



Listen to the Moon

Rose Lerner

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She's a maid-of-all-work, and he's a valet of no play...

John Toogood always prided himself on being the perfect gentleman's gentleman: skilled, discreet, and professional. But now he finds himself laid off and blacklisted, stuck in tiny Lively St. Lemeston until he can find a new job. Any job.

His instant attraction to his happy-go-lucky maid Sukey Grimes couldn't come at a worse time. Her manners are provincial, her respect for authority nonexistent, and her outdated cleaning methods...well, the less said about them, the better.

Sukey can tell that John's impeccably impassive facade hides a lonely man with a gift for laughter—and kissing. But she also knows he'll leave her sleepy little town behind the moment he gets the chance, and she has no intention of giving him her heart to take with him.

John learns that the town vicar needs a butler—but the job is only for a respectable married man. Against both their better judgments, John and Sukey tie the knot. The ring isn't on her finger long before Sukey realizes she underestimated just how vexing being married to the boss can be...

Listen to the Moon Details

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From Reader Review Listen to the Moon for online ebook

Wollstonecrafthomegirl says

This book deserves a better review than I can produce in the five minutes I have to write this. There is so, so, so much that is good here. I mean, first off – a story about servants, that isn't bleak! Much like older heroines and heroes and POC (of whom there are more than a few in Lerner's books) the servant class are the forgotten people in romance novels. Lerner does a fantastic job of bringing them to life and conveying their everyday experiences in a comprehensible and relatable fashion. It seems to me that in this novel, Lerner's reigns in (perhaps not consciously) some of the imagery and the metaphor that was so prominent in Sweet Disorder and (even more so) in True Pretences, in favour of a more character-focused romance. The H/h spend a lot of time together in this novel, which is my favourite kind of romance. Not too much drama, just a complete focus on two people and the development of their love affair. The characterisation is absolutely outstanding. Both Sukey and Toogood feel like completely rounded individuals with believable backstories which impact upon their decisions in plausible ways. The May/December was nicely handled – Sukey sometimes acts like a petulant child and Toogood sometimes acts like a priggish grandfather and that's fine. The sex is plentiful and this is Rose Lerner so it's, you know, amazing. Perhaps if I hadn't read this right off the back of another Lerner novel this would get five stars – she's being graded on a curve of her own making in a lot of ways, which is perhaps a little unfair. But, I cannot quite give this the full five stars. It's 4.5 all day long. For me, the thread of why Sukey and Toogood fell in love was not strong enough. Their attraction was apparent, their intimacy was apparent, but by the end I didn't quite understand where the love had come from other than the fact of their significant attraction to one another. That said, it's probably just me being crazy. This is well, well, well worth reading. I've said it before, I'll undoubtedly say it again, Lerner is an absolute superstar and I hope she keeps writing books exactly like this.

Mei says

This was good. Not exceptional, but good.

The fact that the MCs are common people who works for living is a very interesting one! Here you'll not find Earls, Dukes, Viscounts, etc., but maid, butlers, valets, cooks.

But, I found both hero and the heroine rather annoying with their communication problems.

It could be because of the age difference between them (he's 40 and she's 22), or it could be because of their upbringing, or social station, but it was highly annoying.

They also have a highly sexual drive (often a little bit kinky), but he's a stickler obsessed with cleanliness and perfect household, she's striving to be accepted by everybody, but is basically afraid to be herself and to open up.

So, a great part of the book is took by their internal musings which often are completely oppitive of what the other thinks and feels, leading them to act in a completely wrong way.

Other people problems intrude in their life and bring them both more problems, so that they practically

drown in them! See what happens when they meet his parents....

The writing is interesting and the insight into the world of servants too! We finally see how they're treated and how they're living.

Mandi Schreiner says

First review of 2016 and it gets an 'A' grade! A good start to the new year.

A historical romance where the protagonists are not wealthy. They are not of the ton - they have worked in service their entire lives. Our hero is John Toogood. A valet for a wealthy family, after the war and a family fight, he is let go. Oh the embarrassment. He has some money saved so all is not lost, but his pride is hurt. John prides himself on being the very best. His father is the butler of a great estate, and John learned much from him. So when a butler position opens in the local vicarage, John's spirits lift. He hasn't necessarily wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, and the vicarage is nothing like the house or family he used to serve, but it's employment and he hopes he can make a difference. The only problem - the vicar wishes his butler to be married. The previous butler was a single man who made advances on the females on staff. Not only advances -but he sexually abused some of them. The vicar has it set, that a married man will have better virtues.

