

## A Gentlewoman Scholar

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*A Gentlewoman Scholar* is made up of three historical romance novellas, all set in the 1800s, wherein women fight gender expectations and discover love.

In the first story, Winnifred becomes Fred, using ill-fitting clothing and a standoffish attitude to go undercover as a man and attend a medical school. With only weeks left to graduation, Winnie finds herself posing as Fred's sister when another student, Liam, starts investigating Fred's strange reputation. Their witty banter, endearing flirtations, and obvious attraction to each other threaten to compromise her ruse, her education, and her heart.

In the second story, Esther suffers imposter syndrome at a prestigious women's college, having grown up in poverty with an abusive father and brother. Esther's employer is determined to ensure that she'll never have to rely on men again; she pledges her vast fortune to Esther's education. But Esther becomes enamored of her literature professor, John. Their mutual pining is detailed in emotional inner monologues and scenes of romantic tension. Esther realizes that John is not like the cruel men she's known in her past, but hesitates to trust any man after all that she has been through.

In the final novella, Ellie is a dedicated educator who opens a school for orphans, despite the cultural conclusion that she is trespassing on men's territory. Ellie balances polite conversations with strict boundaries for the children she works with and the men she deals with, most of whom are more interested in her body than her brain. When Graham arrives, searching for the missing heir of his employer, Ellie is unprepared for the feelings that arise for him, especially when he values her intelligence and hard work.

This delightful romance collection highlights women who defy social rules and men who display supportive love.

DELIA STANLEY (March / April 2021)

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