



## Darius: Lord of Pleasures

*Grace Burrowes*

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# **Darius: Lord of Pleasures**

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**Darius: Lord of Pleasures** Grace Burrowes

A story that breaks all the rules...

Darius is a gripping and remarkable tale of desperation, devotion, and redemption from award-winning New York Times and USA Today bestselling author Grace Burrowes. Her gorgeous writing and lush Regency world will stay with you long after you turn the final page...

With his beloved sister tainted by scandal, his widowed brother shattered by grief , and his funds cut off, Darius Lindsey sees no option but to sell himself—body and soul. Until the day he encounters lovely, beguiling Lady Vivian Longstreet, whose tenderness and understanding wrap his soul in a grace he knows he'll never deserve...

## **Darius: Lord of Pleasures Details**

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## From Reader Review Darius: Lord of Pleasures for online ebook

♥?elody says

**3.5 stars**

Started out strong but then lagged very badly half way through. There was a lot more telling than showing. A lot of the vital bits and pieces seemed to trip and fall off the page. The world building also could have been better. Characters are moving around getting to places without any acknowledgment in the dialogue which was very jarring and confusing to follow. And the characters summarizing internally what happened a week before up to what they are doing present time was confusing and choppy and lacked flow of any kind. I kept losing track of whose POV this was coming from when this happened. So odd.

This was my very first Grace Burrowes book, I've heard so much about her writing so I couldn't resist giving this a try. I liked the dark tone and angsty forlorn edge, but the world building and endless glossing over necessary things needs to be way better for me to actually enjoy her storytelling. The overall prose for me was a struggle. The way Burrowes phrases things reads very awkward and hard to understand at some points. I felt like an idiot the number of times I had to re-read parts because they made no sense or read very weird. Maybe I'm just not familiar with this kind of sentence structuring??

He told himself he didn't trust Lucy or Blanche not to harm him, did he allow them to French kiss him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Darius studied his brother, who was drinking tea for a change. "You seem to be a little more the thing. Maybe you needed to put off mourning."

\*\*\*\*\*

He sounded just like John, and Darius saw the hurt that did Vivian.

Everything just read very backwards or the placement of words didn't flow well. And big clunky words I didn't even know existed made me truly feel like a foreigner on a new land. I've never heard of a woman's courses referred to as '*lunation*'. WTH? And *ambit*, *ruminate*, *unprepossessing*, *scintilla* are tres fancy but damn if it wasn't distracting.

Since the author was quick to get through the MC's 'give me a baby' arc I was expecting more build up following it to balance out the very rushed pacing in the first half but no such luck. There is no birthing scene, we don't see much of Darius's tutelage in pleasurable delights, giving Vivian a makeover, dancing, etc. Instead a good 80% we have our leads pretending they are strangers to each other in public and nothing else. It started to get really tiring the 4th time around when they would force introductions on each other. What was the point of this? I just was left wanting more. And speaking of tutelage, how in the world did Vivian lose her virginity in that straddle position without one cry or twinge of pain?? That was the most careless overlooked flaw in a love scene and completely threw me off. Incredibly unrealistic.

I wanted more focus on Darius and Vivian's feelings for each other, not passing thoughts while they go on with their separate day to day lives. Seasons pass in a blink of an eye and these two barely see each other. Darius heartbreakingly misses out on important milestones in Vivian's pregnancy. That bothered me the most. He isn't even there at the birthing and Vivian's shocked reaction to why her husband sent him a letter telling him the baby was born annoyed me to no end. He's the father, of course he would want to know. WTF? I really felt this shift in character portrayal in the second half especially with Vivian, everything that was about discovery, falling in love, and desperate longing just vanished into the background.

At one point I was annoyed and resented the interfering secondary characters, William in particular. Of course the old husband has a kind heart and schemed to play matchmaker, saw that a mile away I just wish so much time wasn't focused on everyone holding their breaths waiting for this man to keel over. I feel bad saying this but I got to the point of 'oh just die already' with the endless droning on where nothing happens. And Vivian's endless gratitude to him, fretting and coddling over while sweet made me lose my patience too. What's the point of telling a story about lovers falling in love when they barely spend time together? The chemistry was certainly there, I found the couple endearingly sweet and charming in the beginning. They both seemed very necessary & vital to each other I just thought it was a waste not to show more of that on the page. A lot of the vital parts of their relationship and growing affection happened entirely off the page, we only got glimpses. And they were lovely glimpses:

"I miss her."

"I miss her in bed," he began, finding his unusual tolerance for pain serving him well. "I miss her over the dinner plates. I miss her out riding, I miss her arguing with me over stupid political questions nobody cares about except the bloody Lords. I miss her teasing John- I miss that a pissing damned lot.

He took another contemplative sip and regarded his companion.

"I miss having somebody, anybody, to talk about John with, and she was so kind."

"She deserves so much better." He was mumbling now, mumbling around the ache that had been in his throat for hours. "She says I deserve better, silly wench. And she smelled lovely, always. How did she do that?"

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I'm hoping this isn't her general style of writing and more of the 'beget an heir' hurried plot that made the writing suffer. I've really wanted to read her Captive series, I just hope I don't run into the same problem.

### **Ella Quinn says**

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Anyone who reads my reviews knows I'm a big fan of Grace Burrowes. Her latest book Darius is no exception. It kept me up until the wee hours of the morning because I couldn't wait to see how it ended. Which I will not tell you. Suffice it to say, Miss Burrowes has taken a tetchy topic and handled it with brilliance.

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## **Wendy says**

Darius: Lord of Pleasures (Lonely Lords, #1) was highly recommended by my favourite reviewers and I'm REALLY glad I listened as the story is an absolute delectable, delicious, feast. Darius is one of those heroes not easily forgotten. My first Grace Burrowes was a few years ago and I didn't enjoy it. I'm so glad I've given her another chance, her quirky, unique style of writing, slightly quaint and old fashioned, takes some getting used to but lends itself beautifully to the period, and once mastered is charming and captivating.

An unusual premise with the outcome fairly obvious from the beginning, however, so expertly executed that it was impossible not to love this beautiful romance. Darius is a handsome, honourable man, forced into destitution by his own Father; he makes a living in the only way he can, by selling his only asset...his rather gorgeous body. The women he whores himself with are depraved, bored, manipulative and cruel and he is forced into acts that deprive him of his pride and self esteem. Darius' self loathing is at it's lowest when he is approached by Lord William Longstreet with an extraordinary proposition, to impregnate his young wife, for a price, one which will solve Darius' monetary problems. Lord Longstreet married Viviane to protect her from the machinations of her stepfather after the death of his beloved wife to whom Vivien had been a companion, having been rescued by that lady, previously from the clutches of her step Father, Thurgood Ainsworth, a slightly ridiculous and dastardly 'gentleman' intent on marrying her off to the highest bidder but also with a rather sinister agenda of his own. All had seemed straightforward until the death, in quick succession of his two heirs. He has no close relatives to inherit his title, fortune and lands, and is reluctant to see it all revert to the crown, he also cares for Vivien and wants to see her future secure.

