



The Maid of Milan

Beverley Eikli

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How much would you pay for a clear conscience?

Adelaide Leeson wants to prove herself worthy of her husband, a man of noble aspirations who married her when she was at her lowest ebb.

Lord Tristan Leeson is a model of diplomacy and self-control, even curbing the fiery impulses of his youth to maintain the calm relations deemed essential by his mother-in-law to preserve his wife's health.

A visit from his boyhood friend, feted poet Lord James Dewhurst, author of the sensational Maid of Milan, persuades Tristan that leaving the countryside behind for the London Season will be in everyone's interests. But as Tristan's political career rises and Adelaide revels in society's adulation, the secrets of the past are uncovered. And there's a high price to pay for a life of deception.

The Maid of Milan Details

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Author : Beverley Eikli

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From Reader Review The Maid of Milan for online ebook

Blodeuedd Finland says

This is not some fluffy romance book, but then I knew it would not be. No, it's between historical fiction and romance. It brings more drama and doubt.

Adelaide, oh poor Addy. Her mother has her firmly in her grasp. Sure she is married to a sweet and kind man, and yes she is happy and loves him. But her mother keeps her down, tells her not to be passionate and just makes life dull and miserable. She used to be passionate, but that brought tragedy and a broken heart. And now her former lover comes back into her life.

Tristan was such a nice guy, I mean he was really really nice, and on top of that he had a mother in law who told him his wife needed rest all the time. He kept up with her cos he loved Addy. Oh yes I loved Tristan.

We then have a book with a heroine that wants to spread her wings but is held back, by a mother and by a husband who loves her (but listens to her mother). A husband who adores his wife and would love for her to show more passion but is afraid to hurt her. And then of course a meddling mother in law, who is not kind.

Doubts, life and the will to truly live or not.

Caz says

At the age of seventeen, Adelaide Henley – beautiful, vivacious and determined to sample all the delights life had to offer - had an affair with an older, unhappily married man while living in Milan with her mother and diplomat father.

When Adelaide and her lover were discovered, they were swiftly parted and she was taken back to England utterly distraught, often to the detriment of her physical health. In order to explain Adelaide's lack of virginity to a potential suitor, her overbearing mother concocted a story. On their voyage back to England, their ship had been set upon by pirates and brigands and Adelaide had been raped, a fact which not only explained Adelaide's "impure" state, but also accounted for her wariness of men, and the fragile state of her emotions and her health.

When the story opens, Adelaide has been married to Tristan, Lord Leeson for the past three years. A fairly young widower, he had fallen in love at first sight, and has been a kind, considerate and attentive husband, usually taking his cue from her mother as to the state of her health and determined not to press his physical attentions upon her any more than is necessary. It's difficult for him, of course, for his wife is young and beautiful, but he exercises restraint during their weekly conjugal activities so as not to overtax her strength. Over the course of the past year or so, however, Adelaide has realised not only that she has fallen in love with her husband, but that she desires him and wants to be more of a wife to him – both in the bedroom and out of it. But Mrs Henley has convinced her that, should she give her husband the slightest hint as to her sinfully passionate nature, he will become suspicious and wonder at the difference between the meek, ailing girl he married and the suddenly enthusiastic sexual partner in his bed.

Adelaide allows her mother's blandishments and fears to continue to influence her – until finally she decides it's time for her to take back control of her life, and show her husband the truth of her feelings for him. Adding to Adelaide's confusion is the sudden reappearance of Lord James Dewhurst, her former lover, who is now a celebrated author. Although she is absolutely steadfast in her love for Tristan and wants nothing more to do with James, matters are complicated by the fact that James is one of Tristan's oldest friends. Having decided that Adelaide is finally well enough for him to take his seat in the Lords and embark on the political career he wants, Tristan has removed to London for the Season, and asks James if he will mind escorting Adelaide to the odd function here and there, when Tristan is unable to attend. Although James is newly betrothed, he is still in love with Adelaide and is naturally only too eager to agree.

Adelaide becomes the toast of the town, and finally feels like herself again. Tristan is enchanted by her all over again, and their physical relationship only gets better as Adelaide proves herself to be an eager participant in their lovemaking. But in the meantime, Adelaide's – or rather, her mother's – lies begin to spin out of control, and when she receives an anonymous missive insisting "I know all", it knocks her back completely. Adelaide suffers a relapse brought on by guilt and an excess of anxiety rather than, as her mother insists, too much gaiety and enthusiastic sex!

