



Beguiling the Beauty

Sherry Thomas

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Beguiling the Beauty

Sherry Thomas

Beguiling the Beauty Sherry Thomas

When the Duke of Lexington meets the mysterious Baroness von Seidlitz-Hardenberg on a transatlantic liner, he is fascinated. She's exactly what he's been searching for—a beautiful woman who interests and entices him. He falls hard and fast—and soon proposes marriage. And then she disappears without a trace...

For in reality, the “baroness” is Venetia Easterbrook—a proper young widow who had her own vengeful reasons for instigating an affair with the duke. But the plan has backfired. Venetia has fallen in love with the man she despised—and there's no telling what might happen when she is finally unmasked...

Beguiling the Beauty Details

Date : Published May 1st 2012 by Berkley Sensation

ISBN : 9780425246962

Author : Sherry Thomas

Format : Mass Market Paperback 281 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Historical Fiction

 [Download Beguiling the Beauty ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Beguiling the Beauty ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Beguiling the Beauty Sherry Thomas

From Reader Review *Beguiling the Beauty* for online ebook

Jennifer says

Hmmm, sort of waffling here, but I think 3 stars. Easier to say that I liked it more than *Delicious*, but it was not as intimate and intricate as *His at Night and Not Quite a Husband* and *Private Arrangements*. I adore the 'don't-hate-me-because-I'm-beautiful' trope, and parts were really lovely, but the romance seemed at arm's length. So much happened offscreen, so it was hard to really feel sympathetic - or to get that true angst fix.

There was also oodles of series foundation building, and nearly every character from her previous books had a cameo. I guess people must really get a kick out of that because I am seeing it more and more. I am in the minority but it's my pet peeve - it's so contrived. AND as long as we are on the subject, the appearance of my beloved Lord Vere raised my brow...(view spoiler). I would have preferred a Great Beauty smile-off between Lady Vere and Venetia!

Update: After a reread - it's still a three. I really didn't like the ending - too slapsticky with Lady Avery.

Jill says

Her beauty was staggering, excessive, as if she were not quite flesh and blood, but an artist's conjuration, born of a bout of fevered ecstasy.

Christian de Monfort, Duke of Lexington at nineteen was smitten. Venetia Fitzhugh Townsend, a married lady was simply the most beautiful woman Christian had ever seen. Two years later, Venetia's husband dies. She remarries a wealthy, older man, and it is rumoured she had an affair with one of her second husband's best friends. Christian now realised that the Great Beauty, was at heart shallow and greedy, encased in a beautiful, outer shell. But still, he remained a man obsessed.

Ten years later, Christian, a man of science, trained in natural history is at Harvard University to deliver a lecture. Venetia, her sister and sister-in-law are in attendance, but during question time are shocked when Christian blames Venetia (without naming her) for her first husband's death and for callously allowing her second husband to die alone after flaunting her affair during their marriage.

When the opportunity for revenge presents itself, Venetia takes it. Disguised as Baroness von Seidlitz-Hardenberg, she boards the same ship home to England as Christian, determined to make the Duke of Lexington pay.

Very few authors can make me forget my first rule-of-thumb when reading a romance. The romance. The romance in Sherry Thomas's historicals doesn't always work for me, yet invariably she wins me over. Most notably due to her unique and beautiful prose. *Beguiling the Beauty* runs true to form. The romance at times left me wanting. Yet, whilst on board ship Christian and Venetia's romance was lovely. Their passion heartfelt and honest.

Some of the plot points are simply unbelievable, some predictable. As expected in a series there is quite a bit of time devoted to introducing characters who star in the upcoming books. The plot is couched in deception

and misunderstandings, some of which are so slight a five minute conversation would clear the air.

Christian's love-at-first-sight is based on nothing more than Venetia's outstanding beauty. He's a man as shallow as he believes she is. Implausibly, she keeps her identity secret on board ship by the use of a veil, or when they are alone, a blindfold for Christian. The irony is of course that he fell in love with a woman years ago because of her beautiful face. And now has fallen in love again despite never seeing her face. Venetia is so incredibly lovely that she makes men literally stare, stumble and obsess. Some of these themes are Harlequin-esque in their silliness.

Yet, Ms Thomas manages to pass off these overused and tedious plot devices, making the situations convincingly realistic, the characters' stories compelling. This is one of her charms as a writer, being able to make me overlook these contrivances. Other writers haven't the skill.