But lucky for John, he has befriended a local maid named Sukey. Sukey works for a boarding house across the street from his lodgings. He is instantly attracted to her - despite the age difference. (John is 40, Sukey is 22. I loved this). While John strives for perfection in his job, Sukey leaves dust piles in the corner and steals her employers hair pins. While John reads extensively and presents himself as the best he can, Sukey talks to much, has a heavy accent and is loud. I adored her.

John knows Sukey hates her current job and employer and decides since they both are quite fond of each other, why not get married, so John can accept the butler position, and Sukey can take a job as the upper house maid. She finally agrees, and the marriage happens.

I love a marriage of convenience story, and this one is done so well. John and Sukey do get married to get this job, but they like each other and are very attracted to each other to start. There isn't really any physical awkwardness in the bedroom. John, being 40 is a little worried he will be too old (tire too fast) to keep up with his very sexually promiscuous wife. Sukey, while a virgin, is not shy in the bedroom. They have a very passionate relationship in this book. It's dirty and romantic all at the same time. I loved their chemistry. She gets so hot watching him work...

But vigorous scrubbing, well...it got the blood pumping. Sukey was flushed and breathing hard, and all at once even looking at him seemed indecent. Muscles shifted under his breeches as he rubbed vigorously at a tomato stain that had been on the wall (Sukey reflected guiltily) since Michaelmas.

His big apron hugged half his wool-covered arse, leaving the central seam to her lustful gaze. He has one of the finer arses it had ever been her privilege to gawk at. The small of his back dipped nicely and then flared in a firm, commanding curve. Even my arse is better than yours, it proclaimed truthfully to the world. And the way it moved...

He turned away from the wall to pick up her boots. Face burning, Sukey dropped her eyes to the jelly mold

she was cleaning. I'd like a jelly mold in the shape of his arse.

But it's not all orgasms and smiles. John and Sukey both have a lot of imperfections, making them perfectly not perfect to me. John is very strict when it comes to running his household. His first instinct is to criticize. This not only rubs his small staff the wrong way, but being married to one of your employees is very difficult. Sukey takes offense to his remarks. The staff has worked together for some time before John comes on board, and they don't always take kindly to his demeanor. He makes them work hard and resentment rears its head. There is also the lingering issue of the previous butler's abuse on the very young girls in the house. While they trust John, it's hard for them to move on. The staff in this book play a wonderful supporting cast that adds much to this story.

Sukey's father abandoned his family when she was young, and those trust issues with men run through her head from time to time after her marriage to John. It's hard for her to completely let her guard down with him. I love the moments in this book - late in the book - when Sukey still acts a little selfish, or John still gets a little embarrassed over her accent or her demeanor. They love each other, but just like in real life, there are some things you don't love about your partner. Their relationship felt so, so real.

Also impressive is the service culture. I feel like this author really shows up what's it's like to work or be born into service. The hours, the expectations, the absolute sanctity of that one half day of freedom every week. The perfection, the dedication. The hurdles women must face. Such a fascinating read.

Highly recommend this one. It can be read as a stand alone. Romantic, passionate and an intriguing story.

Grade A

K.J. Charles says

Massively enjoyable May-December romance between a slightly shambolic maid and a valet with a serious work ethic. I adored all the detail of their working lives and the difficulty of fitting a romance in, as well as the way the demands of class structure were shown to affect low as well as high. Hugely enjoyable. Give me more valets, more servants, more ordinary people in Regency!

Lyuda says

This is good. This is REALLY good. This is HR with my favorite formula: character-driven romance with fascinating protagonists who spend most of their time together and where "historical" feels authentic.

My copy is full of highlighted notes and I re-read them and marvel at Mr. Lerner's talent, perception, and intuition. Her intelligent thought-provoking writing is a perfect antidote for those who dismiss all romance writing as lightly entertaining feel-good fluff.

I can only imagine how much research went into producing such a unique story where the main characters are both servants. But anybody can do the research and, thanks to our information technology age, it can be accomplished with ease. What is not easy is to take the obtained knowledge and organically incorporate it into the story in a way that readers don't feel they are browsing Wikipedia. For this you need talent.

Reading the novel, I felt firmly enveloped in the historical setting, it surrounded me. It offered me a perspective I've not considered, it made me privy to the whole new world which was always there in the HRs I read in some way or another but which played a peripheral, almost invisible role. Here, I was transported right in the middle of it.

