



Duels and Deception

Cindy Anstey

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Miss Lydia Whitfield, heiress to the family fortune, has her future entirely planned out. She will run the family estate until she marries the man of her late father's choosing, and then she will spend the rest of her days as a devoted wife. Confident in those arrangements, Lydia has tasked her young law clerk, Mr. Robert Newton, to begin drawing up the marriage contracts. Everything is going according to plan.

Until Lydia—and Robert along with her—is kidnapped. Someone is after her fortune and won't hesitate to destroy her reputation to get it. With Robert's help, Lydia strives to keep her family's good name intact and expose whoever is behind the devious plot. But as their investigation delves deeper and their affections for each other grow, Lydia starts to wonder whether her carefully planned future is in fact what she truly wants...

Duels and Deception Details

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Author : Cindy Anstey

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From Reader Review Duels and Deception for online ebook

Hailee (haibooklovers) says

Full review on the blog!

On the rarest of occasions, I'll come across a book that makes me chuckle to myself with the sheer level of charm. And then immediately look up to make sure no one saw. We wouldn't want them to think me soft...I have an image to protect, after all.

Duels and Deception is one of those rare books that I would happily define as adorable. Combine a comedy of manners, some YA regency romance, and a dash of mystery – and you'll have yourself a lovely little book. Right off let it be known that this is a very fast, easy read. If it were a movie, I'd classify it as a period rom-com. You know the type of movie – grab your popcorn and various smuggled candies (because nobody wants to pay \$8 for a handful of candy) and just relax and enjoy yourself.

The book follows Lydia (intelligent young lady with a penchant for being in charge) and Robert (lawyer-in-training and all-round delicious cinnamon roll) as they attempt to solve the puzzle of her kidnapping and deal with the social ramifications. Because Society is one cold-hearted bitch (we know this from reading These Ruthless Deeds).

Is this a fast-paced novel? Is the mystery all that mysterious? The answer to both is a resounding no. But that in no way means that it wasn't enjoyable. I'd have been find had we just followed Robert around; his obvious regard for Lydia was – dare I say it – adorable. The slow-burn romance was just this side of angst and therefore such fun.

Sophie says

I received an Advance Reader Copy from the publisher via NetGalley. This in no way impacted on my view.

Anstey's previous book, Love, Lies, and Spies was one of my favourite books of last year. I adore anything to do with the Regency Era and Anstey completely understood the era and how to create a fantastic plot line. I had high hopes for Duels & Deception, and was not disappointed.

Duels & Deception sees Lydia as the mistress of her own household, but because she is a girl, she doesn't have control over her inheritance. Her incompetent uncle is slowly ruining her home and squandering her wealth for his own gain, and no one will listen to her. Her mother only cares about marrying her off, and her intended is far beneath what Lydia deserves, even if he is off the same rank as her. However, when her lawyer's apprentice comes to visit to check on the estate and her marriage contract, they soon find themselves kidnapped, and thrown into a whole world of intrigue. Someone wants her money, and won't hesitate to ruin her reputation to do so, and Lydia and Robert have to work together in order to protect themselves.

I loved the story from the get go. Yes, parts of the plot was predictable and a tad unbelievable at times, but I still enjoyed every minute. The world was so well written and detailed that I felt as if I was immersed in the world, which was perfect for me.

Lydia was someone who reminded me of my all time favourite heroine, Elizabeth Bennet. She had an edge about her, and chaffed at the restrictions of her time because of her gender. She was more than capable of running her household, but no, she couldn't, because she was a lady, and a whole bunch of incompetent men are obviously more prepared for the job. She had her life planned out, and knew what she needed to do if she wanted to be happy. Obviously, none of this panned out, but I feel like Lydia acted brilliantly, and dealt with her lot with true grit.

Her relationship with Robert was as swoony as I could've wanted. Every interaction they had, there were sparks flying, and though both felt unworthy of one another, they tried everything they could to protect the other, and keep them safe. I loved how Robert appreciated Lydia's brilliance, and didn't look down upon her simply because she was female, but rather cherished her capabilities as someone should.

