

Review – The Gentleman’s Guide to Vice and Virtue by M. Lee

This book is about male homosexual romance (the main character is bisexual):

I lean in and kiss Percy on the mouth. I truly intend to make it a peck, just a small one, like it's only because of the rhyme and not because I've been going mad with wanting him for two years. But before I can pull away, Percy puts his hand on the back of my neck and presses me to him and suddenly it's not me kissing Percy, it's Percy kissing me. For perhaps a full minute, I'm so stunned that the only thing I can think is, Dear Lord, this is actually happening. Percy is kissing me. Really kissing me. Neither of us is sober, or even sober-adjacent, but at least I'm still seeing straight. And, damnation, it feels so good. As good as I've always imagined it would be. It makes every other kiss I've ever had turn to smoke and disappear. And then it's not just Percy kissing me—we're kissing each other. I can't decide if I'd rather keep my hands in his hair or do something about getting his shirt out of the way—I'm feeling frantic and scrambly, unable to commit to a single place to put my hands because I want to touch him abso-bloody-lutely everywhere. Then he slips his tongue into my mouth, and I am momentarily distracted by the way the entirety of my being spills over with that feeling. It's like being set aflame. More than that—it's like stars exploding, heavens on fire. Kissing Percy is an incendiary thing. I tug his bottom lip between my teeth and work it gently, and he lets go a bright, weighted breath as he slides from his chair onto my lap. His hands go under my shirt, tearing it out of the waistband of my breeches in handfuls, then his arms slide all the way around me, and I'm struggling to stay soft, trying to think of the least arousing things possible, and it just isn't working because Percy's got his legs on either side of my lap and his mouth is open against mine and I can feel his palms up and down my back. I run my tongue down his jawline, so enthusiastic that my teeth scrape him, at the same time working my fingers against the buttons of his breeches until the essential one pops. He inhales softly with his head tipped skyward when my fingers meet his skin. His nails dig into my spine, my shirt rucked up in his fists. I know we should be careful—it's a private

box, but not that private, and if anyone saw us like this, we might get in real trouble—but I don't care. Not about who might be lingering nearby or the pillory for sodomites or my father's threat of what will happen if I'm caught with a lad. Nothing matters right then but him.

The book also includes alcohol abuse and explicit heterosexual scenes such as a strip poker game that culminates in the following:

But undressing Jeanne is not as easy as it was when I imagined it every time she removed another piece of jewelry. My mouth is still on hers as we stagger to our feet, so I haven't even got a good view of what it is I'm meant to be ripping off. I take a guess and tear at the laces until something snaps and the stomacher falls away, which at least pops her breasts from their breast prison. But then there's a ghastly cage around her waist, with petticoats and corsets and a chemise and I swear to God there's another corset under that and then a whole creative other layer of who-knows-what but I'm certain it's there simply to keep me from her skin. Perhaps fashion is just a reinforcement of a lady's chastity, in hopes that the interested party may lose interest and abandon any deflowering attempts simply for all the clothing in the way. In contrast, Jeanne only needs undo four buttons on the flap of my breeches and then slide them down my hips, which is just unfair. Her fingers wend their way up my spine, and I'm shocked suddenly from the moment by the memory of Percy's hands there, his palms parentheses around my rib cage and a touch that made me feel hungry and breakable. His legs wrapped around me. The sound of his short, sharp breath when I put my lips to his neck. Goddammit, Percy. I let go of Jeanne just long enough to unfasten the buttons at my knees and get my breeches around my ankles, then I kick them onto the sofa in a high arc. She traces my lips with the tip of her tongue, talc from her skin coating my mouth, and, hellfire and damnation, I am not thinking about Percy. I put my arms all the way around her, jerking her toward me.