



## Indiscretion

*Jude Morgan*

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## Indiscretion Jude Morgan

When your father is a man of expensive tastes and schemes but very little money, you soon learn to make do. So when Captain Fortune, a well-meaning but profligate ex-soldier in Regency England, tells his daughter Caroline that they are ruined, she automatically starts seeking employment as a governess. Her father, however, has far grander designs for Miss Fortune....

Caro is to become the companion of Mrs. Catling, the rich, fierce widow of her father's old colonel. As Mrs. Catling amuses herself by tormenting her relatives and servants, Caro resolves to make the best of the situation, and soon her beauty and intelligence attract the attentions of male admirers.

Surrounded by people with an alarming readiness to reveal each other's confidences, Caroline is exasperated to find herself implicated in their indiscretions. But will Miss Fortune be able to avoid losing her reputation without losing her head? And will she find at least one good man amongst the genteel set who will take her side, and, indeed, her fancy?

## Indiscretion Details

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Author : Jude Morgan

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## From Reader Review Indiscretion for online ebook

### Tweety says

4 1/2

I meant to savor my three books by Jude Morgan, and have large spaces in between. instead I have read two of them one after the other. Great fun! Witty, full of satire and real characters with unexpected twists as well as some Jane Austen moments.

I don't know what tho say that others haven't already said in their reviews, but I will say that misfortune follows Miss Caro Fortune most doggedly.

**PG** A few swears and mention of mistresses.

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### Nicole says

Finally, a modern writer who understands the essence of historical novels and knows how to capture that. It's almost a pity he hasn't tried to take on the infamous Jane Austen sequel, because I think he could actually pull it off. Gone are the high speed carriage chases and near-death escapes that authors think are period if they only dress them in empire-waisted gowns and cravats and use archaic and even pretentious language in the commentary. Morgan's action takes place in the parlors and ballrooms, gardens and lawns of the English aristocracy, and the plot is driven by conflicted conversations and inner torments over social conventions. The tone is a little lighter than Austen's, and characters are a little less formal with each other, a by-product, I can't help but believe, of living in the contemporary world where we just want to call our friends by their first names, dammit. Overall, I was delighted to discover this book, and maybe it's just me, but the last line was an absolute gem.

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### Anne says

Books like this are the reason I read and love Regency romance. They enable me to really escape to a different time and place, and to lose myself completely in the story. *Indiscretion* is so well-written and well crafted together, that it is more than just a good Regency novel; it's a masterpiece. This is the kind of book that will become a classic, forever analyzed and admired by readers. Jane Austen and Georgette Heyer would be proud of the wonderful characters, exclaim at the witty repartee and delight in the romance. Jude Morgan is definitely one extremely talented writer!

The story centers on young Miss Caroline Fortune, a sensible and level-headed woman, who has been brought up by her dissipated father, and finds herself hired as companion to an old crusty lady when her father's financial situation becomes desperate. Because of her upbringing - moving constantly, fleeing creditors, being exposed to rough language and lowly behaviour, and living in poorer parts of town - Caroline is very worldly, and very independent. If it had been possible for a woman to live completely by herself in the Regency era, Caroline would have done it. She is smart, quick-witted and resourceful. I was in constant amazement and admiration of her during the whole book. She was so *strong*.

Caroline's world forever changes when she accepts the position of companion to Mrs. Catling, and is swept away in Brighton high society. From then, her life unwillingly becomes a series of entanglements and secrets, as most of her new acquaintances are quick to bestow unwanted confidences upon her, and she must bear them all and do her utmost to keep a neutral front. Caroline does suffer her fair share during the course of the novel, and many, many times I was sure she would break down and have a good crying fit, but aside from shedding a few natural tears over the death of her father (not a spoiler, he dies early on), **she never did**. Does that make her heartless and unfeeling? Absolutely not. I loved her even more when she was able to control her emotions so well and bear the weight of all the accusations bestowed upon her. For, as quick as people were to bestow confidences upon her, so were they to jump to hasty conclusions and blame her whenever their secrets became known or when things turned awry. And in the midst of it all, Caroline, with her unfailing countenance and brave face, only emerged from it all stronger in the end. Sure, she had her angry moments, and since she had a quick tongue and a varied cursing repertoire, she sometimes unleashed her frustration by saying things like: *"Damn and blast and set fire to it all - and especially bloody Brighton - I swear if I hear that word once more I shall scream the rafters down!"* or *"I would dearly love to kick him, and not from the rear!"*