The revelation of who was behind the blackmailing wasn't completely out of the blue, but I did enjoy how Anstey led up to this point, and how much action there was in the book. I can't wait to see what Anstey publishes next, she has definitely gone on my must buy list!

Lonna | FLYL?F says

IN WHICH I was slowly smitten...

Duels and Deception, by Cindy Anstey, is not something I would usually pick up, but I found myself enjoying this lighthearted, romantic comedy of the subtle exploration of courtship and unexpected love.

Beautiful Lydia Whitfield, heiress to the family fortune, has her entire future planned out—including whom she will marry. Dashing Robert Newton, law clerk to the Whitfield family, has been tasked to draw up her marriage contracts. Lydia's carefully laid plans soon unravel when she is kidnapped—and Robert along with her. The unexpected turn of events lead to consequences that she never expected, least of all, her change of heart.

Lydia and Robert are easy to like characters. I enjoyed their imperfection and quirkiness, which adds to their charm. While I found Lydia too punctual and practical, I appreciated how Robert softens her, and allows me to see her through his lens—beautiful, kind, and clever. Their eloquent dialect highlights the great civility and manner of courtship in this era. The indirect expressions of their intentions were hilarious, fun, and flirtatious, and effortlessly capture their uncertain and growing fondness.

As for the mystery behind Lydia's kidnappers, I thought it was predictable and offers an earnest attempt in the way of suspense. I never felt the urgency in finding the perpetrators nor did I feel that Lydia was ever in any imminent danger during or after her escape. Though, I liked how Ms. Anstey used the kidnapping to nicely develop Robert's chivalrous and heroic traits.

Duels and Deception is a Regency romance that was pleasant to read with some predictable twists that manage to resolve itself with ease. I wasn't as drawn into the story as I'd hope. But I loved that it was a gentle reminder that sometimes love happens in the most unexpected of places and that life happens when we're busy planning.

{Thank you author and publisher for kindly giving me this book free of charge, which does not influence my review.}

Stacee says

I loved Cindy's other book, so I was pretty excited to read this one, even though I had no idea what it was about.

I loved Lydia. She's head strong and stands up for herself and looks out for her friends. Robert is a good man and a hard worker and the two of them together was delightful.

The plot was amusing and I was engaged the entire time. I enjoyed the aspect of not trusting anyone and was surprised at who was behind everything.

Overall, it was a quick and fun read. The only downfall was that I wanted 10000% more kissing.

Huge thanks to Swoon Reads for providing the arc free of charge

Brittney ~ Reverie and Ink says

This book was totally cute. I'm realizing more and more how much I'm missing out on by not incorporating more regency romance into my diet.

I think what I loved most were the array of personalities and the humor, though I'm a huge sucker for this time period. I always crack up on how scandalous things like "escorting a lady" or "showing a bit of ankle" were back then.

The first half of the story was really fun. Lydia meets Robert in the first few pages - Lydia being a wealthy land owner and Robert being a lawyer on his way to her place to talk about the estate. Lydia is headstrong and intelligent, and the others that were set to help her manage her estate push back at her constantly. Hence, Robert comes in to take a look at what is really going on and to address any legal matters. Robert immediately finds himself in awe over Lydia and the two have instant chemistry in my opinion. He constantly is trying to make excuses to be around her.

Anyway, not long after they meet, Lydia gets kidnapped along with Robert. That was probably my favorite bit - especially the way it was told.. I was laughing so much. Blah blah blah happens (I don't want to spoil) and then they escape. The description of the book makes it sound like the whole kidnapping ordeal is most of the book, but be warned, that isn't the case. That bit is over really quickly.

My biggest complaint is that the story moved a bit slow in the middle and up until the end. It wasn't exactly dull, I think I just was expecting a bit more action (hence the title). But things did finally pick back up and I looooved the ending! (Even though I guessed who was guilty right off the bat.)

The best part was getting to read from both Lydia and Robert's POVS. I loved being in Robert's head.. he was so sweet and funny and just adored Lydia to pieces. He kept scolding himself for how much he kept thinking about her and my heart just swooned.

