in the novel are the stars, especially the last scene, I was cheering along with them lol

Isabella and Randall had such a cute and entertaining road to getting together :P

Pam says

A delightful historical romance with mystery and political conflict that could destroy both the hero and the heroine, as they work together to thwart a common enemy.

Viscount Randall and Isabella St Vincent grew up together, their fathers were good friends and business partners and when they died, the two inherited a portion of the bank. Isabella is an extremely intelligent woman who is more at home with a spreadsheet than people and for the most part runs the bank. The two barely tolerate each other but know they must work together to keep the bank solvent. When Randall faces trouble they must work together to save not only his reputation but also the banks solvency.

This is an enjoyable continuation to the series and I am excited for more.

I adore Isabella, she is quirky, smart and is a bit different. She knows she will never fit into Randall's world but she does not care, as she makes fun of him at every chance she gets. Her only problem is that she is staring at thirty and desperately wants a family so is looking for a man who she can marry. Unfortunately she picks the wrong man who in turn causes problems with the bank and Randall.

Randall is a perfect hero, not a true alpha but an intelligent man who has a political career that he loves and wants to continue. When trouble finds him he turns to Isabella for help and they realize that they mean much more to each other than they can ever imagine.

The story pace works well, and I enjoyed the mystery and danger that the author weaves into the romance. Secondary characters are key and I enjoyed the added dimensions they brought to the story. All in all a wonderful historical romance.

Copy from the publisher for an honest review

eyes.2c says

Witty, romantic and so enjoyable!

When our current stock of Victorian romance writers truly remembered the existence of Mary Wolstencroft a whole new genre of heroine came into being. The Bluestocking, she's formidable, generally portrayed as women's rights explorers, often overlooked or social inept. Women that today's women can thank as part of the progress to enfranchisement, the recognition of their abilities and their freedoms. Not only that, but they present an excellent opening for writers to incorporate intrigue, humour and in-depth social commentary. And that's just what Susanna Ives has given us. She's given us Isabella St. Vincent. Isabella is a gem. She has an off beat presence that wonderfully combines the different with the interesting. She is an intellect who wants to embrace her womanhood. The how of doing that is the hard part. I laughed at the language Isabella uses,

thank you to Aunt Judith, for her womanly parts. I loved her ability to work out mathematical odds and problems. I loved that her abilities helped countless numbers of women to turn their lives around. If only Isabella could turn her personal relationships around!

Her childhood arch enemy is Lord Randall but in their pursuit of matters that touch the very foundations of their joint banking interests, that childhood frisson between them takes on a life of its own, down paths neither has contemplated. A witty, somewhat different and most enjoyable read!

A NetGalley ARC

Alex says

I really liked the idea of Wicked, My Love. The fact that Isabella was a math genius and basically ran the bank herself while Randall was off doing his political stuff, it sounded like a lot of fun. And I appreciated that she actually wanted to talk about stocks and financial stuff all the time. But... the rest of the story fell a little flat.

I never liked Randall all that much, plus it didn't make much sense to me that he was always slipping into this other persona of "Randy" whenever he and Isabella had to be 'undercover'. Randy was very, very crass, not the kind of person a proper and snobbish politician would assume. Or at least, it didn't feel organic to me.

Isabella was starry eyed to the point of being foolish, but she was likable most of the time otherwise; and I did feel for her and how insecure she felt because she never managed to please her father. But I didn't believe her with Randall, didn't believe they were meant to be and that's kind of essential as this was a romance.

Also, the names the author gave the different places Randall and Isabella visited? I think she was trying to be clever with her word play but it sounded kind of ridiculous.

Lover of Romance says

I had a difficult time getting into this story, and had to put it down...that is why my rating is so low. I just couldn't connect with the story or the characters or the set up...I gave it a 100 pages, and then set it aside. There are many other books I want to read, and I just didn't want to waste my time with a book I wasn't sure I would even like reading. I felt very confused with this one, and just couldn't get a handle on it. I do plan on reading the first book, since that one has some pretty good ratings and reviews.

Jo says

An enjoyable enemies to lovers HRs.