This is a duke-earl-rakes- rogue's free zone. This is "downstairs" world which often functions independently of the world it's served. The world has its own code of conduct and its own rigid structures. Some of the 'behind the scenes' look at the running of a house was a revelation to me. For example, I never thought about the servants' isolation from the outside world

A servant's home was her world, and at the vicarage Sukey (the heroine) didn't even have the running of errands or going to market as an excuse to leave the house... Except for her half-holidays and Sunday morning services, she spoken to no one but Mr. Summers (the employer) and his servants.

At the heart of the novel is wonderfully complex, multilayered love affair between a former valet, John Toogood, and a maid of all works, Sukey Grimes. Their relationship initially driven by lust, felt on both sides and progressed quickly to marriage of convenience- convenience to assuage their loneliness, to resolve economic hardship, and to satisfy physical attraction. Their sexual chemistry is sizzling and sensual and hot-hot. And if it was a fairy tale romance, it would stop there with their HEA. But there is so much more to their relationship than off-the-chart bedroom compatibility.

Both protagonists thought marriage would give them respite from their loneliness. As they quickly learned, this would require much of them. They would need to reexamine their past, to learn to trust each other, to not be afraid to open up, to let other see you for who you are without pretense. Their marriage was not the end but the beginning of a journey of self-discovery and discovery of each other.

Theirs was a difficult journey realistically drawn with real struggles and adaptations to each other and to their circumstances. There is a difference in their social standing to consider which is no less important in the "downstairs" world as in the world of their "bettters". John is a handsome sophisticated upstairs man while Sukey is pretty but uneducated and unrefined downstairs maid. There is their age difference. John is 40 and Sukey is 22. That is something I usually find hard to take in a romance but the author didn't gloss over this fact and it's a big part of the story that is dealt with very realistically.

From John:

The more he wanted her, the more he needed her, the more he asked her for-the less chance she would have to be the woman she'd wanted to be, who stood on her own two feet, who had nothing between her and the sun. The less chance she's have to discover what she really wanted. He'd been collecting his burdens for forty years. Even if they'd grown heavy for him. She was too young to be asked to shoulder half.

From Sukey:

John had tried to do something for her yesterday, and it had made her angry. Because that sort of kindness is a parent's kindness for a small child. It went all one way. She'd thought that would make her feel safe, but it didn't. She wanted a husband, not a father.

Maybe generosity wasn't about giving and receiving. Maybe it was just about the sharing. In joy and care, whichever happened to be in the offing.

Both characters have to struggle to overcome their childhood burdens before they could truly trust and love each other.

This was a wonderful journey with a very satisfying HEA. I really liked all the previous books in the series but this one is my favorite.

Caz says

I've given this a B+ at AAR so that's 4.5 stars

In this, the third book in Rose Lerner's series of books set in the fictional Sussex town of Lively St. Lemeston, the author has once again penned a thoroughly enjoyable and emotionally complex romance with nary a duke or debutante in sight. Our protagonists are a pair of servants, John Toogood, a very correct 'gentleman's gentleman' and Susan (Sukey) Grimes, a maid of all work. Both have appeared briefly in earlier books in the series; John was valet to Nick Dymond, hero of *Sweet Disorder* and Sukey the maid who cleans the rooms occupied by its heroine who, shortly before **Listen to the Moon** opens, has married Nick, to the horror and intense disapproval of his mother, the Countess of Tassell.

Unfortunately, Nick's choice of bride has had repercussions for his valet as well as himself. Cut off from his family financially, he is no longer able to afford John's services, and because the countess is angry at John for not telling her about her son's unsuitable attachment, she has made sure that none of the men in her circle will employ him. At a loose end, John decides to rent the new Mrs Dymond's old rooms while he attempts to find another position, and is rather disconcerted by the sudden, strong stirrings of lust he feels for the cheeky maid who comes in to clean – not very well by John's standards – twice a week.

The attraction may be inconvenient, but Sukey quickly makes it clear that it's reciprocated; her first sight of the tall, dark and handsome valet almost renders her speechless, and even though she is dead set against marriage, she certainly wouldn't mind finding out about all the good bits with him! He, however, being considerably older and more experienced than she is (he's forty, she's twenty-two), knows it would be wrong to take advantage of her - much as he'd like to - and puts their relationship firmly onto a footing of friendship.

Born into service – his parents are the butler and housekeeper for the Earl and Countess of Tassell – John has been brought up to serve and do the best he can for his employers. He enjoyed being a valet and having nobody to care for but himself and his master, and never wanted responsibility for a household. Yet when he hears that the local vicar requires a new butler – and given that beggars can't be choosers – he decides the position might suit him. But there's a snag. The vicar insists that his new butler be a married man.