Claire says

Cute, romantic and quirky, Duels and Deception is an excellent addition to Cindy Anstey's roster of published works. Our MCs, Lydia and Robert, are sweet and engaging, the story quick and lovely. The witty dialogue will keep you laughing, the romance will keep you reading. If you enjoyed Love, Lies and Spies, you'll love Duels and Deception.

Cathy says

This was a hoot. The author perfectly captures the style of Jane Austen down to the chapter summaries ('In which a carriage should not have been ordered and an apology has unseen consequences'), the period phrases (such as 'doing it up too brown' to mean doing something well) and the sly wit and humour:

'With a gasp, Lydia sat up in a dizzy stupor and came perilously close to issuing a most undignified scream. Had her training at Miss Melvina's Finishing School for Young Ladies been anything but exemplary, she might have done so...'

Lydia is a plucky and resourceful heroine and Robert an able and likeable hero. Together they seek to find out who is behind the abduction of Lydia and the attempt to ruin her reputation. For as any fan of Jane Austen knows, a lady's reputation must be maintained at all costs:

'A ruined reputation would affect the entire household. Society would look askance at all the ladies of Roseberry should news of Lydia's disappearance be made known. Worthy marriage prospects for Elaine, Ivy and Tessa would vanish on the strength of Lydia's immoral influence.'

The book has a cast of characters worthy of Jane Austen including scatty mama and unlucky in love friend. So if you want reticules, spencers and curricles and a Regency romp involving bonnets, butlers, duels at dawn, light-hearted intrigue, tender romance, interspersed with tea in the drawing room, then this is the book for you.

Well done to the author for this accomplished pastiche and respectful homage to her literary heroine, Jane Austen. Although it is categorised as Young Adult, I think it would make a fun, light read for readers of any age.

I received an advance reader copy courtesy of the author and publishers, Swoon Reads, in return for an honest review.

To read this and reviews of other great books, visit my blog: <https://whatcathyreadnext.wordpress.com/>

Jen (The Starry-Eyed Revue) says

An ARC of this title was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review. My thoughts are my own. This review can also be found at The Starry-Eyed Revue.

Well, this book was utterly charming. I read a lot of *adult* historical fiction novels, and I usually love when the characters flout societal norms for a risqué tête-à-tête...or two. But in this case, I was happy to see the young gentleman acting so gallantly and in defense of the main character's reputation.

It's difficult to imagine how hard it was in those days to maintain one's integrity and always act accordingly, especially compared with society today. But even so, Miss Lydia Whitfield stands apart as a headstrong and capable woman of means. She always endeavors to maintain a modicum of decorum, but she also has a knack for making things happen in just the manner she planned. Until someone takes matters into their own hands and makes things happen *to* Lydia.

I greatly enjoyed the element of mystery to this story, though I did figure out the gist of it pretty early on in the story. And I loved that Mr. Robert Newton made it his mission to discover the truth behind the abduction, going above and beyond his duties as Lydia's solicitor. They were so utterly guileless in their affection for each other and it was completely endearing but also totally frustrating at times because **I just wanted so badly for them to kiss already. =)**

On a side note, I initially thought this book was a sequel of sorts to *Love, Lies and Spies*, but it is a completely separate story. Both books can be read on their own in whatever order you choose. But you should definitely read both if you're a fan of wholesome, clean fun by way of historical fiction. *Duels and Deception* was adorable, quirky, and just plain delightful, and I can't wait to read more from Cindy Anstey.

GIF it to me straight:

Danya says

This review and others can be found on my blog, Fine Print.

Charming and sweet, Cindy Anstey's DUELS AND DECEPTIONS is an outrageously clever YA historical fiction that's perfect for fans of slow burn romance and whip-smart dialogue. I liked it so much that the second I finished reading, I grabbed a copy of Anstey's first book; she's an auto-buy author for me now!

