



Talk Sweetly to Me

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Nobody knows who Miss Rose Sweetly is, and she prefers it that way. She's a shy, mathematically-minded shopkeeper's daughter who dreams of the stars. Women like her only ever come to attention through scandal. She'll take obscurity, thank you very much.

All of England knows who Stephen Shaughnessy is. He's an infamous advice columnist and a known rake. When he moves into the house next door to Rose, she discovers that he's also wickedly funny, devilishly flirtatious, and heart-stoppingly handsome. But when he takes an interest in her mathematical work, she realizes that Mr. Shaughnessy isn't just a scandal waiting to happen. He's waiting to happen to her...and if she's not careful, she'll give in to certain ruination.

Talk Sweetly to Me Details

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From Reader Review Talk Sweetly to Me for online ebook

Marita says

(EDITED TO ADD REVIEW):

This was just as fun, heartwarming and sweet as I imagined it would be. I mean it's inevitable when you pair a heroine who is so unashamedly a maths geek (to those who care to listen to her anyway) who has to live in a world that is, at best, indifferent to her as a black female mathematician, with a hero whose devil-may-care rakish sardonicism hides a world of hurt and a yearning for love buried so deep even he can't recognise it anymore.

I loved Stephen well before TSTM, because, really, who could have read his columns and not fallen head over heels for his acerbic wit?! But I truly didn't anticipate how much I'd love Rose and her brilliant way of putting people in their place using math :) I love all the fun she had messing with Stephen just because he had the audacity to corner her at her workplace. I also loved that Stephen clearly couldn't get enough of her even when he couldn't admit the extent of his feelings to himself. And his Grand Gesture was sweet as hell too! What was even sweeter was all of Rose's inner monologue acknowledging all his potent charm but sticking to her guns nonetheless; I loved that the unfortunate reality of her life and her childhood made her necessarily wary of letting people in, but that it didn't take her very much to realize that Stephen could be counted on to not let her down-if he couldn't help her solve any problem she might need help solving, he sure as hell would be by her side to face it with her and with a joke or two to hand :)

I just had the most sappy grin on my face the whole time :) Rose went through life undaunted by all her very grim struggles to be given equal consideration and respect regardless of the stigma attached to her race and gender, and did exactly what she wanted to do and did it amazingly well. And Stephen, just like Edward in TSS, wasn't there to take over her life, but to make easier what parts of it he could, so she could be exactly who she was with his love and support.

Courtney Milan has delivered another amazing story here. None of her stories are cookie-cutter by any stretch of the imagination, and once more she has so effectively conveyed an extremely relevant issue here-the rampant racism and sexism evident in Victorian London and the struggles women were going through to be considered equal to men not just as human beings but professionally as well. I wish we could have revisited all the Brothers Sinister again but to be honest we did get to say goodbye to them in TSS so I'm not overly disappointed. I do know that Rose will have absolutely no problem fitting in with Minnie, Lydia, Jane, Violet and Free, and the rest of the men too :)

A lovely and fitting end to the Brothers Sinister (*sniff*), and man am I going to miss these truly spectacular characters. I know CM says this series was groundbreaking for her because it helped her give up her day job and truly put her on the romance map, etc. but I can't begin to convey how groundbreaking it has been for me as a romance reader. **Let me just say that in a world that overwhelmingly focuses on spectacular heroes, this series was the first on in my romance reading history where I waited eagerly for, and was rewarded with, spectacular heroine after spectacular heroine. Yes, the men were amazing, but it was the heroines' stories being told, and told so brilliantly. For so long the 'fantasy' in reading romance has been imagining the kind of hero you want to end up with; CM was the first author who showed me that the true 'fantasy' was, and should be, imagining the kind of heroine I want to be!**

So thank you Courtney, and I will be eagerly waiting for your next series :)

Three Courtney Milan releases in a year. Only GIFs can truly encapsulate my squee-y joy now :)