Sherry Thomas has once again in *Beguiling the Beauty* transcended what would be considered predictable and trivial in lesser novels through her prose, characterisations and detail, making you believe you're reading a novel of much greater substance than it actually is.

Steam: 2.5

Meghan says

I devoured this book in one sitting. Sherry Thomas's prose is always delightful, and this was no exception. The dialogue sparkled, particularly during the hero and heroine's affair on the steamship. In fact, if the entire book was like that section, this would easily be a five-star, all-time favorite romance for me. I loved the chemistry between Christian and Venetia, not just the physical, but their passion for their shared interest in paleontology, the emotional honesty allowed by Venetia's anonymous seduction, and complete abandon which with Christian was willing to both fall in love and profess his love.

The fly in the ointment, of course, is what caused Venetia to seduce Christian in the first place. One of my biggest romance pet peeves is a hero who believes stupid, hateful rumors about an innocent heroine for no good reason. Normally it is a dealbreaker for me, something that causes me to give up on a book almost without fail. Here, I found it mostly forgivable. The biggest mitigating factor was that Christian was so delightful the rest of the time. His misjudgment of Venetia was one minor misstep; in fact, I found myself wondering why a man who was otherwise an open-minded, observant, excellent judge of character was so willing to believe the worst of a complete stranger based on the word of a husband who was so insecure he admitted to memorizing the face of every man he ever observed lusting after his wife. Thomas does a good job of showing how Christian's discomfort with the power of his physical attraction to Venetia prejudices him unfairly, but I wasn't entirely satisfied with how this was dealt with (or rather, not really dealt with) during the resolution and HEA. However, something that would normally be a dealbreaker for me felt more like a minor quibble because I liked the rest of the book so damn much.

Once Christian discovers Venetia's identity and realizes that her seduction was motivated by revenge, the book takes a brief turn for the frustrating, as anger and shame motivates them to deceive and hurt each other instead of trying to offer explanations and apologies. But it's comparatively brief, and soon resolved with a grand romantic gesture that ties absolutely everything up very quickly and neatly. It feels a little abrupt, but

again, I was more than willing to roll with it because I was really, really enjoying the book, and really, really wanted to see everything resolved.

I didn't go into this book with the highest expectations, knowing that it contained one of my biggest romance pet peeves, but I wound up really enjoying it. I am now even more excited about the next books in the series, especially Millie and Fitz's story. If this is how Sherry Thomas writes one of my least favorite tropes, I can't wait to see her do one of my favorites.

(In the interest of full disclosure, I won this book in an ARC giveaway. However, I am not the kind of person who won't nitpick a book just because she got it for free.)

new_user says

Hrnhin, I'm incomprehensible, LOL. I loved *Beguiling the Beauty*. I don't even know what to say. Venetia Easterbrook remained disguised for just long enough, and Sherry Thomas' characters attacked compelling questions, primarily, appearances vs. reality. Genre novels engage this theme halfheartedly in *Beauty & the Beast* tributes. Will she love me despite my hairy toes? Thomas engages the implications relevant to modern audiences. Is Venetia judged at first glance as just a pretty face? Is she resented as a "seductress," an evil honeytrap for hapless men? Should Christian stop blaming her for his obsession? Yes. LOL. Her characters think about this.

Venetia and Christian begin *Beguiling the Beauty* as antagonists who slowly fall in love. They share anecdotes, dreams, interests, histories, humor and sweet, significant moments before suffering a poignant separation, where we witness their daily angst. The resolution was satisfying, the tension was superb, especially their first encounters. Venetia's drawn to Christian despite herself, believably. Likewise, their connection. Realistic characters, fleshed out setting. Witty, fun banter. Fantastic prose, per her usual. What else is there to say?

I did feel a little odd because Christian is so similar to me, except for the obsession, LOL. Right down to the frivolous father. How bizarre, how bizarre... Anyway, I can't wait for Millie's story in July! It'll be so sweet to see the married strangers become married for real. I always like those. Five stars!

PS. I don't like Helena, LOL.