Miss Lydia Whitfield is an heiress unlike most her age: she cares more for the productivity of her estate and its crops than she does for Society or the marriage market. In fact, the unsentimental girl has willingly agreed to marry a man that even she admits is a buffoon to ensure her family's position and on-going security. Even if a certain handsome law clerk, one Mr. Robert Newton, is driving her to distraction whilst drawing up the marriage papers. Doesn't he realize she's trying to be noble and self-sacrificing? But soon Lydia finds that try as she might, she can't control everything around her...least of all her heart.

Everything about DUELS AND DECEPTIONS is delightful, and I found myself smiling the entire time I was reading the book – which was in one sitting, something I rarely do these days. I was particularly impressed by Anstey’s ability to breathe new life into standard romance tropes, such as the classic “kidnapped and forced to spend time together in close proximity.” All my romance readers out there know exactly what I’m talking about. There’s mischief and plotting aplenty in this one, with someone plotting to ruin the Whitfield family name – and Lydia’s reputation – in one fell swoop. Who’s behind it all? Is it Lydia’s horrible uncle? Is it her jealous cousin? Is it someone altogether different? The only way to figure it out is if Robert and Lydia spend more time together sleuthing, obviously. The two of them trying to come up with excuses to call upon one another was absolutely adorable.

Romance isn’t the only charming thing about DUELS AND DECEPTIONS, though: there’s also great representation of female friendships and family relationships aplenty. One of my favourite scenes in the book is one in which Lydia and her two best friends save their best gossip and chatter until their male companion zones out and falls asleep. So funny! The many Whitfield family dinner scenes were also well done, bringing to life the atmosphere of a strained, uncomfortable meal that somehow has a strong sense of camaraderie throughout it all. I also loved the relationship between Lydia and her mom, who starts as a Mrs. Bennet-like character riddled with “nerves” but becomes more complex throughout the novel.

Anstey has an eye for detail, bringing historical accuracy to everything from a dinner party with unexpected guests to taking in the waters in Bath during the rainy season. A lot of research clearly went into writing DUELS AND DECEPTION, and I appreciated that social graces, fashion, and even (im)proper duelling laws were all observed. Aside from a few moments where character’s quips felt just a hair too modern, there weren’t any inaccuracies or anachronisms that I could spot. And those moments were so funny that I forgave them almost instantly. Fair play to you, Cindy Anstey!

Whether you’re a diehard fan of historical romance or you’re looking to try something new and freshen up your genre mix, DUELS AND DECEPTIONS is a charming read that’s guaranteed to leave you smiling.

Miranda (MrsLeif's Two Fangs About It) says

Duels and Deception was SO FREAKING CUTE. I constantly had a smile on my face while I was reading this book. This book had action, mystery, romance, humor, and so much more.

The two main characters of this book, Robert and Lydia, were adorable. I loved them as a couple and as individual characters. Robert was a cutie pie who was kind and dedicated. I found myself falling in love with him from the first chapter. Lydia was hilarious with her headstrong personality. I enjoyed watching her stand up for herself and use her quick wit. I was so thankful that the author included both of their POVs because I felt like that gave me a chance to really connect and love both of the characters.

As a couple, Robert and Lydia made me swoon and squeal with delight so many times. They had great chemistry and banter. I started shipping them from their first interaction. They were just so cute and adorable together! I could go on forever about how much I adore them as a couple. I WANT MORE BOOKS ABOUT THEM, PLEASE. I WANT TO SEE THEM BE PRECIOUS TOGETHER FOREVER.

I thought the plot of this book was extremely entertaining and engaging. I was hoping for a little more action in the middle of the book, but I wasn’t bored while reading this book. I thought the book would have been a 5 star for me if it would have had a little more action in it. However, this was still an addictive book even

without A TON of action.

If you are looking for a historical YA with an adorable romance and plenty of humor, then I definitely would recommend picking up this book!

4 / 5 Fangs

***This ebook was given to me in exchange for an honest review. ***

MrsLeif's Two Fangs About It

Facebook

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Eryn says

2.5

Well, this was quite dull - and beyond *predictable*. No thank you.

