



Forever Your Earl

Eva Leigh

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Eva Leigh's irresistible new series introduces the Wicked Quills of London: a group of bold, brilliant female writers whose spirited allure is beyond seductive...

Eleanor Hawke loves a good scandal. And readers of her successful gossip rag live for the exploits of her favorite subject: Daniel Balfour, the notorious Earl of Ashford. So when the earl himself marches into her office and invites her to experience his illicit pursuits firsthand, Eleanor is stunned. Gambling hells, phaeton races, masquerades . . . What more could a scandal writer want than a secret look into the life of this devilishly handsome rake?

Daniel has secrets, and if *The Hawk's Eye* gets wind of them, a man's life could be at stake. And what better way to distract a gossip than by feeding her the scandal she desperately craves? But Daniel never expected the sharp mind and biting wit of the beautiful writer, and their desire for each other threatens even his best-laid plans.

But when Eleanor learns the truth of his deception, Daniel will do anything to prove a romance between a commoner and an earl could really last forever.

Forever Your Earl Details

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From Reader Review Forever Your Earl for online ebook

Lover of Romance says

This review was originally posted on Addicted To Romance

Summary

Eleanor Hawke has worked hard to build up her business, she runs a scandal rag and she is quite popular. But her latest victim of a scandal, Daniel Balfour, The Earl of Ashford is quite displeased. He marches into her office and makes demands but offers her a chance to get some juicy tidbits and see what his life is really like. So Eleanor takes him up on his offer. They go from gambling hells to races and a masquerade ball, there is so much more happening than she realized. But Daniel has his own secrets. He is searching for his best friend who has recently disappeared and to keep attention off of his friend, he wants the focus to be on himself while he goes out in the worst part of London to search for him. But Daniel never expected to fall for the one woman that seems wrong for him...but in the end is completely right. Will Daniel be able to trust Eleanor with his secret and prove that love really does conquer all?

Plot and Story Line

Wow, what a story this was, and boy was I surprised by this authors ability to completely draw me into a story. From the first page, I was hooked and I just couldn't get enough of these two. The bantering between them is quite energetic and with both Eleanor and Daniel being opinionated and equally stubborn, they definitely have some sparks flying in the air between them. We see two people that have easily underestimated each other. Forever Your Earl is the first of a series, and what a fantastic start. There were so many aspects that made this a winner for me. The first were the adventures around London and the surprises. Eleanor is a character that you really come to adore quite instantly, she is passionate, smart and quick witted. She has this way of endearing just about everyone to her. I love her easy to love personality. Now our hero is quite the Earl...but he is loyal and honorable and will do anything for friendship. I loved seeing these good parts of him come shining through. What was most interesting was seeing the way these two were engaged with each other. They have quite a bit of chemistry, and I just couldn't get enough of them. The love story is sweet and endearing with sparks of desire flying around them. What I loved most about this story, was how this author makes the era come alive for me. This is not your typical regency romance, it has zest and passion and a tone of playfulness to it. This is a story that made me realize why I fell in love with Regency years ago. There was so much cleverness, witty bantering, the characters development and transformations were pure delight, and a relationship that seemed to flow smoothly. These two just fit for each other in small unique ways. I want me some more and more of Eva Leigh!!

The Cover

DANG.....Gorgeous!!! One of my favorite covers this year!! Normally I like more couple poses, but boy that dress with the face mask, the vivid colors, and the background, makes me want to get a time machine!!

Overall View

Forever Your Earl is an outstanding romance that enraptures from the first page...full of adventure, humor, passion, and sacrifice.....it has it all!!! SIMPLY FANTASTIC!!

Jenny Q says

I'm not likely to pick up a new Regency these days unless there's something very different about it, and when I read the description of *Forever Your Earl*, it immediately went on my list. Of course I was drawn to a historical heroine who publishes her own newspaper!

Business is booming for Eleanor Hawke, thanks in no small part to the Earl of Ashford, whose society antics printed in her pages have readers clamoring for more. Some may dismiss *The Hawk's Eye* as rubbish, but Eleanor believes in giving the lower classes entertainment, and if exposing the vices and ugly side of upper society helps convince them to live a more moral life, then so much the better. But she never expects her paper's number one subject to storm into her office demanding to speak to the publisher, much less bearing a proposition she can't turn down.

