



# The Fortune Hunter

*Daisy Goodwin*

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## **The Fortune Hunter** Daisy Goodwin

In 1875, Sisi, the Empress of Austria is the woman that every man desires and every woman envies.

Beautiful, athletic and intelligent, Sisi has everything - except happiness. Bored with the stultifying etiquette of the Hapsburg Court and her dutiful but unexciting husband, Franz Joseph, Sisi comes to England to hunt. She comes looking for excitement and she finds it in the dashing form of Captain Bay Middleton, the only man in Europe who can outride her. Ten years younger than her and engaged to the rich and devoted Charlotte, Bay has everything to lose by falling for a woman who can never be his. But Bay and the Empress are as reckless as each other, and their mutual attraction is a force that cannot be denied.

Full of passion and drama, THE FORTUNE HUNTER tells the true story of a nineteenth century Queen of Hearts and a cavalry captain, and the struggle between love and duty.

## **The Fortune Hunter Details**

Date : Published July 29th 2014 by St. Martin's Press (first published November 7th 2013)

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Author : Daisy Goodwin

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# From Reader Review The Fortune Hunter for online ebook

**Hallie Szott says**

3.5

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**Erin says**

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot...>

There aren't many novels available to those interested in the nineteenth century Austro-Hungarian Hapsburgs so I was understandably ecstatic to learn that author Daisy Goodwin was fictionalizing a chapter of their complex history. I'm not exaggerating, there was some pretty embarrassing fangirl-like squealing the day I got my hands on *The Fortune Hunter* and that is not something I admit lightly.

So what happened? How did a piece that generated so much initial enthusiasm garner a paltry two star rating? I'll be happy to explain, but you might want to make yourself comfortable and I urge you to proceed with caution as illustrating my opinion requires references that may spoil your experience with the novel.

Looking back on *The Fortune Hunter*, I can't deny a certain admiration for Goodwin's portrayal of Bay, Charlotte, Caspar, Queen Victoria, John Brown, Augusta, Fred, Chicken and even the unfortunate Major Postlewaite. I think Miss Baird's passion for photography a stroke of genius and I loved watching the whirlwind of emotional drama inflicted on poor Middleton. Unfortunately, I don't feel these strengths outweighed the weaknesses I noted in the novel's tone, structure and accuracy.

(view spoiler)

By the end of my reading I was so disillusioned that I couldn't care a whit for Goodwin's finale. I wanted only to be done so I could move on to my next read with a clear conscious. If Goodwin explained herself in the author's note I might have made allowances for the liberties she assumed, but my ARC bears no such justification and at the end of the day, that oversight hurts more than any other and leaves such a poor impression that I can't see myself recommending *The Fortune Hunter* forward.

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## Laurel says

A spirited English heiress, a dashing cavalry officer and a beguiling Austrian Empress form a love triangle that on first glance may look like characters from a romance novel, but in reality are based on actual people: Charlotte Baird, Bay Middleton and Elizabeth, Empress of Austria. Set in 1875 Victorian England, *The Fortune Hunter*, by the bestselling author Daisy Goodwin (*The American Heiress*), is the fictionalization of the life of an ambitious horseman John "Bay" Middleton and the two women he romances, taking us at full gallop through London's high society ballrooms, country manor houses and fox hunting while exploring the emotional highs and lows of three very unique people faced with the challenges of personal truth, honor and love.

Miss Charlotte Baird is an intelligent and creative twenty-year old more interested in photography than fashion, beaux, and social decorum. She is also one of the richest women in England. Because she is an orphan, her half-brother Fred manages her Lennox fortune until her majority—and his fiancé Augusta Crewe, the high-minded daughter of an Earl, manages him. While attending a London opera, Fred introduces his sister to a fellow officer, the dashing Captain Bay Middleton. They meet again at the Spencer ball and Charlotte is promptly swept off her feet by his flattery and attentions. (red coat alert) Even though her Aunt Adelaide warns her against the captain's dubious reputation as a womanizer, and her brother and his fiancé think he is totally unsuitable match for her, she has her own ideas about who she wants as a husband. In her mind, she does not see his reputation, lack of fortune or title as an impediment.

