



Proof by Seduction

Courtney Milan

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Proof by Seduction Courtney Milan
She was his last chance for a future of happiness...

A gifted fortune-teller from a humble background, Jenny can make even the most sophisticated skeptic believe her predictions simply by batting her smoky eyelashes. Until she meets her match in Gareth Carhart, the Marquess of Blakely, a sworn bachelor and scientist.

He just didn't know it yet

Broodingly handsome, Gareth is scandalized to discover his cousin has fallen under the spell of "Madame Esmerelda," and vows to prove Jenny a fraud. But his unexpected attraction to the fiery enchantress defies logic. Jenny disrupts every facet of Gareth's calculated plan--until he can't decide whether to seduce her or ruin her. Now, as they engage in a passionate battle of wills, two lonely souls must choose between everything they know...and the boundless possibilities of love.

Proof by Seduction Details

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From Reader Review Proof by Seduction for online ebook

Quirky Omega says

There is definitely some fantastic grovelling here at the end. Thanks Kim!

Katie(babs) says

When I began reading Proof by Seduction I wasn't sure what to make of it. We have our heroine, Jenny Keeble who is a fraud by playing the role of a fortune teller named Madame Esmerelda. She lives in near poverty but because she is skilled at deceit and believes she isn't a good person and hasn't been since she turned nine years old, she does what she has to do to survive. Jenny is not some virginal, innocent British miss but a mature woman of thirty. The only respect she gets is from her clients, especially a young idealistic gentleman, Ned Carhart. Jenny enjoys having Ned as her client because he's such a nice guy and she doesn't feel lonely, even though she continues to take his money. And she doesn't really feel that guilty because if he's that gullible, it's his own fault. But what Jenny doesn't know is Ned has a cousin with a very critical mind and when he hears about Madame Esmerelda, he goes with Ned to visit her. The moment Jenny meets Gareth Carhart, Marquess of Blakely she knows her days are numbered.

Gareth is not only cold, distant and very rude, but Jenny also finds herself attracted to him. I think in part it has to do with him being compared to a "tawny, ferocious and a little feral" lion. Jenny is good at reading people and she's on point when it comes to Gareth. Ned is very protective of the Madame, while Gareth is annoyed. Not only is Ned being played for a fool, but Gareth has been forced away from his busy schedule to handle this situation. He hates having the responsibility of being a father type figure to Ned. Gareth isn't comfortable with people, even his own family. He's been away in Brazil for years working on a nature expedition and now only just returned to England when his grandfather died and had to take over the responsibility of his title. He hates his new life and longs for the freedom and seclusion he sacrificed.

Jenny will not be pushed around by Gareth. Actually, she enjoys the banter with him and wants him to loosen up, to smile and enjoy himself. She comes up with a game of sorts to prove she's authentic. Jenny is skilled at making things up. She tells Ned the spirits have come to her and stated Gareth will marry a woman at a ball they are going to attend. From an orange Ned cuts up, she sees a vision of an elephant. She predicts Gareth will approach his future bride and give her a carved elephant. Gareth is stuck in a hard position because if he exposes Jenny for what she really is, it will break Ned's heart. He goes along with the ruse but Jenny will also be involved because if he's going to be made look like a fool, than Jenny will also.

Jenny and Gareth are complete opposites in everyway. Even though life has been less than ideal for Jenny, she finds humor in the world around her. She tries to make the best of her situation. Gareth is so strung tight and can barely function in society or even with his own sister who wants his approval but seems frightened of him. As soon as Jenny walks into Gareth's life, he changes for the better. He kicks and screams and doesn't want to change, but Jenny forces him. Unfortunately for Jenny, Gareth is much like a hurricane. Once he has been unleashed, he won't be controlled. Even though he treats Jenny with contempt, he longs to hold her in his arms, to bring her pleasure and have it returned. And most importantly he wants Jenny to call him by his first name of Gareth because Gareth the man is very different from Gareth the Marquess. Jenny is now playing with fire because she decided to tangle with this lion.