Daniel Balfour is used to being the topic of conversation, but *The Hawk's Eye* manages to get too close to too many truths, including one he's desperately trying to keep out of the public spotlight. Expecting to be able to reason with a man of business, he is stunned to discover that publisher E. Hawke is actually a woman, and a sharp, no-nonsense, beautiful one at that. Forced to abruptly change tactics, he offers to give Eleanor the scoop of a lifetime by letting her chronicle his exploits firsthand. An exclusive series with London's most notorious rake will take her paper to the next level. And Daniel figures he'll be able to keep her so preoccupied with his after-dark activities that she won't have time to ferret out his secret.

But of course, things don't go quite as planned. While showing Eleanor the lifestyle of the rich and famous, he begins to realize how empty his pursuit of pleasure has been and how much he longs for a woman like Eleanor to share his life with. And Eleanor begins to see how much pressure a man like Daniel is under and that there is far more to him than she ever expected, but what is he still hiding from her? Can a privileged earl and a working-class woman come together to form a partnership the likes of which London has never before seen? Or will their differences and secrets prove to be too much to overcome?

This was my first experience with this author, who has more than a dozen novels under her belt as Zoe Archer, and I will definitely be reading more. It was so much fun to follow Daniel and Eleanor on their adventures. This story is filled with sparkling dialogue and wit, the characters are well developed and compelling, and the sexual tension sizzles. I only have one real complaint, but unfortunately it's an all-encompassing one, and that is that the book is overly wordy and heavy on inner monologues that grow repetitive. It bogs the story down, and I found myself skimming to get back to the action.

But I really enjoyed the story itself. Eleanor is a unique and engaging heroine. I'm not sure how plausible she is for the time period, but she sure is fun to read about. Though it's not all fun and games. The story does bring to light some of the failings and injustices lying beneath the wealthy, polished veneer of Regency high society, and Daniel does come to question many aspects of the disparity between the classes and what he can do to amend that. I loved the depiction of Eleanor's friendship with another female writer, and I adore the premise for this series, *The Wicked Quills of London*, which will each feature a woman who makes her living with her pen. I am very much looking forward to book two, *Scandal Takes the Stage*, which will feature two intriguing characters introduced in *Forever Your Earl*. A good start to a unique series!

**This review was originally posted to Romantic Historical Reviews*

Caz says

I've given this an A at AAR. I had a couple of small niggles, but not enough to knock the grade down.

When it was announced at last year's RWA that Zoe Archer was going to be turning her hand to writing Regency romances under the pseudonym of Eva Leigh, I was undoubtedly one of many immediately asking "when? WHEN?!" (and "who do I have to kill to get a copy?") I have enjoyed other books of hers, most notably her Victorian-set *Nemesis Unlimited* series, which featured tightly-plotted, action-packed storylines, strong, independently-minded heroines, wickedly sexy heroes and great dialogue. I started reading **Forever Your Earl** hoping for more of the same – and wasn't disappointed.

Eleanor Hawke, editor and proprietor of *The Hawk's Eye*, a modestly successful periodical devoted to exposing the foibles of the rich and infamous, is surprised when completely out of the blue, one of her most recent targets, the rakish – and, she has to admit, gorgeous - Earl of Ashford storms into her office. He angrily insists that she stop printing lies about him, even going so far as to suggest that her readers might like to read actual news rather than "spurious gossip about a figure as inconsequential as myself."

But Daniel Balfour has more at stake than simply putting a stop to gossip. For weeks, he has been trying to discover the whereabouts of his oldest friend, Jonathan Lawson, who disappeared into London's underbelly before learning that the death of his brother had elevated him to a dukedom. Lawson, unlike Daniel, had been able to serve in the army during the recent war, but returned from it a changed man. All Daniel has to go on is that shortly before his disappearance, Jonathan had been seen in the worst sort of company in the less salubrious areas of London – and knows that should news of it ever leak out, it will ruin him, his family and his sister's chance of making a good marriage. As Jonathan's closest friend, Daniel can't allow that to happen and besides, he feels partially responsible for the situation, having noticed something wasn't right with his friend and not having taken any steps to help him.

