



## **El affaire de la institutriz**

*Courtney Milan*

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ELLA NO SE RENDIRÍA...

La institutriz Serena Barton había sido despedida de su puesto tres meses atrás. Como no podía encontrar otro empleo, optó por exigir compensación al hombre culpable de su despido, un duque mezquino, egoísta y canalla. Pero no era al duque al que temía, sino a su mano derecha, el hombre conocido como el Lobo de Clermont. El temible expugilista se había labrado muy mala fama solventando los asuntos sucios del duque y, aunque Serena sabía que no podría nada contra él, tenía que intentarlo, pues estaba en juego todo su futuro.

ÉL NO PODÍA CEDER...

Hugo Marshall era ambicioso y despiadado, características ambas que le habían servido para subir de hijo de un minero del carbón a mano derecha de un duque. El día que su jefe le ordenó que se librara de la molesta institutriz por las buenas o por las malas, para él era solo un día más de trabajo. Desafortunadamente, no consiguió convencer a Serena por las buenas y, a medida que la fue conociendo, descubrió que no era capaz de hacerlo por las malas. Pero solo podría satisfacer sus ambiciones si ella se iba. Tenía que elegir entre la vida que buscaba y la mujer a la que había empezado a amar.

Una novela corta.

## El affaire de la institutriz Details

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# From Reader Review El affaire de la institutriz for online ebook

**XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says**

**Before you ask**, I can tell you that NO, the **Fluffy Siberian Bunnies** (FSB™) have NOT hacked my account. This is really me non-reviewing this POC™. **In my defense**, I have to say that:

**1/Liz** forced me to do this.

**2/This is the MacHalos' fault**. Were it not for the bloody shrimping TBR Cleaning Challenge, I wouldn't have to get rid of all the ~~erap~~ stuff that's been sitting on my Kindle for centuries.

**3/Being stuck on a ferry** for 8+ hours has the strangest effect on one's sanity.

**4/I'm innocent**.

**Were I my younger**, more enthusiastic self, I'd write a novel-length crappy non-review explaining why this gloriously short story is so **suicide-inducing**. But I'm not, so I won't. All you need to know about this is:

① **The level of stupid is staggeringly overwhelming.**

QED and stuff.

② **Boredom, it's a thing.**

③ **The unlikable characters are the most unlikable bunch ever.**

Also, they are as **emotional** as a truckload of cardboard boxes and **flatter** than my favorite herd of ironing boards. Also, also, their behavior make **no fishing sense whatsoever**. Also, also, also, I might want to **slightly skewer them all**. Maybe.

④ **The way rape and its aftermath are handled made me feel slightly homicidal.**

You do not treat this subject in such an **ambiguous way**. No. You. Don't. You do not **romanticize** it and you certainly do not depict in such a **frivolous manner**.

**No moral**, no nothing for this one. I am bloody shrimping **done with this crap**.

**P.S.** Liz dear, I guess this means you won't be shaving your head. I'm going to kill you dead for challenging me to read this, but at least you'll make a delightfully hairy corpse.

[October 2015]

► **This is not outside** my comfort zone, this is beyond my wildest imaginings. I'm **never going to survive this one**.

? **Thank you Liz**, I love you forever and always. I really do ?

**ETA:** Liz said she would **shave her head** if I ended up liking this one (read the comments if you don't believe me). I think I'm just **about to fall in love with HR**.

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### Jessica's Totally Over The Top Book Obsession says

3.5 stars

\*\*\*Spoilers\*\*\*

Wow okay this story was different. The heroine Serena was raped by the hero's(Hugo) boss the Duke of Clermont. She was pregnant from said rape and Hugo marries her behind the boss's back to keep her child from being labeled a bastard. He plans it to be a married in name only to help her but they make love, which was really sweet, and they fall in love. I have to say I liked that this story was a little different as it started out with something horrid like rape(not that you read the rape just that she shows up pregnant and she later tells what happened) but ends with a cute love story. I loved that Hugo was so sweet and willing to raise another man's child. I also loved that he punched his boss for his wife. I thought the end was bitter sweet with the two brothers meeting as preteens. One not knowing he had a bastard brother. I felt bad for both boys one finding out his dad is a pos cheater and that he had a brother, the other knowing he is a bastard. The only problem I really had with this book was it was too short I really wanted more. Just sayin'!

