



Sinless

Lynne Connolly

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In Georgian England, love can mean ruin—even for a Shaw . . .

Lord Darius Shaw has never been in love before. But when he renews his acquaintance with lawyer Andrew Graham in a raid on a molly house, where men meet men for forbidden pleasure, they discover mutual feelings as deep as they are dangerous. For while society will turn a blind eye to an aristocrat's transgressions, Andrew has far more at stake. The son of city merchants, Andrew has a disastrous marriage in his past, and a young daughter to support. He could lose his livelihood, his reputation and even his life—and drag Darius down with him.

Darius and Andrew's only choice is to deny the true nature of their relationship. But when an enemy Italian spy threatens their secret—and their futures—the two set out to catch him. And in the process they are forced to face their desires—and make a life-changing decision.

Sinless Details

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Author : Lynne Connolly

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From Reader Review Sinless for online ebook

Claire says

I received Sinless as part of a Goodreads giveaway.

Darius Shaw, an aristocrat, and Andrew Graham, a barrister, find a deep but forbidden attraction in each other. Together they join forces to find a spy who could unveil their secret and destroy their respective families, including Andrew's young daughter.

I can't lie, I'm always a bit stymied by GLBT historical romance novels. Certainly GLBT people existed (and loved), but their stories rarely ended up in any sort of satisfying way given the violent prejudices of the place and time--in this case, Georgian England. Given that HEAs are an understood component of romance novels, it does seem to be an odd fit requiring some suspension of disbelief above and beyond the typical romance novel fairy tale. Still, seeing diversity in the genre is a good thing, and I hope to see romances explored between couples that are not just comprised of young attractive white people.

Moriah says

I received a copy of this title from the publisher for an honest review. Sinless was a 3.75 star read for me which rounds up to 4. Sinless features Lord Darius Shaw, the son who is attracted to his own sex despite the fact he is breaking the law. Less than a year earlier, Andrew Grant helped defend Darius's twin Lord Val; the two meet in a "molly" house and Darius can't help but remember his attraction to Andrew. Andrew has fought against his desires for years as he has much more than Darius to lose and lacks a powerful family to help provide protection. The two feel instinct attraction to each other, but have to navigate political intrigue and societal limitations in order to achieve their happy ending. I don't usually read male/male romances, but I thought Connolly did a good job of telling a story that anyone could relate to; she also provides readers insight into what Andrew and Darius risk in their relationship given society's views towards homosexuality during the Georgian period in England. I really enjoyed this novella and am looking forward to the next book featuring the Shaws.

Sissy's Romance Book Review says

Sinless by Lynne Connolly is book 1.5 in "The Shaws" series. This is the story of Lord Darius Shaw and Andrew Graham.

Darius is a Lord with a very supportive family although he has never been in love things change when he finds he has feelings for Andrew. Andrew is a lawyer with a young daughter with very different circumstance. During this time period you could be put to death for having such a relationship. So they have allot to over come. Much of their time is spent thinking of the other.

This is a very different Historical Romance that I didn't not know that was a M/M at first but I found it to be a really good story from Ms. Connolly.

Tracy Emro says

4.5 stars

I don't normally read M/M romance, but I really loved Darius in the previous book and frankly wanted to see how Ms. Connolly was going to manage a HEA for a forbidden romance that in the era that such a love could be punishable by death.

This is the story of Lord Darius Shaw, third son to the Marquess of Strenshall and Andrew Graham. Darius and Andrew met in the last book when Andrew was called upon to defend his brother Val against murder charges. There was definitely an attraction between them, but Darius doesn't believe that he can ever love anyone, because such a love would only cause pain and would condemn his lover to death.

They meet again when Andrew is part of a raid on a molly house, he has been sent there by General Court to meet with a spy and collect a list that is in the man's possession. He enters the house and is surprised to see Darius there, he confronts him and then sees the man he was supposed to meet. As he moves towards the man, Darius steps between them and kisses Andrew. Andrew is consumed by the kiss and begins to respond, then reason kicks in and he pushes Darius away. But it is too late, his contact has fled and Darius is arrested.