So John approaches Sukey with a proposition; that they get married and go to work at the vicarage, he as butler, she as head housemaid. This seems an ideal solution for them both, and even though Sukey is initially wary, a sudden change in her circumstances leads to her agreeing and very soon the couple is newly married, newly employed and newly housed.

Rose Lerner does a fantastic job in exploring all the pitfalls and difficulties that come with marrying someone you hardly know, and also in depicting life in service. Sukey and John are newly married, but there is no lazing around in bed on the morning after their wedding night and no honeymoon for them. As servants, it's back to work as normal; early starts, late nights, seeing each other only in passing during the

day and having one half-day holiday per week. And as well as having to navigate their way through their new relationship to each other they have to forge working relationships with those around them. John never wanted to run a household and is having to make some big adjustments in his life and his self-perception while desperately trying to avoid becoming an incredibly exacting man like his father. Mr Toogood senior was known to regularly reduce the maids to tears if they didn't meet his very high standards of work; but even so, John finds it difficult to stop himself from being critical when he considers that the staff are not doing their best for their employer.

Both John and Sukey are used to being self-sufficient and find it difficult to let someone else in, so the misunderstandings between them are not contrived, but arise naturally as a result of who they are and of the situation they are in. They realise they have problems communicating, but aren't sure how to go about things differently. Ms Lerner also doesn't shy away from exploring the difficulties occasioned by the eighteen-year age gap between them – both characters at one point wonder if Sukey was looking for a father figure rather than a husband, and John definitely does have problems at times treating her as a woman rather than a little girl. But then, Sukey sometimes acts like a little girl, wanting to be protected and comforted and not taking equal responsibility in spite of her protestations that she wants to be treated as an equal partner in their marriage and work.

But the thing that comes through all the problems and miscommunication is how much the two of them genuinely care for each other. Although their relationship in its early stages is founded on a spectacularly huge dose of mutual lust and they certainly enjoy a robust sex life, there is a strong undercurrent of affection running between them, even when they are frustrated or angry with each other. John and Sukey are imperfect, three-dimensional characters with real problems and insecurities, and while the romance is awkward and messy, it's also full of understanding and a genuine desire to make things work. The writing is intelligent with plenty of humour and has a real period feel to it; the historical background is clearly well-researched but is incorporated subtly without there being the feeling that one is being given a history lesson! There are a couple of well-executed sub plots and I especially enjoyed the later part of the book which sees John struggling to reconcile his feelings of duty towards his parents with his need to make his life his own and tread the path that will make him – and Sukey – happy.

Listen to the Moon is a splendid addition to Ms Lerner's *Lively St. Lemeston* series and is highly recommended.

Rashika (is tired) says

****This review has also been posted on The Social Potato*

Marriage of convenience? A romance between people of the serving class as opposed to aristocracy? YES PLEASE. When I read the blurb for *Listen to the Moon*, I knew I needed this book in my life and was excited to read it especially since I loved *A Lily Among Thorns*. I wasn't even really surprised that I ended up loving this one.

My main issue with the book was that towards the end, there was a little too much drama and angst for my tastes but that's really about it.

I didn't know going into the book that the two MCs would have a huge age gap and I was a little nervous

because age-gaps can either be gross or so well-done that you forget about it. The romance was really neither of those. **Lerner did not shy away from exploring the weirdness of a relationship where there is an giant age difference.** The romance between John and Sukey is awkward and hard but also full of so much compassion and understanding. They aren't a perfect couple but they *are* perfect for each other. I LOVE this about the romance. I love that there are some real misunderstandings that arise from both of them feeling as though they cannot communicate with one another. This isn't just plain-ole miscommunication, it's so much more than that.

Even though John clearly has feelings for Sukey, he sometimes has a hard time treating her like an equal since she is so much younger than he is. He ends up treating her like a little girl and Sukey, for her part, also acts like one. She wants to be comforted and protected, but also wants to be treated as an equal. Throughout the book these two struggle to find a balance in their relationship and it's GREAT seeing them do that. Also, it is a marriage of convenience but they don't fall in love with each other a few weeks later. It's actually kind of awesome. A couple weeks into their marriage, John even states that he isn't quite in love with Sukey but can see himself falling into love. It's so great that it isn't a denial of his feelings but more of him admitting to really care about Sukey while also stating that he isn't quite in love yet. HOW MANY TIMES DOES THIS HAPPEN and isn't a denial? Not a lot in my experience.