Proof by Seduction is a dance between two people. Gareth and Jenny are spectacular together. When Gareth comes to the conclusion he needs Jenny, that's when things really pick up. He wants her with a desperate need because she's able to pick at his emotional scabs until they are oozing. Gareth has cut himself off, all because of a sad and lonely childhood that shaped him into the man he has become. Coincidentally, Jenny's own childhood is much like Gareth's. Jenny is willing to give everything to Gareth, even become his lover without the benefits of marriage, but won't become his mistress where she'll be bought with an expensive trinket or a nice house in town. She tries to teach Gareth these differences with some interesting results.

The change from disdain to passion and lust Gareth and Jenny have for one another happens quickly and may make the reader do a second take. But the scenes where Gareth invites Jenny to sin with him are incredibly sexy. These are two people who need touch and intimacy to feel alive and because they have been denied it for so long, they latch onto each other. There's so much meaning behind the reasons Gareth wants Jenny to call him by his first name. There aren't a whole slew of love making between these two, but they sure make up for it with their kissing and lusty looks. When they finally act on their desire, it sizzles, even though there was one statement that really jolted me out of the story. At one point as Gareth is giving Jenny the much anticipated loving with his tongue, it's mentioned he enjoyed tasting the salty sweetness of the woman that is Jenny. Sorry, I suddenly have a craving for chocolate covered potato chips for some reason. Even with that small purple prose description, I enjoyed the rest of the passage.

Gareth is one of those wonderful, misunderstood, stubborn heroes you want to hold close to your heart because of his internal suffering. I did feel Gareth held back a bit too much. I wanted to see more of an explosion on his part, an impassioned plea where he finally understands why he's the way he is and how he would fix it.

Courtney Milan's debut is a wonderful read. I really loved how Jenny tore off the mask Gareth wears and how they were able to come together and find happiness and love. The ending is sweet, tender and everything in between. Ned also brings forth some lighthearted moments, especially his appreciation for a woman's ankles and his sudden feelings for the woman he believes is Gareth's future wife.

Courtney Milan is a very welcomed debut author in the historical romance world and I look forward to her future releases.

Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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If Courtney Milan writes it, I will read it. I love that she writes in periods where women really didn't have much agency and does her best to empower them within that limited framework. She's also a lovely person, too, and we were lucky enough to get an interview with her in the Unapologetic Romance Readers book group (where she hints about upcoming projects and ideas - spoilers!).

I've read books from the Brothers Sinister and the Worth series, and was excited to traverse into the world of the Carharts. I'd hoped to read this book *before* the interview so I was a bit more prepared for the Q&A session, but I am really bad at blogging deadlines because I'm so focused on real-life deadlines, so that didn't really happen.

...Until now!

The opening of PROOF OF SEDUCTION is really great. We're introduced to Madame Esmeralda (who I couldn't help picturing as the Disney Esmeralda), gypsy fortune-teller extraordinaire. She's meeting with her favorite client, Ned, cousin to a skeptical marquess who also happens to be a scientist and a bit of a jerk. He challenges Madame Esmeralda's claims by forcing her to prove herself, which results in a battle of wills, a reluctant attraction, and a rather cringe-worthy attempt at matchmaking.

Lord Blakely was an interesting character, and his scientific background and stuffy demeanor kept his nastiness from being as unpleasant as it might otherwise have been. I enjoyed his verbal battles with Madame Esmeralda/Jenny, and thought that their interactions were great at adding tension - both sexual and otherwise - to the story. The way that they struggle for control over Esmeralda's attempts to "prove" herself were hilarious. Nary a loophole wasn't exploited to its fullest comedic extent.

My problem with this book is that it drags. Terribly. The beginning is the best part. After that, it's all downhill. Around page 100 I actually asked myself, "Things seem like they're about to wrap up - how on earth is she going to fill the remaining 147 pages?"

With sex, of course, and many back-and-forth arguments.

-_-

The sex scenes are for the most part well-written, but they are repetitive (like the arguments). And there are some rather jarring descriptions, like a woman's lady parts being described as "her wetness" and other little niggling details like that that pulled me out of the moment and made me go "ew."

