



Surrender to the Earl

Gayle Callen

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A pretend engagement turns into passion between an unlikely pair in the second book of USA Today bestselling author Gayle Callen's new Victorian series.

She wanted a favor, not a fiancé.

Audrey Blake's impromptu plan-asking a visitor to help her take ownership of her rightful property-is unraveling in spectacular fashion. Robbed of her sight by a childhood fever, Audrey has been kept in virtual seclusion by her family. And now the enigmatic Robert Henslow, Earl of Knightsbridge, has complicated her scheme to gain independence, insisting they pretend to be engaged.

Duty brought Robert to Audrey's doorstep. As for what makes him propose marriage...it might be guilt. Compassion. Or something far more urgent and unexpected. Their counterfeit union was supposed to be for Audrey's benefit. Yet it's Robert who yearns to prove to the intriguing Audrey how much they both have to gain by making it real-and convincing her to submit to the most blissful passion.

Surrender to the Earl Details

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From Reader Review Surrender to the Earl for online ebook

Lady Wesley says

This is a lovely story of a young widow who is blind and virtually held prisoner in her father's country estate. Until the Earl of Knightsbridge shows up and offers to help her. Seeing a chance to escape, Audrey agrees to a false engagement to the earl, and he whisks her off to her own estate, inherited from her late husband, located only a few miles from his own.

Audrey struggles to establish her independence, despite recalcitrant servants, the occasionally patronizing attitude of the earl, and a sudden unwanted visit from her snooty sister. But her hardest struggle is against the growing affection between her and the earl. She has no desire to give up her hard-won independence to marry again and believes that the earl is helping her only because of guilt over causing her husband's death.

After a few weeks, the earl proposes that he and Audrey make their engagement real. Audrey is very (overly) stubborn, but the earl is persistent and patient -- which is nice in a suitor but it means the second half of the book drags a bit.

As I said it's lovely story, and I enjoyed it. And yet, a month after I read it I had forgotten everything that happened and had to quickly reread to write this review. So, I'm calling this one a 3.5.

Many thanks to Avon and Edelweiss for an ARC of this book.

Kimberly Rocha~ Book Obsessed Chicks says

When Robert Henslow, the Earl of Knightsbridge visits Mrs. Audrey Blake, the widow of one of his fallen comrades of war to give her his condolences, he finds a very capable blind woman who is being kept a virtual prisoner in her father's home. When Audrey begs Robert to help her escape from her father's hold and take her to the only good thing her deceased husband left her, his country home, Robert devises a plan that will whisk her away from the overbearing man, he proposes marriage. Ah, but is the proposal a real one or just a ruse to give Audrey her first taste of freedom since she lost her sight to a fever at age seven.

Audrey reluctantly agrees to this ruse but swears to never marry again and be deceived as she was with her first husband, but things aren't as easy as they seem. Although Audrey finally has her dream home, Rose Cottage, she finds herself yearning the understanding and warmth that the Earl of Knightsbridge has so easily given her since the first meeting. Robert is in awe of all that Audrey can accomplish on her own as a blind woman and in his dealings with her, he opens himself to the possibility that maybe the fake engagement should be a real one. Convincing the finally free Audrey however will be a tremendous task, but one that Robert does not shy away from.

When Audrey's petulant sister Blythe appears at Audrey's doorstep to take in Rose Cottage and see how her blind sister is getting on, she is greeted by both Robert and Audrey, who are both extremely wary of Blythe's intentions, as Blythe has never really gotten on well with her sister. Poor Audrey must deal now with her sister, who is trying to make amends for years of indifference, the Earl who has begun to rain his attentions on her in a rather militant but effective manner, and the house staff, who clearly are keeping secrets from

their lady and would prefer she left Rose Cottage.

