



# Beauty and the Rake

*Erica Monroe*

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## **Beauty and the Rake** Erica Monroe

Once, she was beautiful...

Abigail Vautille dreamed of escaping the Whitechapel rookery and starting a new life, until one tragic night left her scarred and penniless. To save her family from debtor's prison, she strikes a deal with the rogue who owns her father's gambling vowels—if he excuses the debt, for two weeks, she'll give him her body, but not her heart.

Once he was charming...

Inspector Michael Strickland of the Metropolitan Police has always had a way with women. Success comes easily to him, and he glides through life on his good looks and family name. But Abigail lights a passion within him he never knew existed. He sees the beauty within her, not the beast she believes herself to be.

Together, their love is beyond a fairy tale.

After a dangerous figure from Abigail's past resurfaces vowing vengeance, things take a sinister turn. But Michael will stop at nothing to keep the woman he loves safe. When the stakes are high and the scars are more than skin deep, passion might be the key to a happily ever after.

## **Beauty and the Rake Details**

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Author : Erica Monroe

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## **From Reader Review Beauty and the Rake for online ebook**

### **Tracy Emro says**

3.5 stars

This is the third book in the series and to fully understand the heroine - you really should really read the previous book - Secrets in Scarlet before reading this book.

I thought the book was well written, but it was not a quick read and it seemed to drag in places. That might just be me - I found myself repeatedly becoming irritated with Abigail (the heroine). She has suffered and is bitter - but she acts like everyone is to blame for her pain and acts irrationally at times. I found myself mentally shouting "build a bridge and get over it already" at her too many times to count.

Michael is a fairly decent hero - he is far from perfect, but he tries to be honorable and he is kind to Abigail.

I would recommend the book, if you have been following the series. It was ok - but for me, not a keeper.

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### **Linda says**

This is the 3rd book in a series and there's a lot that happens in the 2nd book (I read the synopsis) that is related to this story including I'm guessing how Abigail was hurt.

Abigail, the heroine, worked as a weaver in a factory to support her family as her father does nothing except gamble away money he doesn't have. After a horrendous torture (read the 2nd book?) she has no resources left except prostitution (really?) to support herself & her beloved younger sister. And her father. When said father loses over 200 pounds in a night, Abigail barter away her body for 2 weeks in exchange to her father's debtor.

Michael Strickland had met Abigail in the hospital where she'd been taken after her injury/torture and had been immediately taken with her and is only too willing to agree to Abigail's proposal.

Michael is supposedly the rake but nothing in the story showed that. Quite the opposite as he behaves with utmost integrity and honor towards Abigail throughout; he refuses to debauch her when she presents herself nude to him in her bedroom when she starts crying. It's Abigail who looks for & reads salacious books in Michael's vast library.

I couldn't connect to Abigail at all. At times I felt the author was trying to make her too perfect, but instead it felt rather flat to me.

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### **Eva says**

\*I got this book via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review\*

I honestly have to say that I didn't read the first two novels by Erica Monroe in the "The Rookery Rogues"

series but usually those Regency series can be read separately too. I think I was wrong about it if it comes to this book. "The Beauty and the Rake" has a story on its own but most of the characters have a lot of backstory that eventually is the storyline of the first two books and not really told in this one. I think that the reader of book 3 should know about the background of the side characters too because things would make more sense.

The story is actually rather nice. Abigail Vautille is looking for her father in one of the gaming halls one night. She was once a beautiful young woman, before things happened (storyline of book 1 or 2). She grew up in London's rookeries, now she's unable to work. Her father gambles, a lot. He cannot pay his debts so she offers Michael Strickland herself for two weeks instead of the 200 pounds her father owes him.

The Inspector takes the offer knowing who she is and that her predator escaped prison and is on the look for her but he doesn't tell her. With the help of his boss he tries to make his home safe and give her nice things – like his sister's old dresses. But Abigail has to leave her sister Bess behind with a neighbor and she's afraid that something may happen to her. The girl doesn't know that she is about to sell her body.

Strickland doesn't want to get married. He's the man for a nice affair but without any ties. But he likes her and her intelligence. She knows books. She likes to read and she doesn't care about delicate literature. Abigail wants to feel passion and lust ....