Between them William and Vivien have compiled a list of likely candidates for the surrogacy of Lord Longstreet's heir of which Darius is at the top. After a very awkward meeting, the two embark on a month long incredibly sensual and loving relationship, the like of which Vivien has never experienced. Obviously they fall in love although it is never acknowledged. Vivien is clearly a virgin, although this is not discussed, and it does not become clear until much later in the story. I like the way Grace Burrowes leaves us guessing, ends a paragraph, and begins another with questions and answers hanging, to be answered later when least expected.

As agreed, Vivien leaves Darius after the end of a month, reasonably sure she is with child and after a sensual and enlightening time for both of them, the parting of the two lovers is a tear jerker, moving and sweet...sniff!...wipes a tear hastily! Her elderly sweet, astute and understanding husband is kind and thoughtful, and it is at this stage, from the comments he makes to Vivien, that it is obvious that he has already chosen Darius as his successor, although she doesn't realise it.

The two meet on occasions as Vivien's pregnancy progresses, Darius shows his kind, caring and utterly principled character, determined to protect Vivien's reputation at all costs. They feel the loss of the lack of closeness a pregnant couple should normally experience and I couldn't help feeling their sorrow, Grace Burrowes certainly knows how to crank up the emotional meter. Darius shows his integrity further by visiting a lawyer and setting up a trust fund for his unborn child. He also manages to extricate himself from the clutches of the two women who have used and paid for his sexual favours albeit with the use of some threats to them. His month with Vivien has given him back his self worth and he becomes the man he should be. His relationship with William Longstreet becomes that of almost a son, certainly it is something Darius has never experienced with his own sire. The two become firm friends, almost co-conspirators...a rather nice touch I think.

The rest of this story is moving, touching and exquisite, Vivien and Darius must have their HEA, they

deserve it but there is much to suffer before it is achieved. I like the fact that GB doesn't fall into the trap of 'will they, won't they'. This scenario always really annoys me in other HR novels. it's simply a case of how and when it will be achieved.

My only real quip is with Grace Burrowes' use of modern terms and Americanism's peppered throughout the story, for instance her use of the word 'fall' instead of autumn is irritating given her obvious attention to detail and her thorough research. Still, unlike other novels in this genre, I can overlook it because of the superb and unusual writing and content. 5 well deserved stars and I am now, most definitely a fan. I need to find out what happens to the many characters introduced for no apparent reason and who, I assume will have stories of their own. I have now started on the Captive Heart trilogy on the recommendation of my favourites and am already thoroughly enjoying them. The list of Grace Burrowes' books is daunting, I have a lot to read and now hopefully, listen to.

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### **Miranda Davis says**

I realize most everybody loved this -- who isn't thrilled by a storyline involving a man whore with a heart of gold? -- but I just didn't.

I loved GB's The Heir, it was fresh, witty, incisive, the plot involving, the H/h well-defined and their actions and intentions consistent with who they were and what they wanted. Best of all, their emotions evolved over time and I understood their growing attachment. This didn't compare to that.

I'm not sure why. It could have to do with it being the third must/want-to-make-a-baby premise I've read in a row, the first being A Lady Awakened, which delineated exquisitely the leading characters, gave them a great deal of depth and presented their conflict with grace, and let their emotions evolve believably in the same needs-an-heir scenario. The second being Silver Linings set in western US, gold rush Colorado, different from ALA but clear, lovable H/h and a romance that evolves despite devastating consequences of one fateful wish expressed.

It could have to do with how long it took me to get a sense of the characters Darius and Vivian. They felt sketchy in the book's first half, merely living up to cliches. She was a lord-and-elderly-stateman's young wife with scruples about trying to give her husband a needed heir; he was the jaded, smooth-talking earl's impoverished second son enterprising enough to make a profession out of arousing women clients, though he draws the line at kissing and sex, until the money's just too good to turn down, natch. His mounting debts and a lucrative offer that promises financial freedom bring Darius and Vivian together for a month of baby making at his Sussex estate at her husband's behest. So he is the seasoned seducer, she is the proper, conflicted wife.

The heroine expresses wry, understandable reservations when Darius asks her how she'd like to proceed: "I'd like to put a sack over my head, stuff cotton wool in my ears, and hum some good old Handel while you do the going on." I liked her from here on.

But after having sex once, jarring over-familiarities came out of nowhere: "[Vivian] was certain she'd never seen that exact smile on Darius' face." (Since when? They've only spent a few days together and are virtual strangers.)

At about the same time, he thinks after sex with her: "...and now Vivian was in his hands, trusting him to get

her a baby and not break her heart in the process.

He could do that. He'd make sure of it. The only real question was whether he'd survive when his own was broken instead."

Wha? They hardly knew each other at this point in the story -- her menses did delay sex for a few days, so they got to know one another a little. Indeed, in a twist of Pretty Woman, he takes her shopping and buys her new clothes (why would she allow him to treat her like a mistress?). This is a man who pleases women professionally, has developed a thick skin, literally, and walled himself off from feeling anything. In the bedroom, he's in 'showing her the ropes' seduction mode (which was hot) one moment, and in the next, he's afraid of being hurt. I could understand him finding her appealing simply because she was nothing like the two harpies he 'serviced.' But when such an important emotion just flops out on the page like that without much precedent, I don't end up taking it to heart. Later on, I would've found his vulnerability moving.

Here's a great line that defined his inaccessibility for me, it appears on Pg. 120: "Why are you so casual about disrobing?" [she asks] "I don't think of it as disrobing." His stockings followed. "I think of it as getting into my livery. The fit is superb."

That defined him beautifully for me, cynical, self-deprecating, controlled, remote, seething inside...."I want you to desire what you see. I want to please you."

But then, the heroine calls him on it because after a little sex, she knows him inside and out (huh?). She started coming into better focus...but still, they've only known each other for a week. And as he also points out to her, it's a business arrangement.

Or it could have been the little things that distracted me. Again, GB's thing of protecting a mystery relative is here (in The Heir, a deaf sister; in Soldier, a bastard daughter; someone's bastard son in this case). And yet again the man-talk of menses (first needlessly and repeatedly in Soldier, here relevant when mentioned, but like an allergen, I had a stronger reaction to the second exposure). The "scooting" characters did start to get to me, too. (That's when I knew I wasn't swept up in the story, when a repeated verb annoyed me as inappropriate in tone.)