Just when one thinks there may be a break for Audrey, truths air that may change her change her mind and heart forever, because how many times can a woman be hurt before she shuts her heart away? I thoroughly enjoyed reading Surrender To The Earl by Gayle Callen. I found Audrey's story to be compelling. Robert Henslow, once a cocky man believing all was for him, returns from war a changed man. A patient, and understanding man that would be a good husband only if Audrey only would open her heart. I liked how this Gayle Callen told both Audrey's and Robert's stories so well that I really got a feel for them. Robert's determination to break down Audrey's wall was so commendable that I actually wanted him for myself. Surrender To The Earl is the first of Gayle Callen's books that I have read and I find myself downloading more at this very moment!

~KIMBERLY~

4 Stars (Brilliant)

Les Romantiques says

Posted on Les Romantiques - Le forum du site

Reviewed by Rinou

Review Copy from the Publisher

I chose Surrender to the Earl because it presents a blind heroine (a uncommon thing in Romancelandia where heroines are most often perfect), and the only other romance I read with this characteristic, Candle in the window by Christina Dodd, is one of my favorite books. Unfortunately I think that STTE is far from the same level. However, even though it's the second installment in the Brides of Redemption series, it's possible to read it without having read the first.

Audrey Blake has been blind since the age of seven, due to illness. Thanks to her mother, she grew up without feeling that different from the girls of the same age, but after her mother's death her father never stopped pushing her aside. The only time she defied him she got married, but her husband abandoned her the next day to buy a commission with her dowry and go to India, and her father likes to remind her of this event to put her "in her place". When an officer of her late husband asks her if he can do anything for her, she asks him to help get rid of her father's authority and settle in the house she inherited.

Robert Henslow, Earl of Knightsbridge, feels guilty for making a decision that cost the lives of some members of his unit while he was still in India. Back in England, he comes to pay his respects to one of these men's widow. He is really surprised to discover that she's blind, and is belittled and treated like a helpless person by her family. Eager to ease his conscience and intrigued by the young woman's personality, he agrees to help her by announcing their engagement, temporary of course.

We follow Audrey as she learn to live in a house she doesn't know by heart, with servants who know nothing of her habits, and she goes at it with enthusiasm and courage. She's endearing in the beginning of the book and she understands quickly she has more limitations than she thought, although I found her too optimistic in her way to perceive new people. Unfortunately she's also extremely stubborn in her dealings with Robert, and she most often attributes to his acts the most negative hidden meaning.

Poor Robert, who has already gone to India after a realization about his character, constantly questions himself with each of Audrey's remarks, and tries to get better, when IMO the only complaint one can make

is for his delay at explaining the reason for his initial visit. The author tells us they are quickly attracted to each other, but I didn't truly feel it, and there's no real game of seduction before the last third of the book. The two or three hot scenes are late and rather modest. And Audrey takes the opportunity to blame Robert of using passion to make her yield.

As for the secondary characters, the family of servant isn't very present, and if I was afraid to know the reason why they were trying to get rid of Audrey, their big secret wasn't the one I feared. The lady companion-best friend-blind cane is quickly set aside by a fever which has her bedridden for days, allowing the heroine to realize she's more dependent than she thought, but as a result the strong link that is supposed to unite them is not really displayed.

And finally the one who manages the best is Blythe, Audrey's sister. Presented at the beginning as a selfish and superficial young woman, she's the one who evolves the most throughout the book, returning to the reasons for her behavior towards her sister, so as to become a precious help to her in the last chapters. As for neighbors and tenants, either they ignore Audrey, or they welcome her with open arms once the surprise is gone. Nobody tries to take advantage of her blindness, which I found enjoyable but not realistic.

Throughout the book the rhythm is quite slow, and the historical context is all in all really light. If the author didn't give the date at the beginning, apart from the fact the hero comes from India, the story could have taken place any time during the 19th century, or the beginning of the next. It's what one can call wallpaper historical. I even winced when the hero tells the heroine she would have the house in "tip-top" shape. After verification it seems that the term began to be used at the time of the story, but it has an all too familiar resonance for a historical.