Well I think the story is pretty predictable too but better than others even not knowing about the storyline of book 1 and 2. Even after reading the whole novel I have no real clue what happened to Abigail's arm, only that she is afraid of what people may say about the destroyed skin and so on that's why she always wears long gloves. I also didn't understand the relation with Poppy for sure because it's also a part of the first two books as it seems to me.

Nevertheless you have to like Abigail and her loyalty towards her sister and a little even towards her father. When she runs, she runs.

I liked the parts when they talked about literature – I marked a few books I want to give a closer look when I find time.

Rating: 3\*\*\*

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## Monique says

Review written: September 21, 2016

Star Rating: ★★???

Heat Rating: Between ????? and ?????

*This book was received free via Netgalley for an honest review.*

I was intrigued enough by *A Dangerous Invitation* to continue with this series. Then I missed book 2, which apparently set up this book. All in all, a mistake on my part. That said, I think I'll just stop here with this series and not continue.

I know this series is called Rookery Rogues for a reason, but when I think rogue (or even rake) and romance,

I don't think utter douche with virtually no redeeming qualities. Daniel in *A Dangerous Invitation* was no prince but I dealt with it, kind of. Strickland, on the other hand, is so horrible that I just couldn't ever really find a way to connect with him. Seriously, this guy has no ability to sympathize, let alone empathize with others. To make matters worse, his sister actually has even less ability to do either. I mean, that's saying something right there. It isn't really his sense of entitlement, which he does have and which is laughable given his "almost in the rookeries" life. It isn't the stick up his ass or his moral superiority either. It's this belief that a woman whoring herself out to survive because it's the only thing she can do somehow wants to be a whore. I mean, really?! And then, he thinks he can teach her how to be a better whore. Yes, really! At this point I'm just in utter awe at his cluelessness. While, he does seem to learn (thanks to Abigail completely falling apart on him), it's way too little and way too late.

Abigail is dealing with the repercussions of things done to her in the previous book of this series, so it's obvious I really should have read that first. So, I get that I'm not getting the whole picture. Besides, I think I can see where she's coming from. Forget her scars, how is she supposed to feed herself and her little sister with no way to work? I'd be pretty bitter too at the people who tortured her, the people who failed to help, and the people who got her involved in the first place. Yet everyone keeps telling her to let it go and make nice with them? Huh. Are they going to pay for her sister to eat? Are they going to keep a roof over her family's heads? Nah, didn't think so.

To make matters even worse, the police suck. I knew that already, honestly. Both historically and previously in this series, the police suck. They pretty much cause half the problems and Strickland's crew are no better because they have lost a murderer, who just happens to be the guy who tortured Abigail. While it does make it so she and Strickland have to be in the same house, it's not a shining moment.

I was disappointed that my favorite character from *A Dangerous Invitation* was not here (Atlas). Maybe seeing him would have helped me get over Strickland's ugliness. I'm disappointed I didn't like this more. But Strickland wasn't redeemed enough for me and my own folly in not reading book 2 both impacted my reading of this book.

*This review is ©September 2016 by Monique N. and has been posted to Netgalley.*

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## **Amanda says**

2.5 stars, sort of. God, will I ever be confident in my ratings of Erica Monroe's books???

I mentioned before in another review how much I enjoyed Erica Monroe's thought provoking and at times polarizing writing style. There was A LOT of that going on in *Beauty and the Rake* but unfortunately it didn't all come together in the way that I wanted it to.

First off I gotta say that I think the book's *Beauty and the Beast* elements were really well done. The author infused the story with thoughts about what true beauty is; how beauty can mask ugliness and that there can be beauty found in ugliness. She went even further with the idea that there is beauty and ugliness in everyone and that it is our flaws that make us who we are. Seeing beyond the surface of things and people was a main theme too, as was that love makes us better. Also the obvious references to the Disney film version were a particular delight to read.