I really enjoyed the banter between Isabella and Randall. There were many humorous moments between the prickly Isabella and the charming Randall.

The slow built romance was perfect for these two, and watching Randall slowly realise just how perfect Isabella actually is for him for great. And I loved his possessiveness over her.

This was my first book by this author, and it definitely won't be my last.

Farrah says

My Rating: 4.5/5

An utterly charming and delightful historical romance, *Wicked, My Love* was a wonderful read. With sparkling wit, lively humor, and a lovely romance, this book was fantastic and I absolutely loved it.

Isabella was a lovely heroine. Scary smart and defiantly independent, she was definitely no shrinking flower. Until she was put amongst people and her social awkwardness revealed itself. She was likable in her flaws and I thought she was a great character.

Randall was such a charmer. He could wrap someone around his fingers with a few well-thought out words and charm the whole of society to adore him. Except for Isabella, who was too knowledgeable of his tricks. But, past that, he was smarter than he was given credit for and he truly wanted to help people with his political career, rather than be a pretty puppet. He was also sweet, kind, and just an overall adorable character who I really liked.

The romance was well done. Isabella and Randall had known and hated each other since they were children. But, it didn't take much for all that energy to change to lust and for them to realize how much they cared about each other without the habit of animosity. They both understood and accepted each other, flaws and all. Not to mention that the chemistry between them was steamy and definitely turned the heat up. I thought they were great together.

I had two small issues with the book. 1) The pace was slow in some places. Not enough to be boring, but enough that it was a noticeable change. And, 2) it was somewhat frustrating how tightly Isabella clung to her old hatred. I understood her reasoning, but I also wanted to shake some sense into her. However, these were both very minor issues and I still loved the book despite them.

Other than the aforementioned few places along the plot that slowed down, most of the story moved quickly and kept me fully engaged. The humor in this book was delightful and had me full on smiling more than once. I really liked the story and the ending was simply lovely.

Wicked, My Love was a dazzlingly lovely, sweetly romantic book that I really liked. It was a fun, enjoyable read. Romance lovers, this is definitely a book you won't want to miss.

*I received a complimentary copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review

Marilyn Rondeau says

First of all - I loved WICKED, MY LOVE - it had a great story, it was sensual and the dialogues were oftentimes outrageously funny! For myself - I totally loved this and read it in one sitting!

The protagonists began early in childhood with a very hateful relationship. Thrown together because of their father's great friendship and affection for another they were still from different stations in life. Randall a young Viscount was destined for politics. Isabella was a manufacturers daughter. Wanting to impress her father Isabella had studied finance was enormously bright. Having lost her mother at an early age Isabella was brought up by a devoted Mary Wollstonecroft feminist follower and oftentimes this precocious, and brainy 8 year old spouted out some very enlightening and humorous information to her childhood friend. (As an example - how babies were conceived)

Childhood aside our two protagonists grew up with each assuming their desires, his in politics and hers now running her father's bank with Randall being a equal majority stock holder. Naturally neither could stand one another and their dialogs were still snipes at one another, that is until a disaster of masterful proportions threatened both Isabella's bank and Randall's political career.

What follows is a hilarious alliance of these two foes that ended up with each other finally looking beneath the surface of their love/hate relationship. Nothing more can be said except, you won't be sorry you picked up WICKED, MY LOVE by Ms. Ives. It was simply Wickedly Good!

Marilyn Rondeau

Sam says

I really enjoyed the humor of this book, which I think fits into that rare category that used to be Tessa Dare's alone. I could hardly put the book down because from the first page, it was just so engaging to see how these two characters go from relatively harmless childhood enemies to where we all know it's headed. The fun is really in the ride which involves a road trip (very *A Week to Be Wicked*), fake identities and naughty chemises galore.

The romance is great, but for me, the real stars of this book are the women from Isabella (who saves the day and learns to stop pushing down her feelings because it's the easier and familiar route), Cousin Judith (feminist pioneer extraordinaire), Mrs. Perdita (landlady and former lady of the stage and the night), to the women who also helped ensure that happy ending. **In this book, there was so much about ladies helping ladies and themselves, I really could cry.**

Alyssa says

Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog

Wicked, My Love by Susanna Ives
Book Two of the Wicked Little Secrets series
Publisher: Sourcebooks Casablanca
Publication Date: March 3, 2015
Rating: 3 stars
Source: eARC from NetGalley

Warning: this is an adult book, and for the eyes of mature readers

Summary (from Goodreads):

A smooth-talking rogue and a dowdy financial genius...