I had already read a book by Gayle Callen, but it had not left me with a lasting impression (in fact I had forgotten who the author was). I'm afraid that Surrender to the Earl follows the same path. I hesitated for my final grade, but while it may appeal to some, 3 stars is too kind for me.

Elis Madison says

[and...

(hide spoiler)]

Dottie says

Wickedly delicious, this is a story you will not want to miss! Taken from my review at RomanceJunkies.com:

SURRENDER TO THE EARL by Gayle Callen

Robert Henslow, Earl of Knightsbridge, has just returned home from the military. A mistake he had made while in the military had cost the life of fellow officer Martin Blake. It was his fault that Mrs. Blake was a widow and he was determined to do what he could to make amends. But meeting her, he is shocked to discover she is blind, something Martin had never mentioned during the six months they served together. But what is even more surprising was the way she manages the house, taking care of the rest of the family, despite her disability. While he is there he is also dismayed at the way her father treats her with disdain while

pushing her sister Blythe at him.

Audrey Blake has been blind since the age of seven due to scarlet fever. She had only been married one day when her husband used her dowry to buy his commission in the military. Although their one night together had left her pregnant, she lost the child. Audrey thought her husband had married her for love, but it soon became apparent that he only married her for her dowry. Martin left her a manor house, but her father refuses to let her go there, despite the fact that she is twenty-five and has been managing her father's house on her own for years. Her family is ashamed of her and has plans for her to eventually become her sister's companion – a poor relation – that is when they are not hiding her away. She wants to stand on her own, not be dependent on her family. So when the earl offers to aid her in any way he can, she knows she has to seize this opportunity.

Indignant at the way Audrey's family treats her, Robert decides to help her. Agreeing to a fake engagement, Audrey and Robert leave her father's home on the pretext that she will be staying at her manor house while they make the necessary wedding arrangements since Robert's estate is nearby. At her manor house, she starts to take over the reins of managing her home, but her longtime maid gets extremely ill and there is a strange undercurrent in the atmosphere.

As Robert and Audrey devise a faux engagement and try to get to the bottom of the secrets being withheld at Audrey's manor house, Robert finds himself falling in love with Audrey. However, after her brief disastrous marriage, she refuses marriage. Can he convince her that they belong together and that marriage between them would be different? Will she stand by her decision to never wed, or will she SURRENDER TO THE EARL?

An enticing tale, SURRENDER TO THE EARL, the second book in USA Today bestselling author Gayle Callen's BRIDES OF REDEMPTION trilogy, is a wickedly delicious historical romance that will draw readers in and keep them eagerly turning the pages to see what happens next. Using the original concept of a blind heroine, Ms. Callen brings home the reality of living in a dark world to life, allowing readers to see life as Audrey does. Although Audrey's reasons for not wanting to enter into marriage again are understandable, I could not help rooting for Robert to convince her. With humor, angst, complex characters, blindness, prejudice, witty banter, guilt, loss, forgiveness, healing, tender romance and true love, Ms. Callen has penned a story that readers will not soon forget. Although this story can be read as a standalone, I am sure that after devouring this book, readers will be seeking the first book in this trilogy, RETURN OF THE VISCOUNT. Since the moment I read my first Gayle Callen novel, her name has been a mainstay on my list of auto buy authors. As I look forward to the next installment of this wonderful series, be sure to pick up your own copy of SURRENDER TO THE EARL. Like me, I am sure you will be glad you did!

Dottie, RomanceJunkies.com

Caz says

4.5 stars

Surrender to the Earl is a truly charming romance which has been lumbered with rather a clichéd title that I feel is actually quite misleading. While it's true that the story that involves the heroine changing her mind about her determination never to remarry, there is no question of "surrender" or submission. Both hero *and* heroine discover new things about themselves and each other and have to put aside preconceptions, but perhaps something along those lines wouldn't have made a snappy title.