That good stuff aside, I did have MANY issues with this book as a whole and most of them centered

on...wait for it...THE HERO! Is anyone really surprised? I didn't think so. The hero in this case was a character that had been introduced previously in *Secrets in Scarlet* and I gotta say, I was not impressed with him there and even less so here. Michael was, as the title obviously alludes to, a rake. And when I say rake, I mean RAKE. From the first chapter onward the man was a total asshole, and that's being kind. He more or less bought the heroine after her poor excuse for a father lost a wager with him and was downright giddy about the whole thing. And afterward he was actually surprised that Abigail rebuffed his advances, as if no other woman on earth had ever not wanted him before. SERIOUSLY? Michael was an idiot, a louse and his sense of entitlement and obtuseness to everyone other than himself constantly made me rage. He also had a serious case of sex on the brain 24/7 which caused me further irritation as did the later insistence that Michael's rakish persona was somehow all an act. Riiiiight. Oh, did I mention he even quotes Christian Grey at one point? You know, the 'I don't make love, I fuck' line? Lord, help me.

Obviously my issues with Michael bled into the main couple. The correlation of their romance just didn't make any sense to me, even in the close quarters circumstances. It was like a switch flipped on when Abigail ceased her reasonably aimed animosity towards Michael and Michael realized Abigail was an actual human being with feelings. But being super attracted to each other and having one or two honest conversations does not equate to love, especially when there was a whole lot of TELLING me that they were bonding and falling for each other and far less showing. I wanted to FEEL the slow but sure shift of distrust to affection over the course of their time together which is one of the highlights of the BATB story but I never felt anything even remotely close to that magic. (view spoiler) The courtship, and therefore the love story itself, was nonexistent or rang false in my opinion and since that is one of the core elements that makes the original fairytale great, it was a shame to see it so badly mishandled here.

Let me move on to something a little more positive: Abigail. A big part of Abigail's backstory and how she came to be takes place in *Secrets in Scarlet* so I recommend reading that book first to get the full scope and understanding of things going on with her here. Abigail starts off with a hard, almost impenetrable exterior. Her little sister Bess was her only reason to keep going and not give up on life entirely, but Abigail virtually closed herself off to everyone and everything that had once mattered to her. She constantly saw herself as a victim and let that singular point of view guide her through every choice she made. If I can say one positive thing about Michael it's that it was through his kind and considerate attentions that Abigail was able to release the emotions she'd locked away for so long and begin to see herself as a survivor and someone worthy of happiness. She also in turn pushed, shoved, drop kicked Michael out of his comfort zone of ignorance and forced him to see the world as it really was: cruel and often unapologetic, but still with a sense of hope for something better. Abigail was a gem and I really wish she had been given a better hero, or at least one that was in possession of a functioning brain.

As I said before, rating this book was a struggle as I didn't much care for the plot, hero or the main couple and usually when that happens I'm tempted to dole out the dreaded 1-star of doom. However, I don't believe this is a 1-star book. Between Abigail's journey as a character, Erica Monroe's evocative prose and the core BATB themes present throughout, the book did touch me on an emotional level, enough that I was inspired to write out this longish, impassioned review so that has to count for something! I didn't hate *Beauty and the Rake*, but I do believe it could have been so much more than what it ultimately turned out to be. One positive final mention, the scene in the library that involves the reading of bawdy literature and sexy times, hands down one of the best love scenes I've ever read, BRAVA.

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**Sonya Heaney says**

I'm an idiot for not reading this sooner, because I'd been looking forward to it. However, I got this author's name mixed up with another (similar) historical romance author's name and kept passing over it when it came up for review!

I really love what Erica Monroe is doing with historical romance. The 1830s aren't the loveliest of time periods (the fashion was just **awful!**), and the rookeries of London not the most romantic of settings, but wow, this is the sort of historical romance I need to pull me out of my rut. Throw in a bit of suspense, as the author has, and I'm one happy reader.

The research in this series is VERY impressive, and explained a little in the author's notes, however in the future I'd like to see Monroe get some help with her language, because it's the only place in her books where she really misses the mark.

Self-publishing is a minefield of a thing, but this is one self-published author who well and truly delivers.

Another great thing about NOT writing about dukes and daughters of dukes is that all that ridiculous behaviour that makes no sense in aristocrats makes sense with these characters. Becoming someone's mistress is actually good career choice for these women. Going out without a chaperone is just the way things are. All those ridiculous anachronisms in most historical romances make sense in these books.