Darius spends the night in jail and can't stop thinking about the kiss - he wants Andrew and knows the feeling is mutual. Andrew comes to the jail and Darius taunts him, Andrew tries to get information about the spy from Darius, but he is not willing to talk. Andrew gets him released and asks him to join him for dinner.

Darius goes home and speaks with his father, he tells him that Andrew was looking for the spy and that he will speak to him and learn what he knows. He joins Andrew at his home and they talk over dinner, neither can forget the kiss or deny the attraction, Andrew initiates another kiss but are interrupted by a servant telling Andrew his daughter is ill. Andrew is a widower with a young daughter, something Darius did not know. When he learns of this, he knows he cannot act on his feelings because Andrew would be ruined and his daughter left with nothing. He returns the next and learns more about Andrew's past, how he came to be married and his feelings. They then discuss the incident at the molly house and Darius tells him what he knows about the man, Matteo Bartolini, he is a spy for the French and for Rome, he has a list of English spies and is willing to sell it. Andrew offers to help catch the man, but Darius refuses and tells him that he cares for him, but they must avoid each other because any relationship is too dangerous.

They part and Andrew tries to keep busy and forget Darius, but he knows it is impossible, he has fallen in love. He is invited to a ball being held by Angela Childers, the owner of Childers bank and remembers Darius telling him that he should move in society more often. He goes to the ball and seeks out Miss Childers, she tells him she needs to speak to him and slips him a note with instructions. He arrives at the scheduled rendezvous and is surprised when Darius joins him. Apparently Angela summoned them both, she has information that about the man they are looking for, but she needs a favor. She wants Andrew to work for her, he agrees and she gives Darius the address of where Matteo is staying in Dover. She leaves and Darius and Andrew discuss the information, Darius tells him that he will go to Dover and Andrew should stay in London. As they leave the room, they see General Court's son and he is attempting to sneak whores into the ball, they thwart him and leave the ball. Darius is torn, he is overjoyed to see Andrew again and knows that he loves him, but he can think of no way they can be together, so when Andrew asks why Darius is pushing him away, he tells him that he desires him too much and it is easier to be apart.

Andrew is restless and decides to go to his chamber offices, he is caught in a downpour and takes shelter

from the rain by a print shop - in the window he sees a caricature of himself and Darius kissing at the molly house. He is shocked and leaves. He is confronted by his superior at the chambers office and is warned to take care, he is also told to leave until the scandal dies down. Angry, Andrew finds out who commissioned the print and goes to see Darius. He asks for his help in getting more information. He tells Darius that he will go to Dover and that he believes General Court's son is involved. But he moves in circles closed to Andrew, so Darius agrees to stay in town.

While investigating, Darius learns disturbing news and knows Andrew is in danger. He rushes to Dover with his cousin Ivan, hoping he is not too late to save his love. Andrew goes to the meeting and is ambushed, when facing death, his only regret is not pursuing his love for Darius. When Darius arrives he finds Andrew laying on the ground, but he is alive! Heedless to any one else, he kisses him and helps him back to the inn. They confess their love and consummate their relationship. They return to London but still have no idea how they can be together. Upon returning Andrew learns the scandal has cost him more clients and he is still banned from chambers. And if that is not enough, General Court has summoned him. Darius arrives, he too has been summoned, but unlike Andrew, he is not worried. They confront the General and thanks to Darius, Andrew will not be charged with any crimes. As they leave, Darius takes Andrew to a house and tells him that he has a plan, Andrew is adamant that he will not be Darius' "kept man" and Darius makes him a proposal, one that will let them be together as partners. He tells Andrew that he would marry him if he could, but that this is the best he can offer and that he loves him.

This was such a beautiful story and while M/M romance is not really my "thing", I really loved this story. It is well written, flows well, has a bit of a mystery, a little bit of anguish, a lot of sexual tension and a HEA with a believable solution to a seemingly impossible situation. But be warned, there is a graphic M/M love scene, that might be offensive to some readers, but I thought it was really well done and enhanced the story.

I am voluntarily leaving a review for an eARC that was provided to me by NetGalley and the publisher

Tracy DeNeal says

Andrew and Darius

The Shaws series is well-written with a tight family unit at its core. This installment features the Lord Valentinian's twin brother, Darius and his attorney, Andrew.