Katrina Passick Lumsden says

Sherry Thomas is an excellent writer, technically, and her prose can sometimes be beautiful (when it's not crossing the line into emo uselessness), but I'm not sure her work is really in line with what I enjoy in HR. She's capable of crafting interesting, sympathetic characters and keeping the reader hooked (I had an enormously difficult time putting this one down to get anything else done), but the payoff wasn't what I'd call satisfying. I liked the characters, for the most part, but Venetia was vain and silly, Christian was narrow-minded and cynical, and the abrupt, saccharine, Happily-Ever-After ending was not at all in keeping with the rest of the rather drawn-out, angst-riddled story. I expected an emotionally-fueled confession, some tears, some serious conversation and reflection... Not a declaration of love befitting a quirky, irritating and irrational romcom and some giggles. After spending hours in a tormented state, truly feeling the pain of both

characters, the ending was an insult. It was like Thomas just got tired of writing and gave up. Had this book had an ending befitting its gravity, it would probably rank amongst my favorite historical romances... As it stands now, I kind of want to forget I read it.

OLT says

This HR by Thomas is a lovely homage to Judith Ivory's BEAST. Roles are reversed but the plot is similar in that Ivory's hero in Beast (Avon Romantic Treasure) needs the darkness to conduct the H and h's shipboard affair and here Thomas's heroine is the one not wanting the hero to know her identity. But we have the inevitable fall into love with one of the persons not knowing the true identity of the other.

The book itself is not quite perfect, especially if you analyze the actions of the hero, the Duke of Lexington. At 19 years of age, he falls into lust with married heroine Venetia Townsend without ever meeting her and he becomes obsessed by her beauty. Even when her first husband dies and she remarries and his impression of her character suffers by his take on her actions, he still finds himself obsessed with her to the point that he can't seem to interest himself in any other woman, except for superficial sexual encounters. Fortunately, other than having this fixation on the heroine, the hero is a perfectly admirable man of good character in every other way.

Heroine Venetia in all ways seems a more reasonable and sympathetic character. Widowed twice, she has suffered in ways unknown to the hero and she is a lovely person, caring and affectionate and loyal to her family. Families here, BTW, are loving and close and there are secondary stories just waiting to be developed further. The duke's family is only his stepmother and her new husband, but Venetia has younger twin siblings Fitz and Helena and Fitz's wife Millie. We learn just enough about these characters to look forward to Fitz and Millie's story in the upcoming Ravishing the Heiress (Berkley Sensation) and Helena's in Tempting the Bride.

All three of these books in Thomas's Fitzhugh trilogy are stories about love which may seem to be unreciprocated on one side, but, of course, that won't be the case. How could we have an HEA that way? As for this first book in the series, it's a 5-star one for me because Thomas's writing is 5-star and the romance is so satisfying. Ultimately, one's opinion of a paperback romance is based on how it affects you personally and I loved this and the way it was written.

One more plus for me about the book besides how romantic I found it is the late Victorian time period. It's more interesting than Regency. Peers, such as our duke here, are allowed more freedom to indulge in interests such as his in the natural sciences, and women are allowed a bit more freedom to work, to travel and to educate themselves. (Operative words here are "a bit" because there was still a long way to go. [Are we there yet?])

Dorothea says

First please indulge me as I spend a paragraph or two hating on the cover illustration. I have read SO MANY romance novels and know all about their silly covers but for some reason THIS one bothers me. Mostly, it's this horrible dress she's wearing. It looks so uncomfortable! The scratchy-looking lace on the neckline is digging into her breasts, but if she lowered her arm, the bodice would fall right off. Her posture may be

physically possible (although who knows what she's doing with her right arm that's mostly out of the frame), but it evokes the attitude of someone who really, really has to pee. I'm not quite certain that people got French manicures in the 1890s, but if they did, wouldn't they get them on *all* of their fingers? And I've been sick of covers that cut off bits of people's heads (usually women's heads), but this one really gets to me. I think her mouth is supposed to look sultry, but what I see is someone gasping for breath because her ill-sewn bodice is cutting into her ribcage and THE COVER DESIGNER HAS REMOVED HER NOSE.

The main character is supposed to be almost supernaturally beautiful; if the illustrator (Gregg Gulbranson; the designer's name is George Long) didn't feel up to that, couldn't he have just done a nice floral pattern instead? Frankly, what would really have attracted me (had I been buying this book based on the cover, rather than Sherry Thomas's name on the cover) would have been a picture of a dinosaur skeleton. That would definitely have been truer to the story than this uncomfortable lady who's lost her shoes and stockings.

Thanks, I feel better now.