We get this in 4 weeks? And then we start the Worth saga by the end of this year?!?!?
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEKKKKKKK. It's almost too much to have hoped for after the utter brilliance of The Suffragette Scandal, but hell, if Courtney Milan wants to spoil us, who am I to complain? :D

The excerpt was delicious, and I am totally intrigued by Rose and I am totally relishing getting to see more of Stephen! But mostly Rose, because she is the first black h I'm reading in HR. And she sounds amazing! But I'm so glad we finally get to read a non-whitewashed version of historical Britain. And there's no one I trust to get it brilliantly right like I trust Courtney Milan. And while I'm guessing the Worth saga will be unconnected to the Brothers Sinister (or at best loosely connected), I like that the POC representation in this one will feel like a tie-in/lead-in of sorts to the Worth saga.

Also, all of y'all that enjoyed Stephen Shaughnessy's awe-inspiringly hilarious brand of acerbic and bitingly sarcastic wit should go check out "his" Tumblr where he answers more questions in his "Ask A Man" columns :) Yes, it's even better than you're imagining :D

<http://ask-a-man.tumblr.com/>

Starr (AKA Bam Bam) Rivers says

I seem to like the novellas a lot better than the full-length novels in this series. This was a great book!

I like how CM finds unique (very smart, or damaged or brave) characters and bring them to life.

Rose Sweetly is an black woman who is also a genius mathematician. Stephen Shanghessy is a white Irish Catholic man and a genius with the written word, I suppose, since he's a writer for a woman's newspaper column and a successful novelist.

They are both in their early twenties to boot.

Stephen is one of those lady-killers that I just can't hate. The way he romances Rose is just so sweet and devoted. I like how she puts him in his place but when he's proven his devotion, she's devoted right back.

Highly recommend!

Ingie says

Written December 28, 2014

3.8 Stars - Charming with several important topics

Book #4.5

This was the last part in the amazing well done Brother Sinister series. A quite short novella (3:50 hrs) I buddyread (me listening...she reading) together with my 'Milan'-friend Sofia.

A lot of happy roses...

A worthy conclusion to a fantastic HR series. So very well done and romantic as ever.

“I’m merely making you comfortable with the notion of failure,” she told him, looking down. “When it comes to me, you should expect to fail. Often.”

He set his chin on his hands. “I’d rather fail at you than succeed at anyone else.”

Highly recommended audiobooks, too. ~ Narrated as always by Rosalyn Landor in a remarkable —like outstanding— good way.

Greenwich 1882

‘The nearby docks brought visitors from around the world: lascars from India, midshipmen from the West Indies, swarthy sailors from Portugal...and yes, a goodly number of Irish toiling on ships and in warehouses.’

This is the sweet love tale about **Miss Rose Sweetly**, a shy, mathematically-minded, of *African* descent, shopkeeper’s daughter. Her love to soon be is her, or actually her pregnant married sisters, new neighbor **Stephen Shaughnessy**. An infamous advice columnist and a man well known as a women’s rake.

“Your computer?” Stephen asked with studied nonchalance. This was what he’d hoped for, after all. “What’s that?”

“Precisely what it sounds like: a person who computes. Absolutely necessary for those of us engaged in any sort of dynamics. All those calculations come to a dreadful mess; if I had to do them all myself, I’d have no time to think of anything. And yes, my computer is a woman.”

So Rose get the assignment to try to teach this writer Stephen some little basic about math (with a protective lady chaperon of course..) and Rose’s favorite subject astronomy.

Then soon is that very unique day December 6, 1882 when the *Planet Venus* will intervene between Earth and the sun. Obviously our heroine Rose dreams of seeing this in a space telescope, but this wasn't the time when young (black) women's desires were satisfied in the first place. (An 1882 photo:) (view spoiler)

(hide spoiler)]

...If there wasn't gentleman-like romances princes course.

The seventh part in the Brother Sinister series by Courtney Milan. Amazing good...(view spoiler)

(hide spoiler)]

“Having you watch me calculate is like...” He paused, searching for an appropriate analogy.