Handsome, silver-tongued politician Lord Randall doesn't get along with his bank partner, the financially brilliant but hopelessly frumpish Isabella St. Vincent. Ever since she was his childhood nemesis, he's tried—and failed—to get the better of her.

Make a perfectly wicked combination...

When both Randall's political career and their mutual bank interests are threatened by scandal, he has to admit he needs Isabella's help. They set off on a madcap scheme to set matters right. With her wits and his charm, what could possibly go wrong? Only a volatile mutual attraction that's catching them completely off guard...

What I Liked:

I liked this one - don't be fooled by the slightly low rating. I felt like this one was more of a 3.5-star novel, rather than 3-star one, but when rounding, it gets 3 stars (and not 4 stars). I liked it a lot! But probably not enough to give it 4 stars. There were some large things that I didn't really like, but overall, I liked the book. I loved Wicked Little Secrets (book one), and I thought this one was good, so I'll definitely be reading more of Ives' books in the future.

This book (Wicked, My Love) does not have any crossover from the first book (Wicked Little Secrets), which was actually kind of nice. At least, none that I can remember. If it did, I obviously missed it - and none of the characters from Wicked Little Secrets popped up in this book. In any case, I liked that this book didn't have anything to do with its predecessor in the series, for a change.

Randall and Isabella grew up together, bickering and fighting even as grown adults. Randall is a viscount, living a privileged life from birth. Isabella's father was a brilliant merchant, but never seemed to have time for Isabella; Isabella became determined to be something worth impressing her father. Isabella is a brilliant banker, excellent with numbers and problems and solutions and ledgers. She and Randall and a third partner do banking business together - until that third partner messes up, landing Randall in a huge scandal with another noble, who is plenty guilty in the whole scenario. This is a case of Randall and Isabella putting aside their differences to find out the truth, and save their business and good names.

I love the protagonists, Randall and Isabella. Mostly, I like Randall. He is a flirtatious and suave young man, but underneath those layers, he is very serious, devoted, determined, hardworking, loyal. He wants to hold prestige in Parliament, and not because he holds the title of viscount, but because he worked hard to earn the recognition and votes. He's driven, and he cares about things more than he lets on.

Isabella, on the other hand, is a very serious and intelligent woman. She is terrible at picking up jokes, wit, sarcasm, etc. She doesn't really understand dirty jokes or innuendos. Randall teases her all the time and she knows he's teasing her, but not necessarily how. I'm not sure if I really liked Isabella - there were some things about her that pissed me off - but ehh. She's okay.

This book is all about trying to restore the bank and its business - some sold the third partner fraudulent stocks. Isabella and Randall journey across the country (or so it seems) to hunt down person after person. Meanwhile, the line between hate and love seems to grow thinner and thinner.

I love the hate-to-love romance stories - they're usually very passionate and have plenty of banter between them. I liked the chemistry-filled romance, with plenty of sizzle and spark between Randall and Isabella.

The novel is a good read, overall. I had issues with the female protagonist, so that's why this one got a lower rating than you would think. Read on.

What I Did Not Like:

I'm not sure if I like Isabella or not. She's an example of a very academic/book-smart individual, with little common sense. She is so thick-headed and slow at times. I get it, we can't all have common sense... but like... a smidgen? She would vastly benefit from a drop of it.

There's a subplot involving women's rights - Isabella wrote a book on business and smart investing or something like that, and it is a revolutionary novel in women's rights, in this book. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for women's rights and whatnot (duh). But I wasn't a huge fan of this additional plot. It didn't do anything for me - if anything, it agitated me, and it definitely agitated Isabella (she hates attention and crowds).

