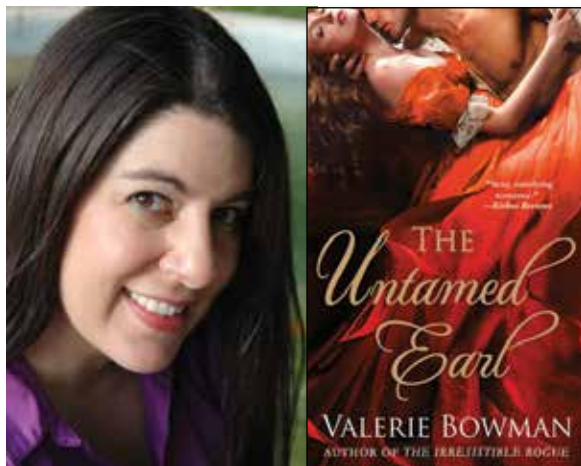


What It Takes to Tame an Earl

HOW **VALERIE BOWMAN** KEEPS HER HEROES FROM GOING ROGUE

By Jennifer Peters

THOUGH SHE'S ONLY been penning her "racy Regency romps" for a few years, **Valerie Bowman** has quickly become one of historical romance's biggest stars — and with good reason. Her latest, *The Untamed Earl*, out this month from St. Martin's, is a perfect example of the kind of complex and charming love stories that have made her a star of the industry. We caught up with her to discuss her new book, what's coming up next and just what she'd be willing to do in the name of love!



The *Untamed Earl* is a take on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. What inspired you to tackle this particular plot with this addition to the Playful Brides series? *The Taming of the Shrew* is just one of the very best. It's such a fun, funny plot and I was excited to write my own take on it and set it in the Regency period. Owen, the hero, is the one being "tamed" in this tale and he's a rogue instead of a shrew.

Alex first meets Owen when she's 15 and decides then and there that she will marry him when she's of age. Yet Owen is a good deal older than Alex. Did you ever worry that making them so far apart in terms of age and experience would prove difficult when you tried to get them together? I did worry about this. This was sort of a case of me writing myself into Owen's age early in the series before I knew who his heroine would be. I loved the idea of Alexandra being in love with him since she was young. She's nearly 19 when the main story begins and he's 32. It does remind me of the old-school historical romances that I grew up reading, however, so I don't mind it for that reason.

Considering how little they know each other when the story starts, and how quickly it progresses, did you ever worry that Alex and Owen were falling in love too quickly? I really tried to make it clear that while Alex fell in love with him at first sight when she was young, she does spend time trying to get to know him during the story to see if she believes they're truly compatible. As for Owen, falling for Alex is completely unexpected and blindsides him, which I love.

Lady Lavinia, the main obstacle in the way of Alex and Owen's love, is pretty terrible. But, I'm curious: Will we ever see her again, maybe after she's been reformed and found a way to be somewhat pleasant? It's funny you should mention that because I've been

thinking about her lately and wondering if she's redeemable. I wanted to make her really over the top. She rips tapestries off walls, says hideous things to people and rolls around on the floor having fits. Can such a lady ever get her act together to become a heroine? I am considering it. I'm thinking her hero would need to be like John Wayne in *The Quiet Man*.

In romance novels, and especially historical romances, love seems to come hard and fast. Do you think love in real life ever happens like that, or

do you just expedite it in books to avoid having 10,000-page novels? I sort of hope in real life it doesn't happen as fast as it does in romance novels. I'm all about taking your time and getting to know someone for months if not years before you decide to commit your life to them. Though I certainly know couples who've fallen in love that way and remained together for decades. But the fun of romance novels is that they're not real life. In real life you have to do things like look at each other's credit reports and talk about who'll take out the trash. Romance novels (at least historical ones) don't have to worry about such things.

What's the craziest thing you've ever done in the name of love? I seriously shouldn't admit to this but I once sent a boyfriend a singing telegram. If memory serves, I believe it was a guy dressed in a gorilla suit.

What are you working on next? What can fans expect from you going forward in 2016? Soon I'll be working on edits to *The Legendary Lord* (book six in the Playful Brides series), and after that I'll be writing Playful Brides book seven, Cade Cavendish's story, which is currently untitled. He's a master of disguise whom his twin brother believed was dead for the last ten years so get ready for some adventure. After that, I'll be writing the story of Delilah Montebank, a character who was introduced as a child in *The Irresistible Rogue*. I've had so many readers ask for her story. I can't wait to write it. And because of her age in the last story, when she grows up Delilah will be in the Victorian Age, so that will be a first for me. I'm also working on a novella for one of the characters in the series, Collin Hunt. So, lots going on in the Playful Brides world and I can't wait to share these new stories with everyone! ✧

For more on the Playful Brides and other historical romances, visit ValerieGBowman.com.