Caroline was badass and fabulous, and she was the best kind of heroine ever. The world needs more people like her. :)

I will be honest, as much as I love Jane Austen, her books are very, very, *very* slow...and it was so refreshing to have a similar book in tone, but more fast-paced! It had its slow moments, to be sure, but some parts had me reading so fast and gripping the pages frantically in suspense! (Maybe that has to do with the fact that I usually peek in books and this time I didn't...) It was an exciting read, but at the same time it was serious and had many deep passages that invited to reflection and analysis. If I hadn't been so lazy, I would have marked them as I read, but I didn't, and now I don't feel like browsing the book for example ;) Just go read it, you won't regret it!

And the romance, heavens be praised! So subtle, and yet so beautiful! The hero is just...so loveable. He's teasing, exasperating, stuck-up, annoying, unconventional, funny, and it spite of it all he's one of my top favourites, and just such a **PERFECT** match for the heroine. I love sparring couples ;) And he is not handsome, rich, rakish, a nonesuch, or anything of the kind. He's just him, and he's perfect for this book, perfect for Caroline, perfect for the reader to delight in. Who can resist a man opposed to marriage because he is convinced the woman of his dreams does not exist?

*"This fantastical creature would not mind any of my follies and inconsistencies - she would be my warmest friend - she would drink too much wine with me - laugh at society instead of courting it - never talk in the morning until at least half past ten - happily stay indoors for days at a time and not seeing a soul, and then on a whim go a journey of twenty miles - and all this time remain naturally elegant, clever, and good-tempered."*

This is not a book to be missed. It is unique, charming, endearing, and I will definitely re-read it many times! I loved that it was so different from all the other Regencies I have ever read. Mark my words, I would say, if I were the kind of intolerable person who says "Mark my words"! ;)

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**Ilze says**

Wonderful book! Right up there with the best of Georgette Heyer (and the author owes a huge debt to Jane

Austen).

Caroline Fortune is, as her besotted suitor tells her at the end of the book, "the dearest, warmest, most generous and good-natured, amusing, entrancing and bewitchingly beautiful woman in creation." Her father has squandered all the family's money, so Caroline has to make her way in the world on her own, first as the companion to a bad-tempered, selfish old b\*\*\*tch, who won't even give her a couple of days off to go to her father's funeral, and then as the long-lost but much-loved niece of her mother's sister Selina and her hilariously obtuse but infinitely kind husband, the village rector Dr. Langland. Along the way she encounters an entertaining collection of characters right out of Regency Central Casting (but not a single duke, thank goodness), although the hero's character is a unique creation, and he is positively scrumptious. Lovely descriptions of Brighton and Bath, and the little village of Wythorpe, where most of the novel takes place, came alive in my mind as I was reading. My only quibble with the book is that there are a few too many convenient, just-in-time coincidences but hey, this is fiction and if the story needs them, so be it.

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### **Wealhtheow says**

Caroline Fortune is a woman of good sense and good humor, both of which she's needed in order to survive. Her father lost what little wealth he had years ago, and now the debt collectors have grown quite severe. Although Caro has better experience with gambling hells than genteel parlors, her father nevertheless manages to secure her a place with a cantankerous old lady. Despite years of experience fending for herself, Caro is still young, and she finds that shifting into the quieter mode of Society rather difficult. Moreover, people keep taking her into their confidence, quite against her protests. When scandals start popping up, how will she protect her reputation?

I really enjoyed this novel. First and foremost, Caroline and the love interest (who I won't name, for fear of spoiling the pleasure of discovering who he is) are unique, well-thought-out characters. Their virtues and their foibles both make complete sense, and their conversations are very entertaining. The secondary characters have distinct voices and personalities, and neither they nor the plot is cribbed from Austen (unlike the majority of Regencies written today).

But like Austen, this is a book that uses a great deal of satire. It's a true pleasure to read an author with both wit and something to say with it. I'm really looking forward to reading more books by Morgan.