Their forbidden attraction and the spy mystery they become embroiled in is both interesting and exciting. This family is addicting.

Deb Diem says

Sinless by Lynne Connolly is a great historical romance. This is a M/M romance though, so it may not be for everyone. Ms. Connolly has delivered a well-written book. I love the characters. A+ to Ms. Connolly for the characters and their interaction. Darius has been out of the closet (to his family) but same sex romances were forbidden at the time. Andrew is a barrister. Darius and Andrew are both searching for the same spy. Their story is loaded with intrigue, suspense, sizzle and bits of humor. I enjoyed reading Sinless and look forward to reading more from Lynne Connolly in the future. Sinless is book 1.5 of The Shaws Series but can be read

as a standalone. This is a complete book, not a cliff-hanger.

I voluntarily read an Advance Reader Copy of this book that I won from Goodreads.

Lori D says

When I requested this book to read from NetGallery, I did not realize it was a m/m story. But much to my surprise it was more about emotions and love than anything else and you could feel it coming through the pages. In historical times, the law forbade this type of relationship with penalty of death. So to actually step out and find someone that felt as you did and maintain that relationship was very scary. But as love will find a way it does in Lord Darius Shaw and Andrew Graham. This series is about the Shaw family and with Darius he is fortunate to have the support of his family. Andrew on the other hand is not as fortunate. He has a child to protect and his job as a lawyer depend upon his discretion. The two had met years ago when Andrew defended Darius's brother. Coming in contact again they begin to have feelings for each other. With a mystery to solve and a relationship to keep quiet, the author leads you through a winding path of strong emotions. You will enjoy this novella as the rest of Lynne Connolly's stories!

Monique says

Review written: January 17, 2018

Star Rating: ★★★★★?

Heat Rating: ?????

An Advanced Reader Copy (ARC) of this book was received free via Netgalley for an honest review.

Darius! It's Darius's book! Darius has been a staple character from The Emperors of London series and is probably the one cousin I wanted to read about most. When The Shaws became a series and I read that Darius was getting a book, I was thrilled. He's a complex and interesting character.

Bear with me because I feel like some things need to be said. First, this is an m/m romance. If that's not your thing or it's a hard limit for you, best to bow out now. For the record, this is my first finished m/m romance and I loved it. Darius is in the hands of a master in Connolly and I trusted her as an author *and* I was already deeply invested in Darius as a person.

Second, Darius was no caricature or stereotype as a supporting character and he most certainly doesn't become that in his own book. What do I mean by that? Darius is very masculine. Most of the time, the gay character is the clotheshorse or tends toward the "Girlfriend!" stereotype. I've always found this frustrating. On a meta level, I loved the fact that Darius is more traditionally masculine because it breaks that stereotype. But from a character standpoint, that's just who Darius is and who he has always been.

Third, there is a lot less sex (though I feel like there are plenty of sexy times even if most of it doesn't go all the way) in this book than there usually is in a Connolly historical. This does tend to emphasize Connolly's own description of this as more of a love story. And, make no mistake, this is a love story. I loved how demonstrative and emotionally engaged Darius is with Andrew. For a man who has essentially set himself at a physical remove from most people, even his family, Darius does touch Andrew a lot and he wants to touch

him a lot.

It's the sweet side of Darius coming to the forefront. Darius shows his emotions through several events: his need to touch Andrew almost from the first, his tenderness with Andrew's daughter, his use of his lover's name with family, and his reaction to the possibility of Andrew dying. These are seminal moments in the storyline as well.

Andrew is less protected than Darius. He is not nobility. He has a child he must provide for. His reputation - because he works in law - is of paramount importance. He has a greater chance of execution if he is found out. He is far more circumspect and unsure than Darius. But also, he has been more conflicted about his sexual preferences in general. Andrew does not come across as a powerful force but his quiet gentleness is matched by the fierceness of his love for his daughter and for Darius.