Then there's Ned. I wanted to like Ned. And at first, I almost did. I felt sorry for him. He's a boy with a huge pair of shoes to fill, and an older cousin who doesn't take him seriously at all. But he's also a weenie. I get

that he was depressed, and that depression doesn't always make you pleasant to be around, which I think the author was going for (to her credit), but his characterization just seemed to vacillate so much, he started feeling more like a cartoon caricature of adolescent weeniness.

PROOF BY SEDUCTION isn't a bad book, and features some great lines. But it isn't Milan's best work. I get the feeling that she enjoys wrapping up stories neatly and quickly which is probably why she writes so many novellas and why they are so good. But that talent doesn't translate well to novels, and this one felt like it was very fluffed up when 100 pages or more could have been easily shaved off. The ending, too, seemed a bit over the top. I mean, really. An elephant?

2 to 2.5 stars.

Kathleen says

I had a hard time reading this book. It was not because I did not like the character's, I did. The story to me was just not that good. While I was reading it, I liked it but when I'd put it down, I had a hard time wanting to pick the book back up. I kept waiting for it to grab me and it did the last part of the book was very good.

If you are thinking about reading this book and read my review, please do not not read this book because of my review. Most of the woman who read this book really liked it or loved it.

Jennifer says

2.5 stars.

At 38% I pretty much loathed the H and felt sorry for the h. As other reviewers stated, the H was really an arrogant jerk. It was hard to like him, impossible even, and I couldn't understand why the h would want him. It was the classic "I can't help but dissolve into a puddle of hormones in the presence of his brooding broodiness" and I couldn't help but sigh. I struggled with putting this down as a DNF or powering through.

Upon finishing, I can't say I regret finishing this. DNFs always bug me and I was happy to find out what happened in the end. That being said, I'm conflicted on how to rate this book. The first third would have rated a one star. The rest of the book a three. I'm bumping the average up half a star for readability. I mean, honestly, the fact that Ms. Milan's writing compelled me to finish this in spite of an awful H says a whole lot.

So back to the story. The h's backstory is really quite sad. How she arrived at her present day vocation was realistic, but unfortunately the resolution of this story wasn't. The H's backstory was also realistic but cliche to the max. Groomed from a young age to assume the title and responsibilities? Check. Grandfather taught him a lesson about how love is worthless? Check. Taught to stifle all emotions as was expected of his station, but needed a passionate woman to teach him how to live and not just survive? Check. Needless to say, the H underwhelmed me in lack of originality. Then again, it didn't bother me much since Courtney Milan knows

how to tell a tale well.

However, in the end, the H's transformation from an automaton to a flesh-and-blood man was lacking. In short, he didn't grovel enough. And really, he needed to. A lot. Not because I'm a sadist and enjoy others' suffering but rather because the h was worth it. Even though her hormonal ridiculousness bothered me a lot. To the point where I'm writing in fragments. Because it bothered me that much.

Overall, a nice way to pass the time if you can get over how mean the H was in the beginning, how fast the h was to forgive him, and how little he needed to grovel in the end.

Sofia says

This book came along at the right moment for me, ready to lift up my spirits which it did admirably.

This was Milan first publication back in 2009. I could recognise Milan's signature in it and compared to her recent work I could easily see her beginning with this one. We got the unconventional heroine, Jenny, whom I liked because of her can do attitude and her positivity against adversity. There are holes in her story which I am sure that had Milan been writing now, would have been well filled. But if I close my eyes and ignore the holes than yes I enjoyed this story because of all the characters involved, Gareth and especially Ned, the character development, the inner dialogue and the banter and the smiles and the elephants.

