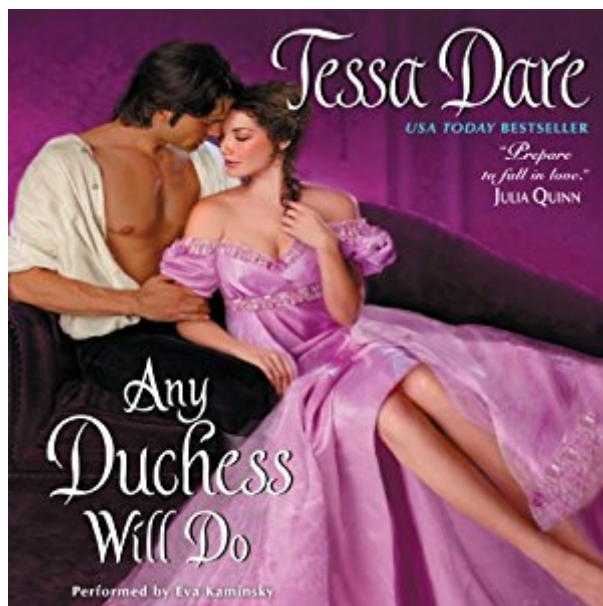


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Any Duchess Will Do: Spindle Cove, Book 4



Synopsis

What's a duke to do, when the girl who's perfectly wrong becomes the woman he can't live without? Griffin York, the Duke of Halford, has no desire to wed this season - or any season - but his diabolical mother abducts him to "Spinster Cove" and insists he select a bride from the ladies in residence. Griff decides to teach her a lesson that will end the marriage debate forever. He chooses the serving girl. Overworked and struggling, Pauline Simms doesn't dream about dukes. All she wants is to hang up her barmaid apron and open a bookshop. That dream becomes a possibility when an arrogant, sinfully attractive duke offers her a small fortune for a week's employment. Her duties are simple: Submit to his mother's "duchess training"...and fail miserably. But in London, Pauline isn't a miserable failure. She's a brave, quick-witted, beguiling failure - a woman who ignites Griff's desire and soothes the darkness in his soul. Keeping Pauline by his side won't be easy. Even if Society could accept a serving girl duchess - can a roguish duke convince a serving girl to trust him with her heart?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I stayed up the entire night reading this book, so please forgive the sleep-deprived incoherence! First let me stress that I'm not someone who automatically declares everything that Tessa Dare writes a five-star gem. In fact, until devouring *Any Duchess Will Do*, she's been an "I really like her, BUT..." author for me. I've found her pacing uneven, her plots a bit too drawn out and filled with frustrating contrivances, and her couples sometimes appearing to be more "in lust" than genuinely in love. My

expectations for this one were also tempered by the fact that I don't generally love cross-class Regency romances, especially when it involves an impoverished heroine being Pygmalion-ed by a wealthy, aristocratic hero. So imagine my delighted surprise to discover that this book is, in my fond but often critical opinion, Dare's very best yet. The plotting feels tighter, the pacing struck me as much smoother, and I fully bought Griffin and Pauline as sharing an emotional connection that's even more powerful than their physical one. This book seemed to magically address my "yeah, it's enjoyable, BUT..." complaints about Dare's previous work while still retaining everything I've always adored about it. We get her witty, warm and breezily engaging writing style, lively characterizations, and fabulously sharp dialogue. My Kindle's "highlight" button was worn out to the point of exhaustion! I genuinely loved the hero and the heroine, both as individual characters and as a couple. And, trust me, that's not a given for me :) Pauline is just the sort of feisty underdog heroine who Dare writes best: slightly socially awkward and endearingly imperfect, yet spirited, smart and independent. Griffin, meanwhile, is a serious contender for my unofficial list of top 10 heroes ever. This is subjective, of course, but he happens to be exactly the sort of hero I find most enjoyable and compelling: a semi-reformed rake who's witty, clever and with a splash of amusing arrogance, yet with a not-so-surprising sweet vulnerability, generosity, and a very wounded but tender soul. Of Dare's heroes, he most resembles the justifiably popular Colin of "A Week to be Wicked", only with a touch more seriousness and depth. But here's what really elevates this book for me: In a sea of self-serious, overly angst-drenched historical romances, Dare's stand out as such joyful, humorous and energetic FUN. That's not to say this novel is devoid of substance---in fact, it has a surprising amount of subtle depth and insight and delivers its share of pathos. It's just that Dare is among the few authors whose view of the genre seems to coincide with mine: that romances should contain plenty of sweet, swoon-worthy fun, humor and happiness rather than relentless grimness. I just love the general tone and energy: neither too dry and stilted nor too melodramatic. I also love the way Dare depicts most of her female characters as supportive, motivating forces in one another's lives rather than as petty rivals. I'm a voracious reader, but this is among the only books of the past several years which I found so enchanting and unputdownable that I had to forego my usual seven hours of sleep. I've reluctantly given most of the Spindle Cove novels 3.5 stars, feeling that they tend to start out strong before meandering around in the middle and limping to the finish line. For me, *Any Duchess Will Do* started out wonderfully and retained that wonderfulness throughout. Happy reading, and good luck getting more sleep than I did!