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### **Sophie says**

What a charming book. Jude Morgan is the only author I know still writing authentic Regency romance. It is a delight to immerse myself in one of his stories because I know it will be a true historical. His characters behave as if they belong to the nineteenth century, and not as twentieth century men and women wearing muslin and cravats. Even when he does let an anachronism slip through, it is with a wink and a nod, and it works. Highly recommended for anyone who enjoys Regency romances rather than the Regency-set silliness that passes for historical romance these days.

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## **Mela says**

[ Mrs. Catling, Richard or Maria (hide spoiler)]

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## **Carol ?? says**

2.5 stars

When I want Austen or Heyer I should read Austen or Heyer. If I want to read a book set roughly in the era I should choose Thackeray's Vanity Fair or the Flashman books where the author has their own voice.

As far as plotting & structure goes this book gets off to a very slow start & I think it could have been a more interesting novel if there had been more of Caroline's life with her father. The book didn't really get moving till the end & then Morgan introduced that tired old Regency trope the (view spoiler)

Although Morgan gave Caroline a few foibles, her character remained flat for me. Most of the characters did, other than Maria & Stephen.

Morgan does on occasion write beautifully - describing a minor character as a "pale watercolour of a woman" for example.

This is the second of Morgan's books I've tried. In spite of the number of GR friends who are fans, I think this might be my last!

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## **QNPoohBear says**

Miss Caroline Fortune has the unlucky happenstance to have such a name and such fortune. Her long-deceased mother was cut off from her country gentry family when she married a young Army Captain and was not cut out for such a rough life. Caroline's father was wounded in the Peninsular Wars and now dreams and schemes about reversing his misfortune. Alas for poor Caroline, her father has just lost his last shillings and she is forced to go to work as a companion for Mrs. Catling, a wealthy dragon of a lady who cares for no one, most especially not her niece and nephew who hope to inherit her money. After brief mistrust on both sides, Caroline quickly befriends Matthew and Maria and Caroline becomes the recipient of secret confidences which could cause trouble if the secrets were to be known to Mrs. Catling. Poor burdened Caroline would rather flirt with the handsome Mr. Richard Leabrook, a recent acquaintance who came to Brighton with Matthew and Maria. Circumstances cause Caroline to lose her position but some good fortune comes her way when her estranged maternal aunt and uncle take Caroline home to their country village. There, Caroline becomes involved with the Miner family, local gentry for whom Caroline's uncle is rector. The head of the family, Stephen, puzzles and infuriates Caroline with his constant irony and sarcastic, witty comments. Isabella Miner instantly becomes a bosom friend and headstrong little sister Fanny hero-worships Caroline for living a life outside of convention. Caroline becomes the source of more confidences and the cause of much trouble. All Caroline wants is a settled life and a man she can count on and give her heart to. Is that too much to ask? In the tradition of Jane Austen, Indiscretion is a comedy of manners that had me laughing out loud. The humor is a little more worldly than Austen's and some lines could be construed as double entendres but Austen fans will enjoy reading about some familiar characters and situations in a

completely new story. The plot had me guessing almost the whole time, I couldn't put it down and absolutely loved it. I was a bit startled out of my equilibrium by some passages in present tense but they don't take away from the appeal of this novel, which Austen lovers should definitely read!

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### **Margaret says**

I find it interesting that I can clearly see all the borrowings from Austen, and yet I still really liked this (which was rather like *P&P* mixed with *S&S*) and *An Accomplished Woman* (like *Emma* with a dash of *Persuasion*). (I wonder what the next one will be like: *Northanger Abbey* plus *Mansfield Park*? Rather a difficult combination, I should think.) The language is generally fairly well-done, though occasionally the characters act in a slightly too modern way. I enjoyed *Indiscretion* nearly as much as my favorite Heyers, I think.

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### **Shannon (Giraffe Days) says**

Debt-ridden and homeless, Captain Fortune and his daughter Caroline are at the end of their rope. Desperate, he finds for her a position as a companion to a garrulous, sharp-tongued rich widow called Mrs Catling, who takes up her residence in Brighton.

Caroline, beautiful, intelligent, well-mannered, had been prepared to hire herself out as a governess or worse - being a lady's companion seems like the better choice, though she doesn't deceive herself that life with the scathing woman will be easy. She meets the widow's nephew and niece, Matthew and Maira Downing, who are dangling after their aunt's money, and their friend, Richard Leabrook.