My biggest issue is with the language. These women in this series have no education, and are from the rookeries of London. Which means they would not have spoken like this:

*"It's a system of cards advancing in a predetermined rhythm."*

*"I believe that the world is fundamentally flawed... I'm a Whitechapel girl. Few people care about our existence."*

And nor do people in 1830s London use mid-twentieth century American terms like "cover all bases"! I was also wondering how the hell they left the building via the first floor (surely the drop to the ground resulted in broken limbs!) and why everyone kept displaying their bare little donkeys (asses)! And the shortened form of **mathematics** is **maths**.

I'd say you should read the book before this one first, though it isn't necessary. You'll catch up easily, but it makes more sense if you get through these in order. Especially so to get the background on the horrible thing that was done to the heroine, and why it is now shaping her future.

It's sad that traditional publishing has become so stagnant. I want more books like these.

*Review copy provided by NetGalley.*

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**Lisa - (Aussie Girl) says**

3.5 - 4 stars

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## Jennifer says

### 4.25 Stars

*Beauty and the Rake* is a great example of an impulse buy that was worth the rush. I adore Beauty and the Beast retellings and I saw this book mentioned as being on sale over at Smart Bitches, Trashy Books. Their deal alert post helpfully linked to Redheaded Girl's fabulous review and I knew this book had to be mine. And, in a rare situation for me, I read it immediately rather than letting it languish on my e-reader.

Abigail lives in Whitechapel with her younger sister and their gambling addicted father. Her entire life was focused on getting out of the slums until her plans were thrown awry when she was captured and tortured by a serial killer. She managed to escape, but has been dealing with the physical and mental scars ever since. Now, her life is taking another difficult turn when she discovers her father is on the brink of being thrown into debtor's prison. Abigail decides to take advantage of this situation and convinces her father's opponent to forgive the debt in exchange for having her in his bed for two weeks.

Michael is an inspector for the Metropolitan police and is feeling disgruntled with his job and his life at the moment. His chance meeting with Abigail and her offer to warm his bed seems like an opportunity to escape from his unhappiness for a short amount of time. It also doesn't hurt that he is very attracted to Abigail. *Beauty and the Rake* follows the two weeks that Abigail and Michael interact in his house and, because this is both a romance and a Beauty and the Beast retelling, it showcases the growing relationship between these two complex individuals.

This is the third book in the Rookery Rogues series and, while I haven't read either of the prequels, I was able to dive right into the world and it didn't miss a beat. Erica Monroe does a wonderful job of providing insight into the less than savory aspects of Victorian London and the setting really comes alive. I have been trying to read more historical romances that don't focus on the aristocracy and this worked perfectly for that initiative. Abigail and Michael both come from humble beginnings and are used to working for survival and their happiness. This made it very easy to relate to them and their struggles.

What I liked the best about this book was the way that the author played with the familiar aspects of this type of story. There are plenty of references to the original fairy tale and the Disney movie to make me smile without feeling like the story was following a checklist. The connections were subtle, but fun to discover. The most fascinating part was the way that both Abigail and Michael embodied the characters of Beauty and the Beast. Abigail's scars make her feel like she is a monster while Michael feels guilty for being part of the investigation team that left her vulnerable to her captor in the first place. I love it when writers play with familiar elements of tropes and give them upgrades which is definitely what happened here.

I just had a fabulous time reading *Beauty and the Rake*. It was dark, romantic, and full of things that hit all my buttons. Abigail and Michael are complicated characters who definitely deserve their happy ending and it does not come easy. I will be reading more in this series and was super excited to see that I had previously purchased book one. Yeah for discovering a new to me author with a decent-sized backlist!

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## **(Tori-Smexybooks) smexys\_sidekick says**

Favorite Quote: “This must be what heaven smelled like: musty books and leather furniture.”

A poor weaver from the ghetto of Whitechapel, Abigail Vautille may not have had much, but she had her looks and her job until a madman takes it all away from her. With no means of employment and a gambling addict for a father, Abigail is faced with the prospect of prostitution or starving. When her father’s latest debts are more than she can pay, she offers herself to the man who holds her father’s markers, promising him two weeks and her virtue if he excuses the debt.

Inspector Michael Strickland of the Metropolitan Police has used his family's good name, connections, and money to afford himself the finer things in life. Success and women have always come easy to him and he has never questioned his means until he sees Abigail again. When he rescued her from near death, he visited her everyday at the hospital, willing his strength into her. He never forgot about her and while he dreamed of her coming to his bed, it was never like this.