Realising that having his every move scrutinised so closely could jeopardise his search and increase the risk to the Lawson family, Daniel decides to turn the gaze of *The Hawk's Eye* elsewhere, by offering to open up his life to public scrutiny within its pages. He offers Eleanor the chance to write the truth about him; where he goes, what he does and who he sees, the life of one of the ton's most infamous rakes set out in black and white for all the world to see.

While not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth, Eleanor knows there is more to Ashford's offer than meets the eye. Reasoning that as long as they're using each other, she decides she might as well take him up on it, even as she stamps down on the thought that her motives for getting close to the earl might not all be to do with her wish to increase sales.

There's a lot going on in this book beneath the surface action of Eleanor accompanying Daniel on various escapades, and his search for his friend. The couple has terrific chemistry, and the romance between them is witty, intense, highly sensual and, at times, heartbreaking. The characterisation of the leads is excellent, both of them strong, determined people who are nonetheless missing a subtle something that the other is able to supply. Eleanor has made her way in a man's world and is intelligent and shrewd without being shrewish or mannish. She likes men – she's had lovers – but ultimately, the paper she built from nothing is her true passion. Daniel, while rich, handsome and titled, feels guilty and inadequate because he didn't reach out to

his friend when he most needed him, and is at a crossroads in his life, no longer wanting the life of a useless fribble, but unsure of what he can contribute. In Daniel, Eleanor finds someone who really listens to her and takes her seriously, and in her, he finds someone who breaks through his cultivated cynical detachment and sees him for who he really is.

As is so often the case with heroes who are described as rakes or rogues, Daniel really is neither – or not that we see within the confines of the story. What we do see is an honourable, clever, well-read and witty man who is prepared to put his money where his mouth is when it comes to the woman he loves, in spite of the huge social gulf between them.

This is another thing that is well-handled within the story; cross-class historical romances are difficult to pull off because of the social rigidity of the time, but the author doesn't ignore the problems and has both protagonists well-aware of them from the outset. Yet the more time they spend together, the more it becomes apparent to them both that they are much more than ships who pass in the night – but it's going to take a lot of courage on both sides if they are to thumb their noses at society and follow their hearts.

Ms Leigh also has a lot to say about the inequality of the sexes; in fact, the copy I have on my Kindle is full of highlights such as this, from a scene early on in which Eleanor is disguised as a man prior to their visit to a select gaming hell:

"It's the diametric opposite to the way women are taught to walk. We're told to take up as little space as possible. Not attract attention to ourselves. Not claim anything as our own."

He started. None of this had ever occurred to him. He's always suspected that women walked differently from men because of biology, but never from truly learned behaviour, lessons that included how females were perceived or thought of themselves in the world.

"But you," she continued. "It's like everything is yours. You can claim it all and no one will gainsay you..."

His laugh was short and strained. Here he'd taken her into this alley to give her some simple instruction on the way to walk like a man, and suddenly he'd been given an entirely new insight into what it meant to BE a man. What it meant to be a woman.

The other many highlights are of the wonderful banter between the pair. The dialogue in this book really is to die for; it's sharp, witty, innuendo-laden—and often downright hilarious, such as the moment when, upon entering the gambling hell, Eleanor declares it to be "Debrett's gone feral."

I only have one real complaint about the book, which is that while I enjoyed it enormously, I never got a Regency "vibe" from it. Ms Leigh makes all the right references to styles of dress, events and social customs, but in my head, the book is set several decades after 1816. I can understand that perhaps the choice of time period was deliberately made in order to distance the author's Eva Leigh persona from her Zoe Archer one, but the book just doesn't scream "Regency" to me. Daniel's reference to an omnibus is another thing that made me question the setting, because I don't believe these appeared in the UK until the 1820s.

Those things apart, though, **Forever Your Earl** is a terrific story and one I have no qualms about recommending most heartily. The reservations I've expressed in no way affected my enjoyment and the book is most definitely going on to my keeper shelf.