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### UniquelyMoi ~ BlithelyBookish says

Courtney Milan has become one of my favorite historical romance authors and books like this, *The Governess Affair*, is why. This introduction to the *Brothers Sinister* series is a charming, beautiful tale that I simply couldn't put down. And surprisingly, while this is a novella, a short read, it lacks nothing. A powerful story, romance, passion... yes, this book has it all - including one of the sexiest, sweetest bedroom scenes ever!

I fell hard for both Serena and Hugo... their secrets, their tortured pasts... everything about them drew me in. And as if that wasn't already enough to hook me, the *Aftermaths & Beginnings* at the end of the story totally sealed the deal and has me impatiently looking forward to the first book in the series, *The Duchess War*.

4.5/5 stars

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### Shannon says

ETA on 4-24: **Free on Amazon! Grab it!**

Historical romance isn't my least liked genre though it's nowhere near my favorite, but every now and then I feel the need to read something that isn't YA or fantasy and I branch out into the world of corsets, cravats, and carriages. **I generally don't enjoy the time I spend there, and I often find myself at odds with fans of**

**the genre, but thankfully this short story has high ratings because it's a tale that people who don't automatically love the genre can still enjoy.** Milan's characters are well-developed, the plot is intriguing, and she writes in an easy-to-digest and quickly moving manner that makes it difficult to stop reading. And let's not forget the incredibly hot sex! Thank you for the realistic scene, Milan.

Let me get this out of the way though; (view spoiler) Don't click the spoiler if you want to go into this blind, but you will learn that info early on. **I think the most important thing to remember is that this is a story of damaged people who haven't been broken beyond repair.**

The relationship between the heroine, Serena, and her shut-in sister, Freddy, was one I found particularly interesting, as they each see the other as having deficiencies while they themselves are living the "right" way.

"Do you not understand what happened to you?" Freddy glared at her. "You suffered a fate worse than death, and still you—"

"I am alive," Serena said. "My child is alive. I intend to carry on living. Can you say that much?"

...

"You always put things at risk. If you fell out of a tree as a child, I'd clean you up and bandage your knees, and next I looked you'd be out climbing again. You never learned your lesson."

Oh, she'd learned her lesson: *Climb harder.*

...

How could they be sisters? It seemed impossible that they should view the world with such fundamentally different eyes.

**The conversations between these sisters added a dimension to this romance that I think really helped to flesh out Serena's character.** I thought it was a clever way to develop the heroine when Milan didn't have that many pages to do so.

**I enjoyed the witty banter between the hero, Hugo, and Serena very much, and their notes back and forth to each other were some of the highlights of the story.** I also thought that what we got of Hugo's backstory was sufficient; sometimes I don't need someone's entire life spelled out for me. When he recounted his memory of his mother I even teared up a bit, though I think I'm just a softy when it comes to moms (I've felt emotional at parts that dealt with moms where others didn't.)

I also liked that Hugo wasn't some gorgeous, overly tall, enormously endowed man and that Serena wasn't a "plain Jane" that nobody but the hero paid attention to; **they're just average people who fall in love in an albeit unaverage way.**

This *is* a novella so it's obviously not going to be as developed as a full-length novel, but Milan uses her 100 or so pages masterfully. **Many people enjoyed this romance for good reason, and I think if someone like me who doesn't typically like historicals found it entertaining I think others will as well, and I'm excited to see what else she has to offer.**

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## **Anna (Bobs Her Hair) says**

**Grade: A+ or 5 brightly shining stars**

Beautiful, poignant, and skillfully written novella! I absolutely loved it!

