

**CHALLENGE TO HONOR by Jennifer Blake**

**MIRA Books**

**Review by :: L.K. Campbell**

For romance readers who have been clamoring for good American historicals, I have a book for you. Jennifer Blake's *Challenge to Honor* is a great read set in early nineteenth century New Orleans.

Celina Vallier is a young woman desperately seeking a way out of the marriage her father has arranged for her with the older and sinister Count de Lerida. She makes an alliance with the sword master Rio De Silva unaware of the secret and dangerous connection he has with Lerida. Celina asks Rio to take her virginity, thus despoiling her for the marriage bed.

Rio agrees to the request. In part, because he finds himself deeply attracted to Celina, but also because of a longtime vendetta against Lerida.

Their bargain comes with a heavy price. Lerida is not a man to give up his prize easily and will stop at nothing to insure his marriage.

Blake's novel, the first of a planned series, is action-packed with swordplay, heroics and steamy love scenes. Her style is easy to read and filled with memorable dialogue. Readers are sure to find the repartee between Celina and Rio is just as good as the passion.