Caroline enjoys Richard's company a great deal, but when he makes a scandalous and insulting suggestion to her the friendship is at an end and Richard hastily leaves for home. Caroline hoped that would be the end of it.

But when circumstances lead her to leave Mrs Catling's employ and live with her aunt and uncle, previously estranged, in the sleepy little village of Wythorpe, she is in for a nasty shock. And as more and more people around her start assigning attributes and even starring roles to her in their own indiscretions and disappointments, Caroline despairs of losing the good impression of Stephen Milner before she's even gained it.

Comparisons with *Pride and Prejudice* and some of her other works are no doubt unavoidable - though *Indiscretions* is set after the Napoleonic War and *P&P* was written before it - but it doesn't or shouldn't suffer from it: it is more that Morgan has written a wonderful, intrepid book in the style of Austen, and superbly so.

The prose especially is in that style, though arguably it's more readable for the modern reader, and there are several characters who are delightful caricatures, larger-than-life figures, from Mrs Catling to Matthew Downey to Stephen Milner, among others. Really the only one who seems moderately sensible is Caroline herself, but she's no dullard, and her comebacks make Lizzie Bennet seem timid. Stephen Milner and his sardonic wit and silliness was another favourite of mine, reminiscent in a way of a Georgette Heyer hero, and when he and Caroline got going the witty banter was a joy to read. Another, Captain Brunton and his unrequited love, reminded me of the pining Dobbin from *Vanity Fair* and Colonel Brandon from *Sense and*

*Sensibility* - and yet, different again. Morgan's skill is amply on display here, not just with the historical aspects or his grasp of the style, but of his ability to create such entertaining characters.

The plot has a gentle pace, like *Persuasion*, but laced with a sense of imminence, of foreboding almost - this tension, this anticipation, gives it an added thrill which helps make up for a slight lack in the romance side. I could have wished for a bit *more* between Caroline and Stephen - so obviously well made for each other - and the ending was a bit short and sudden.

Wildly enjoyable, racy and yet gentle, witty and funny, *Indiscretion* is a must for all historical fiction fans. I could wish for a better cover for it though.

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### **Jaima says**

A delight! Wonderful, robust characters, a plot that kept me guessing and heart-tugging romance. Full of hilarity, wit and charm, in the best tradition of Austen and Heyer. Jude Morgan, why haven't I found you sooner?

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### **Dolors says**

What an enchanting reading!

This is a good choice for those who love Victorian novels, and even more because of its easy prose and its witty dialogues which keep you turning page after page and with a smile playing on your lips at the end of each chapter.

The heroine, Miss Fortune (yes, that subtle irony...), coming from a doubtful background, is a smart and strong-minded but flirtatious girl who has to make her own way in Society leaving some of her acquaintances with their mouths open with her sincere ways.

Stephen, not the shining knight we are used to in Austen's novels, is an intelligent but not obliging character who exasperates Miss Fortune with his jesting, who, at the same time, captivates the reader at once. The dialogues between those two are utterly brilliant.

The other characters help to create a complete and believable picture of the Victorian era, providing the reader with high entertainment of such quality only comparable to that of Austen's, Du Maurier's or the Brontës'.

I can't praise this book enough, specially the second half, which had me completely hooked, and remember the declaration of the last pages which left such a sweet taste on my mouth that I'm sure it'll be some time until I have so much genially fun.

I'll be definitely reading more by this author!

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### **Amy says**

Oh my! Who'd have thought that the first *really* successful modern-day attempt at a regency novel would be written by a guy? Austen and Heyer would applaud.

The plot is not that surprising though is fun to follow along. The characters are well-drawn: There's the proper balance of fluttering, eccentricity, and drollness. But the dialogue, oh the dialogue -- utterly delicious.

I wish my mother was still around so that I could share this with her. She'd have loved it.

One funny aside -- I was given this book by my sister-in-law, who brought it with her from India. My husband, on seeing the book lying on the bed waiting to be started, muttered that it violated one of his cardinal rules of books, so he could never read it. "It's not chick lit," I told him, "more regency." "But I have a rule to never read anything by an author with the first name of Jude", he replied. Hmm...I think maybe he's seen me hurl one too many books by Jude Devereaux across the room. She wrote one book I liked, and all the rest have been a frustration, but I keep hoping, because of the one I liked. This Jude won't get thrown at a wall in *my* home.