Okay, so I won't say I liked this book from the beginning - because I didn't. Frankly, I found it boring from the first chapter, however, because I pre-ordered it, I was *determined* to enjoy it Unfortunately, I couldn't really do that.

First of all, Lydia is not your typical 19th century lady - she's strong and snarky - which is fine....if it's done well. To me, she just came off as an annoying character when she tried to be funny, and a boring one when she acted normal. There was no "middle ground" with her. Furthermore, we have Robert - who was infinitely better than Lydia - and yet, still so *monotonous* with everything he did and said.

The main reason I gave this novel 2.5 stars is because *yes*, there were decent parts that made me smile, and because *yes*, I finished it rather quickly, so it couldn't have been *too* horrible.

Either way, it's a shame. I was really looking forward to this novel. It sounded like an easy and harmless read that I would fly through ... Only for it to, regrettably, turn into a novel that I dreaded picking up, every day.

Kelly says

Oh what a wonderful read! I loved Cindy Anstey's first book, LOVE, LIES AND SPIES and read it when it was first up on Swoon Reads. I am so thrilled to have snuck an early look at the equally delightful, wonderfully unique Duels and Deception.

I didn't think she could top LL&S, but I may even like our hero and heroine more this time around. It's too close to really say, but I so enjoyed our pragmatic duo, with their love of "precise" arrivals. I highly recommend picking this up next year!

mith says

you can read this review [HERE](#) as well!

Last year, when I read Anstey's debut, *Love, Lies & Spies*, I was both charmed and hooked. The adorable little historical rom-com was just what I need and had me staying up on a school night to finish it. So when it came to this novel, I was beyond excited!

The thing is... it didn't quite feel the same? I mean, I didn't expect it to be because it was about a different cast of characters. Still, though, once I started this book, it had a similar feel to *Love, Lies & Spies*, and yet...

Siiiiigh. Nevertheless, *Duels & Deception* was a load of fun. Accurate or not, Anstey knows how to enchant readers with adorable hints of romance and lots of witty commentary. Her characters are fun and it makes for an entertaining read. *Duels & Deception* was all of that: cute, slow-burn romance, quirky characters, and also an interesting mystery!

I have to say that the romance was my favourite part of the novel! I loved both parties, Robert and Lydia. From the get go, you could tell they were attracted to each other and it was sort of funny how they kept either avoiding or pushing those feelings away. I appreciated that Anstey had them start off as friends and slowly grow to more as they spent more time together. I also liked how their conversations were easy and fun, full of banter and provided a lot of comedic relief.

Yet... as much as I appreciate that, a lot of the time, the dialogue felt... very flat. Dull. It's hard to say but I just couldn't really feel it? Some of the long winded conversations just didn't work out for me and it was the main reason I couldn't really love this novel as much as I wanted to.

Anyway. I really did like Lydia. Though she was a bit overbearing, trying to control nearly every aspect she could manage--her estate, her marriage--seeing her fall for Robert was really nice to see. It definitely went against her plans so the way she grew as a character was quite amazing. I also loved her friendship with her best friend, Cora. Lydia's friendship helped Cora through a hard time and it was great seeing them interact.

Robert was also quite charming! He was witty and very transparent with his feelings and I thought it was so endearing. He has his own problems on the side, especially with a friend, and I loved how dedicated he was to helping him.

Now, the mystery. I won't lie, I didn't expect much from it. It was well plotted though, but fairly easy to figure out who was behind it early on. Quick run down: Lydia and Robert, because he tried to save her, were kidnapped. They managed to escape but something didn't feel right about it. Despite that though, someone was holding what happened that night over Lydia's head as blackmail. Whenever that was directly mentioned, I kind of wished I didn't know who was behind it. This really doesn't affect my opinion of the book, but y'know. Small things.

Overall, I was a bit disappointed by this novel, but I'm still glad I got to read it! Despite my misgivings, the book still entertained me. 3.5 stars!

Rebekah says

Anyone who like the Jane Austen era or type books will need to pick this book us! With everything fun and awesome with that era of manners and traditions, it makes for a perfect setting for a fun, cute story.

