



## Miss Milton Speaks Her Mind

Carla Kelly

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*Carla Kelly*

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A lovely young woman is the guardian of her cousin's son, whom she has cared for since his parents's death, and loved as her own. Her wealthy relatives question the true parentage of the boy, placing his inheritance and their future in jeopardy. Then a handsome mill owner offered to tutor the young boy, catching the eye of his guardian, as well. But could she really find love while harboring a scandalous secret than no man could know....

## Miss Milton Speaks Her Mind Details

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## From Reader Review Miss Milton Speaks Her Mind for online ebook

### Ridley says

Definitely not Carla Kelly's best. Slow to start, told entirely from the heroine's POV and way too little interaction between the hero and heroine. I didn't feel the romance in this one like I should. Only a desire to see if my guesses on their secrets were correct compelled me to finish it in a sitting. So, a good story, but not so great of a romance.

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### φ???? [Punya Reviews...] says

**My review contains spoilers and they're mostly my thoughts... for more, visit Punya Reviews...**

Miss Milton Speaks Her Mind isn't one of Carla Kelly's best but it wasn't bad either. I enjoyed it more than I thought I would because the first half of the story went over my head completely. The other half, of course, made the read worthwhile.

Miss Milton Speaks Her Mind is an older release by Ms. Kelly; a traditional (clean) regency at that. The story begins with Miss Milton AKA our h, Jane and her monologues. This book is mainly based on her POVs, though not first person. She's the poor relation to a Marquess, Lord Denby. Orphaned at a young age, Jane had to go to the workhouse; an incident that had shaped her life so far. She had to grow up early, and ever since she's been brought back as a charity case to Lord Denby's household when her mother died, she's been cruelly shown her place in the world many, many times. Though Lord Denby's son Blair was nice to her, his sister, Lady Carruthers was another thing. She's a mean, viciously entitled woman and a bully to boots. As a result, Jane has always been left in a place of neither a lady, nor a servant. More like a governess. If Lady Carruthers could, she'd be a servant of Denby House by now. However, Jane has persisted, maintaining a semblance of dignity so far.

But things have changed drastically over the years. Blair got married young, had a child, then his wife Lucinda died in a carriage accident. It cast a pall over the household that is yet to lift. It seemed like the Denby's bad luck began that day. Andrew, around 2 months old that time, was given into the complete care of an 18 yrs. old Jane. Blair, who was in the army, was no longer a part of the household. He'd be gone for years on end not bothering with his son, or anyone else. His visits were few and far between and he showed little interest in the child after Lucinda's death. Rumors started, most probably by Lady Carruthers who had planned on snagging the Marquesate after Denby's passing by making her brainless, lazy son Cecil the heir. Did I mention he was also a gambler? It was bandied about that Lucinda committed suicide out of guilt cause Andrew isn't Blair's son. Even Lord Denby seemed to believe it. He also never took any interest in Andrew. That poor little boy, who had no one but Jane as his champion. Jane who strongly believe that he was Blair's.

But Jane was also quite naïve, yet kindness itself. She was way too kind I'd say, if there's even anything like that. She had loved Andrew as her own, who calls her Miss Mitten, instead of Miss Milton. :) Sadly he's also aware of the situation now that's he's turned 12, forced to grow up fast to face the cruel world. They didn't have to go out to listen to the gossip; a visit from Lady C anytime would suffice! She made sure to tally Jane's shortcomings and why Andrew should never be the heir, while she sat there doing nothing but eating and taking credits for everything Jane and the servants did.

Things turned bad when Blair came home severely wounded, on death's door. He lingered on for months, and wouldn't let anyone but Jane and Stanton, their butler, take care of him. Even the village doctor balked in taking care of him so it was all left to Jane; sitting there day and after day, with an invalid who has a life-threatening wound that could turn ghastly at any time. The description is not given in the beginning but something horrible happened that left Jane traumatized; so much so she couldn't even sleep peacefully any longer. And she had no help, no one to talk to. Then Lady C's blatant way of nagging and wheedling Lord Denby into establishing Cecil in any way possible was taking a toll on her. Jane wanted Andrew to have what's his but what power did she have if Lord Denby decided to give it all over to Cecil? If he's made the heir... Jane can't even think of it!