BR with Ingela and Irina – thanks girls

Katrina Passick Lumsden says

I like Courtney Milan's writing. I do. But I think it says something that my favorite pieces of her work have been her short stories. Her characters are phenomenal, her plots are interesting, sex scenes are hot without crossing the line into trashy, and I enjoy the fact that her stories aren't just a bunch of superficial fluff. Real people with real issues, not all of them pretty or petty. That being said, sometimes the characters allow their issues to run roughshod over their own existences, and that turns reading about it into a rather trying ordeal. If Milan could construct more compelling obstacles, her work would probably wring four (perhaps five) stars out of me. With her short stories, having the characters balk and hem and haw over things that don't really matter isn't a huge deal because it's over with rather quickly (much as in real life). When you're reading a full length novel, however, the protestations of "Oh, I just can't be with him/trust him!" become a grating irritant.

UniquelyMoi ~ BlithelyBookish says

There are so few authors who can make me wish that I could hurry and reach the end of their novel so I can find out what happens, and yet at the same time make me wish that the novel would never end, because that would mean I would have to close the book once and for all. Courtney Milan is one such author. Another rarity among authors is the ability to write emotionally complex characters and not sound “clinical” while doing it. Again, Courtney Milan met that challenge head on and came out victorious with *Proof by Seduction* where two strangers are brought together by their desire to help one man.

Gareth, Lord Blakely and Jenny Keeble, *Madame Esmerelda*, were in a battle of wills – and wits – that kept the story moving at a fast pace. They were both looking out for Gareth’s cousin, Ned, who at 21 years old was – in their eyes – unable to look out for himself. And while they both wanted what was best for Ned, they had two entirely different ideas about what that was. The scheming, the plotting and the social status maneuverings made this a story in which I found myself constantly wondering what they would come up with next to test, tempt and torment each other...oh, and of course, seduce.

One of the things I really love about this book was how different it is from most romance novels in that, in most romances, whether they are historical, contemporary, paranormal or urban fantasy, there seems to be a set formula in which the heroine is almost always the one to help the hero free himself of a tormented past to become all that he can be. In *Proof by Seduction*, while Jenny does play this role, it starts out in a somewhat ‘less affectionate’ manner than we usually see. In fact, it’s her brutal honesty and manipulations directed at Gareth, whom she really doesn’t much care for in the beginning, which makes him start to realize what kind of man others see him as – aloof, demanding, uncaring, unfeeling...

It is Gareth’s unexpectedly honest reactions to what he learns about himself that forces Jenny to take a look at her own life – past and present – and make a choice for what she wants her future to hold.

People who follow my reviews probably get tired of hearing this, but I need to bond with the characters. I need to feel what they feel, otherwise the story is just a bunch of words to me. Courtney Milan did an excellent job of developing the characters into real people. She gave them strengths and weaknesses, qualities and flaws and she did something else that authors too often fail to do; she gave them hearts and souls. I booed their failures and cheered their triumphs. I ached for their loneliness and then delighted in their companionship. Indeed, I connected with them.

(view spoiler)

A truly awesome story by a truly great author!

Elizabeth says

With a tender, passionate romance, a touch of sly humor, and a gruff and incredibly sexy hero, Courtney Milan’s PROOF BY SEDUCTION is a delicious read from the first page all the way to the very satisfying ending. If you love historical romance you must read this book!

Ursula says

Oh frabjous day! Callooh! Callay! (with apologies to Lewis Carroll). You know that moment? When you start an HR with great optimism, you get a quarter of the way in and then you have a really bad feeling: this is going to be a book I don't like?

I am happy to say the Ms Milan totally exceeded my expectations here:)

This was a lovely book. One that I finished with a huge smile and a warm glow in my heart. After all the angst and emotional turmoil, a wonderful outcome.

The story centres around a young woman- well, older for an HR, she is 32- who has had a really tough start in life. She does not know who her parents are but was sent to a school (one of those cold places where girls learned the etiquette of the fork and spoon, and where all emotions, hopes and dreams were crushed) that was paid for until her 18th birthday by some mysterious sponsor, whereupon she was to become a governess and spend her life in lonely servitude. Jenny decided to break out and run away. With a man. Well, it didn't work out that well and we find her, years later, transformed into Madam Esmerelda, fortune-teller extraordinaire.