“It’s like having Beethoven attend a child’s first recital on the pianoforte.”

She gave a little snort behind him. “I shouldn’t think so. There are a few salient differences.”

“True. Beethoven isn’t female. Beethoven isn’t lovely. You’re far more disconcerting.”

I'm just a huge 'Milan' fan...

This was entertaining and as always in Ms. Milan's romances filled with important political (women's rights) messages. In this part som diversity with a dark skinned heroine as well. ~ A shrewd, smart, clever and very intelligent heroine and a charming good-hearted hero. Yeah!! I enjoyed and it is with sadness that I listened to the last page of this wonderful HR series.

There will undoubtedly be many more book selections from me by this author. Absolutely! ~ Courtney

Milan historicals always catches my attention and makes me love these unique characters.

Farewell!!

I LIKE - as I said; a worthy last novella - thanks!

The Brother Sinister series by Courtney Milan. Four novels and three novellas. (view spoiler)

Jaclyn says

Talk Sweetly to Me is the last *Brothers Sinister* addition, and this little novella was a lovely finale to the collection. Readers were introduced to Stephen Shaughnessy in *The Suffragette Scandal*, as the “Actual Man” that offers advice in Frederica Marshall’s newspaper. In *Talk Sweetly to Me*, Stephen has met his match with Miss Rose Sweetly, an extraordinary mathematical genius, who is quite opposite to Stephen’s carefree attitude.

Rose, like the all of the women featured in the *Brothers Sinister* series has a hard lot because of her sex. Rose is smart, but there are limitations imposed on her because she is a woman. Unlike the other heroines of the series, Rose has the added complication of also being black, which is more than difficult in 1882. Rose may be smart and reserved, but by virtue of the colour of her skin, Rose is immediately considered less. And no one explains the way society works more succinctly than Rose’s sister, Patricia:

“I love you, Rose.” Patricia sighed. “And I know you’ll make a good marriage, one as brilliant as mine. But you have to remember that most men who look at you won’t be seeing you. They won’t see you’re clever and amusing.” Her sister came forward and took Rose’s hand in her own. “They’ll see this.” She rubbed the back of Rose’s hand. Dark skin pressed against dark skin. “It doesn’t matter how respectably you dress or how much you insist. Most men will see that you’re black and they’ll think you’re available.” (p.11)

Patricia is concerned about Rose’s interactions with Stephen and worried that he might take advantage of Rose. Stephen has a bit of a rakish reputation and its understandable that Patricia is concerned for Rose. Luckily, Stephen does not have nefarious designs on Rose and is actually quite smitten with her, and even goes so far as to invent a reason for mathematical lessons with her to get to know her better. While Stephen doesn’t completely understand the hardship that Rose endures because of the colour of her skin, he is intrigued by her reserved nature and bright mind.

Rose is just as smitten with Stephen, but she is more than aware of the difficulties that are ahead for them if there were to pursue a relationship, which make her very cautious in her dealings with him. Rose is not sure if she’s willing to go through the future difficulties, and this uncertainty and vulnerability is what made Rose such a wonderful character. Both Rose and Stephen will need to determine whether their relationship is enough to overcome the inevitable difficulties and obstacles that will come their way because of their difference in skin colour.

Talk Sweetly to Me was another great novella by Milan, and I will admit that she is one of my favourite

novella writers. The format is short, but Milan is always able to give you a satisfying and realistically developed romance despite the lack of pages. *Talk Sweetly to Me* was an emotional story, and I really liked that both Rose and Stephen were forced to *really* consider what they were getting into by pursuing a relationship. Just because they care for one another doesn't mean that they will be happy; Rose has to force Stephen to consider this:

"You told me the awkward difficult bit will only be the beginning," she said. "But it won't be. It'll be difficult in the middle, over and over. It'll be difficult at the end. It will never stop being difficult, and the only reason that you don't know that is that you haven't considered the possibility. At some point, Stephen, you'll realize this is not a joking matter." (p. 66)

I love that these considerations were included. So often in romance all obstacles are easily surmounted, and that's great, I do love that aspect where anything can be overcome in a romance, but it's also nice to read something and know that the characters really have thought about the consequences of their relationship and have made the decision to move ahead (or not) accordingly. For such a short book, I really do feel that readers are treated to a considered and realistically paced romance between Rose and Stephen. Ultimately, this was another great novella from Courtney Milan and I'm sorry to see the *Brothers Sinister* series come to an end. I can only hope that the author's next series will be as thought provoking and unusual as this one has been.