I loved the Shaws quiet and loving acceptance of Darius and Andrew but it is nothing less than expected. The Shaws embody the "family" concept to the n-th degree. They would be lessened mightily if they did not. I loved how they both *could* sink into the family safety net even if they didn't necessarily want to. But I also loved how Darius wanted to stand on his own two feet and his family supported him in doing what he wanted. Safety when needed and a launching platform when not: there is a reason the Shaws are beloved by fans of The Emperors of London.

That's an awful lot of love and acceptance. But this is Georgian England and not only is it illegal to be homosexual but the penalty is death. And reputations and lives can be cut short by loose talk and innuendo. Darius and Andrew face danger from just that kind of thing as well as danger from fools in government. As always, the Emperors are engaged in clandestine affairs, which spill out into the public. The dangers they face are commensurate with the times. The mix of intrigue and sexual politics are potent.

I can't wait for the next book in this series! But I do have one question: could Andrew have Darius be Elizabeth's guardian in the event of his death? What kind of arrangements could be made for the Shaws to shelter her? Because those kinds of things were not touched on in the book and inquiring minds want to know.

ETA (1/22/2018):

Authors could and should follow Connolly's lead here and ditch the stereotypical girl's best friend, clotheshorse, "effeminate" stereotype that seems so pervasive. I want to see a ton of Darius'es out there! Give me the brother's friend who puts his feet up on the coffee table and drinks beer while watching the Super Bowl, please!

This review is ©January 2018 by Monique N. and has been posted to Netgalley.

Jane says

I want to thank Lynne Connolly, author and Goodreads First Reads for the eBook copy of *Sinless* that I won in the Giveaway.

Two young men join together in the search of a spy for the French that has bought a list of names of all British operatives in France and much of the rest of Europe. The young man with the list is a spy for hire and likes other young men rather than the ladies.

This sets the plot for our two heroes to work together to capture the spy and in the process a traitor to England is exposed. They also find a new partnership that adds another element of danger to the story. I liked the descriptions of the times, the plot was suspenseful and the romance was a bit naughty but rather sweet too.

Caz says

I've given this a C- at AAR, so that's 2.5 stars rounded up.

Sinless is book 1.5 in Lynne Connolly's new series *The Shaws*, a continuation or spin-off of her seven book *Emperors of London* series about the powerful Vernon family. The Shaws are closely related to the Vernons (cousins I think), and some of them appeared in the earlier series as secondary characters. Book one of *The Shaws*, *Fearless*, featured Lord Valentinian Shaw (both families had a penchant for naming their offspring after Roman emperors) a rake and hellraiser who found himself in court on a murder charge. Thanks to the efforts of barrister Andrew Graham, Val was exonerated and in **Sinless**, we meet Andrew again as he works to unmask a traitor and tries not to give in to the strong attraction that sparks between him and Val's twin brother, Lord Darius.

Andrew has been sent by General Court to join a raid on a molly house (a brothel catering to homosexual men) in order to meet a man who is in possession of a list containing details of a network of spies. As the raid starts and Andrew begins the search for his contact, he is surprised to see Lord Darius Shaw, poised and coolly collected in the midst of the chaos. Andrew and Darius engage in a brief, wary conversation when Andrew spots the man he is looking for, only to be prevented from confronting him by Darius, who grabs Andrew and kisses him, allowing the other man to make his escape.

Darius has reasons of his own for interfering. The list contains the names of diplomats and military agents placed throughout Europe by his family and the government, so when he learned of its existence and that it was being offered for sale, he determined to get hold of it himself in order to prevent its being sold to England's enemies and his family's rivals. He had managed to befriend the man in possession of the list with the intention of using their friendship and ... shared interests... to obtain it, but the raid put paid to his plans so now he has to find another way – and his first step is to speak to Andrew Graham again in order to find out what he knows.