The more time they spend together, the more Michael realises that two weeks will never be enough time to uncover all the secrets of Abigail. But Abigail’s scars run deep and when she discovers a secret Michael has been keeping from her, she will need to decide if love is enough to forgive the past in order to secure her future.

I love retellings of classic fairy tales; Beauty and the Beast being a particular favorite of mine. Erica Monroe takes this classic and reworks it, adding a pinch of this and a shake of that to create a unique and bittersweet love story that offers up a un. Set in the 1800’s, Beauty and the Rake focuses on London’s lower and middle class. A nice change from the usual trend of historical romances playing out among the aristocrats where the idea of going hungry or cold is unfathomable. The mechanics of the story work well with the characters. Monroe’s obvious attention to detail allowing us an intimate view of the attitudes towards the lower class and the struggles that they endured day to day to survive.

Abigail Vautille and Michael Strickland were first introduced in book two-Secrets In Scarlet. Though I didn’t read the first two books of the series, I had absolutely no confusion while reading this one. Monroe doesn’t recap the series but she does give the reader just enough of the past to let us know and understand the demons that push Abigail and the part Michael played in the events that led up to Abigail's torture.

I found myself instantly smitten by the hero and heroine. Michael is a sexy alpha with a seemingly laissez faire attitude that confuses, confounds, and delights as we slowly piece together the real man behind the mask. His childhood plays a large role in his present behavior yet for all his posturing, there is a strong thread of respect, decency, and honor that exists within in him. It will just take the right person to bring it out.

“It’s easier for you this way, isn't it? If I pretend to play the game.”

Abigail tugs at our heartstrings as we can feel the despair that always surrounds her. Forced into the role of parent and provider to her sister and father at a young age then tragically disfigured. The anger, shame, and disgust she feels by having to prostitute herself out to yet save her father again is at cross purposes with her strength and pride. She has survived worse and will survive this. Michael and Abigail’s romance begins slowly and antagonistically; our hero and heroine fighting against the chemistry and their own demons from first meeting. We are privy to their every thought which makes for interesting insight into their lives.

“She was immaterial. Her life meant nothing. Her virtue meant nothing.”

I loved watching Abigail grow, not only in her sexuality but as a person. With Michael at her side, she is able to slowly let go of the anger and shame that consumes her. Michael has kept his feelings buried for so long and Abigail's own emotional breakthrough helps to break down his walls. Watching him fall in love with Abigail is emotionally gratifying. His constant struggle between what he wants and what he feels he should do is a never ending battle that extends through much of the story. The physical scenes are very passionate and gratifying with bits of humor and naughtiness involved as Michael goes from teaching Abigail how to pleasure him to doing all he can to bring her pleasure.

‘I'm not a perfect man but around you, I become something more. ‘

A dynamic cast of secondary characters are all well developed and add to the familiarity and continuance of the main storyline. Their merging stays constant through the story and Ms. Laurens does well in slowly integrating them into the story and allowing their scenes to help our protagonists. I enjoyed finding the small scenes and figures that Monroe culls from the fairytale for her story. The small suspense storyline that carried over from book two is low key as we follow the hints and clues to their discover their ultimate goals. The ending comes at you fast and wraps up the storyline and subsequent sub plots in a clear and concise manner that answers all our questions and concerns. There is even a sweet epilogue (and you all know how much I love epilogues) that leave us secure in Michael and Abigail's future.

I look forward to reading more of Ms. Monroe's books in the future.

RATING: B+

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## Caz says

Unusually for historical romances set in 19th Century England, the books in Erica Monroe's *Rookery Rogues* series take place principally in the slums and backstreets of London, and their protagonists are people from the working or middle classes. In **Beauty and the Rake**, the third of the series, the heroine is Abigail Vautille, a young factory worker who is no longer able to earn her living as a weaver owing to an injury to her left hand.

The sole support of her broken-down, gambling-addict father and much younger sister, Abigail worked at the factory run by the Larkers, who, in the previous book, were exposed as the heads of a wide-reaching criminal syndicate. When Abigail agreed to help her friend Poppy to expose the Larkers and bring them to justice, Abigail was captured and cruelly tortured by their hired muscle, Frank Clowes, her mangled hand now a constant reminder of her past and of the betrayal by the woman she had once regarded as her closest friend.