Here we have our main female character Miss Lydia Whitfield who is running her family's estate, she is smart and not in the least bit a damsel in distressed. She is engaged to a Lord. But, what's that got to do with anything, right? HA! Her uncle and land agent however, think otherwise. I really liked Lydia, she's strong, independent (especially for the 19th century) and knows how to have a backbone and stand up for herself.

In walks Mr. Robert Newton the law clerk having to visit the estate after Lydia's uncle wrote to him about her decisions running the estate. What he finds instead is Lydia and is fascinated by her. I liked Robert A LOT, he was good, kind and a hard worker.

So when Robert returns to the city to help a friend, he is kidnapped and it just so happens that Lydia gets kidnapped too when she comes to conduct some business! *gasp* Then Lydia enlists several of her friends to help her so her reputation isn't ruined and rumors destroy her. It was so fun to read the wit between characters and the fun lightness of it all.

I really enjoyed the interactions between Robert and Lydia it was so fun and even though the story was a bit predictable it was still a fun read.

The romance was a bit fast for me but that is purely personal preference but still cute.

Overall it a such cute read and I would recommend this to anyone looking for a cute clean regency romance!

Sexual Content: mild

Language: mild/none

Violence: mild

Drugs/Alcohol: mild

Alyssa says

4.5 stars.

THIS BOOK WAS PERFECT AND I AM IN LOVE. <3333333

Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog

Duels and Deception by Cindy Anstey

Publisher: Swoon Reads

Publication Date: April 11, 2017

Rating: 4 stars

Source: ARC sent by the publisher

Summary (from Goodreads):

Miss Lydia Whitfield, heiress to the family fortune, has her future entirely planned out. She will run the family estate until she marries the man of her late father's choosing, and then she will spend the rest of her days as a devoted wife. Confident in those arrangements, Lydia has tasked her young law clerk, Mr. Robert Newton, to begin drawing up the marriage contracts. Everything is going according to plan.

Until Lydia—and Robert along with her—is kidnapped. Someone is after her fortune and won't hesitate to destroy her reputation to get it. With Robert's help, Lydia strives to keep her family's good name intact and expose whoever is behind the devious plot. But as their investigation delves deeper and their affections for each other grow, Lydia starts to wonder whether her carefully planned future is in fact what she truly wants...

What I Liked:

It is no secret that I adore adult historical romance novels. Tessa Dare, Elizabeth Hoyt, Caroline Linden, Katharine Ashe... you name it, I've probably read it or heard of it, one of the two. Historical fiction set in the 1800s isn't super common in YA fiction, especially since when there is a YA novel set in the 1800s, it's usually of a story with paranormal or steampunk aspects - basically, not a purely historical fiction novel. Cindy Anstey's books are exceptional: they are YA historical fiction novels that anyone who loves adult historical romance will love.

Duels and Deception is a standalone novel, not related to Love, Lies and Spies in any sense (not a companion novel, not a sequel). It begins with Miss Lydia Whitfield meeting Mr. Robert Newton for the first time, in which Robert comes to Roseberry Hall (Lydia's home) to discuss important legal matters with Lydia and her uncle. Robert is the apprentice of the Whitfield's solicitor, Mr. Lynch. Lydia and Robert discuss mundane things like replacing the estate manager, and figuring out what to do about Lydia's greedy uncle... oh, and drawing up Lydia's marriage contract. Lydia has always known that she won't marry for love, and marrying her equally reluctant neighbor, Lord Aldershot, will suffice. So, the marriage contract is drafted. But while in town, Lydia and Robert are kidnapped, and only barely escape. And then someone starts threatening Lydia. Someone is trying to ruin Robert and extort a lot of money from Lydia - and they must find out who, before irreparable damage is done.

I am seriously in love with this book! I loved Love, Lies and Spies, which had been my favorite Swoon Reads book to date. Has anyone else been disappointed by the books published by Swoon Reads? They are hit-or-miss for me, mostly miss. But Cindy Anstey's books give me hope. Maybe it's because I love adult historical romance so much, maybe it's because her books have such swoony and undiluted romances, but Anstey's books are easily my favorite of the Swoon Reads line, and the best I've read by far.