**\*\*\*updated to add full review\*\*\***

### The Story

Serena Barton is a ruined woman. Her dismissal as a governess position leads her to demand compensation from the Duke of Clermont. Serena will not leave empty-handed. She is prepared to fight for there is much at stake. She's aware the duke employs an unmerciful man of business, yet she bravely resolves never to be weak again.

Hugo Marshall has one grand ambition, which is to become the "richest coal miner's son in all of England." Once his employment with the duke concludes successfully he will have the necessary funds to actualize his dream. Hugo has worked too hard to resolve Clermont's financial woes. Success equals a substantial fortune from a bet. Serena will *not* cost him his five hundred pounds.

### The Characters

Serena and Hugo are incredibly well-written characters. I absolutely loved them! Serena's spirit burns bright. She's courageous, resilient, charming, and simply powerful. Her inner strength quietly resonates throughout the story. Serena's sister's fragility provides a nice contrast to her character. Frederica is a sad character frustrated with her sister's pugnacious spirit.

At first glance, Hugo appears to be your typical hero – ruthless, ambitious, and self-serving – he's not! Courtney Milan structures his character around a bittersweet core. What drives him is more than rising above his coal miner's background. When I discovered what it was I found it deeply touching.

### My Thoughts

I adored this achingly lovely historical romance about two ordinary-looking commoners, which Milan gently reveals in layers. Their story and romance was affective, balanced, and beautifully written. *The Governess Affair* deftly weaves dialogue, reflection (inner dialogue), and expressive actions (the showing part).

Hugo and Serena are heroic survivors with hopes and dreams. Physical appearance is bypassed; it's how they make each other feel that establishes their connection. Their happy ending left me feeling triumphant for them. If this story were in paperback it would have a special place on my Keeper Shelf. It is now one of my favorite historical romances, and I'm highly anticipating the upcoming Sinister Series. Ms. Milan has gained a new fan! Overall, this is a touching novella that subtly and ultimately reveals the power of a mother's love. If you haven't tried this author's work yet then this is the perfect introduction! Sincerely!

### Memorable Moment

***Safe*, her dastardly senses whispered. *He's safe*. There was something comforting about his forthright recital—comfort with an edge that only sharpened when he took a step closer to her.**

**"If I were a cobbler," he said, "I'd offer you a discount on shoes."**

**“Now you’ve completely lost your mind.”**

**“No. It would give me an excuse to measure your feet with my bare hands.” His lip twitched up. “And don’t think I’d stop at your toes.”**

**She had both her hands on top of his walking stick. She felt herself lean toward him, ever so slightly.**

**“But you’re not,” she said. “You’re the Wolf of Clermont, and I’m the woman you cannot drive away.”**

**“Can’t is such an unforgiving word,” he said. “I prefer *do not wish to*.”**

**This was a man who had walked away from his family at fourteen. He had a reputation for getting what he wanted.**

**But there was so much more to him than the boorish drone she’d once envisioned. He had talked about crushing her hopes and dreams, but when he stood next to her, he drove away the despair she’d carried for so long.**

#### The Sinister Series

Set in the 1860s and nearly thirty years after the prequel < i>The Governess Affair

*The Duchess War* – Robert Blaisdell, the Duke of Clermont (releases Summer 2012)

*The Heiress Effect* – Oliver Marshall, Serena’s son (releases Fall 2012)

*The Countess Conspiracy* - Sebastian Malheur, the Earl of Rane - Robert’s cousin (releases 2012 or 2013)

From the author’s website: <http://www.courtneymilan.com/brothers...>

*“The series is named after the men, but the individual books are named after the women. The women all share one characteristic: they’ve all been ruined. Just not in the usual way...” – Courtney Milan*

**[Note to readers: As of 4/23/12, this sweet little gem is only 99 cents and it's lendable!]**

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#### **Mo says**

3.75 stars.

I quite enjoyed this short read. First time reading this author but I will be checking out other books by her.

I liked both characters. She was strong and would not back down for anything!!