Then Jenny meets Gareth (the Marquess, Lord Blakely.) He is the cousin of a young client of hers, a man who came to her in a very depressed, suicidal state some two years before, and whom she helped enormously. The marquess, however is a cold, rational, scientific man full of completely repressed emotions, unable to express his feelings and blessed with a massive superiority complex, courtesy of his grandfather. He is determined to expose Jenny as the charlatan she is, but has so little empathy that he does not realise how seriously depressed his cousin was, or that by exposing her, he may well pitch his cousin back down into his well of despair.

The author is marvellous at gradually peeling back the layers of her main characters. My initial dislike of the marquess was tempered with increasing understanding, and what was terrific was that Jenny, although with her own faults, never once gives in to him in the way he wishes her to. She battles his buttoned down arrogance and challenges him to open himself up to his feelings and thus, to real relationships. These include a very touching relationship with a much younger sister, as well as his relationship with his cousin, with an "employee" - heaven forbid!- (his man of business) and then, of course, with Jenny herself. To me, he is definitely someone who is "on the spectrum" as we say here in Oz (Asperger's) and the steep learning curve Gareth goes through is sometimes excruciating, but always gripping. Watching Gareth's struggle with intimacy is difficult, his repeated failures where he beats himself up for not knowing the right thing to say or do painful, but ultimately so rewarding. I found myself cheering him on and rooting for their HEA with all my heart.

Jenny grows throughout the book, and she is complex character in her own right, not just a vehicle for the hero's redemption, as is so often the case in HR novels.

I read the enhanced Kindle version- love the insight it gives into the writing process and the author's intentions.

This one is definitely a keeper!

Amy says

If you knew me personally, you would know I have not read HR in years! You would also know that I would be the last person to pick up a book with the main character being a fortune teller! But this year, thanks to authors like Charlotte Featherstone and Courtney Milan I have found a new love for going back in time with some very beautifully real, flawed and engaging characters.

Gareth, The Lord Blakley, is a stone cold realist. His past shows a stern upbringing and he is taught early on that a "man of worth and status" does not show emotion or love of anything but the family business. Jenny, Madame Esmerelda, has grown up without knowing her parents and has felt unworthy in society and as a person all of her life. Both Gareth and Jenny have hid behind their titles in order to survive in a harsh world and that is exactly what they do until their lives collide.

What I loved most about the story is that usually redemption comes one sided in a lot of historical romances but with *Proof By Seduction*, there is an awakening in both Jenny and Gareth and how they are perceived in the world. Through their desperate need for love and companionship Jenny and Gareth learn what they are and what they desperately want to be hence uncovering a heart and soul in each other.

Milan gives a well rounded amount of humor, sensuality, honesty, and strength throughout the story and really draws you into connecting with both characters which is the most challenging role for an author. Milan delivered and I was breathless, aching, cheering, wanting to slap them up until the end.

Proof by Seduction is beautifully real and I look forward to more of Courtney Milan's work.

Kat Desi says

I've read *Brothers Sinister* but even having finished that I still haven't decided then if I liked Courtney Milan or not. After *Proof by Seduction*, I am now convinced that I DO like her! I didn't expect to be so affected by this book but I was. Both Gareth and Jenny were quite compelling characters and while they were going through some hard ships, my heart literally hurt. Yes, I was THAT involved with the story.

Gareth or Lord Blakely is not your average dreamy alpha Hero but he has his moments. Having grown up an awkward child, he turned to sciences and so that he will not be bullied, learned to be cold and calculating to intimidate those who would dare to make fun of him—he is also arrogant and clearly thinks himself above all as a marquess. Jenny Keeble a/k/a Madame Esmeralda makes her living by way of fraud only. She is no flimsy little miss, but a mature 30 year old woman who was "ruined" by society standards. She is strong, willful and will not let herself be pushed around by Lord Blakely.

I adore this two characters and this book will probably stay in my mind for a long time, I think.

Mandi Schreiner says

Prior to getting *Proof By Seduction*, I heard a lot of buzz about this book and debut author Courtney Milan. I was eager to get my hands on a copy, and I was just as eager to see how this book would hold up to all the talk. I am happy to say it held up well, more than well. Courtney Milan writes a very smart, funny and

romantic book.