As you can probably surmise, these two undergo a LOT of character development over the course of the book and it is AMAZING. Who doesn't love character development? YAY.

Listen to the Moon is definitely one of the better historical romances I've read and if you're looking to read a HR with a romance that is messy, complicated and totally worth it in the end, *Listen to the Moon*

Note that I received an advanced copy of this book in exchange for an honest review

Jaclyn says

Listen to the Moon is one of the most unusual and most interesting historical romances that I've read it a long while. For the most part, the historical romance genre is saturated in romance featuring heroes and heroines of the upper echelons of society, or at least one member of the romantic duo is of the upper class. I will admit to being totally fine with this – who doesn't love a duke, or a marquis in disguise, or a pirate who's really an earl? But, Rose Lerner takes readers right out of the world of privilege and focuses her romance between two servants (who are not secretly of the nobility, to be clear), which makes *Listen to the Moon* a refreshing read.

John Toogood is a valet down on his luck and is looking for a new position after his master has had a reversal in fortune. A plum position has come up as the butler for a vicarage; however, John's prospective employer requires that the successful applicant be a married man. Needless to say, John is not married, but he has been involved in a harmless, mutual flirtation with the much younger halfhearted maid-of-all-work, Sukey Grimes. While their work ethics are vastly different, John wants the butler position and having just lost a position of her own Sukey is reluctantly willing to marry John so that they can work at the vicarage.

The story in *Listen to the Moon* is simple and there's not really a lot of extra drama going on. This is a romance through and through, and its focus is on the main characters and their relationship. John and Sukey marry fairly early in *Listen to the Moon*, so the bulk of the novel is their adjustment to married life. While they had attraction on their side, both John and Sukey have a hard time adjusting to marriage. For his part,

John is worried that he took advantage of Sukey as she is so much younger than he (he's forty and she's in her twenties) and is afraid to rely on her too much:

She'd been lonely and afraid, young and inexperienced, and he'd used it to talk her into a marriage that she'd turned down when she had a job.

The more he wanted her, the more he needed her, the more he asked her for – the less chance she would have to be the woman she'd wanted to be, who stood on her own two feet, who had nothing between her and the sun. The less chance she'd have to discover what she really wanted. He'd been collecting his burdens for forty years. Even if they'd grown heavy for him, she was too young to be asked to shoulder half.

On Sukey's part, she was initially determined not to marry. After seeing the disaster of her parent's marriage, Sukey wanted to be independent, and she struggles with her reasons for marrying John:

She looked terribly sad all of a sudden. "I think I want to marry you." Her eyes filled, a tear slipping down her cheek.

John didn't know what to say. "I never intended the idea to make you so unhappy.

"I meant to get by on my own. I ignored my mother when she said I'd end up in the workhouse. I didn't want to need help. I don't want to get married only to have some man to take care of me."

"It isn't weak to wish for a helpmeet."

The inner conflict that both John and Sukey experience is the meat of *Listen to the Moon* and it's what makes this book such a romantic read. Rather than combating external forces, it's each other's hang-ups that provide the tension in novel. I loved seeing John and Sukey struggle with their need for each other, while refusing to be too dependent on the other. It was a lovely journey watching as they learned to lean on each other and trust that they were not taking advantage of what was being offered. While I don't think this more subdued style of romance is for everyone, I think Rose Lerner is a must read for anyone that is a fan of Mary Balogh, especially if you often think Balogh's romances need a little more steam.

What I also found interesting about *Listen to the Moon* was the details about life as a servant. Both John and Sukey are servants in a household and their work is not always glamorous. This is not the historical romance where the hero and heroine put on their fancy duds and dance the night away while enjoying carriage rides by day. John and Sukey both have to work very hard and amidst all this time spent working they also have to find time to be together and get to know one another. Real life often intruded on John and Sukey's romantic life and it was up to them to find some sort of balance. I loved this hint of realism in *Listen to the Moon*; it's not only important from a historical standpoint as an aspect of working life, but also an element that I think makes this read more timeless than some of the other historical romances that I've read. The development of John and Sukey's relationship in spite of their working lives was very, very well done.

Ultimately, I thought *Listen to the Moon* was an amazing historical romance, and the perfect read for historical romance fans who are looking for something refreshingly different in their genre reading. *Listen to the Moon* is also especially intriguing for readers who like their romance focused on the relationship between the hero and heroine rather than in addition to many external factors. While *Listen to the Moon* was surprisingly explicit, it was always deeply emotional, which was a very good thing.