Since Blair's death, Lord Denby has taken to his bed, as if to will death to come and take him too. It was a sad state of affair, though Lady C was very happy about the whole thing. A desperate Jane begins thinking of something to 'rejuvenate' the cranky old man. Lord Denby was also in the army and he'd written a best-selling handbook of sorts on how any British Soldier appointed overseas should behave. When the book arrives, it was enough excuse for her to plan a get-together of Lord Denby's old comrades. Stanton agreed to help her too. All they now have to do is convince the man in question.

About this point, the story was rather dragging with no big bang. And I had no idea who the H was. In the beginning, I thought that the doctor, Mr. Lowe, maybe a candidate cause Jane seemed to have an easy companionship with him. But they were seen together maybe once or twice before a new, whimsical character is introduced; Mr. Scipio Africanus Butterworth. :o Yeah, that's his name believe it or not. Jane and Andrew even had fun between themselves imagining calling him "Sippy". :P Oh my God, I laughed my a\$\$ off to that. He maybe many things, a Sippy Mr. Butterworth was not! :D

So who was Scipio Africanus Butterworth? Scipio, though in the whole story he goes by as Mr. Butterworth, in plain terms, is a mill owner and Lady C has always taken great pleasure in saying he stank of the shop. New money and no class. But in truth he had more class than Lady C will ever have. Mr. Butterworth has worked hard and earned money owning cotton mills. He's got brain and he utilized it. Now he's as rich as Croesus if not more. He bought the estate abutting Lord Denby's and has been a thorn on his side ever since. Though there has been no serious issue between the neighbors, Lord Cranky likes to be, uh, cranky and made various excuses to rattle Scipio, which he bore with his easy grace. These days, Lord Denby is too subdued to even bother, another reason that worried Jane.

Mr. Butterwoth has been Jane's friend for these past 10yrs. that he's been living here. When we met him, it was quite obvious that he and Jane had a very established, and equally affectionate, companionship. Mr. Butterworth was...I don't know, just a good, caring man. He was tall, you can call him a Gentle Giant I guess and quite goodlooking. He wore glasses and worked hard but he was also superbly witty and charming. Jane had taken an immediate liking to him, and so had Andrew once he's been old enough to understand kindness. Even though Lady C hated this relationship, Jane tried her best to never curtail her visit to Mr. Butterworth. Even if it meant hearing Lady C scolding the daylights out of her, calling her all sorts of things. She'd do the same for Andrew and try her best to get Lady C's nastiness off of him anyway possible so that he can also visit him.

After Mr. Butterworth came into the spotlight is when the story began rushing. I was simply glued to know how their relationship will unfold and evolve. He knew of Jane's situation, also knew that Jane was too nice to say anything to Lady C. Maybe she felt indebted that she's got a roof over her head and meals to go with it, which made her never to think of herself. She kept giving without receiving anything in return. At times, Jane was the maid-of-all tricks, she was always running from here to there, doing this and that. The entire Denby Hall relied on her in a way that servants noticed all too well. She was polite to them, and was

rewarded for it as well. Andrew was never neglected, even if he starved for parental affection that he never got. Mr. Butterworth simply had to put his foot down and remind Jane to speak her mind. That it's time she begins thinking of herself.

This got Jane's mind whirring but someone who has never known anything better, it takes a lot just to imagine what life would be like where she can have her own home, do whatever she liked without having to be afraid of being caught and scolded. Without any presence of Lady C anywhere. At the moment though, she was busy with the help of Mr. Butterworth, managing that reunion, planning and writing the invitation cards that needed to be sent out ASAP. Lady C didn't want any part of it but thankfully, Lord Denby showed some sign of life and accepted this plan. It seemed the thought of seeing his old comrades started rejuvenating him already, which, in turn, made Jane's hope soar. Maybe it'd be a while before Cecil can sink his claws on Denby fortune, and Lady C becomes the sole proprietress of Denby Hall. After all, that was her plan from the beginning. Again, a thought that makes Jane shudder with all it's bad vibe.