Lord Gareth Blakely is a broken man, a cold, tortured soul. He was raised to take over his title, and it left little room for fun. He knows nothing of showing his emotions or how to interact with people. One of my favorite things is that Gareth stays broken throughout much of the book. There are no overnight miracles. He doesn't take one look at Jenny and start frolicking through a meadow the next day. He has been an emotionless being all his life, and it takes time, and as he learns, much determination, to become someone better.

Jenny is posing in her life as Madame Esmerelda, a fortune teller, who possesses no actual gift, except the gift of persuasion and trust. She has taken what life has thrown at her and made the best of it. Although she in essence swindles money out of people, she has a good heart and would not choose this life if there were other alternatives.

Gareth, a scientist is determined to prove Madame Esmerelda a fraud for his cousin's Ned's sake. Ned went to Jenny years ago with severe depression, with thoughts of ending his life and Jenny predicted a future of happiness and hope. Ned has prospered since then, and Jenny feels a fierce loyalty and protection over him. Blakely feels the same feelings toward Ned, and sees Esmerelda as a liability to him.

Ned, desperate to show Gareth that Jenny is the real deal, pleads with her to predict something. Jenny doesn't want to let Ned down, nor does she want to admit to Gareth that she is a fraud. So she comes up with this prediction – at an upcoming ball, at a certain time, Gareth will look upon the woman he is to marry and then he must perform three tasks, to be named at a future time, to secure this match. Gareth seeing right through Jenny's absurdities, makes her come to the ball with him, so she can be their to witness this great coupling. The more Gareth and Jenny spend time together, they more their shields start to come down, and love is allowed to seep out.

For as much as Gareth is the serious, stern character, I found myself laughing out loud many times during his scenes – and that is how you will start to root for him. Courtney Milan puts him in situations where you can't help but have a little pity for him and he melts some of that ice off.

There are ridiculously, funny moments in this book – Jenny "sacrifices" an orange on her first meeting with Blakely, looking into the pulp for clues to his future. Jenny knows this is hogwash, and she knows Blakely knows, but she is determined to duke it out with him. His first task involves carving an elephant in a piece of ebony to give to his future bride. Then he must compose a poem about Ned. Let's just say, Gareth has no talent in the art department, and my stomach hurt from laughing.

Jenny has her moments of contradiction. Matching wits with Blakely as Esmerelda she is strong and smart. Then there are times as Jenny, where she wants to prove to Gareth that she is better than a mistress, yet finds herself unable to deny him entry to her house at night. They both are yearning for companionship and love and their desperation to have it is what drives them together.

Jenny and Gareth both want Ned to be happy and towards the end of the book it felt like Ned is forgotten a bit. He is such an integral character at the beginning I kind of thought he got lost in Jenny and Gareth's romance. Jenny has her fair share of personal problems, but for as much as she fights for Ned at the beginning of the book, she lets him down towards the end.

Courtney Milan does a great job of writing two characters that each hide behind a mask. Gareth hides behind Lord Blakely and Jenny hides behind Madame Esmerelda. As the two of them slowly strip away their masks,

their love story is truly wonderful. When Gareth strips away everything and looks at Jenny just as Gareth, it is beautiful and almost heartbreakingly. A truly lovely story, that I can't recommend enough.

Lexxi Kitty says

I really hate alpha-asshole main male characters. Especially when they go all 'manly' and 'can't help myself' and force themselves on women who 'really want it' because 'he can tell'. Fuck off and die, asshole. Bodies react for many reasons, and she might even really, in fact, be turned on - that doesn't fucking give you the right to force yourself onto her fuckball 'because I know you also want it'.

Odd how this is something like the 13th book I've read by this author, but whatever.

Beanbag Love says

Many of my friends have reviewed this book and they've loved it, so I don't think I'll go into too much detail. Of course, every time I say that I follow up with about six paragraphs, so we'll just have to see what happens.

