



Kiss Me, Annabel

Eloisa James

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The rules of marriage . . . according to Miss Annabel Essex

A husband must be:

Rich.

Make that very rich. She's had enough of leaky roofs and thread-worn clothing.

English.

London is the center of the civilized world, and Annabel has a passion for silk and hot water.

Amiable.

Good-looking would be nice, but not necessary. Same for intelligent.

Isn't she lucky? She's found just the man! And her chosen spouse is nothing like the impoverished Scottish Earl of Ardmore, who has nothing but his gorgeous eyes, his brain—and his kisses—to recommend him.

So what cruel twist of fate put her in a carriage on her way to Scotland with just that impoverished earl and all the world thinking they're man and wife? Sleeping in the same bed? Not to mention the game of words started by the earl—in which the prize is a kiss. And the forfeit . . .

Well. They *are* almost married, after all!

Kiss Me, Annabel Details

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From Reader Review Kiss Me, Annabel for online ebook

Rose May says

Note: This review, and all my reviews, comes from my blog - Romantic Rose's Bookshelf (<http://romantic-rosesblog.blogspot.com>)

Book 2 in the Essex Sister series

This book had a lot of interesting, unusual elements that I thought made it a very enjoyable read. First, Annabel Essex (our heroine) is not one of those spinsterish heroines waiting for true love, totally uninterested in money or wealth. Nor is she a missish young thing, with ideas of love at first sight in her head. No, Annabel wants to get married for financial security. I thought this was very practical, and I liked that James made her such a loveable character even as she held out for the dough. I mean really, it shows Annabel's intelligence. A woman in a world where it's impossible to make her own money has every right to make financial security higher on her list than love. It's hard to love if you're dying of frostbite or malnutrition. I thought her sensible, pragmatic, and impressive. Some people were annoyed with her 'greed' but I was glad James gave us a female character so unique from others of the genre.

Another deviation from the norm - Ewan Poley, Scottish Earl of Ardmore, our hero. He's thoughtful, sensitive, and very, VERY sweet. Not at all an Alpha, in my opinion - and I liked his laid-back type-B personality. I also liked his attitude towards marriage – it was humorous. He wasn't looking for the perfect little miss to run his home like many of our aristocratic heroes, nor was he holding out on marriage like many of our rakish heroes. He was delightfully different. I was afraid, when souls and religion was first brought up by him, this would turn into a religious songfest (i.e. God gave us to one another. Let us worship him as one. May our souls mingle in this kiss. MUH!). Happily, it didn't. Ewan was gracious, protective (but not in a fierce way unless absolutely and completely necessary - no pissing fights for him!), and very kind. I liked him a lot, even when he got a bit antsy partway through the book and had a fight with Annabel. Even that was cute. If he wasn't so lovely, it really would've been annoying. He was not, however, a Saint. I was worried about that, until the peasant scene came along and stripped him of his saintly title. Well, bee stings on the ass do that to a person, I suppose.

The plot revolves around the two first meeting, with her subsequent denial of his impromptu proposal. No love at first sight here! Then, a not-so-scandalous scandal occurs, and Ewan and Annabel are forced to wed to avoid her ruination in the eyes of society. There was a robbery, that scandal, a few days staying as peasants, a funny gramma, an attempted tar and feathering (maybe a little less dramatic than that), a sad mad woman, and some cheating at cards. It was cute, light-hearted plot fun. It was fast-paced and a good read, though a little too slow through the peasant scenes. The secondary characters, while they were around (most of the book, Ewan and Annabel were alone in a carriage or in a shack together, so there were only a few secondary characters), were alright. I felt we didn't really get to know any of them, which made the story seem a little lonely, but it was still good. Imogen, Annabel's older, very self-centered sister, inspired my pity and my annoyance. I'm sure most readers feel the same way.

The romantic plot was absolutely adorable as the two grow on each other. Through kisses and questions their love for each other grows exponentially, and it's so delightful to watch. I didn't quite understand, however, why there were so many assurances needed by Annabel at the end of the story and that annoyed me a little. But most of the romance was light kissing, with some deeper emotion thrown in. The romance revolves around their honesty with each other, which can also be considered unique for a historical romance where

deceptions and lies of omission abound. If you like honest historical happenings, you should also check out Emma Wildes My Lord Scandal (review here). Overall, some good characters and some sweet, light-hearted fun. Nothing too earth-shattering or deep, but a great story nonetheless.

“Sexy”ness rating: There was a LOT of kissing. Only one sex scene, if I recall, but a LOT of kissing. So many kinds...