So, the story! You know, if someone had told me that the next Sherry Thomas book would involve two people who grow affectionate towards one another thanks to their shared love of paleontology, I would have been ecstatic.

Then, if someone had told me that it was going to have one of those plots that I'm a bit sick of -- the kind where the hero tricks the heroine into falling in love with him because he actually hates her (or someone close to her) and he's just using her emotions to get revenge -- except with the gender roles swapped, I would have been cautiously intrigued.

What I actually knew is the beginning of the back cover blurb: Duke blahdiblah meets mysterious Baroness soandso while traveling, hot passionate affair, then she disappears because she's secretly "a proper young widow," YAWN. Good job I already love Sherry Thomas's writing!

Despite the dinosaurs, however, I did not love this book. Well, I loved the dinosaurs (look, in this story, the act of sending a massively heavy set of fossilized dinosaur footprints to the other person is *highly fraught with emotional significance*), and Thomas as always has her moments of very beautiful prose. But it's hard to really get into a romance if you dislike the people who are having the romance.

It turns out that switching the gender roles doesn't really make me like revenge plots anymore. The basic idea is supposed to be that Vengeful falls in love with Object of Revenge and repents of faking being in love and using Object; when Object finds out about the revenge, Object feels anguish but finally forgives Vengeful and then they're happy together. The problem for me is that tricking someone to fall in love with you (whether or not there's sex) is a completely horrible thing to do. When the characters are happily excusing this action because of the circumstances that led to it, I'm wondering whether Vengeful, having been capable of this action regardless of the circumstances, can possibly be a trustworthy person.

It didn't help that when we meet the heroine, she's traveling with her unmarried sister and her sister-in-law because the heroine and the sister-in-law have learned from another person that the unmarried sister is having an affair, and they've decided to trick the sister into traveling in order to distract her and break up the affair. Yes, I know it's 1896; no, that doesn't make this 21st-century reader any happier to read about women policing other women's sexuality, especially when there's so little trust among these supposedly close relatives that they never even talk to the sister about any of it. Then the heroine is massively distracted by the

plot of this book, and never bothers even to think about what a hypocrite she's become by having her own secret affair.

(It's pretty clear that the sister and the sister-in-law will get their own books; I'm afraid of what could happen in the sister's book, but the sister-in-law's, which will be published in July, looks like my cup of tea despite its terrible title -- *Ravishing the Heiress* -- ugh. By the way, in *Beguiling the Beauty*, the beauty does all of the beguiling herself. Anyway, I think that some of the annoyances in the last paragraph are the unfortunate byproducts of trying too hard to set up for Books 2 and 3 in the middle of Book 1.)

So that's why I don't really like the heroine. Normally in a revenge story the Object of Revenge seems more sympathetic, but in this case -- while I don't think he deserved to be fucked under false pretenses*, of course -- I couldn't pity him at all because I disliked him even more than the heroine.

Here is why: When the hero and heroine were about 18 or 19 years old, and the heroine was married to her emotionally abusive first husband, the hero caught a glimpse of the heroine across a playing field and "fell in love." No, I can't get rid of the scare quotes, even though he thinks his feelings are totally genuine. There is nothing wrong with being powerfully attracted to a beautiful someone whose character is a total mystery to you, but I want to take the idea that this can be Love, and that it can and should be important to the attracted person, and that this experience can and should be a life-changing event, and crumple it into a tiny ball and bite it and jump on it and then set it on fire. Okay?

And guess what -- the hero then goes on to illustrate one of the very best reasons why I hate that idea so much. Because (having mooned after the mysterious beautiful lady for a long time without ever meeting or speaking to her or learning anything about her character, even the fact that *she likes paleontology too*) the very first information he gets about her character is told to him by her abusive husband, who is out to make his wife look bad even in the eyes of people who don't matter to him or her. The hero believes what he's told, and he's totally miserable! Because this woman whom he only loved for her face, and yet whom he regards as having transformed his life, is apparently shallow and greedy and heartless.

When you nurse a pretty fantasy until it's gigantic and dominates your heart -- even when every single action and desire that caused this domination are *yours* -- it can turn so easily into a nightmare.

