

Heaven Is A Good Book

Dek: Eloisa James, The Queen of Regency Romance, Warms Our Hearts During This Long, Cold Winter

A new year means one thing to historical romance readers: a new Eloisa James book. The reigning queen of the Regency last gifted us with her delightful American duchess in 2016, and for 2017 she gives us *Seven Minutes in Heaven* (Avon, Jan.), the tale of a woman who, of course, falls for a delinquent duke — and we wouldn't have it any other way.

We spent more than seven delightful minutes chatting with Eloisa to find out what inspired her latest *Desperate Duchess*, what's in store for readers in 2017, and how readers, writers and romantics can make the most of the new year.

You've returned to your *Desperate Duchesses* series with *Seven Minutes in Heaven*. Where did you come up with the idea for this particular pairing? While we've seen plenty of governess-and-dad stories from other authors, you've given your version of a tale a very unexpected twist.

I'm never very good at answering questions about where my ideas come from... In this case, I felt I knew both the hero and heroine, as they had appeared as children in earlier books. So it was a little easier to imagine a passionate (combustible) pairing!

Eugenia is quite the businesswoman. Would this have been common during the Regency, or would Eugenia, already a unique character, have been even more unique during her own time period?

Eugenia would be unique no matter her time period, I think. But there were certainly businesswomen in the period. Gentlewomen, in particular, ran large estates. Of course, she circumvents social rules to run her governess agency, and there are consequences, just as there would have been at the time.

Even though your series is called the *Desperate Duchesses*, it seems it's always the men who end up most desperate for love. Men in the modern era hate to seem clingy or desperate, yet in these novels, the men are willing — usually after some reluctance — to be fools for love. What do you think modern men could learn from their Regency counterparts? And what traits do you think are best left in the past?

A man is never more manly, in my opinion, than when he celebrates being in love, rather than running away in the mistaken belief that emotion will make him weak. As for Regency traits to leave in the past, the absolute certainty that women are the frail sex is an unattractive idea that was widespread (but not among my heroes!).

What are some of your personal and professional highlights of the past year?

I spent many joyful hours this fall writing a book that will appear sometime in 2017, about a Georgian explorer and the intelligent young lady who tames his wild ways. Writing joyfully when you've written almost 25 novels is no mean feat. I'm also proud of the fact my recent books are all at 4 ½ stars on Amazon!

You definitely published some of readers' favorite books of 2016. But what are some of the best books you read in 2016?

Here are a few, in no particular order: Penny Reid's *Grin and Beard It*, Sally Thorne's *The Hating Game*, Mariana Zapata's *The Wall of Winnipeg and Me*, Lucy Parker's *Act Like It*, Sarah Maclean's *A Scot in the Dark*, Joanna Shupe's *Tycoon*, Amanda Bouchet's *A Promise of Fire*, Jo Walton's *Among Others*.... I'd better stop there! 2016 was a great reading year — and I have to add that I discovered some of these books on my new favorite social media platform, Litsy. I highly recommend it for discovering wonderful books you might have missed.

Looking forward, do you have any literary resolutions for the new year?

I want to keep that happy feeling I had this fall — managing to push away the stress of book deadlines, and cherish the act of writing.

What can readers expect from you in 2017?

Seven Minutes in Heaven publishes on January 30, and after that, the as-yet-unnamed first in a new series about a slightly crazy family living in a big castle on the edge of a bog. Think *Modern Family* meets *Downton Abbey*.

What are some books you're looking forward to in 2017?

Ilona Andrews's *White Hot* (the sequel to *Burn for Me*), Lisa Kleypas' *Devil in Spring*, Tessa Dare's new Castles Ever After, *The Duchess Deal*, Lucy Parker's *Pretty Face*, and many more I can't think of right now!

What advice do you have for writers looking to follow in your footsteps? As we head into a new year, what are some goals they should set for themselves and some steps they should take to end up atop the bestseller lists alongside you?

My strongest advice has to do with reading, rather than writing. If a person wants to write bestsellers, they need to be reading in that particular sub-genre all the time and enjoying what they read. You can't write simply to make the list because a given sub-genre is popular. You have to write because you love the worlds you're putting characters in. So keep reading, thinking about what is working and why, and start your book with your assessment firmly in mind.

What about readers? What resolutions should readers make as we head into the new year?

I'm resolving to forgive myself for eating too much chocolate. I think that's a good resolution for all of us to adapt!

Finally, what are some romantic resolutions people should make to have the kind of love worthy of retelling in one of your novels? What tips can they garner from your books to help them have their best romantic lives in 2017?

I think the most important thing anyone can do is love themselves first. If you are comfortable and happy without a partner, in my view you are very likely to find one!