The action soon moves to Melton Hall, the Crewe country seat in Leicestershire, where Charlotte is staying with her brother and his future in-laws during the holidays. The fox hunting season is in full swing and even though Augusta thought Captain Middleton was an unsuitable husband material for Charlotte, she overlooks his faults and invites him too. He is, after all, the keenest rider in England and a retired officer in the 11th Hussars, their neighbor John Spencer, 5th Earl of Spencer's regiment. Also in the neighborhood for the season is a surprising new resident, Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, the famous European beauty and horsewoman who has escaped the confines of the Hapsburg court and arrived with her royal entourage, including a pet monkey. Obsessed with her looks, the eccentric Empress is a grandmother but has the face and figure of an ingénue in her first bloom. With a strict diet and exercise regimen she has fought back time, but is still continually anxious about her looks. *"Beauty was her gift, her weapon and her power, and she dreaded its passing."* p 111

Bay is pressed into service by Spencer to pilot the Empress during the hunting season. Reluctantly he agrees and soon meets the enigmatic "Sisi" whose skill in the hunting field impresses everyone, even Bay. A mutual attraction quickly builds into an infatuation by him, which begs little prompting by her to grow into a full-blown affair between the Empress and her pilot. Regardless, he has true feelings for Charlotte and is confident that she will soon be his. His desire for both of these women has him questioning himself.

*"Bay had never thought of himself as a bad person before, not now he wondered what sort of person he really was: the devil in the mirror or the noble-looking young man in Charlotte's photograph?"* p 167

The Empress is not like any other woman he has ever met, “her rank and status made him uncertain.” Here is a beautiful woman in total control of any situation and that intrigues him. Charlotte on the other hand was no challenge; she is easily won and accepts his proposal, entering into a secret engagement until she reaches her majority and receives control of her fortune.

Charlotte returns to London to assist her mentor with an upcoming photographic exhibition. After developing her own pictures taken of Bay and the Empress at Melton, Charlotte’s new friend Caspar notices how ardently Bay is gazing at the Empress and the truth is suddenly so clear to her. Bay loves the Empress and only wants Charlotte for her fortune.

Wrought with aristocratic opulence, social ambition and emotional desire, *The Fortune Hunter* was a delicious indulgence for me. I adore historical fiction based on real people and Goodwin has eloquently introduced me to an era in British and Austrian history that I had never delved into before. The atmosphere of the residences and the descriptions of clothing were refreshing, but it was the exciting action scenes of fox hunting and the white-knuckle final steeplechase at The Grand National that were the most thrilling scenes.

If this beautifully written novel lacked anything, it was romantic tension and a bit more framing of a woman’s place in society at the beginning. We learn from Charlotte’s family that Bay is a rake placing us on guard for our heroine. Is this the truth or rumors? Charlotte is young and naïve when it comes to love and Bay wins her affection and trust so easily. In turn Bay is won over by the Empress equally as fast. I would like to have experienced more inner-turmoil and tension before each romance. Later in the novel Charlotte’s friend Caspar sums it up perfectly.

*“Carlotta mia, every romance needs a little tension. If the gallant captain turns his head and sees you gazing at him as you are now, he will know precisely what is in your heart, but if he turns to see you confiding in me, well, he will be confused, and that would not such a bad thing. Everybody desires a thing more when it is not straightforward.”* p 325

Another minor quibble involved some of the horse facts. I realize I have an unfair advantage being a former equestrian and most readers will not care that horses cannot jump twelve foot hedges, nor, (spoiler alert) that a fifteen hand mare is the most unlikely horse to win the Grand National. Not that it could not happen, mind you, it is just REALLY a long shot. Maybe that was the author’s point, paralleling the love story’s happy conclusion?

What makes this novel more than your run-of-the-mill historical romance? Goodwin’s keen eye for focusing the action like a film director—and an hysterical cameo appearance by Her Majesty, Queen Victoria herself of course. Witty humor always wins me over. Oh, and a beautiful cover. Like Sisi I am very shallow.

Laurel Ann, [Austenprose.com](http://Austenprose.com)

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## **MaryannC.Book Fiend says**

I decided to redo my review on this, because my first one was a quick, slap-dash affair and I want to give this more credit than I did.

I did totally enjoy this novel. Daisy Goodwin has a wonderful way with details when she writes her books, this my second novel by her and like her first one, I was enthralled with all the sumptuousness of her details. The beautiful gowns and finery were vividly imagined, the excitement of the fox hunt, the splendour of the

social gatherings of the rich and snobbish were all presented wonderfully in this book!

I know this has a mixed bag of reviews, but in its defense this book is geared to the romantic at heart, the person who roots for the heroine Charlotte, who despite the fact is an heiress is totally unspoiled by her wealth. I mentioned that I didn't care for the Empress, I was put off by her constant demanding and her worries about wrinkles and losing her beauty. I didn't feel sorry for her that she was lonely and unloved, she came across as one who got what she wanted.