Isabella makes some seriously stupid decisions in this book. She never listens to Randall - and again, I'm all for women's rights, but if someone (anyone, man or woman) has a good/smart idea that will keep everyone safer... you should probably do it. No need to stick up your nose and decide NOW is the time to be throwing women's rights around. I'm thinking of a specific instance in this book, when something like this sort of happened. Honestly, Isabella is both stupid and pig-headed. It's not going to break the world if you listen to a smart idea that happened to be thought up by a man - it won't go against your feminist code.

Anyway. This was kind of a big thing for me. I like Randall, I like Isabella & Randall... but Isabella? Meh. I don't know if I like her or not.

Would I Recommend It:

Okay despite the fact that I didn't really like Isabella, I really enjoyed the book, so I WOULD recommend it... just not as much as I might recommend other historical romance novels. This one isn't a must-read, unless you've previously enjoyed Susanna Ives' books (I really liked Wicked Little Secrets).

Rating:

3.5 stars -> rounded down to 3 stars. I liked this one - though not as much as I had hoped - and I hope there will be more Wicked books (additions to this series).

Samia Ruponti says

hmm....in addition to the romance, loved the introduction to the history of financial derivatives!! :p

BTW, that monolog!! I don't think I have ever laughed that hard!!

Caz says

I've given this a B at AAR.

Wicked My Love is the second book in Ms Ives' *Wicked Little Secrets* series - although there are no characters from the previous book involved, so it works perfectly well as a stand-alone. The author sets her romance against the backdrop of the world of banking and finance in the mid-19th century, and has provided the reader with enough historical background for the story to be convincing, but she never gets so caught up in the minutiae of the subject so as to give the impression she's delivering a lecture. Her two principals are engaging and likeable, although the hero is probably the more sympathetic of the two, as – contrary to the often used trope – he's the charming, socially confident, empathetic one, while the heroine is an awkward, shy genius who finds it hard to connect with people.

Isabella St. Vincent and Viscount Randall (we never learn his first name) have known and disliked each other since childhood, when they were forced into each other's company by virtue of the fact that their fathers had gone into business together. A couple of decades on, their relationship retains a veneer of hostility, although on Randall's side, his dislike manifests itself in an affectionate teasing and innuendo that the rather matter-of-fact Isabella often fails to understand.

Since her father's death, Isabella has taken over his part in the running of the Bank of Lord Hazlewood. But when one of the partners purchases some fraudulent stock at the same time as Randall finds himself, for the first time, on the wrong end of a political argument, things suddenly take a downturn for both of them. Randall's political career is on the verge of ruin and Isabella is terrified there will be a run on the bank – so the two quasi-enemies team up in order to save the bank and, perhaps, save Randall's career, embarking on a series of frantic journeys around the country as they try to discover who is behind the attempt to ruin them.

Isabella is tightly buttoned up and determined to suppress messy things like emotions; and at the age of twenty-nine, is beginning to despair of ever finding love and having a family of her own. She has also gained a degree of fame as the author of a book of financial advice for women, and is uncomfortable with the fact that she has become known as an advocate for womens' rights and independence. It's not that she doesn't believe in both those things – it's just that she's naturally shy, and finds it difficult to reconcile those beliefs with her desire for marriage.

Randall is good looking and charming, and his ability to read people and ingratiate himself easily has smoothed his path through life to no small extent. He is on the verge of making an advantageous marriage in order to further his political ambitions, yet on the inside, he feels he's a fraud. He's genuinely desirous of improving the lot of the underprivileged in society, and has recently been very vocal on the subject of child labour, the corn laws, and the railways – but it has made him some powerful enemies, and during the course of the book, he has to decide who he wants to be – the handsome orator who says what people want to hear and charms them to his cause, or the serious politician who fights for what he believes in, no matter how

hard it is.

While perhaps the transition from dislike to like, lust, and love between the protagonists seems to happen a little quickly, it works because the reader is shown, right from the start, that Randall and Isabella aren't as averse to each other as they insist. They each have a rare insight when it comes to the other, and their long-standing knowledge of each other enables them to work well together when they're trying to save the bank and find out who is trying to bring Randall down. They have great chemistry and the love scenes are satisfyingly steamy; and it made a nice change to have the hero be the one who was more open about his feelings.