Our hero, when he first sees the heroine, is surprised to learn that she's married. At first, he felt entitled to a chance at courting her, because he saw her and found her so beautiful. He still feels entitled, even when he knows he'll never "have" her, to fantasize about her -- to use her face like a mask over his own ideals. So when he can't do that anymore, he's angry -- at her. Even though she owes him nothing at all, even though she has no idea who he is, he still thinks of her as having the *power* to make him miserable. He doesn't stop obsessing about her; now he "loves" her and "hates" her too, and the scare quotes are there because *she's still an imaginary woman to him*. He doesn't know her at all.

And then, to make matters even worse, he uses (this is really eyerollingly terrible) *evolutionary psychology* to make himself feel better. He likes to think about how the real purpose of beauty is only to promote reproduction, and it has nothing to do with character whatsoever. And then -- and this is where the plot really starts -- she attends a lecture in which he's asked to explain this theory further, and he repeats what her husband had told him. That's why she decides to get revenge.

I wish she had simply left him alone to ferment in his own ego.

You see, the part of the book when she's in disguise, and he falls in love with her without seeing her face --

this part of the book solves *his* problem, in the way best aligned with his fantasies. Unbiased by her face and all its imaginary associations, he learns her character, her history, her desires, and they are all exactly what he loves. Fate has given him his ideal, and she has *that face*.

It's more complicated than that, of course. But at the heart, it's the happy fulfillment of a wish whose realistic consequences are bitter misogyny.

* Somewhat ironically, apart from the revenge and deception (ha ha? sigh), the sex scenes on board ship are actually a rather good model for consent! The heroine is scared and tense *and* she really wants to have sex with the hero; Thomas's dialogue captures perfectly how she tests her freedom and he reassures her of it:

"Where is the door?" she asked [the room is dark] ... "Five paces behind you. ... Would you like me to walk you there?"

"No," she said. "Take me in the opposite direction."

And later, as she undresses, and as they are actually fucking, she checks: "Can I still leave?" and the answer's always yes. Thank you, Sherry Thomas, for no bullshit about the point of no return. This is one of the many reasons why I love your books and will keep buying them despite not loving this particular book.

Mei says

Since I read the 3rd book first, I already know how this one will end, but, ah, what a beautiful story this was!!!

We get to discover everything Venetia went through in her two marriages! Poor girl... the first disastrous one to a pompous, egocentric idiot; the second one a gay.... Poor, poor girl...

Christian, as all the other men, was mesmerized with Venetia's extraordinary beauty and he fancied himself in love with her. But he also resented her for the oull she had on him. So when her first husband depict her like a vapid and greedy woman, he accept his word without question.

During a public lecture, he makes heavy accusation against beautiful women and make reference to her past marriage without making names, but those who knew the scandal that erupted when her first husband died will also know who's he was referring to... And Venetia, present at the lecture, sees her dirty laundry washed in front of everyone, reacts in a bad way...

Thus begins her impulsive revenge... She presents herself like a german countess, always wearing a heavy veil... And Christian, intrigued, seeks a carnal relationship with an alluring mysterious woman...

In this way their story begins: she succumbing to his appeal, he falling for an unknown.

But soon, in the darkness of his cabin, under her heavy veil, with blindfolded eyes and murmured conversations after bousts of lovemaking, they discover thier true selves. A wounded, lonely woman; a

lonley wounded man.... and they fall in love!

But Venetia cannot unveil for obvious reasons and she runs away, while Christian cannot stop thinking about the mysterious countess...

They both suffer: he because of the rejection and she because she must reject him when she doesn't want anything else, but to fall in his arms!

A beautifully written, unusual love story! I loved, loved it!

Jacob Proffitt says

I really enjoyed this, though not without some bumps. Christian and Venetia were lovely, with lots of drama pulling them apart and I didn't even mind the conceit of falling in love while she covered her face. Nor how harsh things turned for a while (because it was earned and expected).

I wasn't so much a fan of Venetia turning coward quite so thoroughly towards the end, but even that would have had me rounding a 4.5 up. Unfortunately, that was never in question because Thomas kept throwing in boring PoVs from people around Venetia—namely, her sister and sister-in-law. Helena (the sister) is more than a little pathetic (yearning after a married "artistic" idiot who needed help from his girlfriend to get himself published). Seriously, she read a good five to ten years younger than her 27 just from the swooning around after someone obviously weak and incompetent. Millie, the sister-in-law, was such a sorry little thing in unrequited love with her own husband that it was hard to spend time in her PoV because you know she's being set up for her own book. Which means you also know there will be no movement on her pining/yearning/doe-eyed nonsense until then. Also: their whole deal to not have sex for eight years strained credulity.