That aside, I thoroughly enjoyed the book, which is the second in Gayle Callen's *Brides of Redemption* series. I read and liked the first story, *Return of the Viscount* last year, so had high hopes for this one – and I wasn't disappointed.

Audrey Blake's husband was killed in India, in the same incident that killed the commanding officer of Viscount Blackthorne and his friends the Earl of Knightsbridge and the Duke of Rothford. Audrey didn't have much of a marriage as her husband only married her so he could use her dowry to purchase his commission and left for India immediately after their wedding night. As a result, Audrey is still living under her father's roof, and is desperate to escape. Not only is she widowed, she is blind – the result of a severe fever as a child - and her family thinks she is a useless invalid. Despite her blindness, however, Audrey is very adept at running the household, which is another reason her father is loath to let her leave so that she can live independently on her husband's property.

When Robert Henslow, Earl of Knightsbridge comes to visit – albeit two years after her husband's death – he asks her if there is anything he can do for her. He feels responsible for Martin Blake's death, and makes the offer out of guilt. He is stunned when Audrey asks him to help her to escape from her family home and is reluctant to help at first, unable to see why she would wish to do such a thing or to think of a way he can take her away without her father's permission.

Over the next few days, however, he begins to understand Audrey's predicament. It becomes clear to him that she is frequently overlooked, relegated almost to the position of "poor relation" and regarded as an embarrassment by her brother and sister. Her father constantly belittles her and reminds her of the failure of her first marriage as a way of keeping her under his thumb. At a dinner-party, it is apparent that none of the guests have ever met Audrey before, despite the fact that she has lived there all her life; her father has kept her more or less shut away since the death of her mother some years earlier, and she was the only one who treated her blind daughter as a *person* rather than a blind person.

Robert quickly realises that Audrey is a very capable and courageous woman and begins to admire her fortitude and determination. He also realises that there is only one way in which he can help her to escape without exposing her to gossip – they must announce their engagement, and he can escort Audrey to her property which is quite close to his own estates. Once she is settled, they can quietly end the engagement and nobody will be any the wiser – and Audrey will finally have achieved her dream of living independently.

When they arrive at Rose Cottage, it's immediately clear that all is not as it should be. Audrey and Robert assume that it is because the servants – cook/housekeeper, groundsman, footman, maid – have had a cushy time with no master or mistress and are reluctant to see it end, but it's not long before Audrey realises that the constant 'little' errors – cold food, moved furniture – are designed to make her leave and that there must be something more to the staffs' recalcitrance.

The slowly developing affection between Robert and Audrey was the highlight of the book for me, and was beautifully written. Even though they are not really engaged to be married, Robert is always solicitous and tender, and often playfully affectionate towards her. Audrey is rather more reserved; her memories of her husband's treatment of her are never far away and she has vowed never to allow herself to trust a man again. But she hates that she is becoming more and more dependent on Robert – or rather, she *thinks* it's dependency when it's clear to the reader that it's not: she misses him when he's not around and wants to be with him, but is so prickly about her desire for independence and suspicious that he is motivated by pity for her situation and her blindness that she can't see that he's just as "dependent" on her for his happiness as she is on him.

I found both protagonists to be extremely likeable, even though I did find Audrey's repeated and stubborn refusals of Robert's genuine proposal rather annoying at times. Robert was a gorgeous beta hero; following an event which pulled him up short and made him realise at the age of twenty, that he was well on the way to

becoming an autocrat like his father, he joined the army which he freely admits was the making of him. He has his hidden secrets, but it was rather refreshing to find a hero who didn't quite need wild horses to drag them from him and who was able to own his mistakes and try to atone for them as best he could. His experiences have given him insight, developed his intuition and turned him into a patient, understanding man who will make Audrey a wonderful, loving husband if she will let him.