Jane and Scipio's romance was a *very* slow burn, almost unnoticeable at first. You will think there's *something* there but both were very polite and wasn't forthcoming. In the 10 yrs. they've known each-other, it's difficult to believe that neither took any step to acknowledge their budding feelings! This was one of the things that really struck me. However, when Andrew began his Latin lessons with Mr. Butterworth and Jane, slowly but surely, began speaking her mind here and there, things started changing. It wasn't all good and smooth, but it was a start! And she began feeling comfortable about her budding feelings for the Mill Owner. Since the story is based on Jane's POV, we get to know that she had at first thought Mr. Butterworth was too old for her. But the more they got to know each-other, she knew the 14 yrs. of age difference is actually nothing. Especially when she's pushing 30 herself. I wish we had a few chapters from Scipio's POV as well. That would've been fun!

As Christmas came closer, Scipio invites Jane and Andrew to his sister's home where he spends his Christmases with his nieces and nephews. He also has plans of expanding his business venture into that area. It wasn't until a month spent in sheer bliss with a loving family that Jane finally realized what she was missing. Emma was married to Robert. They already had 4 lovely children, another on the way (makes her appearance right before Christmas :D). Jane needed this for herself, and definitely for Andrew. By then she knew she'd fallen in love with the Mill Owner, but what about him? Apart from his ever polite friendship, was there anything else? Jane couldn't think of a reason why he should be interested in her beyond friendship.

Until the end, there were a few things that were bugging me in the story. For one, Jane understood very quickly that Mr. Butterworth is the happiest living with Emma's family. He really could move there easily. So questions arose in her mind as to WHY was he living a lonely existence so far away? Emma and Robert both were vague about it, though they did confirm that Scipio wrote a lot about Jane (and definitely Andrew). I thought, obviously it has to be Jane! And because of Jane's relationship with Andrew, he's taken an interest in him as well. But my thoughts changed when, at one point, Mr. Butterworth subtly yet strongly thank Jane for taking such good care of Andrew. That point of the story, to me, felt like some kinda revelation. I was thinking... *could it be? OMG!* :o His interest in Andrew, at first, seemed random enough. But after I read that bit, I didn't think it was just because of Jane he was living near Denby Hall!

After Jane and Andrew return from their Christmas sojourn, one day a handsome stranger drops by at Denby Hall, taking it quite by storm. Jane mistook him for the handyman that Mr. Butterworth promised. He even got directly down to work without questioning anything; not that Jane gave him any chance. But things were about to be unraveled where Lord Denby was concerned, and a long kept secret he'd been hiding all these years.

But I was more interested in Mr. Butterworth's interest in Andrew. As big revelations were taking place, my suspicions were confirmed. Andrew, indeed, was Scipio's son. Though initially I was rather disgusted, thinking Lucinda cheated on Blair, that proved to be wrong (thank God!). Lucinda and Scipio knew each-other before she ever met Blair. Even with that age difference, things got too deep too soon. Scipio thought he was in love and wanted to marry her, most especially when he found out she's with child, but Lucinda had other plans. She had no interest in marrying someone so common as him. She snared Blair and got married ASAP to save her face. After her death, Scipio moved near Denby Hall to be closer to his son, and be a part of his life in any way possible. Blair likely already knew, which is the reason why he stayed away from home. We will never know for sure, which is rather sad. In the end though, it seemed like Andrew will inherit regardless of his parentage since Blair had already acknowledged him as his own.

The reason why I revealed this part is because, after the revelation, it felt like even the good-hearted Mr. Butterworth was after something. He also had a reason to charm Jane. This poor girl had nothing in her life and she was dreaming of being something in his! She never felt genuinely needed by anyone, except for Andrew who was growing fast and would've gone away to find his own place in the world soon. It seemed no one really wanted Jane just for herself, and I can't explain how sad I felt knowing that. Even she understood *that* after Andrew's parentage was revealed. And it broke my heart because she was so, so hurt. No, she wasn't angry on anyone (even if I was on her behalf), Jane was too forgiving for that, but still hurt that she wasn't the reason why Mr. Butterworth chose to be close to Denby Hall. Worse still, it seemed like he still harbored some kind of affection for Lucinda!