As you know, if I don't do a review straight away, they are usually short. Thank fuck, I hear some of you say!!!

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## Baba says

**"You could make me say it again," he whispered. "Make me say it always. Make me say it so often that you never have cause to doubt. I love you."**

Oh yes, again, I love it when a story turns from pretty good to amazingly good! 3 stars for the first half and 5 stars for the second half of the story.

*"A perfect sunrise--seen once, remembered always. Never duplicated."*

This was a first for me but certainly not my last read by Courtney Milan. I really loved the second half of the story. In hindsight I think I wanted more interaction/dialogue between Hugo and Serena during the first half of *The Governess Affair*. I assume that writing engaging dialogue is one of Ms. Milan's strengths. I like her writing style--her prose is beautiful. It was fun to witness the H and h's exchange of "lovely" letters. My oh my...

These two gave one another a piece of their minds, that's for sure and their interaction was riveting and at times even amusing.

*"Never hit a man with a closed fist," he told her.*

*He could feel her pulse.*

*"Why? Because it gives you an excuse to manhandle me?"*

*He let go. "Slap his face instead."*

*"Ha."*

*"It will make him take you less seriously, and then he won't be expecting it when you knee him in the groin."*

*She let out a surprised burst of laughter at that.*

*"That's better," Hugo heard himself say. "I spent my day flirting with a beautiful, maddening woman," he told her. "How was yours?"*

The characters are well-drawn and complex. Ms. Milan packs quite a bit into this novella. With that said, I appreciated the fact that the reader gets a plot and on top of that, some interesting secondary characters as well. Hugo and Serena are nicely portrayed and you will even learn about their pasts and motivations. The love scene. Well, I totally adored the pins thingie! So thoughtful and lovely. The love scene was sweet and sensual and really well-written.

Hugo has one goal in his life. He wanted to be the richest coal miner's son in all of England. He thought that he had to prove himself with money and accomplishment. Ultimately it was wrong because you don't need to be wealthy to be somebody special. Hugo found love and a wonderful woman--the greatest gift. Now he is somebody.



*"I've never pretended to be a good man, you know. It's just that...I'm yours."*

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## **Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says**

I blame myself. My disappointment with this book is partially my fault. I just set the bar too high. I built up my own hype. I gave myself unrealistic standards for this book.

I've resisted reading this novella since it was released, despite reading all the glowing reviews on it. I thought for sure it would be good, and that I would love it if I ever gained the courage to read it. Why? Because of the premise. The rape, the defilement of an innocent governess? Her strength in standing up for herself? Her bravery in seeking justice against a powerful duke? The David vs. Goliath battle of one powerless, wronged woman against a powerful peer?

Before reading this book, I thought I knew for sure that this book would break me. It would turn me into a sobbing, blubbering mess. I would feel so much empathy and pain on the heroine's behalf that I would not be able to bear it. That is why, for the longest time, I absolutely refused to read this book. As for how good it would be...well, fuck yeah I thought it was going to be good. It's Courtney Milan, after all.

Wrong. Ambiguous is our word of the day.

It wasn't good. It was not on par with her other works that I loved. It was boring. Dull. Anticlimactic. I did not shed a single tear. I didn't feel anything. And coming from me, that's saying something, particularly when it comes to this subject. I hate sexual violence. I abhor it. It is deplorable, unforgivable, and I hate any man who dares to sexually abuse a woman. My friend and I both agree on that matter, and I think Cory's review is a pretty good reflection of my feelings towards this book.

**The subject of sexual abuse was my reason for avoiding this book, and it seemed as if I worried over nothing.** The way in which the subject of the rape/not rape matter was approached in this book was so ambiguous, my feelings remained largely unprovoked but for the constant twinges of absolute confusion.

The premise of this book was simple enough: Serena Barton is a former governess, who is seeking vengeance for a wrong done to her by the Duke of Clermont. The trouble is that the whole fucking thing was a poorly organized mess. Serena came off as more of a brainless woman, naive, and stubborn to the extreme, rather than one who is strong, and brave.