Worse, though, these PoV shifts were shoe-horned in at awkward places where they broke the momentum and plot into tiny little pieces. Very inelegantly done, I think.

So 3.5 stars rounding to four just because I really liked the central couple and that they fell so completely in love by getting to know one another (though the sexy times obviously didn't hurt, either).

A note about Steamy: There are two explicit sex scenes, but the second is beyond short. So this is the low end of my steam tolerance, even though the two leads are going at it like bunnies (just off-screen). Thomas chose to stick with the emotionally significant events and I think that worked out rather well.

Keri says

Let me preface this review by saying that I have a fan-gurl crush on Ms. Thomas, so it is extremely hard for me to give any book she writes a 3 star rating. However, since I also want to be truthful when I write a review, then I must let the 3 star must stand.

What I loved about the book was as usual Ms. Thomas has wrote two emotional and complicated characters, where not all as it seems. While I didn't like Venetia or Christian for most of the book, by the end I wasn't

ready for the book to be over. Here is one area where I think the book suffered, was the it was too short in length. While Christian may have been in love with a beautiful woman for many years, he really didn't "know" her and on Venetia's part, she only knew of Christian as the man who had just insulted and maligned her honor and payed him back by handing him his heart within a week's time. The ending was too abrupt for what they had put each other through.

The entire premise of the book was how beautiful Venetia was, but by the time we got a full discription of what Venetia looked like, I just didn't visualize her as being attractive as much as odd looking. I still don't know what color Christian's eyes were. That was hard for me, as a reader we were left just as much in the dark about the truth of Venetia's past as Christian was. But the biggest problem for me was the love scene discriptions or rather the lack of. There were none and what was there was brief, which was sad because she has done a wonderful job in the past with love scenes. I think if the book would have at least had one or two, I would have at least rated the book higher, but on its own merit I can't.

Now having said that, we have met our next two couples and as usual the relationships are about as mucked up as two people can get things and I am looking forward to seeing how ST untagles them. I don't want anybody to think that I didn't enjoy the book, I did, but it just wasn't as good as some of her books in the past at least for me. I know this review is kind of rambling, but I am having trouble putting something more cohesive right now.

Kerrie says

(This review contains spoilers, and I don't care.)

I don't know about my fellow buddy readers, but for *me* this Buddy Read was going to ask a Very Serious Scientific Question:

Do Sherry Thomas books *always* blow chunks?

Now, it wouldn't make sense to read the same book. This is scientific, you see. But as the Sherry Thomas Pain Train commenced, one truth became evident:

Miserable characters living in a hell of their own making that they created with their eyes wide open.

It's all about the wangsty emoz.

Clunky infodumps straight out of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

"Tetrapodichnite was the scientific term for the fossil footprint of a saurian. It would appear she was quite familiar with paleontological argot."

Overwrought prose that treads the line of pedantic triteness:

"And he would maintain his dignity and composure, even when his heart had been dragged through a forest of knives."

This book sucked because (among many other reasons) the characters didn't make sense. Christian has loved Venetia from afar for **10 years** (another ST trope - unrequited miserable love). He believes nasty gossip about her and uses her as an unnamed example across the pond at a lecture about the evolutionary role of beauty and how beauty can be nasty and heartless, and Venetia is conveniently present to hear. Does she take him aside later and simply say, "You're wrong and what you said was *sooo* gauche?" Why no, because that would be too easy!

Since apparently the only thing she could have said to him was the truth and spill her guts to a *total stranger* which would be **entirely out of the question**, Venetia has a **brilliant** plan to disguise herself with a veil, sail on the same ship as Christian, seduce him, and then leave him and break his heart. What could **possibly** go wrong?

Of course they fall in WUV, bond over their common love of dinosaur fossils, he even presents her with a 6 x 4 foot slab of above fossilized footprints, and there's some "witty" banter about masturbation, another common ST theme. Previously infertile Venetia conceives in a foreshadowing as subtle as a

Then just as shit is supposed to be wrapping up, it... drags on. After pages and pages of dialogue on ship hashing over feelings, childhood trauma, dreams and aspirations, etc., suddenly they both develop that Stiff British Upper Lip and make their misery worse (did you doubt it?) by marrying each other when neither trusts the other and they know it will be Hell on Earth.