The thing that grabbed me about the story right from the start was the humour: The book is chock full of it, and the way in which Randall and Isabella trade quips and insults is a real delight. I'm a sucker for good banter, and Ms. Ives has a real gift for it; it isn't forced or unfunny, and a story full of genuine humour and sharp one-liners is almost always going to get a thumbs up from me. There is a downside, though, which is that the humour does give the book a certain modernity in tone, which might not work for everyone.

There are a few things which prevented me from rating the book more highly, such as Isabella's stubborn desire to cling to her "no emotions" rule and her inability to believe that Randall can genuinely love her. There are a couple of places where the plot veers over the line between "funny" and "silly", and then there are the daft names for body parts that crop up throughout. I know that some of these appear when we're in Isabella's POV, and I suppose it's plausible that a twenty-nine year-old spinster in 1847 would not know any other terms for her "sacred vessel" or a "man's dangly parts" but Randall thinking of his "percy" or his "Mr. Long Johnson" took things a little too far towards the overly-cutesy for my taste. There were also a large number of run-together-words which I suppose were meant to be funny, but which interrupted the flow, as I had to go back and re-read them; and once again, too many of those intrusive Americanisms – we don't have sidewalks, we have pavements; Fall is called Autumn; it's "maths" NOT "math" and we don't say "anyways" – to name but a few.

Overall, though, I did enjoy **Wicked My Love** in spite of my reservations, and even though the tone in the second half especially is perhaps more modern than I normally like. But it's a strong story, and the humour – combined with the fact that Randall is a very attractive, perceptive hero – really won me over. With those things in mind, I'd say that if you enjoy reading books by authors like Tessa Dare and Maya Rodale, then this one could very well work for you.

Sonya Heaney says

Originally posted **HERE**.

I don't really know how I feel about this book. I do know I loved the characters and I thought the plot was great. I liked the fact it's set in the 1840s. On the other hand, I struggled with the slapstick humour and some of the histrionics of the secondary characters. It sometimes made what was a brilliant story into something a bit farcical – and then it would switch back to the great story I was enjoying and I liked it again.

Something to note is that this is the second book in a series and yet it reads like a standalone. I couldn't even tell you if the original characters made an appearance. I liked that.

We have a hero and heroine who have known – and disliked each other – since childhood. However their lives have been thrown together nonstop the whole time, as they have common business interests.

What I absolutely loved about this book was the way careers were integrated into the story. Most historical romance authors who go for the Girl Power! aspect come off as anachronistic and often ridiculous. Isabella's reasons for being involved in the running of a bank were believable, and I loved her character in general. Her faults were consistent. She wanted marriage, but was desperately aware it was unlikely for her. Her quirks weren't "cute"; they were things she struggled with, and things that made her self-conscious. For example, her serious nature that made it impossible for her to tell when someone was joking.

I also loved that she wore glasses (absent from the cover – of course), and that she really did struggle without them.

As for Randall, I was actually really impressed an author had the bravery to write an aristocratic Tory hero! I loved seeing the way he struggled with his politics and how to fit the aristocratic ideal into a life where it was becoming difficult to fit.

Another thing I loved was that the plot was so complex it meant the romance took time to develop at a believable pace.

As for my criticisms? Well, this is where I struggled. I think perhaps the author was going for a lighter pace in the nature of popular wallpaper romance authors who have come before her. But it just wasn't necessary. Far too many sex jokes.

Cutting away from the interesting plot to have silly scenes like the housewife shrieking about her "babby-wabies" took away from the book. Having the antics of the beautiful blonde (of course) ex-mistress going crazy and attacking Isabella lowered the quality of what could have been a brilliant book.

I also didn't like how many times words were run together like this at "funny" times. I gave up trying to read them by the halfway mark.

There were also the usual issues with the Americanisms in the British dialogue. It's **maths**, not **math**, dammit! Nobody should EVER say **anyways**.

The thing is, *Wicked, My Love* could have made it onto my best reads of the year list if the wallpaper, slapstick aspects had been eliminated. Strip them away and there's an absolutely beautiful story here.

Review copy provided by NetGalley.

Claudia says

This was a nice and sweet read but with some faults and weaknesses

REview to come