Overall rating: B+

Bottom Line: An adorable book with the sweetest hero I’ve ever met and a nice, yet sassy, heroine who knows what she thinks she wants – and is definitely ready to go all out to get it.

Melindam says

I enjoyed this installment, though not as much as the first one. I loved both Annabel and Ewan up to the point where the author sacrificed their totally credible, acceptable and enjoyable characters to some idiotic plot device & made them act like idiots as well. A great pity.

Still very much hate Imogen, though. :)

Jessica's Totally Over The Top Book Obsession says

I enjoyed Annabel and Ewan's book more than the first book. I liked that Annabel had flaws but was very likable and relatable. Ewan was sexy and Scottish. I thought it was sweet how they fell in love and I really enjoyed Ewan's family. I loved that they had this cute kissing game and that they were so honest with each other from the start. I still hate Imogen in this book but I do hate her a little less. I still wonder how Eloisa James is going to redeem Imogen.

Lauren says

Kiss Me, Annabel

3 Stars

Annabel Essex ideas has very definite ideas about who her husband should be - rich, amiable and above all, English. So, what is she doing in a coach on her way to be married to an impoverished, argumentative and most assuredly Scottish Earl!

Eloisa James is a wonderful writer. Her attention to detail is exquisite, her stories are full of potential and her characters are engaging. So why am I having such a difficult time with this series?

The romance in this one is alright - nothing really earth shattering. Annabel comes across as very mercenary at first, but she does grow on you and is quite likable by the end. Ewan is a fantastic hero - intelligent, sensitive and honorable. My one issue with him is his focus on religion. If there is one thing I hate, it is being preached to.

Ewan and Annabel have great chemistry and fun banter. They have some kind of weird argument about halfway through, and I still have no idea what the heck they were fighting about. This puts a bit of a pall on their romance.

The biggest problem with the book is James's tendency to spend an excessive amount of time developing secondary characters and plot lines that will obviously appear in later installments. This causes the story to drag in places.

The next story is Imogen's and all I can say right now is that I despise her character. She is whinny and obnoxious. Her hero, Rafe, will either have to sober up dramatically or sink deeper into his cups if he is to deal with her. Only time will tell.

Kate says

I cannot rave enough about this book. It didn't make me cry, but it did make me laugh out loud and grin like a fool, which is just as good! Amongst my favorite things in this novel:

*Ewan (aka MacHottie) is, unlike so many heroes, fairly ignorant of women in the bedroom.

*Annabel starts by convincing herself she will NOT be a grouchy wife, and because of that willingness to be friendly succumbs quite easily to MacHottie's charms. They fall so gradually, and most of the time with such joy, that I was grinning like a fool the whole time.

*MacHottie... not enough well-written Scotsmen in the genre. He is delightful and refreshingly human, and has a great sense of humor.

*Eloisa writes so cleverly. She weaves in the other plots so seamlessly, that if I didn't know they were coming I might not have noticed them at all until their own book! Not to mention the way she has of leaving one at a cliffhanger for a whole chapter!

I nom'd this book easily in one night and have to force myself to go to bed so I don't start on *The Taming of the Duke* - or I'll be up all night!

Liz F says

I really enjoyed this book. I'm digging these Essex sisters books! In this book, we focus on (surprise!) Annabel!! Here's what we learned about Annabel from the FIRST book: Annabel was the bookkeeper for her father's not-so-profitable horse stables in Scotland; she was thrilled to leave Scotland; although she was good with numbers, she did not love the bookkeeping task since money was always so tight; due to her growing up in near poverty, she is mostly concerned about marrying a wealthy, titled man. She has no plans to fall in love and isn't particularly concerned about how attractive he is or is not. Oh, and she's beautiful!

So, we don't think too much of Annabel in the first book since she seems pretty shallow and self-absorbed. In this second book, of course, we get to know a lot more about her. And we like her! Yes, yes, she's gorgeous

but she loves her sisters and just doesn't want to worry about whether or not there will be food on the table. Don't we all worry about that?? And don't we all wish we didn't have to worry about that?

Annabel briefly meets the Earl of Ardmore at a ball and he's handsome but poor so she's isn't very interested. Meanwhile, Imogen (another sister) is dealing poorly with her husband's death and is trying to be scandalous by throwing herself at the Earl of Ardmore. She's finally convinced OUT of having an affair with him and she, Annabel and their chaperone go to Ardmore's hotel to tell him so, in person. Now, hotels are not nice places in historical England and NOT a place that a proper woman should be seen. While meeting with the Earl, they are robbed but Annabel gets someone's attention in the street by yelling out the window. Of course, the gossip magazine gets a hold of this info and Annabel was reported as the one breaking off an affair and her reputation is ruined!