There is a difference between stubbornness and bravery. Bravery requires you to know what the fuck you're getting into. **Bravery requires intelligence, a plan of execution, both qualities that our not-so-intrepid heroine, Serena, lacks.**

Serena is stubborn. Serena does not think things through. Serena's plan to get justice for herself and her unborn child runs somewhere along the line of "I SHALL SIT ON THE BENCH IN FRONT OF THE DUKE'S HOUSE FOR MONTHS AT A TIME, IN THE RAIN, IN THE COLD, UNTIL SOMEONE ASKS ME WHAT'S GOING ON, AND THEN I SHALL NOT GIVE A STRAIGHT ANSWER BECAUSE IT'S BETTER TO KEEP PEOPLE GUESSING BECAUSE THAT'S HOW GOSSIP WORKS AMONG THE TON."

What. The. Fuck?

Seriously. For the majority of the novella, I didn't know what the fuck Serena was hiding. She is so fucking vague. She doesn't let anyone know what's going on. She doesn't answer any fucking questions as to what the Duke has done to her. She wants to keep people guessing. She kept ME guessing. And I lost my fucking patience. For a heroine who might have been raped. It's so wrong, and yet, I can't bring myself to fucking care because by this point, Serena has gotten on my nerves so damn much with her "Pish, posh, I shall keep my fucking secrets to myself because you are not fucking worthy" attitude.

*"I believe none of it, not without proof. Tell me what really happened, Miss Barton, and perhaps I can help."*

*"I'm sorry, Mr. Marshall," she said. "I really will not say."*

ARG. TELL. ME. NOW.

There are almost no details as to the actual rape, and **Serena kept the event so cryptic and inconclusive that her response just undermines the actual abuse.**

*"No." Her voice broke on the word, but she did not look down. "He did not force me."  
I let him do it.*

I understand that there is always a quality of self-censure, of self-blaming in the case of rape, when a woman has been the victim of sexual violence. She sometimes blames herself. If only I had done this. If only I had done that. I understand that perfectly, but the way that this book portrayed Serena's attitude made it seem less like self-blaming than a woman who doesn't know exactly what the hell is going on, who's just seeking vengeance because she feels that maybe, possibly, perhaps, she should seek reparation for an act that perhaps she didn't like, than that of a victim. I don't know if I'm explaining myself well here.

Serena doesn't even realize that there was a wrong done to her, despite the fact that something wrong has been done to her. But if she doesn't think she was wronged, why does she seek justification?

As for vengeance? What vengeance? **Serena doesn't know what the fuck she wants.** She wants some obscure idea of "vengeance" rather than a woman who is bent on getting justice. Serena is wishy-washy. She is pitiable, rather than admirable. She doesn't know what she wants out of this, and I was frustrated at her lack of will, her lack of decisiveness; she is everything that is obstinate, and she wants nothing exact.

I don't get it. The premise could have been executed so much more powerfully. Instead, Serena's very ambiguous rape was approached in such a way that I, the reader, was left shaking her head in confusion rather than rooting for her. The writing was good, but the characters were unbelievable, the premise poorly executed, and I feel so very let down by an author that I admire.

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**Navessa says**

DNF @ 50%. I really expected to like this one. I enjoyed *The Heiress Effect*. But then, part of the reason that I enjoyed it was because none of the characters were fucking idiots.

So the premise of this book is a ruined governess seeking recompense from the man that ruined her, who happens to be a duke. He sends his man of business to handle it because he has better things to do. The first thing his servant does is ask what the female lead wants. The next five conversations that they have go something like this:

*"I demand justice for what was done to me!"*

*"What kind of justice?"*

*"Retribution!"*

*"Um...in what form?"*

*"Vengeance!"*

*"Yeah, you see, I got that the first time. I'm wondering what exactly it is that you're looking for."*