Days later, Andrew is still bewildered by the kiss and can't forget the feel of Darius' mouth on his or the way Darius had made him feel. Even though he has been married and has a young daughter, Andrew is well aware that his sexual preference is for men, but decided – after the death of his wife – that it would be safest for him to live a celibate life. Andrew is a successful lawyer, and cannot afford the merest whiff of scandal to be attached to his name; unlike Darius, he does not have the backing of an immensely powerful family to cover up any indiscretions, so while Andrew acknowledges to himself that he would very much like things between him and Darius to develop, he knows such a thing to be impossible. When Darius reveals the truth about the list and exactly what is at stake should it fall into the wrong hands, Andrew's sense of duty and honour compel him to offer his help... but more than that, he wants to help Darius because he cares for him. This decision propels Andrew into unforeseen dangers – and forces him to confront the truth of his feelings for Darius, even though it seems there is still no way forward for them.

One of Ms. Connolly's real strengths is her historical knowledge, which she uses to create a solid backdrop to her stories so that the reader is transported to the dirty cobblestones and extravagant mansions of Georgian

London. Her research is impeccable and her plotlines are intriguing, but I have, on several occasions, found the romances in her books to be somewhat underdeveloped and based on insta-lust – which is the case here. Andrew and Darius have known each other for a while and, we're told, have been suppressing a strong attraction to one another. But they go from zero-to-sixty in the blink of an eye; they share a couple of heated kisses, and then, BAM!, they're in love. There is no progression from 'I fancy you' to 'I love you'; in fact I checked to see if I'd somehow skipped a chapter or two, because the romantic development is pretty much non-existent and instead we get pages of Andrew and Darius thinking – and talking – about how much they want each other and how anything more between them is impossible. Darius has, supposedly, decided love is not for him because he doesn't think it's fair to put someone he loves in harm's way (given the fact that homosexuality was punishable by death at this point in time) and so refuses to let himself fall in love. I understand his reasoning, yet he barrels through all that with Andrew in no time at all, telling him on several occasions that he desires him and wants to take him to bed – and the next minute telling him such a thing can't happen.

I'm also a little doubtful about the degree of acceptance shown Darius by his family. He's not an oldest son, so doesn't have to 'do his duty' and provide an heir, but even so, the way that his parents and other family members accept his homosexuality strikes me as perhaps a little more wishful-thinking than historically accurate. I'm sure there were enlightened people around at the time who would have thought that what people did in their own bedrooms was up to them... I just found it a little implausible that Darius' preferences could be so widely known and nobody seemed to turn a hair.

Sinless boasts an intriguing storyline and a strong historical background, but it doesn't really work as a romance. I believe this is Ms. Connolly's first m/m story (please correct me if I'm wrong), but authors like K.J. Charles and Cat Sebastian have set the bar incredibly high for m/m historical romances, and this one just doesn't cut the mustard in that department.

Carra says

This is the first book I've read by this author, and when it comes to M/M historical romance I can be very hesitant and picky because it can be a difficult genre to get right and still remain true to the time period. The author actually did a pretty good job of this, though I wish there could have been an epilogue to see how Darius and Andrew were faring after the end of the story. Also, even given the number of historical books I've read (both M/M and M/F), there were several terms and phrases I had to look up for their meaning.

Darius is quite lucky in that his family accepts him even knowing his orientation. But his family seemed quite progressive and more laid back than you'd expect from a family in their position in this time period. For the most part he's discreet, though there's still rumors from time to time. His position in society does much to quell the talk, something that Andrew does not similarly benefit from.

Andrew comes from a working class family, and has worked hard to get to where he is. He does have a daughter, and he places her first in everything—even if that means he will never find love. He suppresses his wants, as he has so much more to lose than Darius if he gives in and is outed publicly. But the pull between these two is quite strong, and that ups the tension—emotional and sexual—throughout the story.

The majority of the story focuses on the intrigue going on as they attempt to identify a spy, which does offer a nice dose of suspense. The romance plays second fiddle to this for much of the book, with the tension between Darius and Andrew mounting the further in you go. When they finally give in to each other, it is

quite passionate and the scene is done well. Again, the focus is more on the mystery, and their intimacy is kept to a minimum which fits well with this story.

4.5 stars for Sinless, and I would definitely recommend this to M/M historical romance fans. While the physical scenes are at a minimum here, there is still enough for me to put this as an 18+ read.

Romancebooksandmore says

4.5 Stars

I won this book in a goodreads giveaway for a fair and honest review.