With no other means of earning a living and keeping her father out of debtor's prison, Abigail has only one option open to her. All she has left to sell is herself, and while being a rich man's mistress would be preferable to becoming a streetwalker, she is under no illusions about the step she is about to take. Heading to her father's favourite gambling den in order to retrieve him one evening, she is aghast to discover that he has lost two hundred pounds. They have no money, so Abigail offers herself to her father's opponent, a strikingly handsome man she does not know. She will spend the next two weeks in his bed in full payment of the debt, and after that, she hopes she will have learned enough of the courtesan's arts to be able to attract a

protector.

Inspector Michael Strickland knows he shouldn't be in a gaming den but he's tired of following the rules and of trying to live up to expectations he knows he can never fulfil. He can't believe his eyes or his luck when Abigail makes her offer; her lovely face has haunted his dreams, and now here she is, offering herself to him. What Abigail can't know is that Michael is weighed down by guilt over the fact that his carelessness led to her capture and torture; he had information about Clowes that he delayed acting upon which gave the villain the time to find and maim Abigail. Michael wants her badly – and also reasons that he'll be doing her a favour by being her first 'client'. He'll treat her well and then have a word with some of the madams he knows to see if he can find her a place in one of the nicer whorehouses where she can command a higher going rate.

Not long after the bargain is struck, Strickland receives a note from Clowes, who has escaped custody, threatening Abigail's life. He decides not to tell her – after all, she will be living in his house for the next two weeks and he will be able to protect her in person while also working to bring about the criminal's recapture.

The story that follows is principally devoted to the slowly developing romance between Abigail and Michael. Although she is prepared to become his mistress immediately, Michael finds he doesn't want her to come to him simply because of their bargain; he wants her to want him and the delay gives them time to get to know each other before they finally become lovers. The mystery element doesn't really come into play until quite late on in the book, and I found Abigail's reaction upon discovering that Michael's actions – or lack of them – could possibly have contributed to her injuries to be rather over the top and contrived. On the positive side, however, the author's descriptions of the sights, sounds and smells of the rookeries, and of the harsh lives led by their inhabitants are very evocative, and she makes very clear that these people are as far removed from the glittering world of the ton as it's possible to be. I have to say, though, that Abigail does not at all sound like a young woman who has grown up in the worst areas of London and who has had little to no education. I can't imagine such a woman uttering things like: "*We are creatures of malcontent, pressed further and further back into these dark corners until eventually we shall all smother each other.*" And it's unlikely she would have been able to read or write, yet she enjoys reading essays by Swift and Voltaire's **Candide**.

In her author's note, Ms Monroe speaks of her love for Disney's **Beauty and the Beast** and how both Michael and Abigail possess elements of both those characters (for eagle eyed readers, there are several references in the text to certain elements of the movie version). Both are lovely to look at, yet Abigail is a bitter woman on the inside, one who has been robbed of all her choices, first by an irresponsible parent and then because her injured hand means she can no longer find honest work. And Michael, who has spent most of his life among the people of the slums, is indifferent to the hardships they face, preoccupied with his own sins and the guilt he carries for them. Gradually, they help each other to face their demons and emerge stronger as a result of their mutual love and trust.

In spite the reservations I've mentioned, and of the occurrence of a few modern turns of phrase and Americanisms, **Beauty and the Rake** is a well-written and developed romance between a pair of engaging protagonists. I will certainly be keeping an eye out for whatever Ms Monroe writes next.

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## BigComfyChairBookReviews says

### 3.5 Stars

Wow, people really didn't like Michael. I had a different view of him than several of the reviewers. Yes, he was a self-centered rake, etc...But, not once was he anything but sweet and generous to Abigail. It was her idea to prostitute herself out, and while he was obtuse to many things he never treated her like a prostitute or a whore. My favorite thing about him was that right from the beginning he admitted he had flaws and had made mistakes and he apologized for them and tried to be a better person.

I actually found Abigail much less likeable than him. She had such nasty resentment and bitterness. I get she has been through a lot, but she acted like a teenager blaming everyone else for her problems instead of blaming the people actually responsible. Not to mention the fact that she is an ADULT and responsible for making her own decisions. As anyone's mom would say, "if Poppy told you to jump off a bridge, would you?" Well, Abigail would, and then she would blame Poppy for her pneumonia. She is so concerned with taking care of her young sister Bess, yet refuses several offers of help out of spite and pride.?