So, the being in love before I could understand why and the odd familiarity between strangers left me feeling as though I'd somehow missed important developments in the romance between H/h, even though I was 'present' for all their interactions. I got their chemistry but not the love somehow. Then again, the prospect of a child simply may've trumped all rational scruples and superceded evolving emotions to cause a fundamental shift in perspective. What the hell do I know? I prefer a romance that unfolds, that's all.

For me, it wasn't until after he impregnated her and they had to, of necessity, become strangers, that I felt his longing and loss -- and believed it. And that's when Darius' fierce drive to be a part of Vivian's life -- and to end his previous life -- was understandable and moving. And I felt her ambivalence and desire and sadness. That was the last third or less of the novel. I much prefer A Lady Awakened for the unspooling of the often-visited premise and Sebastian St. Vincent (Kleypas, Lion in WInter) for a very good, bad man redeemed. But I am in the minority, here. If you've enjoyed most or all of GB's books, this will be more of the same.

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### **Lady Wesley says**

I've become a Grace Burrowes fan-girl after reading the entire Windham series, although one of the annoying things in those books was the author's habit of tossing in new characters with little or no

introduction. But, as I pointed out in my review of the series:

What I did not realize originally was that Grace Burrowes had already written something like twenty-four unpublished novels before this one was published as her debut. She's created a whole world out there, people, and you'll never understand who all the players are unless you read all of her books. And even then you won't know because there are more on the way.

Namely, the Lonely Lords series, each one featuring a secondary character from the Windham series.

Darius Lindsey, second son of the Earl of Wilton, is one of those secondary characters, in *The Virtuoso* (Duke's Obsession, #3), as Lord Valentine Windham's friend who helps him restore the run-down estate that Val won in a card game. (And how odd it is that these sons of an earl and a duke are such competent carpenters? Well, we'll let that slide.) Darius is broke because his evil father has cut his allowance. Why does Wilton treat his children so cruelly? No idea. Why does Darius's sister Leah need his protection? No idea. Why is Leah tainted by scandal? No idea. (But fear not, you'll get answers if you read the next book *Nicholas*.)

To keep the wolf at bay, Darius is a sort of man-ho for two ladies with bizarre sexual tastes. He refuses to engage in actual intercourse with them, but allows them to enjoy their peccadilloes. He hates them and himself, but he's desperate to keep up his modest country estate, protect his sister, and support an adorable boy who may, or may not be, his son. Enter Lord William Longstreet, an elderly, highly respected politician married to a much younger lady. He and his late wife had two sons, but one died at Waterloo and the other in a duel. Thus, Longstreet has no heir, and upon his death his estate will revert to the Crown, leaving his wife virtually penniless. After discreet investigation, he has picked Darius as the man he wants to hire to impregnate his wife, and he offers Darius a fortune to take on the job.

Vivian Longstreet is, as Darius later puts it, a "married spinster." She had been the hired companion to the late Lady Longstreet, and after that lady's death, William married her to save her from falling under the dubious protection of her greedy stepfather. She has reluctantly agreed to her husband's plan but has no real expectation that it will work. When she and Darius meet for the first time, though, they awkwardly enjoy one another's company and agree to go forward with the plan.

You know where this is going. Darius and Vivian spend a month at his estate, uneasily at first but then passionately, and she returns to her husband. They don't admit the love between them; they both know that they can never even acknowledge one another in public, and Darius can never be a true father to the child that she is going to have. I love the way the author gradually built up the relationship between Darius and Vivian. We get to see that he is a truly good man, despite his flaws, and deeply protective of those he loves. With Darius's encouragement, Vivian comes out of her cocoon and enjoys herself. In addition to the increasingly passionate sex, he buys her a new wardrobe and gets her out of her drab gowns and severe hairdo. It's a little bit like spending a month with a cross between George Clooney and Tim Gunn. I want to go there.

Okay, I jest, but actually I found this story sweet and charming and deeply affecting. Their parting was truly touching. I didn't cry, but I wanted to. And then when Vivian returns to her husband, he actually comforts her. "It's all right to be infatuated with the man, probably better in fact," adding, "Lindsey is comely, he has a certain dash, and he no doubt charmed you. Some feelings for him were inevitable." What a sweet old bird.

Back in London, Darius uses some of William's money to set up a trust for his unborn child. He decides to drop his two "clients," but they are not inclined to just let him go, so they cause trouble. Vivian's stepfather

and step daughter-in-law also cause trouble. There's some excitement, but Darius knows how to play down and dirty and gladly does so to protect Vivian's good name. In the meantime, Vivian is finding ways to keep "accidentally" running into Darius at various venues around town. In public, he treats her with cold politeness to avoid raising suspicions, but Vivian is hurt nonetheless.

As Vivian's pregnancy progresses, Lord Longstreet's health is deteriorating. I think Lord Longstreet is a sort of secondary hero in this story. He married Vivian to give her protection at a time when he still had two living heirs. Although he's still in love with his dead wife and spends his time reading her old diaries, he always shows Vivian tenderness and respect. It gradually becomes apparent that Lord Longstreet hoped all along for a match between Vivian and Darius, and he goes out of his way to befriend Darius, even naming him godfather to Vivian's child. He treats Darius like a son, and Darius finds in Lord Longstreet the paternalistic affection he had never known from his own father. It's all rather unexpectedly moving.

I have now read all of Grace Burrowes' published novels (although she's turning them out so quickly that's it's hard to keep up). As I've said in other reviews, she has certain authorial habits that drive me to distraction, and yet I keep reading because her characters are so compelling. I found fewer distractions in this book, perhaps because I was so smitten by Darius himself. I suspect that most readers will be smitten as well.

Highly recommended.

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### **Beyond the Squee says**

**This wonderful story is available NOW.**

Back of the book:

*Desperate, penniless, and shunned by his wealthy father, Darius Lindsey begins offering himself secretly to jaded society ladies. He hangs onto his last shreds of honor, but he's losing ground financially each month.*

*That is until the aging Lord William Longstreet makes Darius an offer he can't refuse: get the Lord's pretty young wife-of-convenience, Lady Vivian, pregnant discreetly, and he will earn enough money to never want again. But problems lie ahead when the stunning Vivian captures his heart, and his clients refuse to let him go. Can Darius untangle himself without scandal and offer himself to Vivian heart and soul?*

I loved this. LOVED it. I love Darius. I loved Vivvi. And Vivvi's husband? Lord William Longstreet? Yes, I loved him, too.