Jackie says

2.5 I so so so so so want to like this book, given its author is one of the few romance writers who (under her original name, Zoe Archer) openly identifies as a feminist. And because her heroine, Eleanor Hawke, is an independent woman who owns her own newspaper. But no matter how much I wanted to, I just could not warm to it. Because:

- The premise behind the novel—Daniel Balfour, Earl of Ashford, decides to offer himself as a subject to a scandal sheet writer, believing that by appearing in a scandal sheet on a regular basis he'll distract people from finding out about his search for his friend, the heir of a duke who has disappeared somewhere in London, and thus avoid a scandal for said friend—made no sense to me. Why couldn't the missing heir's family just say he was rustivating in the country? And since the scandal was his friend's, rather than his, why would Daniel worry about being followed himself?
- Even if I could overlook the lack of sense of the premise, there is no real goal or problem driving Eleanor in this plot, so I didn't feel very invested in her; she wasn't fighting for anything that I wanted to cheer her on in. Daniel's goal—to find his friend—didn't seem all that emotionally compelling, either.
- There is no real conflict keeping the two potential lovers apart, except for a class-based one (which, of course, falls to the wayside at novel's end for no apparent reason beyond the hero's willingness to break with tradition, and the heroine's willingness to overlook her previous scruples about cross-class alliances)
- Loved the fact that Eleanor is not only a writer, but a publisher. But the explanation for how she came to own her own paper & printing press is pretty glib ("I saved for it, and some friends lent me \$"). With all the barbs she lobbs about the treatment of women during her sparring with Daniel, she seemed remarkably untouched by any institutional or personal sexism herself
- The usual anachronisms common the genre are here, ones that make it easier for contemporary readers to feel comfortable in the past. But others, ones that just seem the result of carelessness (omnibuses? In 1816??) kept distracting me
- Daniel is supposed to be a rake, but, as is usual with current Regency romances, we never see much sign of his formerly rakish behavior, or how being such a rake impacts his current behavior.
- Eleanor gets really angry when Daniel suggests maybe she could do better than to write and publish gossip & scandal, so angry that she kicks him out. And then he has to apologize. This sounds more like a writer of romance in the 21st century justifying her decision than a writer of a scandal sheet in the early 19th.
- The two grow closer when Daniel admits he's jealous of Eleanor's passion for her work, that he feels "empty" because he's just a wastrel aristocrat. Totally ignoring the many responsibilities an aristocrat did have: serving in Parliament, running his estate(s), just to name two. I find this very American sense that work is only employment for pay very annoying.
- Knowing that once she's married, her property will be her husband's (unless there is some canny lawyerly dealing in the writing up of the marriage settlement) never comes up for discussion at book's end, when the two if course marry by special license.

:-)

? Irena ? says

If I'd wanted to read a contemporary romance chock-full of contemporary issues (real and imaginary), I would have read a contemporary romance chock-full of contemporary issues (repetition deliberate).

It's like the author had this check list of the things people are bothered about today (or in the 1900s, I'll give you that) and proceeded to cross out one item at a time.

I can usually suspend my disbelief in romances, but not *this* much. The story supposedly takes place in the early 1800s! At one point of the story the hero's footman is carrying messages between them back and forth and that is written like they are on their phones. It's ridiculous.

And there are only so many times one can use the word privilege before it simply becomes noise. There was one time I thought the next words I'm going to read would be 'check it' or something similar.

I won't get into all the annoying details. If not for a couple of truly entertaining moments, the parts about war veterans, this would be a bigger chore to read. They are the only reasons why I'm not rating it 'I didn't like it'. If it had to be a historical, it would have been better as a story set in the 1900s.

Sarah says

[having sexual assignations with men likeminded]

Tessa Dare says

First, disclaimer: Eva Leigh is a friend of mine, and we write for the same publisher. So I'm biased.

That said, I don't think anyone who knows me at all could doubt that I genuinely adored this book. To begin with, the "Wicked Quills of London" concept is pretty much everything I'm wired to love--an entire series built around intelligent heroines who write, often inappropriately? YES, PLEASE. A scandal-sheet publisher and an infamous rake as heroine and hero? GIVE ME MORE. <3

The witty banter between Eleanor and Daniel is sharp and funny, interspersed with romantic moments that made me sigh with happiness. (I loved the carriage-race scene in particular.)