The *Beauty and the Beast* themes were well done. I thought Monroe did a nice job of picking elements from the fairy-tale and the Disney version that would work best in her story and knowing what to leave out. It's obviously inspired by *BatB* but is still original.

The first book in this series was so full of action and intrigue (there was a bar fight in the 1st chapter) it really set my expectations for the series. Then the second book had a little less, but was still moving toward an end goal. Now, this third book has the least amount of adventure, 95% of it takes place inside Michael's townhouse. The villain plays almost no role until the very end. The focus was really on the two MC's character journeys and their developing relationship. This would have been fine if it were shorter, but 350 pages with one setting and no action is way too long. Ultimately if this book was 50-100 pages shorter it would have been closer to 5-stars.

I think most can agree that Monroe's prose are absolutely beautiful. But, I wish she would work on her characterization a little bit. I had the same issues with the first 2 books. Her character's motivations are often contrived and out of place. For instance, Abigail spends the whole book blaming Poppy and Knight and in the span of 60-seconds shifts all her blame and hatred to Michael for no reason (other than Monroe needed a way to get her out of the townhouse). She is mad at Michael for withholding a small truth but openly lying to her beloved sister? There are several character decisions that if you look at them too closely will fall apart. But, as a whole, Monroe is a very talented writer and I will continue to read her books.

WARNING: there is sex in this book, it is not erotica, but enough to be a steamy & hot adult romance. Please do not read if you are looking for something PG. Romance-5/5 Steaminess-4/5 Explicitness-3/5

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## Heather says

Beauty and the Rake is a story of hardship, self loathing and love. My heart went out to Abigail for all the pain and suffering that she went through. The author did a great job with conveying the agony and the self loathing that Abigail endured. Michael's inability to accept his past and look forward to a future was troubling. The authors words perfectly captured their struggle and the ability to over come it all to finally find love. I expected Michael to spend more time with the investigation and for the storyline to include more of it but I understand why it didn't. The beauty and the beast syndrome was definitely there all over the story.

All in all it was a good book that I was able to finish in a few hours. I would definitely recommend this book to others.

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## **OLT says**

There is most likely something wrong with me because I did not like this even a little. Something about this just doesn't work for me and on the off chance that there's somebody else like me out there in Romance Reading World, I'm sticking my head out and writing this review.

This is book 3 of Monroe's Rookery series. It's admirable that she has chosen London's poor areas and inhabitants for her stories. No fancy dress balls, dukes or earls and diamonds of the first water. Nope. We have working gals and guys, some of them ever so slightly on the shady side of life, because that's what you have to do to survive.

That's why this third story disappoints. I need realism if we're going to have stories about the lower classes and the nitty gritty of life. I don't want a policeman, son of a policeman, who lives in a large, well-decorated home with an incredible library and three employees (housekeeper, cook, and butler/footman/valet). He lives well and has money and comes from a (I believe) upper-class family. That family money thing confuses because why did his father work as a policeman if so? And the book has us sometimes believing that hero Michael lives comfortably because of family money, yet at other times the implication is that he needs to work for his money, with gambling on the side to supplement. Color me confused.

And then there's the heroine. Poor as a church mouse, working from dawn to dusk weaving textiles in a factory, yet she has all the time in the world to read books and educate herself. She's so well read and well spoken that she puts upper-class young ladies to shame. (Granted, she had to steal the books and form a "lending library" of sorts with other book thieves in the neighborhood.)

The romance doesn't work for me either. The H is, IMO, a bit of an arse. When gambling with the h's father puts the family in his debt, he takes advantage of the opportunity for the h to pay off the debt by staying with him for two weeks in his bed. Well, ick on him even if we're supposed to see that he is a tortured soul and will be redeemed by our beauty's love. And, speaking of our beauty, I wanted her to have more spine. She seems to melt whenever the H says suggestive things to her or looks at her speakingly. Yet I felt no warmth and romance in the relationship of these two. No fuzzies for me here.

So the book disappointed me. After book 2, I was looking forward to this one, feeling terrible about what had happened to this young woman at the end of the previous story. Unfortunately, book 3 doesn't make use of the possibilities this set-up provides.