And then the final scene! The two gossips responsible for spreading the nasty rumors about Venetia show up and declare that their 25-year reputation as *responsible gossips* (LOLWHUT?) is on the line because what they spread turned out not to be true. (It's too confusing to explain because it **makes no fucking sense**.) In this ridiculous and improbable scene, Christian and Venetia finally come together and it's all

So on top of the total improbability and boring overwrought writing (there's a paradox!) the constant vignettes of the secondary characters (of Books 2 and 3) were **beyond** obnoxious. The "action" (and I use that term in the loosest sense possible) kept stopping in order to get a glimpse of Millie and Fitz's WEIRD no-sex-for-8-years marriage agreement and Helena and Hastings' hate relationship that you know is going to be **totally** hawt in Book 3.

I'm giving this a 1. It doesn't deserve **negative infinity stars** - there was no sleep rape or repetitive passages about lit flares, for instance. But just the lameass plot, the nonsensical characters and their actions simply for the purpose of wangst, and the WTFery of the final scene with the gossips definitely merit it 1 star. (Ok, 0.75 stars, but I'm feeling generous today.)

I was also unaware that there was an excerpt for Ravishing the Heiress at the end of my ebook so I was always further along than I thought I was. Go me! Sorry, Karla - I think you got the shaft big time this go-round.

Wicked Incognito Now says

I really hate to write a review for a book I loved. It's so much easier for me to pinpoint the things that went

wrong in a book than the things that are right. Plus, novel enjoyment is subjective. Romance novels are particularly subjective, so when I write a glowing review I'm always afraid I'm setting up other readers for disappointment. The disappointment is more likely if the reader, like me, holds Sherry Thomas up on an HR pedestal. She is the creme de la creme. Disappointment is easier when we ascribe greatness to our favorite authors. This likely disappointment could be more inevitably acute because Sherry Thomas was heavily inspired for this latest endeavor by another cream of the crop historical romance author: Judith Ivory. This novel is based upon Ivory's novel *Beast*. Admittedly, this worried me. I happen to think that *Beast* is one of the best romance novel's ever written. What to do when one of the best takes on one of the best? Biting fingernails over here.

You should have faith. If you are a historical romance reader, how can you go wrong with Sherry Thomas? Of the HR writers currently writing, she is the master. Oddly enough, unlike some of her previous novels, I can't point to any specific lines within this particular novel that prompted me to highlight them to share in this review because the turn of phrase was so lovely and memorable.

I think where Sherry Thomas is successful is in her uncanny understanding of the romance formula. Of course, no one likes to read a formulaic book. We want to be surprised. We want novelty. And Sherry Thomas doesn't skimp on those elements. Yet, the successful romance novel is undoubtedly formulaic to a certain extent. Sherry Thomas understands the needed balance for a romance novel. We must not have too much close focus on any particular character's overwhelming inner-monologue. There mustn't be a dearth of "telling" as opposed to "showing." No one wants "info-dump." There must be a certain amount of character interaction and dialogue. There must be forward momentum but not too much annoying and distracting action. AND Sherry Thomas adds her particular formula of angst pushed to the edge, and then over the edge in a way that frustrates the readers but keeps them pushing on to the end because they just **MUST** experience the resolution of this heart-breaking predicament. There is no doubt in my mind that Sherry Thomas knows she is playing with our emotions. She knows we hate her for it. But she also knows this sort of emotion is what we really crave when we read a romance novel, and this is why we will return to read her books.

This novel's particular angst involves unrequited love, an extraordinarily beautiful heroine, and a hero who can't stop fantasizing about her despite his scientific mind that demands he give it a rest. He constantly berates himself with a knowledge that she is shallow and mean--knowledge he only acquired through gossip and her cruel first husband's words prior to that husband's suicide.

I want to line up Ivory's *Beast* and ST's *Beguiling the Beauty* and do a side-by-side comparison, but I'm not going to. There are elements of *Beast* that are undoubtedly superior. But in many ways, ST's novel is a more satisfying read. I think Ivory was more concerned with beautiful language than reader satisfaction, whereas ST keeps her reader firmly in mind. Had Sherry Thomas not mentioned in a review that she was doing a Judith Ivory cover, I would've noticed it anyway. Then I would've felt that ST ripped off my beloved Ivory. But because ST readily admits her influence I am mollified. Many authors do this. Sherry Thomas did it successfully. **This is the first book I've read in months that I finished in a day just because I absolutely could not go to bed until it was over.**

Well done Ms. Thomas. And thank you.