But the short ending was really beautiful where Scipio acknowledges that he'd been in love with Jane ever since their first meeting. That he got over Lucinda fast when her rejection opened his eyes. Even though Andrew was a big part of it, he'd come to realize long ago that Jane was the most important part of his and his son's life. They can't imagine their life without her in it. Only he didn't think anything could be come of it. Jane may have been a poor relation to a Lord, Scipio thought her a lady and wasn't about to be ditched by another one and get his heart trampled on all over again. So he'd decided to admire her from afar. All that confusion, if only they'd talk they could've been together way before now. \*sigh\* Anyway, it was easy for me to forgive him when his proclamation of love made Jane the happiest person alive. Oh Scipio already knew of her feelings, and not exactly from her own mouth... but I'll leave you to find out exactly how.

Another thing was, I wanted to know more about Scipio's, uh, not so common name. I wanted to know the whole backstory for this has to be one of the oddest hero names I've ever read. :| I even thought the author would explore it a bit, and give us some background but there was nothing. But Jane did let him know what she and Andrew secretly called him. heehee :P There were also some hints about Scipio having a past but nothing was ever said or revealed about that, another thing that made this story incomplete IMO.

Finally, I felt a story for Dale would've been so so good! Who is Dale? Read and find out. But trust me when I tell you that he is a character you'd want to know better. Too bad he didn't have many pages in this story, and there never was a book for him. :(

I did enjoy Miss Milton Speaks Her Mind but I wasn't quite in love with this story for reasons I stated above. 3.5 stars.

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**Megzy says**

2.5 stars

Not my favorite Carla Kelly.

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### **Sue Leinberger says**

Another lovely story by Carla Kelly. It pulled me in and I ended up reading until 1 a.m. so I could finish it. She has such a deft way of revealing the inner struggles and motivations of her characters.

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### **Lynn Spencer says**

As with all of the Carla Kelly books, I did like the characters in this one. Put-upon poor relation Jane Milton rather satisfactorily finds her voice and her wealthy neighbor Scipio Butterworth (am I the only reader who kept wanting to call him Skippy?) seems like a genuinely decent man. However, I just had a hard time getting drawn into all the machinations with Jane's obnoxious relatives, so I found I kept putting this book down and then picking it up again. It's not a bad read, but not as good as most of Kelly's books.

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### **Linda says**

*I am a BIG fan of Carla Kelly's Regency romances.* Even her stories that I have rated three stars, I would consider reading again. That said, I was deeply disappointed with **MISS MILTON SPEAKS HER MIND**. It hurts me to give one of her romances two stars. :-(

It started out slowly but I could forgive that. It contained those dreadful annoying relatives that kept showing their faces but, yes, I could look the other way. *For a while*. It even took some time for the hero, Mr. Butterworth, to take an active part. And, to be fair, he kept my interest for about an hour.

But somewhere along the line the story fell flat. Miss Jane Milton cried one too many tears. I wanted to ask her to get a backbone and quit forgiving everyone! I lost my respect for Lord Denby. Lady Carruthers' whining and meanness reminded me of listening to nails scratching a chalkboard. I wanted to plant a boot in her back end. Sheesh!

Say it isn't so but Mrs. Kelly's trademark with the common-sense working class stretched my patience this time. And there were gaps in the storyline that didn't make sense. Sigh. You can see what a toll it took for me to finish this story. Trust me, unless you are a die-hard Kelly fan, and even then, look for another book of hers to read.

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### **Kaye says**

Tame and sweet, the book centers around Jane, a put-upon poor relation and a mill owner. This book had an annoying number of side plots, but all resolved well enough.

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### **Yue says**

Again, Carla Kelly moved me to tears. She is one of the two authors in historical romance that never fails to deliver wonderful stories.

