



# historical romance reviews

**SCORCHER** — Borders on erotic. Very graphic sex. **HOT** — Most romance novels fall into this category. Ranges from conventional lovemaking to explicit sex.  
**MILD** — May or may not include lovemaking. No explicit sex. **★★★★½ GOLD PHENOMENAL** — In a Class by Itself.  
**★★★★½ FANTASTIC** — Keeper. **★★★★ COMPELLING** — Page-Turner. **★★★ ENJOYABLE** — Pleasant Read.  
**★★ PROBLEMATIC** — May Struggle to Finish. **★ SEVERELY FLAWED** — Pass on This One.

## MY FAVORITE COUNTESS

**Vanessa Kelly**

★★★★½ **HOT**

**SETTING:** 1817 England

*Kelly's well-written and powerful love story will keep readers entertained with a captivating plot. The strong protagonists, deep emotional intensity and rising sexual tension all make the fast-paced romance memorable.*

**SUMMARY:** With all the debts left by her late husband, Bathsheba Compton, Lady Randolph, is in dire need of funds. She must find a rich gentleman to marry. At a dinner party she meets Dr. John Blackmore and is taken aback by her reaction. She tries to ignore the sexual tension, but when she falls ill with a deadly fever, John saves her life.

John discovers a tenderhearted and intelligent woman under Bathsheba's sharp tongue and wanton facade. They begin an affair, but when John proposes marriage, things go awry. Bathsheba cannot understand his dedication to helping poor women in dangerous areas. It is during one of these forays into St. Giles that John is nearly killed. They will have to look into their hearts to overcome the sorrows of life and embrace the joys of love. (ZEBRA, May, 352 pp., \$6.99)

**Joan Hammond**

## ONE WHISPER AWAY

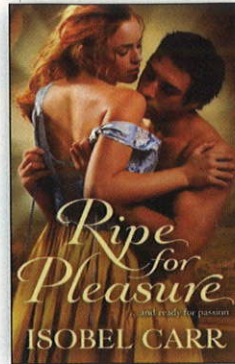
**Emma Wildes**

★★★★ **HOT**

**SETTING:** Regency England

*The first in Wildes' Ladies in Waiting series is a lush and highly sensual love story. Since this is the beginning of a promising series, the author introduces characters we will see in future books, which may distract from the primary love story. Still, Wildes has crafted a romance that is sexy and sweet.*

**SUMMARY:** Lady Cecily Francis is set to marry a lord, but she's looking for a way out, since she knows her sister is the one who truly loves him. She finds it in an unexpected encounter with the Earl of Augustine. An American and half Iroquois, Augustine is in England to settle



his father's affairs and his three half-sisters' lives before returning to the States. When he innocently wipes spilled champagne off Cecily's gown and whispers in her ear, he starts quite a number of rumors in the ballroom and sets Cecily to thinking. She proposes an arranged engagement, which would silence wagging tongues and give her sister a chance to hook her man. Augustine already desires Cecily, so he's more than willing to pose as her fiancé. Despite numerous distractions, Augustine seduces a very willing Cecily and together they are able to face those who could destroy them. (SIGNET ECLIPSE, May, 314 pp., \$7.99)

**Kathe Robin**

## RIPE FOR PLEASURE

**Isobel Carr**

★★★★ **HOT**

**SETTING:** Georgian England

*Carr is a born storyteller. She enriches her sensual tale with colorful details, suspense, a treasure hunt and charming, delightful characters (including a marvelous mastiff). The fast pace and added humor will have readers eagerly awaiting the next novel in the League of Second Sons series.*

**SUMMARY:** Much to the chagrin of the ton, Viola Whedon, a highly sought-after courtesan, has been writing her memoirs. When a gang of men break into her London townhouse she believes they are after the manuscript, and so she accepts Lord Leonidas Vaughn's help. Leo knows it's not the text, but a royal treasure that has his cousin's

henchmen snooping around the house. He spends much of his time at Viola's home and when a fire breaks out he takes her to his remote estate for safety. Viola thinks she's above seducing, but as they engage in sexy games she marvels at the passion he arouses in her. Leo finds pleasure he never knew existed in his relationship. While their love blossoms, the hunt for the treasure intensifies and Viola is in danger. As their enemy draws close, Leo's mother takes matters into her own hands, sweeping Viola away and forcing Leo to decide what he wants: love or money. (FOREVER, May, 300 pp., \$7.99)

**Kathe Robin**

## TOUCH OF A THIEF

**Mia Marlowe**

★★★★ **HOT**

**SETTING:** Victorian England

*Sensuality, sexuality, passion and mystery blend into a wonderfully entertaining tale where a prince, a lord and a jewel thief join forces to reclaim a powerful gem. Though her story is suspenseful and sexually charged, Marlowe never allows one aspect to overshadow the other. Her three-dimensional characters truly steal readers' hearts and keep the pages flying.*

**SUMMARY:** To keep her family from ruin Lady Viola Preston becomes a jewel thief. She not only has a gift for picking locks, but she can sense a jewel's presence and resonance. When a priceless red diamond is stolen from a temple in India, Greydon Quinn vows to retrieve the jewel and return it before India explodes in rebellion. He needs Viola's help, so he catches the little thief and blackmails her into stealing the stone from the courier delivering the gem to the queen. They head off on a journey that leads from the beautifully romantic city of Paris to Hanover and back to London, but it is also a journey that draws them into passion. One false lead gives way to another until the real stone is found. Yet they must still discover that their love is more precious than any gem. (BRAVA, May, 340 pp., \$14.00)

**Kathe Robin**