Originally posted on The Book Adventures.

*Review copy provided by the publisher via NetGalley.

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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Rose Sweetly is a brilliant, scientific mind whose efforts go mostly unrecognized because she is a) a woman and b) black. Most people roll their eyes a little once she starts to talk "Sweetly" (a.k.a. go on a major geeky bender), but not Stephen Shaughnessy.

Stephen is the columnist (Actual Man) for women who want to ask men questions and have an "actual man" respond. He's also a bit of a rogue and a rake, though not a rapacious one. The fact that he's so charming and so forbidden causes Rose no shortage of concern - especially now that he seems to have taken it upon himself to court her in a bizarre fashion: by soliciting her for mathematical tutoring.

It was so great to see a nerdy heroine who actually walked the walk. Rose is *such* a nerd. The nerdy jokes and scientific banter in *TALK SWEETLY TO ME* were great. I could relate so hard to being interested in something that makes most people roll their eyes and say, "Oh, there she goes again." (In my case, it's

books.) Milan hit the nail on the head there.

Like all of Milan's heroes that I've encountered so far, Stephen is a delightful beta hero. Very sweet and attentive, despite an active sexual history. There are only one or two sexual encounters between them, and they were well written, albeit abridged and a little tepid. Stephen was a little bland for my liking...I think I liked Robert in **THE DUCHESS WAR** more because we got more time to explore his character, and he had a moody backstory and a bit of an edge, which is always exciting in a hero. Still, nobody writes beta heroes like Milan. I didn't even think that I liked them until I read Milan.

That said, **TALK SWEETLY TO ME** is probably my least favorite Milan book I read. **HER EVERY WISH**, a novella in her Worth series, does a much better job of giving backstory and providing steam in a short amount of time. But don't be alarmed: saying that this is my least favorite Milan book is a little bit like saying, "This is my least favorite glitter." Glitter is always going to be sparkly and fun, so even if it's your *least favorite glitter*, the fact that it is glitter means that, by nature, it's always going to be at least somewhat amazing. (By the way, for some interesting images, do a Google search of "ugly glitter.")

I enjoyed reading **TALK SWEETLY TO ME**. I'm not sure I'd read it again, but it was a charming bit of fluff that brightened my day with its sparkle and its charm. What more can you ask of glitter?

3 stars!

UniquelyMoi ~ BlithelyBookish says

Without fail, Courtney Milan gives me stories I can get lost in and amazing characters I can fall in love with! **Talk Sweetly to Me** is a charming, romantic, passionate tale of two people who could be poster children for 'opposites attract.'

A full review may come later, but the bottom line is that historical romance fans will love Ms. Milan's writing, and those who are not fans of the genre should give her a try anyway - and prepare to be wow'd!

Steelwhisper says

I need to sleep over this. Review to come!

I normally like Milan's books, they vary from 3 to 4* for me usually--mainly because she writes genuinely strong heroines who tend to be at least still partially true to their era. And she tends to have heroes who aren't outright dicks or completely bland apart from their looks, titles and riches. So far I took the slight

preachiness and the usually very atypical sex in stride, a minor price to pay for something somewhat different than the mainstream.

This time it was a bit too much. Too much of everything. And herewith under spoilers (you were warned, don't open unless you want to be spoiled).

(view spoiler)

So, this book simply contained way too many modernisms and not enough realism for me to like it. It was, of course, still well-written (with a few SPaG issues), and I liked the MCs, so I rounded down from around 2.5*.