Bay was a cad for so easily coming under the spell of The Empress. But without giving away anymore details, I enjoyed the time spent reading this lovely novel. I wanted more.

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### **Deb says**

A friend of mine won 10 copies of this for our book group.

The general consensus was that the characters were shallow and the plot predictable. We did have some fun looking up pictures of Sisi to see her long hair and clothing - but you can do that for free. Apparently there was an old movie about Sisi too.

This kind of predictable historical romance is just not my cup of tea. There's so much better stuff available. Save your money - or at least use the library.

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### **Cassandra says**

Charlotte reiche Erbin und Fotografin aus Leidenschaft, macht sich nichts aus den Heiratskandidaten, die sich mehr für ihr Geld und die berühmten Lennox-Diamanten interessieren als für sie. Doch dann trifft sie auf den charmanten Bay Middleton und fühlt sich sofort zu ihm hingezogen. Er bittet sie, mit ihm durchzubrennen aber Charlotte hat noch zu viele gesellschaftliche Skrupel und das Schicksal nimmt in Gestalt der Kaiserin Elisabeth ihren Lauf, die Bay ganz in Beschlag nimmt.

Ein sehr schöner historischer Roman, der von wahren Begebenheiten inspiriert wurde und sich an der schönen Sisi entzündete. Ich habe den Roman sehr schnell durchgelesen und dabei keine Langeweile verspürt. ( Ilona )

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### **QNPoohBear says**

July 1875 Charlotte Baird, heiress to the Lennox Diamond fortune, is tired of being hunted for her fortune. She feels restrained by the conventions her soon-to-be sister-in-law swears by. Through the aegis of her godmother, a talented photographer, Charlotte has discovered the new medium as an art form. She loves it because photographs don't lie. Unfortunately, her family dismisses her passion as a mere hobby. Her brother wants Charlotte to marry his army friend, "Chicken" Hartopp but what Charlotte really wants is to dance with someone unsuitable. Enter Captain Bay Middleton, another army friend of her brother's. Bay is entirely unsuitable, according to Society. He has no title, no fortune and is rumored to have fathered the child of a Society wife. Bay is tired of his lifestyle but he does not wish to be a stuffy member of Society either. He wants to race his beloved horse Topsy through the hunting field and to Grand National. When he meets

Charlotte, he looks past the fortune and sees a lonely young woman with a vibrant personality desperate to break free. Something about her draws him in. Charlotte falls for Bay's charm but he is more than a handsome face and pleasant manners; he sees her as she really is. Bay would never try to mold her into someone Society expects her to be, so naturally she tumbles headfirst into love. Then Bay receives a summons he can't refuse. His commanding officer, Earl Spencer, asks him to pilot Elizabeth, the Empress of Austria through the hunting field. Bay would prefer not to play royal nursemaid but Elizabeth is no pampered Empress. She rides like the goddess Diana and takes every jump without hesitation. Bored with the rigid confines of the court in Vienna, Elizabeth has come to England incognito for a little r & r. She prefers to remain anonymous because she's tired of people looking at her and judging her looks. She was once said to be extremely beautiful but at 38 and a grandmother already (!) she knows her beauty and youth are fading. Only on the hunting field does she feel equal to anything. When she meets the handsome pilot, she knows she will enjoy her stay in England enormously.

This is a complicated love story that involves a fictional account of the lives of real life figures. I was able to put the book down at night for the most part but I was kept guessing as to what was going to happen to Charlotte. I was surprised to learn she and Bay were real people when I read the Author's Note at the end. This book can not really be called a fictional biography because so little is known about Charlotte or what happened during the timeframe of the novel. Also events have been pushed forward for the sake of the story. The writing is good -not super great- it's accessible for readers of all genres. It doesn't sound too period but it doesn't sound too modern either. I enjoyed the plot more than Daisy Goodwin's first novel *The American Heiress* mostly because the characters were more three-dimensional and engaging. There were some minor anachronisms involving chocolate and a song title. "Yankee Doodle Dandy" wasn't written yet but "Yankee Doodle" was.

Charlotte is a girl I can easily identify with. She's a young woman of her time and place and doesn't necessarily want to change that, she just longs for someone to love her for her own sake. Her parents are dead and Charlotte's older half-brother, his fiance and Charlotte's aunt all care more about her fortune and appearances sake than what is inside. I loved the addition of photography to the plot. Usually unhappy young ladies in Victorian novels become suffragettes or run off with a servant. Charlotte is sensible and values her family ties enough not to do that. She has her photographs as a form of art and self-expression. She sees people as they really are through the lens of her camera. She has some growing up to do before she really knows what she truly wants but she's almost there. She does sound a bit younger than 20 but she's been sheltered and it is the Victorian period so it makes sense for her.

