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“As smooth, full-bodied and intoxicating as a fine wine, this Regency romance, the second in a series following the impoverished Essex sisters (after *Much Ado About You*) is vintage James. Every exchange showcases the author's subtle wit, and not one of the encounters between the book's well-matched protagonists-refined beauty Annabel Essex and the simple but capable Ewan, earl of Ardmores-lacks for passion.”
– *Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review of *KISS ME, ANNABEL*

KISS ME, ANNABEL
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR ELOISA JAMES
GOES “WILDER” ON SHAKESPEAREAN THEMES
IN PULSE-POUNING NEW HISTORICAL ROMANCE NOVEL

Eloisa James, the New York Times bestselling author of historical romance fiction who “came out” of the closet in 2005 (revealing her true identity to be Mary Bly, Shakespeare professor at Fordham University, daughter of a revered poet laureate), once again transcends the oft-mistaken public perception of romance publishing with her new novel, **KISS ME ANNABEL** (Avon Books, ISBN 0-06-073210-5; \$6.99; on-sale 11/29/05). This seductive, scrumptious romp through Regency England riffs on all manner of classic literature, from its pseudo-Shakespearean title, to its gender-bending, tongue-in-cheek rendition of the Bard’s *Taming of the Shrew*, to a brief interlude reminiscent of a Laura Ingalls Wilder plot. And that’s not to mention early modern bawdy puns on female anatomy, Renaissance ballads about widows and quotes from Shakespeare sonnets and *Hamlet*.

“The underlying structure of this book is very loosely based on Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*,” notes James. “Obviously, Annabel Essex is no shrew. But there is a significant scene that isolates Annabel and the hero, Ewan Poley, earl of Ardmores, in a house in the country. The two are tested by hunger and frustration – and which puts forth a Shakespearean situation. But I dislike his project of taming the shrew, and would never want my Annabel to respond to adversity by becoming docile. So I reversed the circumstances by having Ewan discover that when he’s cold, wet and hungry, he becomes rather cranky...and is tamed, naturally, by Annabel.”

How does Little House on the (Scottish) Prairie fit in? James explains, “I was reading the Laura Ingalls Wilder ‘Little House’ books to my daughter when writing *Kiss Me, Annabel*...I’d forgotten that in the midst of this Wilder binge I made Annabel churn butter and Ewan milk a cow...put it up to literary influence!”

The author, who is a noted expert on the lecture circuit, often speaking about classic influences on pop culture, considers her own work a prime example of this powerful infusion. “The rules about pop culture not being ‘literary’ seem to be blurring. Witness the popularity of genre books with historical content, à la *The DaVinci Code*. The divide was always artificial,” she explains, “after all, Shakespeare was a strictly genre writer himself.” A section of James’s website details the literary “Easter Eggs” scattered through her novel – and that is one of the site’s most visited pages, logging tens of thousands of impressions.

About the Book:

After a Dickensian childhood, managing finances for her ne'er-do-well father, making sure there was always just enough left after his horse-racing losses to ensure that there would be a scant measure of food on the table for herself and her three sisters, Annabel Essex is tired of being poor. She's not overtly fond of horses...and she has no desire to ever go back to Scotland. Although all she has for a dowry is a very well-bred racehorse, she knows exactly what she wants in a husband: a kind man who will keep her warm, comfortable, and dressed in silks for all her days.

It stands to reason that Ewan Poley, earl of Ardmore, is certainly not the man for her: he's Scottish, races horses – and, worst of all, *must* be looking for a bride with a large dowry. Annabel's only dowry is a racehorse, so she rejects his proposal without a thought. In truth, Ewan, who presides over extensive stables and farmlands in his homeland, is not the pauper Annabel believes him to be. But it's altogether too much fun to leave the lovely lass to her misapprehensions – especially after a scandalous encounter sets the gossip tabloids aflame, and the two are quickly betrothed. With the world thinking they are married and Annabel thinking her fiancé is impoverished, the two set out for Scotland in a journey marked by discovery and pleasure. But when they reach Scotland, and all the intricate truths about their lives unwind, can a marriage between a believer and a skeptic, between a seducer and a near-virgin, between an idealistic man and a practical woman survive?

About the Author:

New York Times bestselling author Eloisa James's historical regencies have been published to great acclaim. A reviewer from *USA Today* wrote of Eloisa's very first book that she "found herself devouring the book like a dieter with a Hershey bar;" later *People Magazine* raved that "romance writing does not get much better than this." Her novels have been RITA finalists, won the National Readers' Choice Award for Best Long Historical, and repeatedly been named one of the Best Romances of the Year by Amazon.com and Borders. After graduating from Harvard College, Eloisa got a Ph.D. from Yale and eventually became a Shakespeare professor, publishing an academic book with Oxford University Press. All her books must have been written in her sleep, because her days are taken up by caring for two children with advanced degrees in whining, a lonely cat, a very plump dog, and a tumbledown house. Find out more about the author at www.eloisajames.com.



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KISS ME, ANNABEL

By Eloisa James

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\$6.99 U.S./\$9.99 Can