The novel is quite complex, with a number of different threads running alongside the story of Tristan and Adelaide's troubled marriage; such as the relationship between James and his fiancée, the doubts sewn by Tristan's meddlesome former mistress and the rivalry between James and another writer.

While there were elements I found rather frustrating – most notably Adelaide's inability to stand up to her mother, and Tristan's continual insistence on James squiring Addy around when he wasn't available – I found myself really drawn into the story, which was quite the page-turner. I reviewed an earlier book by this author (*A Little Deception*) and remember a similar experience – the story was quite compelling even though I did have a few issues with certain areas of the plot and characterisation. I also remember that the villain in that story was an especially well-drawn and forceful character. In this book, there isn't a villain in quite the same mode – Mrs Henley is selfish and self-righteous, and James is selfish and egotistical – but Mrs Henley's machinations (both the ones stated explicitly and those I suspected) kept me on tenterhooks, wondering what on earth she was going to attempt next, and how poor Adelaide – and poor Tristan, who seemed to me as much of a victim in this as his wife – were going to be able to cope with the next setback or revelation.

Then, at about two-thirds of the way book, something happened which, I confess, I found very distasteful.
(view spoiler)

It's difficult to say too much without spoilers; suffice to say it's something which I am sure that many readers will find unpalatable. In fact, I felt as though I'd been slapped in the face when I read it, and I'm afraid I found it impossible to recapture my earlier enthusiasm for the novel. Perhaps a metaphorical slap is what Ms Eikli intended. In fact, I think that Adelaide is acting more or less in character, and, given the circumstances into which she has been forced time and time again, what she does may not be all that unlikely. But that still didn't make it easy to regain any sympathy for her, and in fact, it was another day or so before I could bring myself to finish the book.

The author does make it clear that Adelaide's actions have devastating consequences and that she is almost destroyed by what happened. She knows she does not deserve Tristan's love or his forgiveness and fully expects and intends to spend the rest of her life alone. But at its heart, **The Maid of Milan** is a romance, and

Adelaide cannot be left to atone for her mistakes by losing the man she loves forever.

Because of the serious reservation I've expressed above about the plot, this proved a very difficult book to rate. I had confidently expected to be writing a 4 or 4.5 star review, but now find myself unable to rate it so highly. Reviewing is a very subjective thing, of course, and I have to admit that, had I not been reviewing this book for a blog tour (and had I not previously enjoyed another of Ms Eikli's books) I may not have finished it.

But I recognise that not everyone has my tastes, and that to base my entire review on one particular plot point is not completely fair, because the book has much to recommend it. The storyline itself is quite compelling in the early stages, as the reader witnesses Adelaide's gradual re-awakening and her struggles to break free of her mother's lies and schemes. Then there is Tristan, who is an absolute sweetie and only wants to do the best for his wife. There are numerous secondary characters and plotlines which make the whole thing very intriguing as misunderstandings and plot twists pile on top of one another, making the reader wonder how on earth these two people who really do love each other are ever going to make a life together.

As a consequence, I can't help feeling that the incident to which I've alluded was unnecessary. Tristan and Adelaide already have so many problems to surmount; so many secrets and lies to untangle that this event felt like death-knell to their relationship. I didn't see how they could recover from it, and also felt that Tristan blamed himself far too much for the turn of events, so that when he eventually asks for forgiveness from Adelaide, I wanted to howl that she should be the one doing the grovelling.

In conclusion, all I can say is that **The Maid of Milan** is certainly not your run-of-the-mill historical romance, and that if you're looking for something different, it may well be the book for you. The story is quite gripping and well written, and I thought the author did an excellent job in showing the emotional consequences of keeping so many secrets. But on a purely personal level, I was unable to get past my dislike of that one particular plot point I've mentioned, and am sorry to say that it did spoil my enjoyment of the book overall.

Books Mom says

I began reading this story expecting it to be another typical Regency romance. Wrong. This was certainly not a typical story of any kind.

Addy is married to Tristan and loves him dearly. However, he doesn't really allow himself to get very close to her. Her mother appears to actually hate her, and does everything in her power to disrupt her marriage. In spite of this, Addy is beginning to get closer to Tristan and her to her.

Then Tristan's best friend, James, comes to town with his very young fiancé, Beatrice. Unknown to Tristan and Beatrice, James and Addy had been involved years before, and she had become pregnant with his child. Upon his return, he spends most of his time neglecting his young fiancé, and chases after Addy. She now wants nothing to do with him, realizing what a mistake she had made in the first place.