Originally reviewed at The Book Adventures.

Shira Glassman says

Well, it's a rare day indeed that a cisgender m/f romance follows a format *I* like--the hero is in his forties and the heroine is not only 22 *but she's a twig like me*. Damn. I never really thought about how much reading positive things about tiny-boobed women would mean, especially since I have all these lofty ideas about how we're not supposed to be judged by our bodies. So, that was cool, because I wanted to read it for its focus on "actually **working** people, for once, in historical romance" and was prepared to put up with, I don't know, a guy who didn't suit me sexually. I'm glad for the nice surprise, as well as the other little nice throwaway surprise of the heroine expressing (plot-irrelevant) bi feelings in the middle of the book. Having m/f romance actually cater to my whims for once makes me feel like a person.

So, yes, working people! I enjoyed the peek into what has, I suppose, morphed into the hospitality industry. I also enjoyed the fact that most of the book takes place after the lead couple is already married, so instead of "will they won't they", it shows married people learning how to accommodate and heal each other's jagged edges. Also, a lot of crap can be avoided by listening to each other and making sure you really know what the other person is saying before you react to something they didn't actually mean. *This is important*. In this stage of my life, I blundered around just as much as the two of them do, for similar reasons, and I feel like reading books that show people successfully weathering this type of thing can only help other young-marrieds. Also this is a work of historical fiction where both MC's have two living parents and I gather that is somewhat rare?

The author is smart enough to know that England's history has never been all-white, especially during its colonialist expansion days. Other authors would do well to study the way she wove an Indian cook and walk-ons who were Muslim and possibly-Jewish into a story focused on white Christians. This is vital because it's due to media that we have an incorrect picture of the past in the first place. (That's not even counting Ash from *True Pretenses* because neither of the POV characters in this book know he's Jewish, so when he shows up the only way he counts as representation is if you know Lerner's other books. On the other hand, maybe that *is* representation in a way, because closeted people of all stripes have always existed, alongside openly marginalized folks.)

Anyway I thought she did a masterful job at showing the way past hurt can get in the way of present happiness--the heroine's abandonment by her father, the hero's judgmental father--but that it can also be healed once you stop expecting your spouse to hurt you in the same way.

OLT says

Rose Lerner looks like a very young woman on her online photo and, unless that photo was taken 20 years ago, I am in awe of how much insight she has into the human condition at such a young age. And then there's her writing skill to be in awe of also. This may be the first Lerner HR I've reviewed but it's not the first I've read. I think I've read them all but, to ditto reviewer Danker, this one may very well be her best.

Usually I read romance to escape from my humdrum existence, but this story and its characters put me into the relatively humdrum world of the servant class. A kind of "downstairs" romance, so to speak, with poor maid heroine Sukey Grimes, very pretty but under-educated and unsophisticated, and hero John Toogood,

handsome, polished man-of-the-world (within his own bit of the world), ex-valet of Nick Dymond, hero of Lerner's SWEET DISORDER.

John has just lost his position as Dymond's valet and is forced to find a new position. The one he aspires to is that of butler in the village vicar's home. But the vicar wants a married butler and that's where Sukey comes into the equation. He needs a wife and she has just been fired from her maid's position after being caught eating 2 brandy-laced raisins. (Yeah, I know. Hanging or transportation should have really been the punishment.) So she's desperate and agrees to wed John. They are, fortunately, physically attracted to each other but that's about all that's going for them in the relationship at the beginning.

So that should do it for the story, right? They marry, we have some very satisfying bedroom scenes, they discover they're compatible in and out of bed, and we move on to the HEA. Not so fast. It's not that easy. These two are very flawed characters. Sukey and her mother were deserted by her father, who went on to make a new family with another woman. So she has her issues. Not only lack of trust and fear of abandonment, but there's the fact that she's a bit on the immature and irresponsible side. But then, she's young.

And then there's John. Such issues he has. A perfectionist and control freak who always seems to see what's wrong and never what's right. He doesn't relate well to others, isn't sympathetic or charismatic and is pretty darned uptight. Well, we learn the reasons for all this and we keep hoping as the story progresses that he'll find a way to his own happiness. And that he will learn to find contentment with his very young wife. And speaking of "very young wife", the age difference between the two is pretty large. John is 40 and Sukey is 22. That is something I usually find hard to take in a romance but Lerner didn't gloss over this fact and it's a big part of the story that is dealt with very realistically and well.