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## **Maria Rose says**

With a unique twist on the classic beauty and the beast story, this historical romance between Michael and Abigail takes us into the rough reality of life in the poor and middle class areas of London in the early 1800s. As a police inspector, Michael is used to viewing the lower denizens of London's poor with mostly indifference. The exception to that is Abigail, a woman who paid the price for his neglect when she was tortured and left for dead by a crime family that he failed to stop in time, a woman he visited in the hospital. He gave her the strength to go on, though she never saw who it was that whispered words of encouragement to her in her pain filled state. Now Abigail is forced to make a deal with Michael when her father loses 200

pounds to him in a gaming hell - let her father go to debtor's prison or spend two weeks as Michael's paramour. Knowing her only option for a future hand to mouth existence will be the prostitution trade anyway, she is determined to learn from Michael how to conduct herself accordingly. But Michael's reputation as a rake is slowly undone by his fascination and attraction to Abigail, and his determination to help her rise above her poverty stricken state. They both have things to teach the other on the path to true love, if they are able to escape the clutches of the man who destroyed Abigail once and has escaped from prison, determined to finish the job.

It's no secret that I'm a fan of Ms. Monroe, having delightfully consumed her two previous titles in the Rookery Rogues series, *A Dangerous Invitation* and *Secrets in Scarlet* (the latter being where Michael and Abigail were first introduced as characters, though with no sense at the time that they might end up together). She has the knack of putting you in the scene with her meticulous attention to detail. Her research is thorough and describes everything from the different areas of London and the class of people living there, to the types of dress, mannerisms and expectations of low and middle income level characters. Yet far from being boring, this adds much to the points of view of Abigail and Michael and is instrumental in understanding their positions in society and how they interact with each other. The fact that they are attracted to each is dismaying for Abigail who is trying hard to isolate her emotions from the acts she's expecting to perform. She's a bitter woman now, her disfigurement having resulted in the loss of her only source of income and having the burden of taking care of her young sister and her gambling addicted father. She understands what Michael wants from her and nervous as she is about it, is determined to make the best of her situation. On the other hand, Michael is, (admittedly even to himself sometimes), a bit of an ass. He doesn't see anything wrong with this deal he's made with Abigail, thinking he's doing her a favour in getting her started on the road to a lucrative courtesan career, never realizing the selfishness of his actions until he starts to see the real Abigail, the one under the damaged and curt exterior. There is a slow unfurling of sexual tension between them and it leads to some steamy and yet tender love scenes, though not in the way that Abigail or Michael originally expected upon making their bargain.

One thing that is fairly clear is that Michael and Abigail both display qualities of a beauty and a beast, Abigail in physical form and Michael in his emotional state. I really enjoyed the allusions to the Disney version of the story that were woven throughout, from Abigail having to save her father by making a deal with "a beast", the tall thin butler and round womanly housekeeper that befriend Abigail in Michael's home, the cavernous library that delights Abigail even as she finds tomes hidden in the dusty corners that would have made Belle blush, and a delightful scene in the snow complete with a fur lined cloak. I'm sure I'll think of more gems that were subtly hidden throughout the story.

Along with the sweet romance is the suspense subplot with the man who tortured Abigail, having escaped from prison and threatening mayhem and murder on those responsible for his incarceration. It's also a good excuse for Michael to explain why he's keeping Abigail close without alerting his superiors to his true reasons for having her with him. I liked how the tension was put into the story through the twists and turns of wondering when Abigail's nemesis would finally make his move.

From beginning to end this story had me enthralled and I was delighted with the final result and Michael and especially Abigail getting their happy ending. 5 stars!

Note: a copy of this story was provided by the author for review.

Note: this review also appears as a blog post on Straight Shootin' Book Reviews:  
<http://straightshootinbookreviews.com...>

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## **HR-ML says**

London 1832. Michael got promoted to Inspector in bk #2 which frankly I liked better.

Michael was a Metropolitan Policeman & Abigail kept her family together even though her father with insufficient funds owed gambling debts. Michael agreed to enjoying 2 wks in bed with Abigail in exchange for Michael forgiving her sire's 200 pound debt.

I skipped ahead in this story because the H came across as a lukewarm policeman & love interest. A variety of lovers seemed to be his obsession. Doubtful he'd remain faithful going forward?

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