The solution, as it always is in historical England, is to get married. Annabel is crushed: he's poor AND she has to go back to Scotland!! The rest is as you may imagine: stolen kisses, discreet touches and falling in love. BUT! There IS a little surprise towards the end and Lord Ardmore's family is entertaining and eclectic.

This is a fun read and I thoroughly enjoyed it! (By the way, the next book is about Imogen and right now, she seems like a tired, sad, classless bitch. Not looking forward to reading it.)

Ruth says

I enjoyed this read, although there were more things that irritated than in the first one, even though I probably enjoyed the story more.

The sisters are great again. *Real* sisters, just like I enjoyed in the first one. Josie is incorrigible - I can't wait for her book, and Imogen is headed towards being a hardened, sad, raving bitch.

I also liked that Annabel's character nicely does a twist on the Beautiful Heroine gig. It's the cause of her insecurities - she's only valued for being beautiful, but never by those from whom she really needs approval.

One thing which irritated me was that the hero was just too perfect. He was wonderful, but too damn wonderful - a saint really. I get that this was at least partially the point, but it just annoyed me. Is anyone really that nice? Also, the whole aristocrats-play-at-peasants thing, taken from *The Taming of the Shrew*, went on far too long, and bored me senseless. I just didn't buy that anyone not a peasant would actually choose to live in a hovel for any length of time. It just didn't seem remotely believable.

On to Isobel's story. Let's see how the Super-Bitch gets on..

Angela says

I'm tempted to give this a one-star, strictly on account of the sloppy writing and unfocused storytelling. If you can wade through all the crap side-stories, it'd probably be about a three-star tale.

At the beginning of the story Annabel and Ewan seem to be perfectly matched. And then they weren't.

Annabel spent much of the first book selflessly comforting her grieving sister and being something solid in the Essex family. She's gentle, and rational. The beginning of this book was much the same, but then EJ throws a curve ball and decides to completely change Annabel's personality so she becomes selfish, and an unlikable person. It's such a bizarre and unnecessary turn-about, clearly inserted into the story to add drama and conflict. Really, this only emphasizes the fact the story and concept for this book was half-baked at best.

Then we have Ewan. Strong, sweet, gentle giant Ewan. For the most part I liked him; he's beta, and calm, and thoughtful. Then, when he gets tired, hungry, and dirty, he becomes a dick. He says some seriously mean-spirited things to Annabel, then brushes them aside and has sex with her as an "apology". Still, he's depicted as a perfect human being. Jesus in the flesh. In the last few chapters he was so sappy I wanted to barf. Clearly, his character lacked consistency.

Imogen, Imogen, Imogen.

I have some big beefs with Imogen's screen time in this story:

1. It's not her effin' book!!! Throughout the story, entire chapters were dedicated to her growth, and working through her grief. While this is important, it could have been told from a distance with the H/h POV, and then delved in greater detail in her book. Instead she's hijacked the first two Essex Sisters stories. Bad, bad, bad writing.
2. I don't like her. Yes, grief brings out the worst in a person, and I have to admit the excuse of her grief helps her character be slightly more likable. But behind that, she's a selfish and immature girl (not woman). The final straw was when she storms into Ewan's castle and announces Annabel's plan to leave him after 6 months - in front of everyone. I dislike her so much, I'm not even looking forward to her book.
3. Her side-story in this book was pointless. Outside working through her grief, and us learning that Mayne is going through growing pains, there was no need to dedicate half the book to her character.

Have I mentioned bad writing?

Yes, it needs to be repeated. The conflict was forced, characters change personalities, and nothing really happens. There wasn't anything about this story that kept me coming back for more.

Madenna U says

This story features a girl that is so beautiful she believes that everyone desires her but no one could love her. Her allure is all of her own making only. Luckily, in a strange twist she is compromised trying to "save" her younger sister. Ewan, who pretends to have nothing but is really the richest man in Scotland, is the perfect match for Annabel. It takes a trip across the country together for them to find their happily ever after and believe they deserve it.

Jacob Proffitt says

I had to stop so that the pain would go away. Why James would put so much Imogen in a novel about her

sister Annabel I will never understand. Imogen is a whiny, entitled, mean-spirited, manipulative, uncaring, self-involved jerk and I swear half this novel is her PoV. Why? Why are you PoV hopping to thoroughly unpleasant people. I thought I'd get a reprieve when Annabel left London and Imogen, thankfully, stayed, but *no!* It *still* bounced back and forth.