Darius is his brother's spare. His father isn't fond of him. Has cut him off from funds and despises him intensely. Dare has expenses that his small manor house and acres just can't support. While we don't find out how it comes about (and I'd rather like to know), Darius offers himself to ladies of the Ton, and right now he is working for two hideous women. He doesn't care about them. But they have deep pockets and his manor house needs a new roof. And he has that young by-blow (not his) to support.

Darius is a good man. He's been forced into this position. But he's still a very good man. Which brings him to the attention of Lord Longstreet and his young wife of convenience, Vivian.

Lord Longstreet needs a legitimate heir. He has this lovely, young wife, but his heart belongs to his deceased first wife, Muriel. They had two sons, who have also passed. William doesn't want his estate to be taken back by the crown, so he makes a list and asks Vivian to choose a young man (discreet, needful of coin, reasonably handsome) to get her with child, to enact baby-making on his wife. Yes, this trope pulled me IN. Which is kind of odd, as I don't like cheating books at all.

So, was this cheating? I truly hate cheating fics, and I loved this. Talking it over in my head, I know that her husband has encouraged this assignation. Darius has agreed to it. Vivian, though scared, agrees also. The only one hurt by this is the crown. And William really doesn't want them to profit by his death and he does want Vivian to be taken care of. He's a wily one, that William. He married Vivian to keep her safe from her step-father. He's EVIL. Gah!

In fact, there are a few evil folk in this book: Darius' current clients, the two harpies; Thurgood, Vivvi's stepfather; William's bastard's wife, Portia. Surprisingly, William's bastard is not a bad guy. Plenty of bad guys to go around, that's for sure.

I was worried, a couple of times, about how this could end with that HEA we all read this type of book for. WORRIED, I tell you!

So, back to the baby-making. Vivian is shy. Darius calls her a Married Spinster. But he's rather enthralled with her. Knowing that at some point she is going to have to face the world without William, he decides that besides the baby making, he's going to bring her out of her spinsterhood. He cajoles her into buying a few new clothes, to stand tall and become the lioness that her child will need. And then he entices her to make babies.

Oh, how he entices her. She's shy, she's enthusiastic, she's enamored of him. And, to his fear, he with her. Yes, there are several baby-making scenes. They are HOT. They are SWEET. They made me fall in love with Darius. And Vivvi didn't stand a chance. She fell for him. Hard. Which was good, because he falls in love with her, too.

This is the point that I started to worry. She's MARRIED. And William is a really great guy; a gentleman to the core. And even though she entered this pact with her eyes open, and with her husband's encouragement, HOW can it work out? There are so many people in line to bring destruction to these two. Yep, I was worried! And I cared. Thank you, Ms. Burrowes, you made me care deeply about these characters.

Now that I've gushed, I will say that there were a few things that I wish had been ironed out a bit. Some things that I thought could have used a bit more explanation. Like why Darius' father hated him. What's the story behind Leah, Dare's sister? But this is still a FIVE BOOKMARK review as those things just couldn't water down the fact that this is a LOVE story. Thankfully, some of the answers to those questions will be in the next book of Lonely Lords' Series. And I've already got **NICHOLAS** on my kindle!

I will be reading this one again and again. And I hope you do, too! I asked my cohorts here at BtS if I could give it a TEN...they laughed at me! I did give it FIVE BOOKMARKS!

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Thank you, NetGalley and Sourcebooks ~ Casablanca, for the opportunity to read *Darius*!

## Caz says

### **A- at AAR so 4.5 stars.**

I have to confess to being a big fan of Grace Burrowes' work. Her writing is sublime and even more importantly, so is her characterization. I've laughed and cried while reading her books; it takes a lot for the written word to reduce me to tears, but she's managed it a few times.

*Darius* is the first in a new series of eight books under the title of *Lonely Lords*. From peeking at the next couple of books in the series, I see that the central characters from each story are related in some way, with a couple of characters from Burrowes' Windham series making cameo appearances.

Darius Lindsey is a 'spare'. The impoverished second son of the Earl of Winslow, he ekes himself out a meagre existence by providing services of an 'intimate' nature to wealthy, bored women in exchange for money. It's clear he takes no real pleasure in his occupation, and that he despises himself for doing it. But having been cast off by his father and feeling unequipped to do anything other than trade on his good looks and charm, he does what he has to do to keep a roof over his head and to protect those he cares about. At the beginning of the story, he is persuaded into employment by Lord William Longstreet who is in need of an heir, having recently lost both his sons. Darius doesn't have sex with the women who employ him – but Longstreet's offer proves more than he can resist: enough money to make Darius financially secure in exchange for impregnating Longstreet's much younger wife.

I'm normally quite wary of this sort of storyline. In the wrong hands, it can turn out to be an excuse for endless sex scenes and of course, in order for the hero and heroine to get their HEA, the elderly husband has to die conveniently or be otherwise put out of the picture.

But this author hasn't let me down yet, so I felt fairly confident that she would be able to make such a contrivance work. I can forgive a hackneyed plot if the author makes me care about the characters, and that, I feel, is Burrowes' greatest strength.

The reasons for Darius' estrangement from his father emerge slowly, but from the outset it's clear that his childhood was not a happy one. There are also references to a past scandal involving one of his sisters (which I imagine will be addressed in the next book) and the fact that Darius is doing the best he can to integrate her back into society and protect her from censure.

Vivian Longstreet is, as Darius terms it, a "married spinster." She had previously been companion to Longstreet's late wife, but after the latter's death, William marries Vivian in order to prevent her being married off for profit by her rapacious stepfather. But with death approaching, he needs to secure her future and in order to do so, comes up with the idea of finding a man to sire a child who he will present to the world as his heir and who will inherit part of his estate and enable Vivian to live independently.

Vivian agrees reluctantly to the plan and together, she and her husband come to the conclusion that Darius is the ideal choice: in need of the money, very discreet and above all, Vivian comes to realize, a man who is fiercely protective of the people he cares about.

Even before their liaison begins, Darius senses danger. Vivian is fragile and lacking in confidence and he knows he needs to take care with her, and not just in the physical sense. But more than that, he recognizes a kindred spirit, someone he could easily come to love but who, for the sake of the child and her reputation,

can never acknowledge him after their time together comes to an end.

Darius and Vivian are to spend a month together, and given the nature of their agreement, things begin awkwardly. But Darius, as well as being handsome, charming and good in bed, is a truly good man. He knows that the longer Vivian is allowed to brood over their situation, the more likely she is to want to back out – so while he can't allow her too much time to come to terms, he sets about putting her at ease with a mixture of consideration and playfulness. Vivian begins to blossom in his care, gaining confidence in her appearance and in her ability to assert herself.

Before the month is out, they have fallen deeply in love even though they don't acknowledge it and know it can never amount to anything. Their relationship is beautifully written, full of tenderness and genuine affection. I particularly liked the scenes where they have breakfast in bed, which were a little glimpse of an informal domesticity in the lives of two people who have never before experienced it. I sometimes think that moments like that are just as intimate as sex scenes – if not more so.