This is my 3rd book in the series and although I'm not a diehard fan of the series, I'm not against

them either. I had my reservations about one of the two I did read but I decided to take a chance on this one despite the differing reviews, and that was mainly because of a gracious comment that the author made to an unfairly negative review here. Let me once again say that I'm not a big fan of modern sexual behaviours found in so many Regency Historical romances these days. This one falls into that category. I was thinking earlier today about the fact that because someone was servant class, that automatically seems to mean they were more likely to engage in premarital sex and more promiscuous behaviour. I sincerely doubt that this was true of the times and I didn't love it in this book. Our H seems not to worry too much about the fact that the h is a commoner and I really liked him for that. However all along you get the feeling he wouldn't consider marrying her in reality and he in fact offers to make her his mistress (my pet peeve in all of these types of books). Why would she risk her future and that of her sister by taking a chance on sleeping with the Duke and therefore risking pregnancy? She had so many responsibilities to worry about and withdrawal is/was by no means a safe means of preventing pregnancy. I know I'm old fashioned and that's why I like historical romances because I do prefer the old school values. I wonder how much better this book could have been if the h was an innocent young miss who won over the dissolute and jaded duke? Having said all of the above, I have to say that the author writes well and knows exactly how to craft a good story.

Desperate for grandchildren and a Dower House, Her Grace the Duchess of Halford has gone to the trouble of drugging her son, Griffin York, His Grace the Duke of Halford, and bringing him to Spindle Cove. Familiar to Tessa Dare readers as the setting of her current series, it's a convenient location for duchess hunting, rife with eligible young ladies who don't fit into Society for one reason or another. Her Grace insists that her son pick somebody, ANYBODY, and she will mold a Duchess out of the woman. Griff, vexed and still half-lit, picks the barmaid, Pauline Simms, to irk his mother, and because the little voice inside him whispers, "Her Grace will take her." Pauline is an astute, purposeful, and engaging woman with a challenging home life. Griff offers her an obscene amount of money to humour his mother and fail spectacularly at duchess training. There are two basic heroes in historical romance novels: The Rake and The Protector. This may be the first novel I've ever read in which a character readers met as a Rake in an earlier story is reintroduced later in the midst of transforming himself into a Protector. When Tessa Dare's readers first met Griff in *A Week to Be Wicked*, he was a dissipated, dissolute, hedonistic sybarite. He fit a lot into a couple of pages. His Grace wasn't exactly hero material, but that was Dare's challenge. You have to bring them low to build them up.

Griff had been brought very low indeed before the story began and, I have to say, I don't think I've seen an unapologetic rake so completely redeemed since Sebastian St. Vincent took a bullet for Evie Jenner in *The Devil in Winter*. *Any Duchess Will Do* is a very good historical romance: clever, sweet, sexy, and, yes, romantic. Tessa Dare's books are always a great deal of fun and often more than slightly implausible. Dare pulls the story off so successfully in this case because, frankly, the hero is a Duke and rich as Croesus, and because Dare takes a romance trope and gives it enough of a twist to make it sufficiently crediblessque to maintain the illusion. For readers of the series, she has some savvy reincorporation, which was absolutely necessary to keep the willing suspension of disbelief going. **Reviewer's Note:** I sincerely hope that someone somewhere in the romance sub-culture is making a list of all the things Dare's heroes compare their telltale masculine firmness to. She has a particular gift for wry metaphor in this area.

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