She spends so much time trying to avoid him, while her husband keeps trying to encourage her to be more friendly to him. I really began to love both Tristan and Addy, and hoped that they could work out their difficulties. It was almost impossible, however, as her mother kept putting everything possible in the way of

her happiness.

I kept reading and hoping for a happy conclusion, but couldn't figure out how it could possibly end happily. This author was wonderful and managed to surprise me with the ending and the result was not what I expected but even better.

I highly recommend this story to anyone who is not looking for a typical romance. This is even better.

Bookread2day says

I read with joy the paperback version of The Maid of Milan. This happens to be the very first book that I have read from the author Beverley Eikli. After reading and enjoying The Maid Of Milan so much, I will certainly be reading more of her books. Once I started reading from the first page in this book there was no stopping me.

I was swept away by Adelaide Lesson's life with her secrets. I do not want to tell readers much about Adelaide's life as I do not want to give the plot away. What I will say is that Adeladide married her husband Lord Tristan Leeson when she was at her lowest ebb. Then from out of the blue Lord Tristan's announces to Adelaide that his boyhood friend, James fifth viscount Dewhurst is coming to stay at Deer Park. and James Dewhurst is a man that no women can resist and most of all Adelaide Leeson.. I hope that many readers will enjoy reading The Maid of Milan as much as I have.

Tami says

This is my review of The Maid of Milan by Beverly Eikli, This was not your average regency or historical romance. The author described a very accurate accounting of how love realistically is. AKA not your mommas romances. I enjoyed reading this book and look forward to reading more from her.

InD'tale Magazine says

4.5/5.0

Ms. Eikli has penned another wonderfully moving historical!

Read full review in the 2014 June/July Double Issue of InD'tale Magazine.

Janine Southard says

This book was very competently written. I could tell who was doing what, why, and how it all smelled/looked/felt. That's why it gets the "it's okay" number of stars.

Unfortunately, it also employed some of my least favorite Regency-plot points. E.g., the horrible mother who

keeps her daughter down; sorta-kinda-but-not-really cheating. Moreover, the main character is preoccupied with being good looking. Yes, fine, that is her most salable feature in this time period, but can't she have a second occupation? (Late in the book, the reader does discover the MC has written poems/speeches, but that's waaaay later.)

Christine says

This is not your average historical romance. It opens with an irresistible premise – Adelaide is three years married to the handsome Tristan. She has a controlling mother and a terrible secret. With her physical health improving she can now see her husband for the noble man he is and her desire for him grows. Now enter the “other man” entwined in her secret...

Not only did this story have me absorbed by the romantic tension we all expect from a romance but also had me hanging on every word as it presented surprise after surprise, twist after twist, one enigmatic, expertly developed character after another. The exceptional writing style, highly descriptive but apt, instantly transported me into Adelaide’s world and I could see each scene as if I were watching it as a television series.

I love how the story explores scenarios and themes that are outside the norm – children born outside marriage, blackmail, unrequited love, control, the emotional consequences of secrets kept, prostitution, poverty and injustices. There are just so many deliciously interesting sub plots. I love the unpredictability of the storyline and that the characters are complex and therefore real. The larger-than-life Kitty Carew is a devilish hoot of a character.

As well as bringing together such a complex story-line, the story also stays true to the time in which it was set, no doubt a difficult task but one the author does with seeming ease.

I think even those who don’t normally read historical romance, will find this story a brilliant one. I highly recommended it.

Jolene says

I received this book from the author in exchange for an honest review. This was a really in depth heart rending emotional rollercoaster ride in a book. Once started it was very hard to put down. At several points especially at the end tears were rolling down my cheeks. I love these books that pull your emotions in twenty directions.

Jamie says

★ *Read this review and more like it on The Last Page* ★

Adelaide is a young wife with a past full of scandal who has come to love a husband she was pushed into marrying to save her reputation. While at first she doesn’t care for Tristan, after getting to know the good person and even better husband that he is she falls in love with him. After years of living with guilt over the lies she’s forced to live with and the unsteady beginnings of her marriage, Adelaide’s quiet life is upset when the love of her past reappears. Instead of the expected rekindling of a lost love due to circumstance, the story took an unexpected turn, with Adelaide wanting nothing but to put the past behind her. The Maid of Milan is

a story of regret and finding new love in unexpected places.