Their month ends, Darius and Vivian have to part and I don't mind admitting that the pages that covered their final night and their subsequent goodbyes brought a lump to my throat.

Vivian returns to her husband, more or less sure that she is expecting a child. Darius attempts to return to his previous life, but he can't – not only are his finances in a better state, Vivian has enabled him to rediscover some of his sense of self-worth and he resolves to tell his two current clients that they're finished. Unfortunately, however it's not that simple. They're not going to give him up that easily, and make threats against his sisters to try to ensure his continued attentions.

There's another spanner in the works, too, in the shape of Vivian's stepfather, who, even though no longer married to her mother, has never removed himself from Vivian's life and still has plans to gain control of her fortune as soon as she is widowed.

If I have a criticism about the story, it's the somewhat melodramatic nature of the villains and their respective plots. On the plus side, these are not allowed to drag on or create a Big Misunderstanding between the hero and heroine. Darius decides on a plan of action and meets underhandedness with underhandedness which, while he is not proud of it, quickly and satisfactorily neutralizes the threats.

I know that Burrowes has been criticized for inaccuracies in historical detail in her novels, and while there were a couple of things here that made me raise my eyebrows (like the scene where Darius takes Vivian to Gunter's and at one point feeds her ice cream!) there was nothing here that truly bothered me.

Because for me, what's important in a romance is that we are shown that relationship developing. We get to know the characters, to understand what attracts them to each other, and watch them fall for each other and overcome whatever obstacles lie in their path. And this is where I think Grace Burrowes excels. Darius and Vivian have both been missing something in their lives – he feels worthless and lives on the edges of society, and she has never lived for herself – and in finding each other, they find themselves as well.

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### Caz says

I reviewed this title at both All About Romance and Romantic Historical Reviews when it first appeared - so the content portion of this review is somewhat truncated. It's one of the earliest books by this author that I

read, and is still one of my favourites, so having an audio version at last is the icing on top of the cake as far as I'm concerned.

Darius Lindsey is the impoverished younger son of an earl who, in order to make ends meet, provides services of an intimate nature to bored, aristocratic women in exchange for money. He is approached by Lord William Longstreet, who offers Darius enough money to make him financially secure if, in return, Darius will spend one month with Longstreet's young wife and do his very best to get her pregnant. Darius is reluctant - he doesn't have intercourse with the women he consorts with, so accepting this particular "commission" will break his carefully preserved rules.

Vivian Longstreet is much younger than her husband, and cares for him deeply. She had been his late wife's companion, and in order to protect Vivian from being married off for profit by her greedy step-father, Longstreet married her. His plan for her to conceive an heir has been mostly put into play in order to ensure her safety and security after his approaching death. Naturally, Vivian is not too happy about the situation, but agrees to it, knowing it will ease William's mind.

Unbeknownst to her, however, he has not just selected a father for her child – in Darius Lindsey, he has selected his replacement.

Not surprisingly, things begin awkwardly and Darius does his best to put Vivian at ease using a mixture of charm and gentle humour. He's gentle and attentive, and Vivian begins to blossom in his company, seeing herself for the first time as an attractive woman; and through her, Darius begins to re-acquire some sense of his own self-worth.

At the end of the month, they have fallen deeply in love, though of course they can't say it, and Vivian returns home, fairly sure that she is expecting a baby. Darius attempts to return to his former life, but he can't stomach it any more and tries to sever ties with the two women who have been employing him most recently. Unfortunately however, they are less than amenable to this, and make threats against Darius' sister, who has already been the subject of one scandal and whose reputation can not bear another.

Also rearing his unwelcome head is Vivian's step-father, who is hoping that once Vivian is widowed, he will be able to marry her to a man of his choice in order to gain control of her fortune.

But they've all reckoned without Darius ruthlessness when it comes to protecting his loved ones, because he doesn't scruple to fight just as dirty as they when he has to.

One of the many things I love about Ms Burrowes' work is the fact that while she cranks up the angst-o-meter to an excruciating pitch, I always know that things are going to work out in the end. There are parts of this story that had me in tears when reading - and did again when listening - but I know I can wallow safely in the angst. Darius and Vivian know that they will have to live as strangers once their month is over for the sake of her reputation and the child, but it's heart-breaking for both of them. Darius can never be a part of his child's life, and the part when Vivian, in late pregnancy, talks of their having been cheated out of all the little things that an expectant couple might do, is incredibly poignant (and one of those tear-jerking moments that Ms Burrowes does so very well).

I loved this book just as much in audio as I did in print. In Roger Hampton, Grace Burrowes has found a narrator whose voice, delivery and emotional engagement are an excellent match for her words. She has a very distinctive writing style and her characters' speech patterns are quite unlike those found in the works of any other author – so finding someone who can utter them without mangling them or sounding self-

conscious is incredibly important. Mr Hampton has done such excellent work on Ms Burrowes' (inexplicably) small number of available audiobooks, that his is now the voice I hear in my head whenever I'm reading one of her books!

His performance in **Darius** is very good indeed, although not completely without flaws. Happily, however, those flaws are generally small and in no way spoiled my enjoyment of the audiobook. He differentiates well between all the principal and secondary characters, and absolutely nails the emotional heart of the story. His interpretation of Darius is spot on – this is a man living on the edge, having to support himself in a manner he hates so much that it has warped his view of himself and brought him to rock-bottom when it comes to a sense of self-esteem. One can hear Darius' world-weariness and his physical tiredness in Mr Hampton's voice, and he makes a clear distinction between the different sides of Darius' character that the heroine is allowed to see – the real one; kind, tender and funny, and the worldly one; flirtatious, brittle and with an underlying bitterness that he barely manages to contain.

I liked the gentle northern accent he gives to Nicholas Haddonfield, and his portrayal of the elderly William Longstreet is very good indeed. I've had occasion to criticise some of his female characterisations in the past, but for the most part, they're all very good, and feel appropriate to the situations and ages of the ladies he is portraying. The one flaw I found is with his performance of Vivian, who begins the story with fairly low-pitched tones (as specified in the text) but which get a little higher as the book progresses. To be honest, it's not something that bothered me excessively, because I was enjoying the story so much – but it's something I noticed and wanted to mention.

Overall, however, Mr Hampton's performance is very good indeed and one I'll certainly be listening to again.

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## Laura says

\*\*Review cross-posted on Smart Bitches Trashy Books\*\*

Ack! This is my first review and I'm coming right out of the gate with a D. I'd like to echo an early RITA Reader Challenge reviewer and state that I have the utmost respect and admiration for authors in general and Grace Burrowes in particular. But this book did not work for me.