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and can't wait to see where Eva Leigh takes the Wicked Quills series next. If you like smart, independent heroines, rakish-yet-respectful heroes, and snappy dialogue in your historical romance, put FOREVER YOUR EARL on your TBR.

UniquelyMoi ~ BlithelyBookish says

The sweetest gifts are the most ephemeral. An orange at Christmas. The first hawthorn flower of spring. A beloved's kiss. They all pass in hardly the time it takes to draw breath. Thus we must grab hold of these prizes and cling to them tightly, before they slip from our grasp and into the realm of memory.

Forever Your Earl is the first book in Eva Leigh's *Wicked Quills of London* series and I loved it! I was blown away by to think this could possibly be Ms. Leigh's debut, until I learned that Eva Leigh is, in fact, Zoë Archer – another favorite author of mine.

Blurb...

Eleanor Hawke loves a good scandal. And readers of her successful gossip rag live for the exploits of her favorite subject: Daniel Balfour, the notorious Earl of Ashford. So when the earl himself marches into her office and invites her to experience his illicit pursuits firsthand, Eleanor is stunned. Gambling hells, phaeton races, masquerades . . . What more could a scandal writer want than a secret look into the life of this devilishly handsome rake?

Daniel has secrets, and if The Hawk's Eye gets wind of them, a man's life could be at stake. And what better way to distract a gossip than by feeding her the scandal she desperately craves? But Daniel never expected the sharp mind and biting wit of the beautiful writer, and their desire for each other threatens even his best-laid plans.

But when Eleanor learns the truth of his deception, Daniel will do anything to prove a romance between a commoner and an earl could really last forever.

My thoughts...

There are already many excellent reviews of this story, so I'll keep mine short. I've read some of Zoë Archer's *Steampunk Nemesis Unlimited* books and loved them, and had been hoping she'd write straight historical romance, too, because I knew they'd be stories brilliantly told, and I was right. A solid story, lot's clever dialog, sexual chemistry off the charts, and laugh out loud moments has made *Forever Your Earl* an absolute delight to read, and I am *sooooo* looking forward to more!

An ARC was provided by Avon Books. In appreciation I'm giving them an honest review.

Lily (Night Owl Book Cafe) says

Forever Your Earl is the first book in *The Wicked Quills of London* by Eva Leigh and it follows a brilliant woman, Eleanor Hawke, a writer who lives for a good scandal to entertain the readers of her newspaper with. When one of her favorite subjects shows up in her office, the last thing Eleanor expects was to end up experiencing his illicit pursuit by the earls side.

Ashford has his own reasons for allowing Eleanor to tag along on his exploits. As long as the woman keeps her focus on his rakish behavior for her newspaper, he can continue searching for his friend Jonathan and hopefully keep his family out of a scandal that can ruin them, should his disappearance go public.

If you have followed me for a while, you know I love my historical romance and Eva Leigh did a good job delivering exactly what I wanted. A swoon worthy romance, an entertaining plot, and well written main characters.

Eleanor and Ashford were fantastic together.

"You set me adrift," she confessed.

"And you anchor me," he answered.

Seriously. They had so many moments that melted my heart. She was a hard working woman who made a name for herself and built her newspaper from scratch. He is an earl who has a lot of money, lots of free time on his hands and very unsure of the purpose he has in his life. Together, they made a great duo that I could not help but root for, especially when in their day and age, society would frown upon their match.

"We've degenerated into name-calling now." She shook her head. "The last refuge of those deprived of wit."
"Now who's calling names?" He grinned.

The banter between them was so much fun. I loved how the two clicked together and the tension that built around their relationship. Eleanor seemed to have bought out a different side of Ashford, a very vulnerable side that not even Ashford he was aware of. His confessions to her about not knowing his purpose was heart touching.

The plot I found interesting as well. Daniel (Ashford) search for his friend fueled Eleanor's writing and the reason why the two have ventured into some questionable places. Jonathan's story was also very heartbreaking, a veteran of war with demons. I hope he eventually get's his own book.

This was my first taste of Leigh writing and I really did enjoy it. I am looking forward to exploring more of her writing in the future.

I leave you with one more...

A long while later, she said, "You've a peculiar way of showing a woman you love her."

"Never done it before," he answered.

This review was originally posted on Night Owl Book Café

Ally says

Color me naive when it comes to historical accuracy why don't you?