Lydia is such a lovely young lady. She is clever and kind and selfless. Perhaps in the beginning she comes across as too selfless and agreeable - she puts her family first in everything, and puts up with so much. She stands to inherit everything when she comes of age (which is shortly, since she turns 18 soon), or marries. Her uncle, aunt, and two cousins live with her, since her father died. So she lives with them, her mother, and her sister, and she gives in to a lot of their crap, Lydia is so sweet and honestly a better person than I'd be. Family is so important but sometimes, family needs to be put in their place. I loved seeing the development of this character - Lydia becomes more vocal as the book goes on. In many ways, she was assertive to begin with - she is a bit of a control freak, which is why she is arranging her own marriage and drawing up the paperwork with Robert.

Robert! I love Robert. This book is writing in third-person limited POV, switching between Lydia and Robert. So Robert is equally as important in this story, as it is shared between him and Lydia. Robert is a

new book boyfriend for sure! He is intelligent and hardworking and such a sweetheart. He's a gentleman to a fault, and always looks out for Lydia in a protective, loyal, sweet way. He's not an overly aggressive alpha type, but he is commanding and authoritative in a distinct way. He is an apprentice to become a lawyer, but he's also the third son of a nobleman (earl, I think?). Basically he is a good man and I want one of him! I'll take the excellent manners and kind but protective disposition any day.

The world-building is so flawlessly written. At no point did I feel like I was reading anything but an 1800s England story. The towns, the peerage, the mode of dress, the language/phrases, the customs and norms of society... Anstey has really done her research, because this world was created so well and so unshakably. I usually read and seek out anachronisms in historical fiction novels, because they're pretty common if you really look. But with this book, I'm not sure I found any! Or perhaps I was so captivated that I missed any.

I loved the light, fun tone of the book, with the sense of adventure, even with the terrible kidnapping and the harm that came to Robert and Lydia (Robert especially). The overall tone of the book was incredibly lighthearted and warm, which is so refreshing. YA books can be so grim, you know? This book was fun, and incredibly enjoyable. I was hooked from start to finish.

The romance made my heart so happy! I finished the book with a serious case of the warm and fuzzies. Yes, it might seem like there might be some sort of love triangle or something, with Lydia drawing up a marriage contract for her and Aldershot. But they're not engaged, and Aldershot is enamored with someone else, and Lydia doesn't care for him - she sees marrying him as duty. When she meets Robert, this changes, and the more time she spends with him, the more seriously she considers not marrying to preserve family honor and such. Trust me, there is no love triangle.

The romance between Robert and Lydia is so adorable and swoony. Once they meet, you can clearly see how much the two of them want to be in the other's company. Eventually it gets to the point in which they are always thinking about each other, which is so cute. There are so many swoony moments in this book, even though there isn't a ton of actually touching going on (I mean it's 1800s England, what do you expect). I loved watching these two fall for each.

And I loved the ending! It's perfect! You might wonder how there could be some sort of ending, with Lydia being a rich heiress, and Robert being an apprentice (though he is the third son of an earl - I think it's an earl). But the author pulls it off really nicely. The ending is excellent and the whole story is wonderful - trust me!

What I Did Not Like:

I don't really have any dislikes! Maybe more kisses? Every book needs more kisses...

Would I Recommend It:

I highly recommend this book especially if you love adult historical romance! It's a very "clean" version of an adult historical romance novel, like Tessa Dare's or Elizabeth Hoyt's. And with the wonderful characters and swoony romance, I think any YA reader would enjoy this book.

Rating:

4.5 stars. I'm trying to decide if I want to round up or down, so I'm going with down for now! This book and Anstey's debut novel, *Love, Lies and Spies*, are so brilliant, and probably Swoon Reads's best books (in my

opinion). I really hope Anstey writes more YA historical fiction for Swoon Reads, because I am impressive and dying for more!