*"Acknowledgement for the wrongs done to me!"*

*"What was done to you?"*

*"Nothing! But I'm now a ruined woman!"*

*"Er...so you had an affair with the duke?"*

*"No!"*

*"Did the Duke force himself on you?"*

*"No!"*

*"So you want vengeance for what was done to you, yet you're saying that nothing was done to you..."*

From what I could gather, the duke did in fact rape her. She makes it apparent through her thoughts that he forced himself on her, but in her mind, because she didn't scream, it wasn't rape. Fine, I get it, it's a common misconception from that time period, but the way this book handles it drove me bugfuck. I'm not sure which I found more offensive, her sister victim blaming and shaming her or the fact that she didn't seem to be bothered by it. And her demanding the duke answer to her for what he did but not explaining how or why was completely maddening.

So the duke's man of business has to get rid of her so that a scandal doesn't fall on his boss's head. Instead, he falls in love with her. I'm not sure why but I'm guessing that he must have a fondness for irrational women that talk themselves into circles every time they open their mouths. Throughout the first half of this book he continues to try to dissuade her from seeking recompense and she goads him on by telling him to do his worst. Because, you know, she's one tough cookie.

So he makes his first move. Immediately after:

***"HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME? THIS IS HORRIBLY UNFAIR! WHY WOULD YOU BE SO MEAN?"***

*\*sobs\**

*\*pours heart out\**

*\*he apologizes\**

They argue again. Her: *"Do your worst!"* He makes his second move. Immediately after:

***"HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME? THIS IS HORRIBLY UNFAIR! WHY WOULD YOU BE SO MEAN?"***

*\*sobs\**

*\*pours heart out\**

\*he apologizes\*

Aaaaaaand rage-quit.

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### **Jill says**

Hugo Marshall is determined and ambitious. As a former boxer Hugo has squared off against any number of opponents and won. But Hugo has met his match. Serena Barton is tenacious and optimistic. She'll fight until she gets what she's owed.

*The Governess Affair* is a novella and prequel to Courtney Milan's new series, *Brothers Sinister*. Set in 1835 a generation before the characters in the main series, this is an introduction to what looks like another impressive series from this talented author.

**Steam:** 2.5

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### **?Karlyn P? says**

Loved it!!! Just when I thought I was getting burned out (ney, sick and tired!) of Euro/Regency historical romances, I pick up this Courtney Milan novella and realize my problem might have been something else. I was just bored. But Courtney Milan infuses such flavor into her writing I couldn't stop devouring it. which is simply refreshing among the glut of today's bland and formulaic offerings. I honestly haven't been this excited to read a Euro/Regency era historical in many months now, and I can't wait for more of this series. Squee!

This novella tells the story of Oliver's parents, one of the brothers who will be featured in the series. And what a surprising couple too, I really couldn't imagine how they would find their HEA. I am looking forward to learning more about their story too, hope we see them in Oliver's story.

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### **Christina ~ Brunette Reader says**

**3,5 Stars**

Setting the stage for the following series about the next Victorian generation, Courtney Milan gives us a solid novella about two common people whose lives have been anything but common and who soon and poignantly recognise each other's hard-won inner strength, finding both healing from past hurts and hope for a brighter future in their love.

Hugo Marshall, a coal miner's son and an ex-pugilist, is now the Duke of Clermont's unscrupulous right-hand, the final step in a steady social and financial climb. The last problem the contemptible and careless aristocrat has literally brought on his doorstep has a name, Serena Barton, and a truth to tell that could destroy everybody's plans.

Armed with his usual ruthlessness, Hugo confronts the young woman who has been carrying on her dignified and resilient siege from a public bench facing the ducal residence, waiting for her rightful recognition. What he discovers is that things are usually not as they seem and that a greater revenge can come from allowing oneself to be loved.

The writing is very good, surely a notch or two above average, and for the ability to convey deep emotions through revealing gestures without many superfluous words and leaving the reader some margin for interpretation, Milan reminds of Laura Kinsale at her usual mesmerizing self and of Connie Brockway at her best. And I always welcome a writer who doesn't spell me out the obvious, telling me what to think every step of the way.