But I loved this tale! Zoe Archer writes the most kick a\$\$ heroines and I love her for it.

Eleanor is our heroine and she rocks it. She's smart, industrious, driven and hot. There, I said it. I have a fem-mance going on here. This is woman who stands on her own, believes in herself and doesn't hesitate to

point out the inequalities between the sexes. She nails it.

"he'd been given an entirely new insight into what it meant to be a man. What it meant to be a woman."

Daniel is our hero and a most likable man he. He's a rake. He's got heart. He's got heart. He's naive about the world, inequality of the sexes and the classes. But, and this is a really big BUT, he's an active listener. He's a learner. I'd take him. In a heartbeat.

Is this reality? Is this regency? Hell no, not even close. Please. But it's a story worth reading and if you can suspend your expectations of reality in romance (???), you really should be reading this book.

"It wasn't sportsmanlike for a man to be so annihilating to a woman's self-control. He ought to be regulated, like a weapon."

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

I feel like a curmudgeon but this had such a modern bent to it. The hero and heroine's views and conversations could have been ripped out of today's feminist issues and dialogues. From the heroine dressing as a man and seeing and feeling what power they are handed for simply being male, a man coming on to her and her friend and then basically saying they aren't worthy of him anyway when they deny him, to the hero leaving a note on man he had knocked out and the heroine had beat up a bit that read along the lines of I treat women horribly. I had to constantly fight to have the setting be historical, would have loved this as a contemporary.

There were at times, too, that the conversations were all a bit too clever and the plot and intricacies of the hero needing to keep the heroine and society occupied as he searched (sort of searched, let's be honest) for his friend. I'm going to give the next in the series a shot because I like the author's writing style.

It seems I'm at a crossroads of my older historicals being way too problematic at times and my newer historicals being too chock full of wonderful feminism. Is anyone else having this problem or is my psyche having a woman in her thirties (perfect age to be tired of the b.s. but still idealistic or indoctrinated to cling to old views/values) battle?

Arshia says

DRC provided by edelwiess and Avon.

The premise of the story was a little confusing from the beginning. The hero's motive never made sense to me on why he wanted the heroine to follow along. He could've done his investigation clandestine. Clearly a spy he was not. The heroine for this era was pretty independent. Educated, working woman, editor in charge, sexually active, pretty liberal for those days.

The story was well written but some oomph was missing which would've made me love it.

nick says

Historical romance is one of my **favorite genre of adult romance** to read, but I have to admit that I'm very picky when it comes to them. **Only certain authors work for me** and I'm always a little wary to start series by new authors. *Forever Your Earl* intrigued me because **the protagonist, Eleanor, is a writer**. Considering the day and age that the book was set in, that was very much unconventional, and for me, refreshing. **I ended up really enjoying this title** and by the end, I was ready to read more by Eva Leigh. Like I mentioned, Eleanor was **a fantastic main character**. I really appreciated how **smart, driven and thoughtful** of a protagonist she was. Not to mention, she was **comfortable with being a sexual individual and certainly not ashamed of it**. This is very much unconventional in HR, where most often you will find prim and proper heroines who don't know what sex is all about. **Daniel, the hero, was also a pleasant surprise**. I grew to really enjoy his character throughout the book. He was going through a difficult time, searching for his friend, Christopher, and trying not to let Eleanor's gossip sheets find out about him. **I loved the loyalty** he clearly had towards his friend and even though Eleanor could have been a "threat" of a sort to him, he was nothing but absolutely respectful of her. **Their growing romance was so well-written**, with its **slow progression and the banter** the two of them engaged in. These were **two delightful characters** and they could not have been more perfect for each other. They did have some **obstacles** in the way like Daniel hiding about Christopher being missing and him being an Earl and her just a commoner, but they were **not added for the sake of convoluted drama**. The ending of *Forever Your Earl* was sweet and worked in every way for me. Historical romance fans will have much luck with *Forever Your Earl*. It's a **sweet, smart and heartwarming romance** and I promise you, by the end, you'll be clamoring for the next companion story!