Courtney Milan is a very good writer. Her premise was very nicely laid out right from the first pages. We got action, tension, and a pretty good introduction to the characters in short order.

I thought Gareth's "problem" was both fascinating and heart-breaking. Who hasn't been there and had that feeling balloon to epic proportions? I could really relate and, even when he was bumbling around with his poor attempts at communication, I had to feel for him.

Jenny got on my nerves a bit. I never quite understood her strategy. And she made at least one very stupid move which I thought wasn't completely believable when compared to her obvious quick wit and cunning. I don't know that I can pinpoint it, but she just seemed a pain at times.

All-in-all, though, this is a very good historical romance. It's a bit unusual, but familiar enough to be a comfortable read as well.

Okay, not quite six paragraphs, but enough to give *Proof by Seduction* the Beanbag seal of approval.

Ally72 says

There really isn't anything better than reading a wonderful book and left feeling happy after it is over. The story revolves around Gareth (Marquess of Blakely) and Jenny (Madame Esmerelda). Gareth is a scientist and restricted to his numerous responsibilities of being a Marquess. Jenny is a well educated orphan who is trying to live an independent life. She has few options available to her so she decides to be a fortune teller. Gareth's cousin, Ned, comes to depend upon Jenny for advice and Gareth fears he is being taken advantage of. Gareth threatens to expose Jenny and in the process falls in love with her. There is so much more to this story and depth to the characters than what I am writing about. I know I am NOT doing this book justice with my review! "*Proof of Seduction*" was a beautiful love story where two complicated and intelligent people came together in a perfect fit. This book reminds me of Tessa Dare and Julia Quinn's (especially her

older ones) books. If you like those writers, I think you will really like this one too. Courtney Milan has become a new (favorite) author for me to read and I cannot wait until her next book comes out!

KatLynne says

Gareth Carhart– Marquess of Blakely – scientist.

Jenny Keeble – Madame Esmerelda – seer and predictor of the future

Ned Carhart – Young cousin of Gareth and client of Madame Esmerelda

Surprisingly, I loved this book. I didn't think I would. Reading the cover, it was hard for me to imagine I would like, much less love, a hero who was so "rigidly logical, a scientist who retreated behind scientific proof". But you soon fall in love with this broodingly handsome, complex, intense man.

I loved Jenny, her independence, intelligence and her desire to not only survive but thrive in a world that had at best treated her cruelly. Having no family, no known relatives, I found myself rooting for her to get her HEA.

From the beginning with Gareth's intent to prove Madame Esmerelda as a fraud and therefore stopping all association with her from his young cousin, Ned, I found myself enthralled. A great historical that I found intensely romantic, witty and sexy.

A debut book from Courtney Milan and I am so glad I read this one!

Rane says

Gareth Carhart, Marquess of Blakely is anger and appalled when he finds out his cousin is getting taken advantage a "Madame Esmerelda" and is out to prove she's a fraud to free his cousin from her grasp, only he didn't count he- himself would fall under the spell of not Madame Esmerelda but the true woman behind the costume- Jenny Keeble

Jenny has made a living as a fortune teller, but instead of telling the future to her clients, she only tells them what they want or need to hear, but when she comes toe to toe with the Marquess of Blakely there's more at stake then her future- but her heart...

When it comes to brand new authors, am always a little leery and give the author a lot of leeway, Courtney Milan blew all my doubts of the water from the first few pages, in her stunning debut book.

Jenny Keeble has made a living fooling clients into thinking she can tell the future, but what's she's really doing is giving them what they want to hear, business is going great until one of her normal clients, Ned Carhart a man she comes to like for his easy going self, brings his cousin the Marquess of Blakely, Gareth Carhart, whose cold and will use science to answer and prove Madame Esmerelda a fraud. Jenny doesn't want to lose the respect she's earn as Madame Esmerelda and the money it brings in, so she comes up with a plan to break down the shields and coldness she sees around Gareth and the way The Marquees treats his cousin, if she's proven a fraud, then she's going to try and make life easier for Ned, giving the Marquess three tasks in order for him to find his bride, Jenny is surprised how deeply she's drawn to Gareth and at a

risk of losing her heart to this cold unfeeling man.