What I liked was how realistically love is portrayed. There are so many love stories where characters fall in love upon meeting with a fiery passion and continue to forge the relationship despite any of the difficulties that stand in their way. This is the kind of love I think everyone envisions, even though in reality the fire often burns out and couples end up struggling with each other's imperfections. Adelaide and Tristan's love for each other was born out of quiet patience and tenderness, getting to know the other person over time as passion grew between them. For Adelaide, true love started off as a compromise but became so much more. As her love grew, so did her guilt over both the past and for not sharing the same admiration at the start of the marriage. She holds her husband in the highest regard and worries about tarnishing his opinion of her.

Real love is complex. Very often, a working relationship requires compromise and learning to love, to respect, and to grow together. Sometimes in relationships you have to put aside your pride in order to make things work, sometimes you have to forgive no matter how much it hurts, and often times you just have to be brave and honest with yourself and your partner. This is the truth of love and marriage. I appreciated how the story attempted to illustrate the difference between two very different kinds of love, and how the slow and difficult kind can still last and become passionate.

What I did find a little hard to believe at times were the timelines and just how convenient certain things were. I noted early on how the first wives of both Tristan and James conveniently died around the same time, and that the timing of James' freedom from Hortense just happened to be within hours of Adelaide's marriage. All of these little coincidences of course make every character innocent to circumstances that are out of their control at least in some way. It also seems that everyone has some dirty little secret. Everyone cheats, had cheated, or had a child out of wedlock but it's okay because everything is justified and it's not really cheating. That made me roll my eyes just a little.

Adelaide is an intriguing heroine, though at times I did not like how unstable her emotions were, with her thoughts often swinging wildly. Despite how intelligent, beautiful and loyal she is, she was still foolish for most of the book, trying fruitlessly to take control of her life and often just making things worse. For the most part I could sympathize with her and still did in the end, though there was one point where I just got downright mad. She had the opportunity to face her past and reveal the things that she needed to, but instead decided to cower when faced with a way out. Instead she let another person yet again take charge of everything and happily swept troubling matters under the rug. While I get that this is part of the point of her character, that for much of her life she has never been in control and has thus succumbed to a form of learned helplessness, this still bothered me. I suppose though that maybe it's because this kind of characterization hits close to home. Despite my annoyance with her, Adelaide is a well developed character who, although deeply flawed, has some good points as well.

Many of the antagonists in the story truly are despicable, particularly Mrs. Henley, Adelaide's mother who is easy to hate. Funny enough though, she is absolutely right in some regards as to the ugly personalities of some of the side characters. One in particular I am still pretty darn mad at for damning so many characters due to their selfishness, even with all of the coincidences and honest feelings on their side as if they are a victim themselves. This character also served as a true lesson as to how blind love can destroy everything, even the person you care about the most despite all the best of intentions.

Overall *The Maid of Milan* was a pleasurable read. There is a whole lot of drama to keep the story moving fast and tension high as the story progressed. I felt apprehension while reading most of the book and even though I was expecting the eventual climax, the story still managed quite a few surprises. It stands out from other historical romance novels for it's unique cast of characters whose flaws make them pretty believable.

Disclaimer: Received a copy for free from the publisher in exchange for an honest review

Robyn Koshel says

I have to be honest, when I got this book I thought it was going to be another fluffy Regency bodice ripper romance with some rake in mole skin trousers. Was I wrong! This book is nothing like you would expect. The only way I can describe it, is as a Regency version of *Dynasty*. It has everything, secrets, lies, blackmail, love triangles, death, drug addiction, jealousy, affairs, scandals, oh and some bodice ripping too- the only thing it is missing is *Joan Collins*. However, I think Mrs. Henley, Adelaide's mother runs a close second. Mrs. Henley forces Adelaide to go along with the story that she created in order to save Adelaide, but all it does is eats her away from the inside. She is later put in a position that the only way to get out of one lie is to tell more.

No one is who they seem in this book, except for Tristan. Tristan is truly honourable man with a moral compass who repeatedly saves Adelaide.

Adelaide's only real crime is being young and in love and obeying her mother. Time after time, her loyalty to her mother and her husband are tested. In the end, you learn who the true villain is and why.

The book has a genteel opulence of Anthony Trollope's *The Palliser's* but underneath the waving fans it is all gritty intrigue.

This is the first book I read by Beverley Eikli and I can say I am now a fan.

The Maid of Milan gripped me from the start and kept me there. I read it in a day, I just couldn't put it down. I highly recommend this unique book.

My Book Addiction and More MBA says

Tired of the average, run-of-the-mill historical romance? If so, *Maid in Milan* is the book for you! With a complex plot, extremely well developed characters and lots of twists and turns, this book will captivate you from start to finish.