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### **Hana says**

This was about a one and a half star for me. Several of my dear Goodreads friends loved this book and I understand why.

The basic story concept is the beloved stuff of classic Regency romance--a young woman, raised by a well-born but dissolute, gambling father, is forced by his bankruptcy to seek employment with a nasty but wealthy old woman who gets her jollies by manipulating and abusing her staff and relatives. It's a popular (even hackneyed) story-line because it highlights class and economic differences in Regency England, it provides an opportunity for the reader to admire the heroine's pluck, and it sets up the sort of rags-to-riches happy ending of which Regency genre fans are justly fond.

I don't want to spoil the book for those who loved it, but let me try to explain why it was hard-going for me and might be so for a few other readers.

Much of the story is told in dialog. The dialog is forced to convey nearly all of the plot and character development, with next to no exposition and remarkably little description of place or person. Too much time is spent at endless dinners and teas where an over-large cast of characters discuss each other, what happened, what might happen, what they should do tomorrow, why so-and-so did such-and-such. We don't even get good descriptions of the food and fashions (always a redeeming quality IMO).

The long stretches of dialog were made heavier by the absence of dialog tags. What's a dialog tag? Here's an example: "'Perhaps the ladies might...' Jane let the suggestion gently float across the table, with a speaking glance at her mama-in-law."

Dialog tags are one way that a writer can help reveal character and relationships and that, after all, is dialog's primary purpose. In the absence of tags and description, the reader is left on her own to try to sort out a conversation while rendered essentially blind and deaf.

Problem number two: a less than believable heroine. Caroline Fortune (*Miss Fortune*, get it?) never seemed entirely real to me.

Hints are dropped that she knows rather more about gambling hells and hangover cures than most gently-bred Regency females, but, alas, the author never spends enough time on Caroline's life with her father for this interesting aspect to be developed.

We *do* get to see that her father has indulged his own appetites at her expense--for example she seems to

have only two well-worn dresses to her name. We also discover that she has been subject to at least one fairly public humiliation--having been forced to leave her elite school in mid-term due to lack of money.

Such a complex and painful background normally leaves scars and might have been highlighted in moving ways in the next section when Caroline leaves her father to take up her new post with the harridan. Her new position comes with a dress allowance and the first stop is the milliner to order a wardrobe befitting her new role. But we never get to go to the milliner or see the dresses, we never get to feel Caroline's wonder and delight--and surely such a young woman *would* feel that way.

Nor do we ever get to feel any of the other complex emotions that might go along with this scenario: a sense of embarrassment, indebtedness, or perhaps ambivalence. Here is a young woman being outfitted at an upscale London shop by an elderly woman, a total stranger, and presumably molded to suit her employer's sense of style and deportment. Surely it would have felt odd; it might even have been painful or humiliating. But this promising moment is given no more than a half sentence. There are, in fact, remarkably few emotional moments, not even as she parts from her father; Caroline and her employer are simply packed off to Brighton without incident or illumination.

Once in Brighton I would have expected Caroline's odd background to cause more trouble than it did. And I would certainly have expected her employer to give her more grief and humiliation.

Schooled by her gambling father, Caroline supposedly plays a very mean game of whist and other far less respectable card games. What a promising set-up for gossip and nasty pointed remarks about how adroitly Caroline shuffles a deck of cards! What a delicious opportunity for her to spot card-sharps and turn tables! What opportunities for dangerous liaisons! But no. Total silence on her card-playing skills and their reception in polite society. Another missed novelistic opportunity.

Caroline seems to slip into Brighton society and her new role with little comment or mishap. Does that make sense? Here is a girl, barely into her twenties, denied nearly all social opportunity and yet she knows all the dances? She knows how to handle her dresses, her reticule, her fan, the complex rituals of a mannered society, etc.? All flawlessly enough to pass muster? We never see her struggle with these things so the next Big Event and her reaction makes very little sense. Without getting into spoiler territory, let me just say that Caroline--given what little we know of her background--seems at once too innocent and too assured for the central plot point and its consequences to be believable.

It was promising idea and in Georgette Heyer's hands it would have been a classic, but as shaped by Jude Morgan the book proved more of an irritant than a diversion--at least for this cranky reader.

Content rating: a clean read except for Caroline' incipient drinking problem.

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