Interestingly, the character who grows most during the course of the novel is Audrey's younger sister, Blythe. When we first meet her, she is self-centred and rather cruel to Audrey, but when she turns up at Rose Cottage in the latter half of the story, and begins to confess to just why she felt and acted the way she did, the sisters begin to rebuild their relationship. I'm not sure I completely bought into Blythe's change of heart to start with, but when it became clear that she was motivated by a genuine desire to atone for her past behaviour, I began to enjoy watching them become friends and I liked the way that Blythe was not afraid to ask difficult questions or tell Audrey a few home-truths when necessary.

I admit to being a sucker for stories where the hero and heroine become friends before they are lovers (and to liking a "fake-engagement" plot), and *Surrender to the Earl* certainly delivers on that score. Audrey and Robert are a perfect fit – as friends they are like-minded and genuinely appreciative of each other and there was plenty of romantic and sexual tension in the air when their feelings for each other began to grow into something more.

I've read some complaints about the slow pacing in the book, but personally, I didn't feel that at all. I was so engrossed in watching Robert and Audrey falling head-over-heels in love and enjoying their interactions that the fact that "nothing happened" didn't bother me in the slightest.

For me, the fact that the developing romance was placed so firmly at the heart of the book was key to my enjoyment, and I'll certainly be looking out for the next book in the series.

With thanks to Avon and Edelweiss for the review copy.

Shannon says

I really wanted to love this. Audrey was such a good character and had so much pride in her abilities and then opposite her was Robert, who was such a flat character and garnered no sympathy or love from the reader. He was just...blah. And the story never built up to something more. From the beginning you could pretty much piece out what scandal Mr. Blake had left behind and nothing else occurred which made the story exciting.

Monique Takens says

Ik heb de Nederlandstalige uitgave gelezen : Voel mijn liefde - Candlelight Historische roman 1118 . Een goed verhaal over een blinde weduwe die haar veel te beschermende familie wil ontvluchten en een man die haar uit schuldgevoel over zijn betrokkenheid bij de dood van haar man daarbij wil helpen .

Sm says

started off okay, a little slow, got marginally better, but then got annoying, more annoying, then kiss and make-up, then immediately end.

ugh.

robert was fine and seemed to have a natural progression from guilt-motivated to falling in love

audrey, on the other hand, went from understandably frustrated with her situation (family treats her like a complete invalid just because she's blind even though she's figured out a way to manage through life) to ridiculously prideful and insufferable, especially toward the end when robert's laying his heart out, but she's too selfish (wanting to shield herself) to be understanding of where he's coming from (view spoiler)

not to mention, the whole side story of the servants in her late husband's cottage just dragged on and on and i could care less (view spoiler)

Sarina says

[The main character was stubborn, but relented at the end. But I wanted her to chase after him a bit in the rain, to make it more romantic. (hide spoiler)]

Melanie says

This second book of the Brides of Redemption trilogy in which three friends and soldiers who are returning to England from India in a need of redemption after an incident that all three were involved, we watch Robert Henslow, Earl of Knightsbridge meet his true love.

I loved the first story, 'Return of the Viscount' [my review is here] and I was really looking forward to this one.

You know how some books lean more to either heroes or heroines, meaning we have more of a character development of one and not enough of the other? Well in this one Ithanks for jumping to b2b to finish reading my review...

<http://bookworm2bookworm.wordpress.co...>

Melanie for b2b

Complimentary copy from the publisher

Lover of Romance says

After coming home from India, Robert has come to Audrey Blake's home, out of duty and obligation to her

husband, with whom he worked with as a fellow soldier. What he finds is a confident young woman, but blind. Audrey once suffered a severe fever, and she lost her sight at six years old. Now she is a pretty much a prisoner in her father's home, and feels smothered. She married her husband, desperate to have freedom. However after she finds herself married, her husband is not what she expected, he used her as well. After he leaves for India, she loses her baby, and then later finds out her husband has been killed. Now back in her father's home, she is desperate to find a way to leave. When Robert Henslow comes for a visit, and offers her a chance to get free once more. Only she will have to have a pretend engagement with the Earl. At first Robert is more than willing to help Audrey, but as their pretend engagement brings them even more intimately closer than he ever would have imagined. Now he desires to make their fake engagement much more real and keep Audrey as his own.