Dabney says

Like **The Suffragette Scandal**, this politics of this novella are almost impossible to separate from its fictional merits. The heroine, Rose Sweetly, is a brilliant black mathematician; the hero Stephen, a feminist Irish Catholic writer. Both are practicing their craft in Victorian London despite the prejudices of the time. Their love story is a rousing cheer for diversity and overcoming the limits of the society in which they live. I liked both Rose and Stephen tremendously.

This is not Ms. Milan's best novella. It's too short to encompass the emotional journey the leads take. I believed that Stephen and Rose fell for each other almost immediately but I didn't feel it. Their connection, like the comet Rose studies, was something I had to take on faith. The villain of the piece was a one note racist--I expect nuance from Ms. Milan because she's so extraordinarily talented--and almost all the secondary characters were too slimly sketched.

I enjoyed this tale though. I wish all those who think romance heroines are busty blondes just waiting for their bodices to be ripped or young administrative assistances pleading for their leather planners to be used against them by bossy billionaires would read **Talk Sweetly to Me**. The writing is lovely and empowering. The cover is subversively stunning. And, once you've read it, you'll better understand how to measure the path of a comet.

KatLynne says

Milan's ingenious recipe for a charming, short read...

An African American woman – the very clever and gifted Rose Sweetly...
A scrumptiously delicious Irish, Catholic male... Mr. Stephen Shaughnessy...

Toss in...

Mathematics, astronomy, humor, seduction, and a few surprises along the way....

And, of course, the main ingredient...

The very **talented** pen of Courtney Milan...

The Results...

An appealing, engaging love story featuring two very lovable characters resulting in a sweet, fun romance.

Caz says

This is a short and sweet (sorry!) coda to Ms Milan's superb **Brothers Sinister** series which features the rakishly charming Stephen Shaughnessy, one of the secondary characters from The Suffragette Scandal and author of the controversial *Ask A Man* column in the **Women's Free Press** .

As with all the books in the series, the novella packs a serious political message in amongst the wonderful writing and the love story. Here, we have an Irishman with feminist sympathies and a young Black woman who happens to be a mathematical genius, and Ms Milan doesn't make light of the sort of problems and the prejudice they encounter individually and are likely to encounter as a couple in England in 1888.

It's a quick read and I enjoyed it, but it lacked the romantic and character development that I've become accustomed to finding in all Ms Milan's work – not just in her full-length novels. Stephen and Rose Sweetly are already enamoured of each other at the beginning of the story, though neither is aware of it, and the story is more to do with Rose needing to allow herself to believe in Stephen's love for her and then to decide to face - rather than hide from - the challenges that will befall them.

That said though, there is a thorough tenderness permeating the story, and Rose and Stephen are likeable characters who make a great couple.

I'm really sorry to see the **Brothers Sinister** series come to an end, but I'm delighted to have this set of fabulous stories to go back to time and again.

Nakeesha says

Romance novels are an escape for me. I turn the news off. Tune out the kitchen table talk of girlfriends. Bow out of the supper club nights of my social circle. I plug in my earbuds on the commuter bus, shut the bedroom door to the kids, hideaway from all of the troubles of the world and get lost in books. That's what romance novels are for in my world.

Like many women of color romance readers, I've lamented that there are too few historical romance novels featuring non-white women. Its kind of obvious why isn't it? At least for me it is. I run from social and racial issues and dive into romance books to escape. I learned in The Heiress Effect that Courtney Milan will not always let me run and hide when she introduced an Indian hero to her Englishwoman heroine. If she's not tackling race, she's tackling class like in Proof by Seduction. If not class, then gender like in The Suffragette Scandal. In Talk Sweetly to Me Milan multiplies all these issues together when she boldly introduces a middle class heroine of African descent to a radically heroic Englishman.