Jane has been living as a slave in the house of her cousins. She takes care of Andrew since he was a baby. Both of them have been bullied by her Aunt for many years. Her neighbor, Mr. Butterworth, a mill owner, is a dear friend (from many years ago) but only now they get closer. He invites her to his country house to spend Christmas, and it is there where she realizes she loves this kind, big man.

The beginning of the book is a bit dull. Too gloomy, too sad. Jane's life as much as Andrew's life. Once Mr. Butterworth comes into scene, it gets lighter, but not entirely, since this is Carla Kelly. Her romances are sweet but melancholic. I love how Jane and Mr. Butterworth are such good friends. He was so nice to her I was moved by his generosity. When Jane and Andrew spend their holidays in his country house, in the company of his sister and nieces, the book is sweet and less gloomy. Finally Jane and Andrew are happy, after so many years.

When Jane finally trusts Mr. Butterworth with her terrible secret, my eyes were full of tears. It was so sad! Just remembering it my eyes get teary again... Poor Jane, she deserved all happiness in the world.

The final confession, at the end of the book... I wasn't surprised, I was expecting it. Still, I am not a fan of it. (view spoiler)

Just a sweet, touching and with a kind romance -the one where they are first friends, then lovers- that I was expecting. Jane's secret was "OMG WHY?" (with tissues at hand) while Mr. Butterworth's (can't say his name... it is just too awful) and Lord Denby was MEH (men!).

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### **Wollstonecrafthomegirl says**

This has a low rating on goodreads and from some of my trusted goodreads friends. You're all wrong. This is a great book and I won't hear anything else about it. It would have easily made my five stars list but the ending let it down for me - I'll get to that.

Kelly is actually one of the darkest romance authors out there. She explores the dark aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the very real struggles of men and women in a difficult period of history. She does all of that whilst crafting lovely love stories which feel somehow a mixture of gentle and light and significant. They wrap around you like a cashmere blanket until you find yourself warm and soft at their centre and desperate to stay there.

This one is a perfect example of that. Dependable and dependent relative Jane. Traumatized from her cousin's awful post-war death and left to raise his son, Andrew, at the house of her relatives. She's an everywoman. Trying to please everyone, take care of everyone and never asking herself what she wants from life. I know a Jane, you know a Jane, there are thousands of Janes out there. She is good down to her bones and she deserves her HEA.

Then there's Mr Butterfield. Older (15 years, so this is a May/December) and factory owner (so much

catnip). In love with Jane from afar. He takes a more prominent role in her life at the start of the book and in a plot which slightly stretches the bounds of historical credibility (given that she is a single woman) she goes to stay with him (along with Andrew) over Christmas. It's oh-so romantic. And in that way of Kelly the love grows with small moments and conversation between the H/h. It's just a wonderful thing to read.

What drops the book down to five stars is the number of plot bunnies which pop up, seemingly out of nowhere, and massively crowd the last 20% of the book.

They distract from the declarations of love which in a book with no sex and limited kissing is a vital part of the resolution and needs time and space to breath. Way too much going on and not enough of it was telegraphed throughout. There's also the late introduction of characters who the reader is supposed to care about despite never having heard of them before. It's a flaw.

That said, this was a great, pleasant, hot chocolate with marshmallows and cream kind of read, which I do heartily recommend.

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### **Audrey says**

3+/3.5-ish stars. A traditional Regency with a very subtle and low key romance between a successful mid-40s mill owner and a 29-year-old poor relation in an aristocratic household.