This is book 1.5 of the Shaws. The story of Darius Shaw and Andrew Graham. This is my first foray into M/M books and it was a really enjoyable read.

This is a historical book set in the 1700's during a time when just being gay could hand you the death penalty. So our Hero's must figure out if their love is worth the secrecy and what could happen if they were truly found out. This is even harder considering one is from a powerful aristocratic family and the other is a lawyer who is trying to make a living and raise a daughter.

Besides a few mistakes which I attribute to it being an ARC and the fact that it got a tad repetitive at times, if I had to hear one more time about Andrew's family's background I would not have been pleased, this book was a joy. The forbidden love, the angst the reason the heroes were thrown together it was all great I would recommend this book and I would for sure pick up the other books in this series.

A good book for anyone who wants a historical LGBT+ book.

Melissa says

OMG!! I love reading Ms. Connolly's historical romances, she puts you right there in her time period. This time it was my favorite of her's, Georgian England. Her attention to detail is absolute. I love the men's wear, the coats, the breeches, the way they wear them, the way their valet's obsess over dressing them and how they look. It is some of my favorite parts of her book. Or the way the female's dresses, and layers and how long it takes to prepare for an outing, opera, ball. The detail to the hair styles, and whether the female feels this is necessary or not. It is so much fun and adds either a much needed breather of fun to a scene or builds the tension for the next scene.

Ms. Connolly knows her words, and how to use them to the best effect. Her descriptions of the era she is writing in, buildings, streets, houses pull into the book and help keep you there, even if her characters act a little out of time sometimes. With such realistic attention to detail it was not hard to settle back and let this love story unfold of forbidden desire and all consuming love.

He is an Emperor of London (part of a very important aristocratic family that names their son's after old emperors). He is sheltered by his family name, but Darius Shaw is about to break the law, sin against the church and take the very law abiding Mr. Andrew Shaw with him. Andrew is a common man, a man of the law. He got Darius' brother off a murder rap the year before, and filled his fantasy's since. Andrew has a reason besides the fact he is sworn to uphold the law to resist his feelings for this handsome man that haunts his dreams - he has a small daughter.

When being caught in a gay relationship can get you a trip a gallows, how do fall in love and make a life for yourselves? Can these men of such different stations make it happen? You have to read to find out. Five stars and I can't wait to read the rest of this series.

Thank you very much, Ms. Connolly for sharing your joy in love and this era with us.

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

Initial Thoughts

This was just okay for me. The characters spent a lot of time thinking about each other but were apart for a lot of the story. I think that this is the first historical M/M romance that I have read. I thought that the danger of their relationship in the time period added to the overall story.

I won a copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway. Full review to be posted soon.

Cathy Geha says

Sinless by Lynne Connolly

The Shaws #1.5

What if the person you were attracted to was:

- * forbidden
- * made you “perverted” in society’s eyes
- * was considered to be “sinful”
- * could get you put in jail...or even hung

Well...Lord Darius Shaw is a man that tried to suppress his “desires” but finally felt freer once they were admitted to those closest to him. Andrew Graham, however, is of a lower status and thus less protected should he ever be found to have an interest in someone of the same gender. Laws in England were unyielding and remained difficult for those that did not conform to the standard male-female couple choice expected by society. Add in the fact that Andrew is a widow with a young daughter and the stakes are even higher.

Darius and Andrew have seen one another previously during the trial of Darius’s brother Val...in fact...Andrew was the lawyer defending Val. Awhile after the trial ends the two meet again in a Molly House raid and the spark remains. The two have a mystery to solve – who is the spy and who might be committing treason by providing the spy with documents being sent to the enemy? – They work together, test the waters between them, remain steadfast for most of the book in avoiding a liaison and finally find a way to a HEA together. I was once again impressed by the Shaw family and their loving support of both sons – no matter what – and wished all who find themselves in uncomfortable situations would have such support when they needed it.

Is it believable? Mostly

Is it a good story? Yes

Did I like it? Yes

Do I want to read the next book in the series? Definitely

Thank you to Net Galley and Kensington Books – Lyrical Press for the ARC – This is my honest review.

4.5 Stars