Alyssa says

Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog

Forever Your Earl by Eva Leigh
Book One of The Wicked Quills of London series
Publisher: Avon
Publication Date: September 29, 2015
Rating: 4 stars
Source: eARC from Edelweiss

Warning: this is an adult book, and for the eyes of mature readers

Summary (from Goodreads):

Eva Leigh makes her Avon debut with the first book in her smart and sexy Wicked Quills of London series!

Eleanor Hawke loves a good scandal. And readers of her successful gossip rag live for the exploits of her favorite subject: Daniel Balfour, the notorious Earl of Ashford. So when the earl himself marches into her office one day and invites her to experience his illicit pursuits firsthand, Eleanor is stunned. Gambling hells,

phaeton races, masquerades...What more could a scandal writer want than a secret look into the life of this devilishly handsome rake?

Daniel has secrets and if The Hawk's Eye gets wind of them, a man's life could be at stake. And what better way to distract a gossip than by feeding her the scandal she desperately craves? But Daniel never expected the sharp mind and biting wit of the beautiful writer, and their desire for each other threatens even his best laid plans.

But when Eleanor learns the truth of his deception, Daniel will do anything to prove a romance between a commoner and an earl could really last forever.

What I Liked:

Debut historical romance author! I personally don't come across too many of these first novels from first-time authors, so I always make a mental note when I do. Debut novels are extra special! Especially when they're really good, written like a tenth novel from the author. I enjoyed this book! Lots of witty banter, good chemistry, and likable characters!

Eleanor is a self-made woman, a writer who owns and runs her business. She writes scandals for her paper, The Hawk's Eye. When one of her illustrious subjects, Lord Ashford, comes to her directly and offers to take her about and show her his life as a rake, how can she refuse? Eleanor knows he has ulterior motives, but she knows an opportunity when she sees one. Daniel, Earl of Ashford is trying to turn The Hawk's Eye away from something specific that he is doing - looking for a fallen comrade. But in the process, this very earl and this very journalist find it impossible not to fall for each other... but can this unlikely romance survive?

My absolute favorite thing about this book is all the banter between Eleanor and Ashford! Eleanor is a writer, and a sometimes sarcastic one. In any case, she is observant and has a quick mind, so her tongue is sharp and she is unafraid to tell Daniel anything on her mind. Daniel is a master opponent, just as adept with trading barbs. They play games with each other in words like pros. It is so fun to watch! I enjoy their relationship.

Specifically, I like the romance. They meet when he storms in her office, and she takes him up on his offer to let him show her into his life as a rake. Their first night about, she has to dress as a man. This particular night takes up a huge chunk of the book, maybe 20% alone (that's a lot for one night!). After that, things take off. Daniel finds that he cannot stop thinking about his clever companion, and Eleanor cannot stop thinking about the earl who is more than a rich, powerful man.

I like Eleanor, and not just for her wit! Though her clever mind is a big part. She is inquisitive and curious, very smart and very calculating, but not in a cold way. She can sniff out situations like a mathematician solves equations! She is also candid and honest, bold and not shy at all. She isn't ashamed of what she does (the newspaper, as a woman), or who she is (a poor plebeian).

I liked Daniel too! He is a kind man, but also wicked and very rakish. He is definitely a hawt HR male protagonist, and it's no wonder Eleanor can't stop thinking about him or picturing him a certain... way. He's guilty about the friend he's looking for, and it's clear to me that he is a good, noble, selfless man that shouldn't feel so guilty!

I loved the romance! As I said before, I liked watching the banter flow between the two characters. The chemistry is very present throughout the book. I would have like to see more steamy scenes between the two (the author definitely held back, compared to what I usually expect from historical romance novels). But I

liked the progression of the relationship, even if it seemed a little fast.

There was another really REALLY great thing about this book - it's a very progressive historical romance novel. At first, you might think, that's anachronistic! Eleanor is running her own business and publishing work as a woman! I think this modern aspect really helped the book, and made it unique. I love the progressiveness of the story, the feminism!

The conflict - Daniel looking for his friend - is always in the back of Daniel's mind. He goes to all these debauched places with Eleanor in search of his friend, not just the cover of taking her to see his rakish life. Will he find the friend? You'll have to read this book to find out...