Sam (AMNReader) says

RTC. Cause that was a binge read and it's bedtime.

The review hasn't written itself, but I did so appreciate the conversation and intimacy built between these characters. I HATE mistaken or hidden identity plots, but this one did work for me. The hero makes a mistake and is punished in a singular fashion for it, but of course that goes awry because he's also a really decent guy.

There's some sexy hairpin action (aka sexy consent) and what results is a sweet, convincing relationship. When it all falls apart--less a big misunderstanding and more a big understanding--it is also dealt with in a convincing way and all character vulnerabilities melt away in favor of their regular defensive modes. The secondary characters play a large role here and have set this series up so I'm almost reluctant to step away from it now.

Last night, because I enjoyed it and binged it to no end, I might have given it a 5. This morning, I think it's not quite that, perhaps the rush to the end and the device employed, so I'll leave it at 4 for now. Probably.

Caroline says

Reading my first Sherry Thomas book in twelve months brought home to me her astonishingly consistent excellence. Numerous authors are able to churn out consistently mediocre pulp fiction (and sometimes make a fortune in so doing), but truly original and inventive writers seem unable to avoid the occasional sour lemon among the juicy peaches.

The narrative of *Beguiling the Beauty* is deceptively complex, which is perhaps why the Goodreads summary is so unsatisfactory, leaving out so many essential elements.

Christian, Duke of Lexington and the most eligible bachelor in Britain, is in no hurry to marry. Part of the reason is his scientific objectivity and passion for natural science. He's more interested in fossils than debutantes. But the main reason is a life-changing glimpse, when he was still in his teens, of a stunningly beautiful woman across the verdant pitch of the Eton-Harrow cricket match. He's completely entranced, even when he discovers she's married. Neither does his infatuation diminish when Venetia, the transcendental beauty, rips through marriage after marriage, leaving a trail of malicious and highly unflattering gossip in her wake.

While giving a lecture at Harvard, Christian is asked about the role of beauty in natural selection. Instead of his usual succinct answer, he finds himself describing, third-hand, the uncontrollable damaging effect of human beauty, using his cricket pitch experience as an example. Unfortunately for Christian, Venetia is sitting in the audience and promptly deduces that Christian is talking about her.

Her original plan of charming Christian and introducing him to Helena, her unmarried sister, turns into a plot of vengeance for outing her in public, even though most of the Harvard audience would not be able to make the connection.

She pursues him on his transatlantic voyage back to England and attempts to seduce him -- not an easy feat, as this requires maintaining her anonymity through the use of veils, darkened rooms, and blindfolds.

The gentle seduction works too well, leaving both Christian and Venetia in a limbo of frustrated passion.

After Christian realises that the mysteriously veiled shipboard siren is Venetia in disguise, the tension and

stress between them escalates further.

At one point in the book, I found myself completely absorbed in the psychological tension generated by the stormy interaction of the pair and experienced intense discomfort -- an indication of the skill with which Ms Thomas handles the emotions of the characters and draws the sympathy of the reader.

The romantic episode on the transatlantic liner requires some suspension of disbelief, especially concerning the effectiveness of a veil or the darkness of an unlit room. But by this point in the story I was completely hooked and more than willing to give Ms Thomas the benefit of the doubt.

bookjunkie says

It felt light and fluffy, but overall a very satisfying romance IMO. I like the way Sherry Thomas writes. Also, there's something very vicariously pleasant about having a heroine whose incredible beauty is a plot point. I mean, I'm also fond of the stories where you have a mousy plain Jane who wins over people with her inner beauty and whatnot, but this story of a jaw-droppingly gorgeous beauty who's also crazy about dinosaur fossils was a nice fantasy!

There wasn't any darkness in this story at all, and the Hero was utterly bewitched by the heroine both physically and without ever seeing her face. There wasn't a real conflict other than two good, noble, courteous people with shared passions misunderstanding each other and hiding their true feelings. Neither of them are really cruel and they have quite the believable HEA. That's why I call it a light, fluffy read. But Sherry Thomas' writing is good enough to give it substance and make it memorable, as well. Read this if you're in the mood for a light, feel-good romance with an impossibly beautiful heroine.