The romance, which features elements of the beta hero, gentle giant, friends-to-lovers, and the pining hero, may actually have been a little TOO subtle, to be frank. There weren't enough opportunities for us to see Scipio's pining (and, in fact, there was no hero POV at all in the book), although the internal narrative from Jane was well done. The romance may have felt too subtle because I thought the other plot elements and the background stories (namely, the life in the mills and the reminiscences of the "war in the colonies") were very strong and fleshed out well, leading those aspects of the book to take a dominant role in the story over the romance itself. I initially thought Jane was a bit bland and doormat-y in her poor relation role, but it helped to see her gain confidence in her narrative and watch as her personality blossomed as she began to "speak her mind" over the course of the story. This book also includes one of my least favorite romance elements: nasty, mean, and spiteful relatives. \*shudder\*

On a side note, while very finely detailed in historical elements as you may expect of a Carla Kelly book, this story nevertheless disappointed me a bit because of its sloppy editing. I'd come to expect better editing from Signet than to have missing quotation marks or wrong spellings of characters' titles. Alas, even ol' faithfuls can make missteps, I suppose.

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### **Judy Bullard says**

Good read - but I do wish she would add an Epilogue!!

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## **Doreen says**

### **Another excellent book**

Carla Kelly can be relied on for a good read. She gives us in this book the view from the heroine's point of view solely, but her writing voice is the same consistent voice from all her books. And her understanding of the British law of inheritance is perfectly correct.

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## **Karren says**

This was a cute little romance. It kind of reminded me of Miss Buncle's Book in tone, although I don't think it's quite as good and it had some comparatively darker plot elements. The last part of the book kind of lost some of its charm, I think because there were additional plot elements and characters introduced and the heroine was depressed (not fun to read about that for too long...). Overall a sweet little book. I read it on kindle as my library didn't have it.

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## **Patsyann says**

This is a book about secrets and being bullied.

I figured out one secret early and I suspected what the other secret was. The third secret came out of the blue. In a Carla Kelly Regency romance, if the hero and heroine don't get married right away, then their relationship does not reach a climax until the very last pages...and you have to read and read to get there and it is always satisfying because the two always end up getting what they want – no matter what their age!! Love it!!

The hero and heroine were both changed by the end of the book – secrets revealed and all.

Carla Kelly does dysfunctional families so well!! The dysfunctional family in this book moved the story along. The secondary characters were the best ever!! Love this book!!

BEST USE OF: a twelve year old boy

ALPHA MALE 5

SPUNKY HEROINE 10

CUTE KID 10

HEA(HAPPILY EVER AFTER) 10

PROLOGUE/EPILOGUE none

Rating System

9 - Excellent – a keeper

Heat Level

0 – no sex, no heavy petting, chaste kisses only.

First comes friendship then marriage – what a concept!!

COVER COVERS IT: Great cover! Reflects a scene in the book!!

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## **Judy says**

\*\*Very Slight Spoilers\*\*

#### Deceased Characters:

Blair: Dead from wounds sustained in the war between England and France, Son of Lord Denby, husband of Lucinda, father of Andrew although his patronage of Andrew is considered questionable.

Lucinda: Dead from wounds sustained after stepping in front of a moving carriage when her son, Andrew, was six weeks old.

#### Living Characters:

Jane Milton: 30 year old spinster and poor relation of the Stover family. She is used as a part-time servant, mother to the little orphaned Andrew, nursemaid to her dying cousin, Blair, encourager to her hypochondriac uncle, "whipping boy" and object of ridicule by her cousin, Lady Carruthers.

Andrew: 11 year old son of Blair and Lucinda, struggles with the lack of interest shown by his father, Blair, who spent many long years away from home and rarely came home to attend to his relationship with his son. Is of an age to understand that he is the subject of ridicule by neighbors and Lady Carruthers.

Lord Denby: Marquess who has decided to be "absent" from life as he has taken to his bed and rarely arises except to sit for short periods of time in a chair.

Mr. Butterworth: "Mill Owner" who resides in the property adjacent to Lord Denby's, friend to Jane and Andrew, the butt of Lady Carruthers' ridicule, however, somewhat accepted by the local society.

Approximately 16 months previous to the story's beginning, it seems that Jane's cousin, Blair, returned home from serving many years in the war between England and France with a wound that would not heal. It fell to Jane to be his nursemaid, however, the reader isn't fully aware of exactly how Blair died and if Blair's and Jane's relationship included feelings beyond that of cousin. We do know that he lingered in sickness for several months while Jane nursed him and that although some time has passed since he died, a black wreath still hangs on the door that nobody seems motivated enough to remove. Jane has been left with a sadness that seemingly goes beyond Blair's death. She can't sleep, she fears to wake up once she goes to sleep and she does not eat.