This book did not do its job. It did not allow me to escape social, gender, and racial pressures. It put them front and center in my face right alongside the love story. I couldn't escape. Milan was subtle in showing the indignities faced by her heroine, heavy-handed in making you feel the prejudices deep in your gut, and perfectly paced in bringing the star-crossed lovers to an HEA. It broke me wide open because my heart pounded at the love story and my head raged against the obstacles which still exist today. Milan brought all these issues into my happy place and she made me cry. And now all I want to do is buy a plane ticket to Ireland to find me an Actual Man.

ARC provided by Netgalley

Obsidian says

I wanted more. That's my big issue with this novella. I wanted more information on Rose's background. I wanted appearances by the other Brothers Sinister. This book didn't feel part of that universe at all. That said, I enjoyed Milan touching about race relations in the 1800s and throwing some mathematical and astronomy our way via the heroine.

Rose Sweetly does her best to keep Stephen Shaughnessy out of her mind. He has a reputation from the articles he writes, and Rose knows her duty is to marry one of the men her family has their eyes on for her. As a black woman she doesn't have the luxury to be flirted with or ruined. I loved the fact that Rose has such an interest in mathematics and astronomy and even though she tries not to, has fallen for Stephen. I found her relationship with her sister interesting and wish we had more details concerning their parents than what we got.

I wasn't a huge fan of Stephen at first. Especially because he's focused on seducing Rose. Then all of a sudden he gains depth and is in love with her (the story really needed to be longer) which did give me whiplash a bit.

We don't get much time to develop secondary characters in this and as I said, I was disappointed with the lack of appearances by the other characters in this book. I thought the doctor was an ass, but didn't really get why the character didn't just switch doctors. I saw the racism thing coming a mile away. It wasn't exactly

subtle.

The writing is top notch and there was a flow hiccup towards the end and that was about it.

The ending was okay, but once again I just needed a bit more since the HEA felt a little too pat for me.

Kate says

WARNING: This review is nitpicky, cantankerous, and possibly even querulous. Proceed at your own risk.

I had high hopes for Talk Sweetly To Me, but today they were dashed--dashed I say--against the unforgiving shores of reality. Here in no particular order I present my grievances:

1. Sloppy editing. Stephen's name is--have you guessed it?--Stephen, yet at one point the author refers to him as Patrick. At another point Rose marvels "You've mounted an entire theodolite telescope mounted in the window." But Rose, tell us--is it mounted?!
2. The cover. Rose Sweetly is a black woman. Why has she been white-washed for the cover? Someone casually browsing Amazon would have no idea on seeing that picture that it's meant to depict a heroine of color, and that is a disappointment.
3. The plot. Originally there was going to be a Shop-Around-the-Corner style plot with Rose and Stephen corresponding and simultaneously falling in love, which I was very much looking forward to, and which apparently got edited out. What's left is pretty flimsy, sadly. Their love felt too instant for me, and honestly, I'm not convinced Stephen is smart enough for Rose.
4. Finally--I think it's really great and exciting that CM has written a historical romance with a person of color as a lead character, and I hope that this novella is successful and inspires other romance authors to write non-white heroes and heroines. With that being said, I could've done with a couple fewer references to Rose's dark (and "frizzy," agh) hair, dark eyes, dark skin. I don't feel that I have a good picture of what Rose looks like, other than dark, because that's CM's go-to adjective for her. It comes across almost as if CM is periodically reminding us that Rose is not caucasian.

Official nitpicker's grade

VISION: A+

EXECUTION: C

Sofia says

A nice short, not as fully developed as her longer work or as her The Governess Affair.

What this reminded me most of was me taking my eight year old son to see the transit of Venus across the sun back in 2004 at the telescope set out in Sliema. Nice memories. This story infact recounts the same transit of Venus which happened before the 2004 one that is on 6th Dec 1882. Plus it also opened my eyes about the existence of 'computers'.

More on the transit here.

BR with Ingela

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

3.5 stars

Courtney Milan could make a priest reading the phonebook to a nun sound like sexual banter....or something like that. You know what I mean, Milan knows how to use words between couples. Was too short, I'm aware it's a novella but I'm a greedy obsessed fan.

When does the next Milan book come out?