My only quibble, hence the lower rating, is that the author tackles some "heavy" themes such as class differences, injustice, power abuse and women's disadvantaged condition which the shorter format cannot in no way support, allowing only a too superficial skimming, in my view. I know the genre's focus is supposed to be on the romance and Milan, thanks to her gifted storytelling, has indeed succeeded in making the falling in love believable forcedly rushed novella-pace notwithstanding (not a small feat), but I still see the initial choice as unwise and a little too ambitious. Those issues really needed a full book, romance genre or no.

On balance, a promising prologue to the ensuing quartet and even if not strictly necessary, I suggest you to enjoy this quick read to better understand how it all began.

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**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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THE GOVERNESS AFFAIR is the fourth Courtney Milan book that I have plowed through this month. I regret nothing about this experiment, except for the fact that I have gone through all the books of hers that I already owned, so any further binges must be put on hold until I am able to obtain more books. Booooo.

GOVERNESS AFFAIR is the direct prequel to THE DUCHESS WAR. I think it could be read as a standalone, but reading it was also interesting in hindsight because it fleshed out some of the characters who were only alluded to in DUCHESS. This book is about the parents of one of the characters in THE DUCHESS WAR.

Hugo is known as the Wolf of Clermont because the Duke only has to snap his fingers before Hugo comes running in to deal with whatever problem is at hand. When a strange woman shows up one day, staging a quiet, sit-down protest outside of the Duke's estate, Hugo is surprised to learn that this quiet, not classically beautiful woman, is the latest problem.

Serena has good reason to hate the Duke, and she is determined to see that his dastardly deeds do not go unpunished, even if it means she has to wage war upon his intermediary first. The battle between Hugo and Serena is a battle of wills, and even as Hugo makes his attempts to crush her rebellion, he is curious to find out what, exactly, his employer has done to warrant such wrath.

I liked this book a little more than I did *TALK SWEETLY TO ME*, but that's mostly because of Hugo. Hugo is an amazing love interest. He's not quite as passive as most beta heroes, but he isn't exactly an alpha hero, either. I liked the power he had, and how he chose to wield it. Even though he was working for a bad man, he did not let that tarnish his personal sense of honor. Also, the sex scenes in this book are *very* good, featuring one scene in particular that was very inventive in how it went about showing that consent in sex can be very sexy, indeed.

I'm sorry to say that I did not particularly like Serena at all. I think she was probably my least favorite heroine out of all the Milan books I've read, which makes me unhappy, especially considering what this character had to go through. My problem with her was that she struck me as very immature and a little petty. I would have liked to have seen her anger more fully realized, and to have gotten a better sense of her character beyond the victim mentality and the half-cocked quest for revenge.

That said, I enjoyed her banter with Hugo, and it was great to see her learn to trust again.

P.S. Milan seriously has the best romance novel covers ever. Just look at all those fabulous jewel-toned dresses on the covers. Looking at all the books she's published is like looking at a rainbow - especially in the new, as yet unpublished remainder of the Worth series.

GIVE THEM TO ME NOW.

3 stars!

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## **Carol ?? says**

Maybe this edition was expanded as it is showing on Goodreads as 154 pages whereas the editions with this cover are showing as 101 pages. Believe me, this one felt longer than a novella! I think Ms Milan may have expanded this slight story beyond what it could bear.

I really liked the original idea. I liked the opening scenes. I could overlook anachronisms such as duke wearing a coat with gold thread - in 1835.

**But** too many things were improbable, too many scenes were repetitive and this book was just generally too much talky talky for me.

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## **Karla says**

### **5...I told you so Karla...Stars!!**

*Safe*. Yes Serena, Hugo Marshall is...*Safe*, and the most honorable of men. One of the softest, sweetest stories, I've ever read! Never were two people more meant to be together.

**I'm doing the Yippee Skippee and I can't stop smiling!**

Thanks for the push Jill and Dhes, it was so worth dropping everything!

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