Jane has little support from other members of the Stover family. It is apparent that Lord Denby has troubles and sorrows of his own - to the point, he has taken to his bed seemingly wishing for death to hasten, even though it's obvious there's probably nothing wrong with him physically. Lady Carruthers, Lord Denby's sister, fancies herself the boss of the household and she is not a nice person. She rags on Jane and Andrew endlessly and they never receive a kind word from her. Lord Denby might as well be an absent lord for all the attention he gives to this sad state of affairs.

Andrew is nearly twelve years old and in order to receive a proper education, he needs to learn Latin and Greek, however, he is very reluctant to leave the safe environs of Jane's comfort to go to the local school taught by the vicar. Rumors surrounding Andrew's legitimacy abound, many initiated by Lady Carruthers who would like to see her own useless son, Cecil, inherit the marquessate. Even Lord Denby seems to doubt that Andrew is his grandson showing absolutely no interest in the boy. Finally, after much pressure by Lady Carruthers, it seems Jane has no choice but to send Andrew to the vicar's school where he will have to brave whatever cruel taunts come from the boys in the neighborhood regarding his mother's death and the question of his legitimacy.

Up to this point in the story, I had a problem sticking with the book and this is coming from a major fan of Carla Kelly's. I have read pretty much every book of hers that I can get my hands on and check regularly to see if and when more books might become available. But, there was such a gray shadow over the life of Jane and even Andrew, I was finding it difficult to stay engaged.

Then the Stovers' neighbor, Mr. Butterworth, enters into the story-line: Once this fine man was introduced,

things take off like a smooth sailboat crossing the bay. Apparently, Mr. Butterworth has been a long time friend and solace of Jane's and Andrew's even though he wasn't considered fitting company to a family like the Stovers since he was the owner of several mills and "stank" of the shop to Lady Carruther. Of course the reader immediately realizes what Mr. Butterworth's persona will add to the storyline. Can we all say - Hero? We first meet him when he sees Jane walking back from her conversation with the vicar regarding Andrew's attendance at his school. It is raining and he comes out with an umbrella to escort her into his home for a quick spot of tea, while his servants dry her cloak and they have some conversation about Andrew. When Jane shares with Mr. Butterworth relative to Andrew's placement in the vicar's school, he stands her friend and encourages her to begin "speaking her mind." After Andrew's first day at school, Jane and Mr. Butterworth see him walking back from school with his head down as a result of insults he has received, whereupon Mr. Butterworth takes it upon himself to teach Andrew Greek and Latin and eventually provides a tutor for Andrew. Thus, we were able to get a glimpse of what Mr. Butterworth was to Jane and Andrew before Blair's convalescence and eventual death created an interruption. In fact, although Mr. Butterfield is 15 years older than Jane's 30 years, we are soon rooting for their friendship to turn into something much more. Further, it seems he doesn't "stink" to Jane at all but rather smells of lavender.

Once Jane is brave enough to begin standing up for herself, the story gets much more interesting and the grayness begins to lift. In fact, the colors of the story change to the point that a red cloak eventually enters into the story-line. By that time, Jane and Andrew have been invited to and accepted an invitation to spend Christmas with Mr. Butterworth's sister's family who live near one of the mills that he owns. What a wonderful time they have and Andrew begins to understand what it would be to live within the confines of a lovable, supportive family.

Jane is encouraged by Mr. Butterworth to spill some very sad secrets she has been harboring and he is there to comfort and hold her. However, it is obvious Mr. Butterworth has secrets of his own that he is unwilling to spill. It seems Lord Denby also has some secrets that need to be spilled. A pleasant man visits from America that everyone assumes to be a handyman. Everything points toward the revealing of secrets until the happy ending we are looking for eventually arrives. Dear Readers, buy this book and enjoy, enjoy, enjoy!

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