I will start with what I did like. Burrowes is a technically outstanding writer. Her prose is always pristine and graceful. It's authoritative, in a way—as a reader, you feel like you're in very capable hands. This book is no exception, though there were a few small editing foibles (notably, one scene in which intercourse seems to morph into a blowjob—complete with “nibbling”—and then back into intercourse mid-sentence).

The other thing I liked, although I don't think it was well executed, was Burrowes' effort to subvert the norm and have the male lead (Darius) sell his body for money. In fact, he sells his body (and his “seed,” to use the appropriate term) to the female lead (Vivian) at the start of their relationship. The two of them then have to navigate feelings of worthlessness on his part and feelings of am-I-more-than-just-a-paycheck-to-him on her part. That's interesting and worthwhile. But there are major problems!

1. Darius has a rule: he does not “swive” the women. Instead, he allows them to gaze upon his beautiful manhood; permits them to bind, hit, and ride him like pony; and performs oral sex on them. First of all, that's

just weird and improbable. Second of all, it strikes me as a copout on Burrowes' part. He's not really selling his body or "betraying" Vivian by actually penetrating these ladies. His dingdong is hers and hers alone. For me, this kind of undoes the bravery and complexity of the male prostitute storyline.

2. The women who use Darius' "services" (Blanche and Lucy) are crazy evil caricatures. They enjoy hurting and humiliating Darius and flaunting their power over him. They are super, super pissed that he won't "swive" them. When Darius tries to end their arrangement, they stalk him all over town, threaten to ruin him and everyone he cares about, and ultimately drug, kidnap, and attempt to sell his beloved sister. Come on, now. Can't we see a well-rounded, sympathetic, non-psychotic female character purchasing sex? Again, it kind of ruins all the progressiveness of the male prostitute storyline if the women who purchase sex are nutsos and the man selling sex seems to escape with his bodily purity intact.

3. More on the theme of points 1 and 2: Vivian herself doesn't actually purchase Darius for sex. Her husband does! It's all his idea. He pays for it, he persuades Vivian to allow it. Therefore, he absolves her of any taint that might be associated with purchasing sex. Again, copout, annoying. Go for it if you're gonna go for it.

Which brings me to my next major problem. Vivian is a doormat. Doormat doormat doormat. Maybe not personality-wise, though her personality is pretty bland. But in terms of the plot, everything happens TO her. This woman couldn't find her way out of a paper bag if there wasn't a man there to help her do it. To start at the beginning, Vivian's husband, William, saves her from her evil stepfather by marrying her. Then, as mentioned, William proposes that Vivian should get pregnant by Darius. Darius proceeds to teach the shy untutored Vivian all about sex (yes! she is a married virgin!). He also at one point informs her that maybe she's feeling upset because of her "menses." And he tells her what changes to expect in her body when she's pregnant (her boobs will be sensitive and she will be more emotional).

Gah! Does anyone else want to punch through the screen upon reading this? I can tell you what my reaction would be if a man I'd just met told me that maybe I was sad because I had my period. And it wouldn't be to passively accept his wisdom and then have sex with him as soon as I'm no longer "untidy." PLEASE, girl, get a brain!

It sort of proceeds like that from there. For a large portion of the book, Vivian is basically just chillin' at her house being pregnant while Darius races around town trying to defeat the evil lady sex-buyers (who, incidentally, end up having no actual bearing on the outcome of the story) and thwart Vivian's villainous stepfather while being the world's best brother, uncle, and friend. Truly, Darius is the most saintly male prostitute you will ever meet. The resolution of the story, needless to say, does not involve much action from Vivian herself.

To add to the problematic portrayal of women, at one point a minor male character (though a character we are supposed to like) fleetingly has "sympathy for men who beat their wives." No! No. Not OK. Don't care if it's a minor character, don't care if he doesn't follow through, don't care if it's supposed to be a joke.

Other peeves:

- Everyone is either a complete saint (Darius, Vivian, William) or an absurd villain (Lucy, Blanche, Portia, Thurgood). Even when the saints do something that could be considered problematic (e.g., performing oral sex on horrible people for money), their motives are pure as the driven snow. The characters all start to bleed into each other and it's really very tedious.
- Nicknames! This is something I've noticed in Burrowes' other books, so I am primed to be irritated. But

why would you give a character one name, if you're just going to call him/her something else? Maybe it would be a charming display of affection if it happened once to one character, but there are SO MANY NICKNAMES. Darius is Dare, Vivian is Viv or Vivvie (uck!), Trenton is Trent, and even the damn stepfather, Thurgood, is Good. Too cute, too confusing.

– Minor characters from other books popping up hither and yon for no reason.

I think that's all. Burrowes is a lovely writer and I have enjoyed her other books. This one, however, drove me nuts!

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### **Shabby Girl ~ aka Lady Victoria says**

[some took place after he'd spent the month with the heroine, so for me, comes a little under the cheating heading. I know, I know, he didn't have a committed relationship with the heroine, but my squirmy heart doesn't distinguish that little detail. I did keep putting the book down and picking it up, rather than a straight read through due to these moments making it

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### **Kathie (katmom) says**

OH  
My  
GOSH...

I am in LOVE with Darius.

IN LOVE...

This fantastic Regency Romance was released on 4/1/2013 and the sequel comes out next month!

*Desperate, penniless, and shunned by his wealthy father, Darius Lindsey begins offering himself secretly to jaded society ladies. He hangs onto his last shreds of honor, but he's losing ground financially each month.*

*That is until the aging Lord William Longstreet makes Darius an offer he can't refuse: get the Lord's pretty young wife-of-convenience, Lady Vivian, pregnant discreetly, and he will earn enough money to never want again. But problems lie ahead when the stunning Vivian captures his heart, and his clients refuse to let him go. Can Darius untangle himself without scandal and offer himself to Vivian heart and soul?*

I loved this. LOVED it. **I love Darius.** I loved Vivvi. And Vivvi's husband? Lord William Longstreet? Yes, I loved him, too.

Darius is his brother's spare. His father isn't fond of him. Has cut him off from funds and despises him intensely. Dare has expenses that his small manor house and acres just can't support. While we don't find out how it comes about (and I'd rather like to know), Darius offers himself to ladies of the Ton, and right now he is working for two hideous women. He doesn't care about them. But they have deep pockets and his manor

house needs a new roof. And he has that young by-blow (not his) to support.

Darius is a good man. He's been forced into this position. But he's still a very good man. Which brings him to the attention of Lord Longstreet and his young wife of convenience, Vivian.