This isn't a warm and fuzzy romance. As a matter of fact, I found it a difficult and uncomfortable read at times. Sukey and John's problems hit too close to home for me. There's a recent May/December romantic relationship within my own family that I haven't been too pleased about. Not only that but I see so much of myself in John's critical ways that it had me squirming uncomfortably at many things that happened in the story.

But I soldiered on. What a book. It's very well written. No fairy tale here. This is real life. If you want the fairy tale, there are lots of less-talented and even almost-as-talented authors to choose from for that. If you want something that is more down-to-earth and realistic and that cuts to the nitty-gritty of relationships, this is a very good choice.

K.J. Charles says

Another cracking Regency from Rose Lerner, one of my favourite historical authors. This is a very gentle story, of a marriage of convenience between a superbly skilled older valet and a rather haphazard housemaid, and it's lovely. Masses of fascinating stuff about Regency housekeeping really underpins the story, making us really aware that the devil is in the detail. John's precise constricted existence and Sukey's yearning for something outside her circumscribed life are carefully, slowly laid out to us. A real portrait of a marriage, of life in service, and the difficulties and dilemmas of people who rarely get their own romance. And so much respect for the servants, too, the demands and complexities and nobility of their work. Absolutely loved it.

Daniella says

Welcome to my **HR Purgatory shelf** !

Blah, blah, blah. I'm sure you know what this shelf is all about, so I'm just going to cut to the chase and explain why this book is in this shelf. (If not, then read all about the introduction here.)

Reason(s) for putting *Listen to the Moon* in this shelf:

The writer wrote a deleted scene where the couple ends up having a threesome with another woman. The H actually penetrates the OW while the h looked on. And she had this to say:

It was strange and wonderful to see John do this thing he did with her with someone else, to see his brow furrow and hear him breathing harshly through his nose—to watch him and not be caught up in it, herself. Inwardly she gloated a little, thinking, *He's done this with lots of people, but he only married me.*

That's just sick. Um, sorry, but I can't trust a writer who comes up with these things. What if the part didn't get cut out for whatever reason? I cringe to imagine reading such crap.

Thank you, saxe, for your review!

saxe's Review: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

The link to the deleted scene (believe me, you'll be wanting to gouge your eyeballs after reading it):
<http://roselerner.com/blog/2016/01/04...>

Jennifer says

5 Stars

I enjoy a good lord/lady romance with balls and shopping trips as much as the next historical romance fan, but sometimes it is nice to read something completely different. *Listen to the Moon* was exactly the type of story I was looking for and became my first 5 star read of 2016. It is the third book in the Lively St. Lemeston series and focuses on John Toogood and Sukey Grimes, a valet and a maid that readers met in book one, *Sweet Disorder*.

John grew up in service to the formidable Dymond family, but lost his valet position when his employer got married. Now, he is searching a new position and comes across a butler opening for the village's vicar. The only catch is that the vicar requires his butler to be married. John then turns to Sukey, a maid-of-all-work whom he has recently been interacting with and whom he finds very attractive. Sukey and John decide to get married in order to achieve the butler position for him and the housekeeper position for him. Now, they have

to make their way through the early days of marriage while getting to know one another and adjusting to a new household.

I just loved both John and Sukey. They were likable, but flawed characters who felt very real to me. John is quite a few years older and definitely has more life experience. Due to his upbringing and fear of losing another job, he is obsessed with perfection and can come off as snobbish and critical. He does adore his new wife and wants to do anything to make her happy. Sukey comes from a lower class and has some serious daddy issues. Her father left her and her mother when she was young and she has difficulty trusting anyone with her true feelings. She has always been on the lower rung of servants so, while she is hardworking, she isn't as obsessed with perfection as her husband. But, her vivaciousness and humor keeps her going through life with a decent attitude that is very attractive.

I am always up for a good marriage of convenience story and the fact that this one took place within the servant class was a major bonus. John and Sukey had immediate chemistry, but they had quite a few obstacles to overcome in order to achieve their happy ending. They have very different attitudes towards their work and their devotion to employers. They are also dealing with the fact that they just married and have to work all day, every day with one another. The relationship slowly develops from friendship to true love with a variety of steamy and romantic scenes. My particular favorites were when John was gently cleaning Sukey's boots just to make her feel good and when John gets sick and has to rely on others to help with his duties.