I stuck it out for a while on the strength of Annabel and Ewan. Unfortunately, somewhere near mid-novel James decided to rewrite their character arcs for no apparent reason. Annabel went from confident, non-nonsense, slightly mercenary woman to insecure idiot determined to be miserable and Ewan goes from a man of disciplined achievement to rage-addicted nutjob stupid enough to think a couple days with no luxuries in a hovel in the middle of nowhere would be "romantic". Srsly?!?

I had enough, finally, when Annabel chose to disbelieve Ewan's outright declaration of love and rewrite it in her head as "desire". I can *maybe* cut her some slack for disregarding his declaration in the throes of passion, but later when he repeats it in the cold light of day, fully clothed, and begging her to stay and she blows it off as, I kid you not, "he's mistaking desire for love" I found I'd reached the end of my patience. Until then, I hadn't seen her as so arrogant. Manipulative, maybe. Mercenary certainly. But to deny the man you say you love the honesty of his expressed emotions? That's a douche move and unworthy of who I thought she was.

So yeah. Imogen is a dead loss and I have no idea why you'd clutter up a romance with its antithesis and the main couple regress emotionally apparently just for funsies. Sorry, this one's going back and I'm officially done with the series.

Caroline says

I just love Eloisa James! She's the smartest romance writer around (her day job is as professor of Shakespeare at Fordham), and her books are filled with delicious research and delightful characters. Addictive for historical romance fans!

kris says

Annabel is apparently walking sex?? Ewan Poley is apparently Jesus?? They meet up; he is propositioned by Annabel's sister; she ends up in his room while he's mostly naked; they agree to travel to Scotland together and then get married. Hijinks ensue that allegedly result in feelings, boners.

1. I would've enjoyed the Annabel's-insecurities plot if it had shown up anywhere else in the novel. It feels as though James were attempting to make that particular fear come from the realization that Annabel wanted ~more from her relationship with Ewan, but instead it came across as: Conflict 1: Annabel won't marry Ewan. RESOLVED! Conflict 2: he isn't rich! RESOLVED. Conflict 3: ...Annabel is insecure!!

2. If Annabel was OK accepting Lucius's money after she married, why wasn't she OK accepting it pre-marriage?

2.5 Why didn't Lucius offer to increase any of the sister's dowries?

3. While I found Imogen's additional development far more palatable than I thought I would after the first

chapter of *Kiss Me, Annabel*, I was still a bit frustrated by just *how much* of it there was. It felt like every other chapter was dedicated to Imogen pouting at Mayne--which is an exaggeration, I know, but it *felt like it*.

4. I thought Ewan was kind of obnoxious??? Too much choir boy?? Especially when he so easily--and quickly!--turned into a lusting, humping alpha male? His characterization was literally those two poles: pious angel, too amused, too pure, and raging lust-monster, too hot, too heavy.

4.5 WHOA DUBIOUS CONSENT. IF THE LADY SAYS 'NO', WHAT SHE MEANS IS 'NO'. PLEASE TO BE STOPPING ASSFACE.

5. WHY WAS ALL THE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT OFF PAGE?? I don't want to read about Ewan's sweaty panting: I want to read about how they communicate, the questions they choose to ask one another, the answers they choose to share, the careful laying of a foundation together!

NOT THAT I DON'T ALSO WANT SWEaty PANTING, BUT JUST NOT *EXCLUSIVELY*.

6. I'M STILL GOING TO READ THE NEXT ONE, SO I GUESS YOU WIN JAMES!! I GUESS YOU WIN!!

Jilly says

Annabel wants to marry a rich, titled Englishman. Instead, she gets accidentally ruined by a poor Scotsman. But, he looks like this:

So, I'm thinking: Best Accident Ever.

But, of course there has to be angst. And, troubles. And, a really really stupid reason that she isn't sure about marrying him.

Cuz, I'm thinking:

Although, I think we should get a closer inspection of that kilt. For science.

Cute book, but lame "problem". I'm looking forward to the next book in the series though, because it is about the bitch sister. I'm polishing my 1-star review in case I need it. I'm feeding my hate (this is done by watching some episodes of that House Hunters show where rich assholes complain about the too-small jacuzzi tub in their million dollar vacation home that they will use once a year).

Bring it on!

Gwen (The Gwendolyn Reading Method) says

Eloisa James is great with characters and this was no exception but it gets downgraded b/c of some shady

understanding of consent.

Laura says

my 100th book in 2016. ❤