Lord Longstreet needs a legitimate heir. He has this lovely, young wife, but his heart belongs to his deceased first wife, Muriel. They had two sons, who have also passed. William doesn't want his estate to be taken back by the crown, so he makes a list and asks Vivian to choose a young man (discreet, needful of coin, reasonably handsome) to get her with child, to enact baby-making on his wife. Yes, this trope pulled me IN. Which is kind of odd, as I don't like cheating books at all.

So, was this cheating? I truly hate cheating fics, and I loved this. Talking it over in my head, I know that her husband has encouraged this assignation. Darius has agreed to it. Vivian, though scared, agrees also. The only one hurt by this is the crown. And William really doesn't want them to profit by his death and he does want Vivian to be taken care of. He's a wily one, that William. He married Vivian to keep her safe from her step-father. He's EVIL. Gah!

In fact, there are a few evil folk in this book: Darius' current clients, the two harpies; Thurgood, Vivvi's stepfather; William's bastard's wife, Portia. Surprisingly, William's bastard is not a bad guy. Plenty of bad guys to go around, that's for sure.

I was worried, a couple of times, about how this could end with that HEA we all read this type of book for. WORRIED, I tell you!

So, back to the baby-making. Vivian is shy. Darius calls her a Married Spinster. But he's rather enthralled with her. Knowing that at some point she is going to have to face the world without William, he decides that besides the baby making, he's going to bring her out of her spinsterhood. He cajoles her into buying a few new clothes, to stand tall and become the lioness that her child will need. And then he entices her to make babies.

Oh, how he entices her. She's shy, she's enthusiastic, she's enamored of him. And, to his fear, he with her. Yes, there are several baby-making scenes. They are HOT. They are SWEET. They made me fall in love with Darius. And Vivvi didn't stand a chance. She fell for him. Hard. Which was good, because he falls in love with her, too.

This is the point that I started to worry. She's MARRIED. And William is a really great guy; a gentleman to the core. And even though she entered this pact with her eyes open, and with her husband's encouragement, HOW can it work out? There are so many people in line to bring destruction to these two. Yep, I was worried! And I cared. Thank you, Ms. Burrowes, you made me care deeply about these characters.

Now that I've gushed, I will say that there were a few things that I wish had been ironed out a bit. Some things that I thought could have used a bit more explanation. Like why Darius' father hated him. What's the story behind Leah, Dare's sister? But this is still a FIVE BOOKMARK review as those things just couldn't water down the fact that this is a LOVE story. Thankfully, some of the answers to those questions will be in the next book of **Lonely Lords' Series**. And I've already got **NICHOLAS** on my kindle!

Join me in raving about this book and go get yours TODAY! Seriously, loved it!

I will be reading this one again and again.

And I hope you do, too!

I asked my cohorts at Beyond the Squee: Book Reviews if I could give it a TEN...they laughed at me!

\*Thank you, NetGalley and Sourcebooks Casablanca, for the opportunity to read Darius.

This review may also be found at:

Beyond the Squee: Book Reviews

[www.beyondthesquee.com](http://www.beyondthesquee.com)

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### **Carol \*Young at Heart Oldie\* says**

I started reading this book with some trepidation given the story premise, but I was totally captivated by this beautifully crafted and emotionally satisfying tale of love and redemption.

***The time had come to ransom his soul back from hell.***

Ms Burrowes took a risk with a hero who, to put it in his own words, *was crassly bought and paid for, a stud to service a highbred filly, a cicisbeo in the most vulgar, unflattering sense.* But for me that risk definitely paid off because it is Darius' very flaws that make following his journey to regaining his honour and self-respect so much more satisfying. He's a good and noble man at heart:

*...it struck her like a thunderclap that Darius had prostituted himself to provide for John and the collection of castoffs that formed the staff at Averett Hill. There was nothing, nothing Darius would not do to protect his loved ones.*

and truly deserves his happy ending.

**I was a biddable, unpaid nurse-companion in an ugly dress. I am not... I am not the woman I am supposed to be, unless I am with you. I had no courage. I had no fortitude. I had no trust. I was nobody's mother, nobody's lioness, nobody's lover.”**

I adore Vivian. She's kind, honest, intelligent and a genuine lady. I loved watching her blossom into the woman she's meant to be - confident, courageous, passionate and a wonderful mother. Most of all I love her for seeing what a truly wonderful man Darius is.

**He was just a man, she was just a woman, and it would be... just sex.**

One of the highlights of the book is the slow-building romance between Darius and Vivian. It makes their falling in love seem natural and inevitable. There are so many things I love about the relationship - Darius's flirting and teasing, Vivian's delightful innocence, the passion and their overwhelming love for each other.

The secondary characters certainly add depth to the story. There's Vivian's kindly and astute husband, Lord

Longstreet, Thurgood Ainsworthy, Vivian's avaricious step-father and Lady Cowell and Lady Milne (I would hesitate to use the word Lady in connection with them!), those harpies who make Darius's life such a misery. I'm happy to report that both the harpies and Ainsworthy get their just desserts.

I can't end this review without mentioning the scenes with Darius and the baby. They're so moving and heart-warming.

**If you are looking for a story with unforgettable characters and a love story that touches the heart, look no further than this book.**

**VERDICT: FANTASTIC! LOVED IT!**

**RATING: 5/5 Stars**

**SENSUALITY RATING: HOT**

This review is also posted on my blog:

<http://rakesandrascals.wordpress.com/...>

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**Judy & Marianne from Long and Short Reviews says**

Originally posted at: <http://www.longandshortreviews.com/bo...>

Negotiating for the creation of a child, time allotted, price, and after-the-fact requirements, make for page-turning, breathtaking reading. Darius is filled with startling events and clandestine agendas.

A beautiful man, an earl's son no less, selling his 'services' is not the usual setup for a Regency romance. It gives pause, but compelling characters, exceptional plotting, and exquisite writing by Grace Burrowes lured me in and captivated me with a riveting, tangled love story that makes one believe that even the flawed and damaged can find redemption with the right incentive.

Darius Lindsey, in his determination to protect and take care of those he loves, engages in activities abhorrent to him. When a hush-hush proposition that can make him independent comes along, he breaks almost all of his 'rules' to honor his part of the agreement. What he gets in the bargain far surpasses all he ever hoped for. How Ms. Burrowes creates Darius to be sympathetic and understandable makes him come alive. How he copes with extracting himself from his past relationships is amazing. Fighting fire with fire is not easy.

At age twenty-five, Vivian Longstreet, quiet, compassionate, intelligent, and loyal, lives like an old woman tending her old and ailing husband, the Fourth Viscount Longstreet, William, who is good to and protective of Vivian but is still in love with his first wife, Muriel who is dead. William longs to be with Muriel again. But first he is determined to do right for Vivian and his family name.