Listen to the Moon, obviously, provides many details into the daily lives of servants. There are three other servants in the vicar's household and they are given enough development to help make them a major part of the story. I loved all the tidbits that Rose Lerner threw in such as how work is divided up among two maids and how a cook's daily routine goes. The vicar's house basically becomes another character and provided a wonderful background to the romance.

I found this book to be very refreshing in its attitudes towards romance and class. Even though John and Sukey's days were long and full of work, it didn't mean their lives were depressing. They could have just as captivating of a love story as any duke and his lady as long as they are treated with respect. I definitely hope to see more servant-focused romances in the future and am crossing my fingers for one of the vicar's maids to get a romance in this series.

I received a free eARC of this book from Samhain Publishing via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Zoe says

WHAT A FANTASTIC NOVEL

I will not do a summary of the book. I think a fellow GR reviewer Mandi, has done a fabulous job of it and I cannot do a better job than she has in her review, which can be found below:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

I have heard a lot of high praises about Rose Lerner and her Lively St. Lementon series. I even have her In for a Penny on Kindle, just haven't got around to reading it. I read Mandi's review yesterday of Listen to the Moon, and I decided right away to read this book.

It is hard to explain why I love this book, but I shall try nonetheless. Listen to the Moon has an unusual pair of lead characters, John Toogood & Susan Grimes. They were both servants. Now imagine that, I don't have to say how unusual that is in the historical romance genre. John was almost a gentleman himself. He was born into service but he was a valet, upper servant whose parents were upper servants. I think it is safe to say that if the servant class had nobility, John would be that. Susan, aka Sukey, was on the other side of the spectrum. So here we have a cinderella story, only in the servant world.

And the age difference. John was 40, mind you. Not 35, which could still pass for young and virile as a 30 year old man. And Sukey was 22. There is no other word for it. It was a May-December relationship. This was one of the major clash points in the story and done exceptionally well. Love knows no age. It is simply a fact. It is hard to imagine because it did not happen to most of us. This book, convinced me that it is totally possible and beautiful.

And the passion. I despise an useless sex scene. In this genre, we read about sex a lot and often it serves to excite us. John and Sukey's intimate relationship in this book, serves a much much more important purpose. It truly united them, as man and wife. It happened frequently, some explicit and some implied. But it consistently highlighted the fact that they were in indeed, before God and man, joined for life. I thought Rose Lerner did a splendid job in employing sex in this book. She didn't write sex to shock or entice her readers. She wrote sex scenes because this was as natural as the Sun rising from the East for John and Sukey. And the physical relationship, brought them closer in heart and mind.

The heat level, I think was the highest in the first 30% of the book. They married early in the book and after they got married, like any married couple, they were faced with the challenges of actually living together. The book explored these practical difficulties in life, 2 different people sharing a life and working together, with different backgrounds, expectations, and tempers. I did not feel that I was reading a romance novel anymore, yet, it was extremely romantic in a pragmatic kind of way.

In this book, John and Sukey really came together in marriage. A relationship that started with attraction, born out of necessity and grown into love. It is not a book for "action seekers." It is a solid love story, where silk gowns and hessian boots had no place, which lacked a brooding hero and a strong heroine. But it is much, much more than that. John and Sukey are 2 genuine characters, whose love and despair were real. No one threw a hissy fit because we need a conflict. When they quarreled, they did it over real issues in life and relationship. When they loved, they did so without hysterics and drama but with a vulnerability that we all experience in love.

I read this book with admiration and awe. It is not an extremely emotional book where you felt oh my God I want them to be together. Rose Lerner did not just write a romance novel in this story. She explored the layers and delicacy of life and depicted a love story with all its glories and mundaneness. I rarely give out 5 Stars for a book but when I do, I almost always give 5 stars for subjective reasons. I give 5 stars simply because a book resonates with me on a personal level. Not this book, I give 5 stars for its brilliance and poignancy. One may not like the book, but one cannot dispute that the story is masterfully written. Tour de force, indeed.

p.s: I have a major bone to pick with the cover. This is not John at all. This guy on the cover looks 25 and has not John's finesse. Please, who approved the cover for this book??

namericanwordcat says

Oh this is so good!

A non London set Regency romance about a valet/butler and a maid. The themes are wonderful--opposites attract, marriage of convince to a much older man.

The characters are both lonely and charming with their own complex lives that come together.

The historical detail of holidays, food, class, women's and servant's rights in a small village are perfectly explored.

And it is very sexy. The banter and writing fierce and well paced.

There was some needless angst for me that took a little shine of the love story but overall all a really joy for any romance reader.