The ending is satisfying on pretty much all accounts! It ends a little too perfectly, in my opinion, but I rolled with it. I wanted a little more romantic epilogue type of thing between Daniel and Eleanor, but there was an epilogue, and it did feature the two of them, so I guess I shouldn't complain too much. Hopefully the author's writing gets even better as the series goes!

What I Did Not Like:

Like I said above, not enough steamy scenes! At least, not enough as I would expect from a historical romance novel, especially an Avon one. There was one main one, well over halfway through the book. And then a few short or curtailed ones. Maybe I'm just a needy romance reader!

And I mentioned the ending - it was very cookie-cutter perfect! I wanted a little more clear resolution on a few things, and a nice expanded closing between Daniel and Eleanor. Of course, you can't always get what you want! This particular point isn't a huge deal.

Would I Recommend It:

As far as historical romance novels go, this one isn't bad at all! I really liked the witty banter and chemistry between Daniel and Eleanor. And the feminism and progressiveness of the novel! Eva Leigh is definitely an up and coming historical romance writer to watch.

Rating:

4 stars. I will definitely be looking forward to reading the second novel in the series! Marwood is my favorite secondary character of this novel, so I can't wait to see him and his chosen opposing lady in action. Both are some of my favorites, such interesting characters!

Jennifer says

4 Stars

I received an eARC of this book from Avon Publishing via Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

Forever Your Earl is the first book in the Wicked Quills of London series, written by Eva Leigh who I first discovered as Zoe Archer. The series focuses on female writers who live and work in Regency England. Eleanor Hawke, owner and editor of the popular scandal sheet, *The Hawk's Eye*, is the first heroine and her

life gets complicated when she begins to tangle with the rakish earl who is her favorite gossip subject.

This book gets going when the Earl of Ashford visits the offices of The Hawk's Eye in order to talk with its owner. Imagine his surprise when the owner turns out to be the beautiful Eleanor Hawke! But, Ashford continues with his plan which is to have Eleanor follow him around and feature him in a column known as "To Ride with a Rake" in order to distract her from discovering a secret regarding one of his best friends. As they spend time together, they discover how much they like one another despite their class differences.

Eleanor and Ashford were such great characters! They come from very different backgrounds, but are both intelligent and mature. They each had a personal journey to go on and their love story helped enhance them. Eleanor has come from nothing to running The Hawk's Eye and thoroughly enjoys her independence. She also has some things to say about a woman's place in society.

"I'm not much of an expert on refined female behavior, but even when I was a little girl, I was told not to run, not to swing my arms, or make my stride too big. That"--she gestured to the alley, indicating Daniel's performance from a moment ago--"it's the diametric opposite to the way women are taught to walk. We're told to take up as little space as possible. Not attract attention to ourselves. Not claim anything as our own."

Ashford comes from privilege, but understands that there are many people who do not and he sometimes feels guilty for not taking full advantage of what he has been given. He has never found a true cause to devote himself to and fills that void with the stereotypical rakish behavior. But, his relationship with Eleanor forces him to use his impressive brain and do some good with his fortune.

He'd thought he'd be the one in power here, but with only a few sentences, she'd stripped him entirely of that power. He felt oddly defenseless even though she was right. Outside of this alley, he was always in control, given the benefit of his gender, his class.

Eleanor and Ashford go on a variety of adventures such as phaeton racing, masquerade balls, and even a gambling hell. These moments allow them to interact in a very fun way. Eleanor gets to go undercover most of the time and the descriptions of them were really well-done. I especially enjoyed the details that were put into her male disguise. I thought it was such a creative way for an earl and a commoner to hang out together and fall more and more in love.

The only reason that I didn't rate *Forever Your Earl* higher is that I felt like the plot got away from the writer towards the middle. The subplot of why Ashford was letting Eleanor follow him around in the first place went away for awhile and then took over the book at the end. I really liked this side story and am hoping to see more of the resolution in other installments. And, of course, I am super excited that Ashford's best friend and Eleanor's best friend are the focus of the next book in the series.

Forever Your Earl is an entertaining and wickedly smart romance that I think showcases Eva Leigh's impeccable writing and character development. Eleanor and Ashford have some major obstacles to overcome and they do it a way that felt organic and satisfying. Can't wait for *Scandal Takes the Stage* now!