Gareth wants to get his cousin away from this so-called Madame Esmerelda, and as a scientist, he knows exactly how to prove her a fraud with science, what he doesn't count on is Madame Esmerilda cleverness and wit. When she tells him and his cousin she can find him his future bride, along with completely three tasks, Gareth goes along with the tasks knowing he has her in his grasp anytime. When his attraction to this clever woman is also set of flame, he sees this a bonus of winning the war between her and after winning he'll have her in his bed and Ned out of her grasp. He's taken by surprise over and over again as Jenny slowly strips away his shields he's hidden behind, and uncages his heart and sets it free.

Courtney Milan writes two strong characters with a lot of depth and just as much heart, even if they can't see it.

Even though Jenny does lie and takes people money, you see there's more then meets the eye with her. She doesn't just tell people what they want to hear, but what they "need" to hear, when it comes down to it, I felt she was giving advice and hope to the people whom needed it. Because of her status in society, she wouldn't have been able to get anywhere in life, expect selling her body, but Jenny has more respect for herself and does what she can to live. What makes her so beautiful is she's able to see the good in people, it's easy for many of us to just see the bad in people and brush them off, Jenny doesn't do that, she is able to see the goodness, the strength of character in everyone around her even the ice man- Gareth. Jenny's childhood in a cold girl's school and her past would have made someone bitter and untrusting, with Jenny it only gave her hope and built up her inner strength in herself, and she needed that when she takes on Gareth, each of her tasks was to show the respect others, open his heart and drop his shields.

Gareth was a complex and very cold man, raised to not to feel, not to smile, not to laugh or have fun, Gareth only felt truly alive on his trip to Brazil. He felt in being alone, he could be free, once he returns to stuffy London, he feels even more weighed down by his title. Gareth has trouble talking with own sister and trying to rule over his Ned but not trying to rule his own emotions and trying not to care. When Gareth accepts the give tasks, he does them for show and to prove his own point, instead of seeing beyond the tasks and what the tasks are meant for. Gareth wants to win at all costs, but in the end no one is truly a winner at War, both sides always lose and Gareth is at a lost in what to do and feel. Jenny brings out emotions he's tried to run away from, and to see her as his equal. The road to Gareth dropping his complete shields is hard, but well worth it. Jenny brings him into the light, she shows him how good it feels to smile, laugh and even give a comfort hug. He's able to see the golden heart in his cousin and the strong woman in his sister, things he never saw before until Jenny showed him. It was amazing to see Gareth finally thawed out, and able to truly smile with his heart.

Secondary characters, are usually there to push along the story, but Courtney Milan makes even the secondary characters engaging, Ned went to Jenny in his darkness hour, and she gave him hope, when he loses it again, he tries to hold on to the lie she told him, but what if that lie became true? Ned was fun lovely, but finding himself, his worth in the world, is something we can relate to, Ned needed a little push, and with some help with Jenny (and Gareth) he's able to find the man inside himself he wanted to be. I look forward to more of his own story and his future.

Overall: stunning debut by an author whom shows a promising future, no need for a fortune teller to tell you either, just read this awesome book!

Nisha says

This book rocked. The main characters are Jenny Keeble, an educated woman who masquerades as Madame Esmeralda, a fortuneteller, and Gareth Carhart, the Marquess of Blakely, a scientifically driven, cold, awkward man. Gareth tries to unveil Jenny of her fake identity since his cousin, Ned seems to take her word as law. And so begins the battle.

I loved both of the characters. Jenny was very real and essentially a modern independent woman, who carries her share of scars. She's exceedingly smart and manages to counsel Ned when he is depressed (that was really ingenious). Gareth is so perfectly awkward. I love how his mind works and whenever he makes a mistake. It is one of the few HR that portrays the Hero with self-esteem issues (he's really NOT good at making friends). The Elephant is one of the funniest cutest part.

A great debut novel and worth reading and even adding to your collection.

Susanne says

4.5 Hilarious Stars!