Bay is a bad boy. He's charming and supposedly handsome (the mustache would creep me out) but I knew he would be depicted as a fox even before Charlotte told him so. I don't see Charlotte and Bay as idea partners. He loves his horse, Topsy, more than anyone and riding/hunting is his passion. Charlotte doesn't ride. The only thing they have in common was a lack of pretension. I found Bay very weak and not a hero that I could really like. However, he could have been worse and could have blamed his actions on external factors more than he did. Like Charlotte, he has to grow up a lot.

Sisi, as Elizabeth prefers to be called (I question the Anglicized spelling of Elisabeth) is a complicated woman. I have some sympathy for her because she was married off to the Emperor at a young age and mostly unwillingly became a part of the strict court. Her husband is married to his duty as Emperor and not interested in being a partner to his wife. She fears aging and losing her beauty more than anything-probably because she fears losing love. She is spoiled, moody and demanding though. I admire how daring feats of athleticism and how she knows what she wants but her methods leave a bit to be desired. She's surrounded

by various courtiers who give her what she wants. She doesn't really care about other people at all. I don't admire that about her.

Secondary characters include Charlotte's brother Fred, an amiable sort of gentleman but clueless. He allows himself to be ruled by Augusta. Augusta is one of those annoying Heyeresque "villainess" women who is so puffed up on their own consequence yet craves notice by people of greater consequence. She's annoying. Chicken Hartopp is Charlotte's chief suitor. He's a fortune hunter despite being wealthy himself. He doesn't care about Charlotte as a person and he's a really awful drunk. Charlotte's godmother, Lady Dunwoody, seems like an amazing woman, but she too tries to meddle with Charlotte's life. Charlotte's only friend is the flamboyant American Caspar Hewes. He adds some comic relief to the story. He's more complicated than he lets on and I grew to like him. The royal contingent includes some "yes m'am" courtiers, including Countess "Festy", Sisi's lady-in-waiting, who is devoted to her mistress. I liked her a lot. She seemed very kind and caring. Finally, there's Queen Victoria herself. She also adds some comic touches but comes across as incredibly vapid and snide. I am not sure she was actually like that.

The cover of this novel is absolutely gorgeous! It's perfect for Sisi. It shows her in profile in her riding habit with diamonds surrounding her. It's based on her famed beauty and quirks.

Fans of BBC and ITV period dramas like Downton Abbey will probably enjoy this one.

Content:

touching over skin

fade to black love scenes

hints of homosexuality

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## Melinda says

Good historical fiction. I am well versed regarding Sisi and Goodwin's dates throw a major curve preventing me from giving it a higher rating. If I lacked the knowledge of Sisi I would place this at a solid 4 stars.

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## Isidora says

Šta se dobija kada spojite troje ljudi, različitih po svemu osim sklonosti prema kršenju konvencija strogog, visokog društva dve najmoćnije evropske imperije druge polovine XIX veka? Šarlot Berd je bogata naslednica, koju više od dosadnih prijema zanima tada pionirska oblast fotografije. Bej Midlton, privlačni kapetan i najvestiji britanski konjanik, sanja o pobedi na prestižnoj Nacionalnoj trci, a prezire stege i etikeciju. Austrijska carica Elizabeta "Sisi", najlepša i najnesrećnija vladarka svog vremena, iz krutih i licemernih dvorskih krugova neprestano beži u svoje omiljene aktivnosti - putovanja i lov, te upoznavanje novih kultura, istovremeno marljivo radeći na oživljavanju mladosti i nadaleko zvučne lepote. Svaka od ove tri osobe poseduje želju za bekstvom od utvrđenih društvenih uloga, ali je ih splet tuđih okolnosti smestiti u



okvire neobi?nog ljubavnog trougla.