I was given a ARC by Edelweiss and Avon books to give a honest review. It has been quite some time since I have read anything from this author. I have loved all of her other books, and I don't know if I was just distracted with this one, or what, but I had a hard time getting fully into the story, when I have never had any problems before. I would describe it as an enjoyable read but not the type that gets the blood thumping with excitement. I did enjoy the type of circumstances that this couple is faced with. And once I got about halfway into it, then it started to get really good.

With Audrey, blind, and a virtual prisoner in her father's country estate, she is more than eager to leave. Her father sees her as a invalid, to be put aside and practically forgotten. All the glory and attention should go to her younger sister of course. So when Robert, the Earl of Knightsbridge, returns home to pay his respects to the widow of one of the soldiers he feels guilty over his recent death. When he arrives he is very surprised to find that she is blind, but no where close to invalid status. She is determined to have a life, despite being blind. He finds her courage and tenacity, only makes her even more attractive in his eyes. When they agree to a mutual fake engagement, he is all for it. He feels like he owes her something, and this is the least that he can do. Audrey, is no where ready to take on another husband. But for the first time she feels a fierce desire for Robert, the kind she has never felt before.

Robert, didn't have the best childhood. For the most part he felt isolated but yet he grew up to be a man of honorable intentions. He joined the army, and ended up in India. I found Robert to be the type of hero you want for yourself. He isn't much of a rake, he is bound by duty and obligation. I found him to be very refreshing and I liked the way he treated Audrey. He never sees her blindness as a negative characteristic, but admires her for what she has done despite of it. There is such a passionate connection between the two. I also liked how the heroine was far from perfect. She suffers from being blind, and I just loved this aspect of the story. It added a certain unique aspect that only added to the story even more.

I found Surrender to the Earl a pleasant and steady read. It wasn't the type where you are flipping through the pages, but it wasn't so slow it would take a turtle to keep ahead. I didn't find it to be very significant enough to blow my mind in any form. Although there were certain aspects of the story that I did enjoy. I liked the slow escalation of the love story that develops between this couple. Overall I found it to be a enjoyable romance that leads you into a light read, that is good for any time of the year.

Originally Posted on my site at <http://addictofromance.blogspot.com/>

Janet says

3.5 stars

The Window Seat says

Three men with three debts of honor to fulfill to the families of their fallen comrades. This premise quickly sets the stage for the books of the Brides of Redemption series and it is always a pleasure to read stories where men of the nobility are truly noble men as they are put to an impossible task. In Surrender to the Earl, Lord Knightsbridge faces an even greater test of his honor when the woman he came to help has true challenges in her life to overcome.

Arriving at the estate of Baron Collins, Robert Henslow intends to offer both his condolences and his assistance to the widow of his fellow soldier Martin Blake. His reception into the home is less than welcoming, but in wandering he finds the woman he seeks at the piano and he gets swept away in her emotional playing. All too soon the moment is broken and Robert must quickly find his footing in the situation when he learns that Mrs. Audrey Blake is blind. They talk for a moment under the eye of Audrey's father Lord Collins, keeping the conversation light. But in a brief moment of solitude, Robert makes Audrey the offer of assistance. He is shocked when she immediately accepts his help and asks him to remove her from her father's house where she is being kept as a virtual prisoner by her family.

For the full review, please go to <http://www.thewindowseat13.com/2013/0...>

Farshana says

A random pick and it turned out to part of a series of which I had read another book recently. I was thinking I have read the same somewhere when I realized it is a 3-part series. It was a good read with the heroine being blind adding the much needed difference to the story.