Adelaide Leeson has been through a lot. After a passionate affair with Lord James Dewhurst, she's left mourning the loss of their still-born child and is in quite a delicate condition, both emotionally and physically. Thanks to some quick thinking and deceiving by her mother, Addy finds herself married to Lord Tristan Leeson, a genuinely kind and caring man who wants nothing from Addy but her health and happiness. After three years of marriage, Addy is now ready to form a closer relationship with her husband, both emotionally and sexually. But all the lies her mother has told to cover her past are catching up with her. The more she tries to build a relationship, the more her mother tries to keep them apart, fearing that Tristan will learn the truth about Addy and her true nature. To throw even more problems into her life, her ex-lover James is coming to stay with them for a visit and he's bringing his new fiancée Beatrice. While Tristan is pursuing his political career, he asks James to take her around London and help Addy re-enter society, not knowing about James and Addy's sordid past. James is relentlessly trying to open up conversations with Addy about their past and trying to rekindle their relationship despite his pending nuptials, but Adelaide is loyal to Tristan and wants nothing to do with James' advances. But when a risqué opera singer is thrown in the mix along with a painter and someone who knows James and Addy's secret, the plot thickens and anything can happen. Desperate to try to keep the secrets hidden, Addy will do anything to preserve her marriage to Tristan, but will it be enough or will the truth out itself and turn her world upside down?

I absolutely loved this book! The author's willingness to delve into subjects not usually written about in historical romance novels, while staying true to the regency era was refreshing and very entertaining. Tristan's willingness to overlook his own desires in order to maintain his wife's mental well-being will have you absolutely falling in love with him. How selfless and loving Tristan is towards Adelaide! I loved the way that despite her history with James, Addy fiercely loves her husband Tristan and does everything to try to stay true to him. I extremely disliked the way that James shamelessly pursued Addy even though she was happily married to his best friend AND he himself was engaged; however, I realize that this component of the plot was crucial to the storyline, so while I didn't like it, it didn't make me like the book less. I was disappointed at what happened between James and Addy, but the ending helped to redeem this book and I was very satisfied with how the author chose to tie up all the loose ends left, but be warned, it doesn't end quite the way you may think! This is definitely a book worth reading!

Rating: 4.5

Heat Rating: Mild

Reviewed by: AprilP

Courtesy of My Book Addiction and More

Mave says

When she was a girl and lived in Milan Adelaide has had an affair and lost the child she was. To hide the scandal she and her mother move to England. The mother convinces her to marry Tristan, a young widower and devises a ploy to justify its non-virginity: their ship was attacked by pirates and the girl was raped. Convinces Tristan that the trauma has resulted in a fragile state of physical and mental health, and this justifies the coldness of women in their relationships. Adelaide bears this marriage of convenience. When she is falling in love with her ??husband reappears in her life Jason, her former lover. Jason is a good friend of Tristan and is being hosted at their house with his young girlfriend Beatrice. Adelaide will have to fight against Jason and his mother in order to love her husband.

It's a regency romance very different from the usual. It has a very rich and engrossing plot: nothing is missing, secrets, lies, scandals, unrequited love, jealousy, death, twists.... The problems faced are very real and so are the characters. Adelaide is a young woman who is a victim of her own lies and whose only fault is great and not knowing how to rebel against the mother. Tristan is the man hero, an honorable man who loves and respects his wife and protects it from anything that could hurt her. Mrs. Henley, however, is a woman hateful, manipulative, selfish, is really unbearable.

This story is written really well, so simple and addictive., The ending was amazing. I recommend it to anyone who loves historical novels and love stories.

Rhoda Baxter says

I bought this book because I really enjoyed The Reluctant Bride. I was rather hoping it would have the same political intrigue as TRB, but it was very different. That's not to say it was any lesser. (Is that a real word? Must check).

Adelaide is living a lie - her husband Tristan thinks she's fragile and prone to 'nerves'. She is prone to headaches and spells of heavy lethargy that she herself can't explain. Then there's her weird manipulative nutjob mother...

Tristan is a lovely hero. Very kind and gentle with Adelaide and firm when he needs to be. James, who is after Adelaide, is a bounder and cad (boo, hiss). There are lies upon lies and hearts are trampled on relentlessly by selfish people.

The plot twists and turns and the ending is surprising. I really enjoyed reading this book. I read it on a train journey and nearly missed my stop!

Dalene says

First, I would like to thank the author Beverley Eikli for gifting me this book for an honest review. I love this book, it has a complex plot with many twists and turns making a great story-line. The characters are well developed and written. It kept me intrigued through the whole book. I look forward to reading more from this author.