Lord William Longstreet is a respected, shrewd politician and maneuvers and manipulates to be sure his heir holds on to the family title and properties. He knows his way around London Society and does what needs to be done to assure Vivian's independence from a villainous 'past' step-father, Thurgood Ainsworthy, a

shyster deluxe.

Seeing the metamorphosis of Vivian is like watching the gradual unfolding of a rose. Vivian blooms during the month she is a guest at Darius Lindsey's home in Kent. Under his tutelage, she learns to dress beautifully, learns how to use her 'woman weapons' to get what she wants, and how to protect herself. But most of all she learns the joy, pleasure, and ecstasy of love with Darius who never fails to 'take care' of her. She also learns a sad fact. They must be 'unacquainted' when her sojourn in Kent is over.

Many of the secondary characters do not have the best interests of Darius and Vivian at heart. Blanche Cowell and Lucy Templeton that Darius deals with for money have 'turned mean into a hobby'. How he free himself from their clutches creates some nail-biting moments. Thurgood Ainsworthy and his underhanded schemes or closely rivaled by those of Portia who is the wife of Lord Longstreet's bastard son. Her plans to get her husband legitimized and to become lady of the manor are mind-boggling.

Of course, there are some characters that reach right out and touch the heart like John, Darius' little relative that is in Darius' care. It is not hard to see why Darius will go to any length to protect him. Gracie, Darius' loyal housemaid and the other servants in his home give the reader a close look at Darius' real personality.

Once I started reading this tale of redemption I didn't want to put it down. It nurtures the deep belief that there is hope for all humanity even the 'soiled' bits and pieces of it. And the old saying that there is a little bit of good in the worst of us and a little bit of bad in the best of us (according to the mores of the society we live in) seems so true.

Grace Burrowes, just like in her Moreland series, enchants with love finding its way even if it has to navigate around a multitude of obstacles that get thrown in its path.

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### Tin says

Trouble is spelled D-A-R-I-U-S.

I am a big, big fan of Grace Burrowes, but it was a deliberate choice for me to skip the *Lonely Lords* series when it was released 2013 because I was daunted by the number of books in the series -- 12 in all. While I didn't read them, I bought the books as they were released or when they went on sale. A few weeks ago, I had just finished the *A Year Without a Duke* series, and I needed to follow it up with a good read, and Grace Burrowes has never disappointed me before, so I started reading Darius's book ...

And now I'm in deep. I've actually finished reading **Darius**, and **Nicholas**, and I'm currently reading **Ethan** (book 3). I am really trying to slow down my reading, because it means a greater review backlog for me -- I'm trying to stay away from the *Lonely Lords* by reading cookbooks and magazines, but I am totally and completely enthralled with all of them -- yes, even the ones I haven't read (because I've been reading the excerpts of their books).

So here I am, with Darius's review, so I can continue reading **Ethan** and proceed to **Beckman** -- and, yes, I'll probably binge-read the series this summer.

Darius is a complicated man who is about to enter into a very complicated situation: hired by the dying Lord William Longstreet, Darius must spend time with the viscount's young wife, Lady Vivian, and hope to get her with child in order to secure the Longstreet succession line, and to protect Vivian when she becomes a widow. Paid by discontented housewives to fulfill their sexual desires, Darius isn't a stranger to unusual sexual requests, and Lord Longstreet's offer of money would be enough to help Darius improve his estate, and, maybe, allow him to get out of his questionable choice of occupation. I think Darius expected this arrangement to be similar to his other arrangements, but Vivian's beauty, intelligence, and honesty disarm him.

Vivian is a surprise to both Darius to us, readers -- she's an incredibly strong and pragmatic woman who is a willing, but reluctant participant in her husband's plan. Vivian served as the companion to the first Lady Longstreet, and the viscount married her to protect her from her relatives, who see Vivian as a pawn to be sold off to the highest bidder. Now, she is about to be without her husband's protection, and William Longstreet is taking drastic measures to protect both her, and his family legacy. Vivian is that rare combination of vulnerability and strength -- she needs protection from the evil intentions of her brother, but she is not entirely helpless as well. When she encounters her brother (happens several times in the story), it isn't with fear or trepidation, but wariness. Vivian's love and loyalty to William puts her in a really difficult position: to fulfill her promise to him, she must break her marriage vows to him.

I love the contrast of business and pleasure in this story -- Darius and Vivian both believe they could separate their minds and their hearts, but William, who has lived longer than either of our hero and heroine, has very realistic expectations. William and Vivian both carefully selected Darius from a list of potential candidates, but it was William who did the final interview. Did he go into this arrangement expecting something more between Darius and Vivian? I think so, but he never pushed or manipulated, but allowed things to unfold in its own natural time. I really liked William, who seemed to stand from a seemingly omniscient perspective, and accepted the outcome of his life's choices with such admirable grace and dignity.

What unfolds between Darius and Vivian is both predictable and unpredictable: it begins, as expected, with a lot of hesitation, especially (and understandably) from Vivian -- and Darius is the expert who guides her into this strange new situation. Darius takes charge in the beginning, helping Vivian change her wardrobe, and guiding her to be more confident -- but the relationship starts to slowly equalize as Vivian also teaches Darius about what it means to love and be loved. There is no sizzle and there are no sparks in the beginning, because our heroine really tries her best to maintain her distance from Darius -- but, when the proverbial wall goes down -- this is where it becomes unpredictable: because what happens next isn't something that can be easily defined. It isn't a burning passion, but it isn't cold detachment either. There is just this pull between the two of them: like the moon and the earth -- essential to one another.

Beyond Vivian and Darius, Grace Burrowes explores family dynamics: Darius and his brother Trent, and the rest of the Lindsey clan, William Longstreet and his bastard son, etc. I really love how Burrowes expands her world in small, intimate increments -- Valentine Windham is in this novel, as well as Nicholas Haddonfield. I also love how she expands on the problems and complications that beset her hero and heroine in similarly small and incremental ways. Beyond the problem of the Longstreet succession, Darius must deal with her angry and vengeful clients, who seek to ruin Vivian out of spite. By the later part of the book, there seems to be so many tangled knots -- and Burrowes is never one to just allow the problems to magically disappear, but, instead, allows her characters to use their resources: their intellect, their friends, etc. to figure a way out of their problems.

This book is that rare mix of spellbinding storytelling, strong characters and challenging family drama. I really, really can't wait to read more of the *Lonely Lords*. (Now that I've completed this review, I can read

Ethan's story! ... and write Nicholas's review.)

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### **Lady Wesley says**

Darius -- my favorite Lonely Lord book-- is just as good in audio. Fine job by Roger Hampton (although I do wish his female voice was not quite so falsetto).

My five-star review of the book is here .

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