Roman Dejzi Gudvin, kod nas preveden kao "Lovac na bogatstvo", za svoje protagoniste uzima istorijske li?nosti i delimi?no potvr?ena zbivanja, ali ostatak pri?e je izmaštan i, ruku na srce, povremeno dosta klišetiran: fizi?ki neugledna, ali inteligentna i bezobrazno bogata devojka zapada za oko britanskom "Kazanovi". Njegovo interesovanje je, uprkos tome što izdaleka deluje kao klasi?an sindrom "lovca na bogatstvo" (što je i naziv romana), iskreno i bez zadnjih namera. Me?utim, bu?enje prve ljubavi naruši?e spektakularni dolazak "ledene kraljice", kontroverzne supruge Franca Jozefa, koja obilazi svet u potrazi za slobodom. Naravno, navikla je da dobije sve što poželi, a ni njen novoimenovani "putovo?a" u gostima ne može da odoli blistavoj, dvostruko krunisanoj zvezdi. I tu se javljaju komplikacije.

Roman odlikuje filmi?na, uzbudljiva radnja, veoma autenti?an prikaz epohe i istorijskih li?nosti koje su je krasile. Uprkos ?estoj predvidljivosti zapleta, pri?a vas naprosto "nosi" i teško je odložiti knjigu iz ruku. Autorka pripoveda na zanimljiv, šarolik i detaljan na?in, pružaju?i protagonistima životnost i podrobnije se bave?i nekim interesantnim i važnim, a retko tematizovanim, tada popularnim aktivnostima, poput fotografskih udruženja ili izgleda lovne sezone. Dok je Šarlot na momente zaista iritantna - skoro koliko i njen polubrat Fred u paketu sa budu?om suprugom Ogastom ("karakondžula" koja kao da je isko?ila sa stranica Džejn Ostin), a Bej Midlton vrlo šarmantan u svojoj kolebljivosti iza "fasade" Ostrvskog lafa, ona koja zaista unosi sjaj i pometnju u pri?u jeste carica Sisi. Epizodne li?nosti su tako?e upe?atljive, baš kao i pojedine vrlo efektno dotaknute, a zabavne epizode - poput kratkog susreta kraljice Viktorije i austrijske carice, gde isplivavaju sve razlike u odnosu prema kruni i pogledu na svet; fotografskih izložbi sa poprili?nim karikiranjem britanskih manira i uštogljenosti - posebno iz perspektive ekscentri?nog ameri?kog fotografa Kaspasa Hjuza; latentno edipovskog odnosa prestolonaslednika-tada tinejdžera Rudolfa, prema majci; ili naprosto opisa kaljavih londonskih ulica na kojima se za?as zaglibe ko?ije džentlmena što hitaju u klubove na malo prepucavanja, kad je ve? dvoboj zabranjena "zabava".

Svi ljubitelji fine istorijske proze bez pretenzija na potpunu ta?nost, a sa dobrom i doziranom romansom kao okosnicom pri?e, svakako ?e uživati u ?itanju!

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## Lucinda says

A sparkling sensational new novel from the author of 'My Last Duchess'

Daisy Goodwin's refreshingly original outlook on historical fiction is wonderfully engaging, highly readable and deliciously evocative. In this brand new novel she combines with assured in-depth insight; clashing cultures set in 19th-century England. I thoroughly enjoyed this uplifting treat, having been suffering from withdrawal symptoms after the end of hugely popular 'Downton Abbey'. Light-hearted, unpretentious and likeable characters delight and intrigue within an exquisitely lavish backdrop of glittering period charm. Anyone seeking an assured novel that lingers on in the mind will adore Daisy Goodwin's writing, and her books that bring imaginative tales vividly to life.

The Fortune Hunter is set within 1875. Sisi, the Empress of Austria is the woman that every man desires and every woman envies, being both beautiful and intelligent. When she comes to England her life is a whirlwind of intrigues and seductions...and forbidden love! Intensely passionate and full of flavour, Sisi's story is one that will enchant and capture your heart.

Heartrending, powerfully stirring and brilliantly told this novel is a magnificent example of nineteenth-

century fictional narrative. The struggle between love and duty is told with such clarity as to tug at the strings of life, whilst also adding realism and authenticity that's sensitive to the times. I am very impressed by this new novel by one of my favourite authors, whose work continues to amaze and beguile me with each fresh character and yarn.

\*I won an Uncorrected Manuscript Proof Copy of Daisy Goodwin's new novel 'The Fortune Hunter' through a Goodreads, first-read giveaway \*

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### **Britany says**

Charlotte Baird lives in London in 1875, she's into photography and is about to make her debut in the social scene, when she meets Captain Middleton. Captain Middleton falls for the meek Charlotte, and just as suddenly, also becomes dazzled by the Empress of Austria. This makes for an awkward situation for our narrator Charlotte...

I didn't completely hate this one, and the fact that it is based on real characters is intriguing to me. However, the point of view frequently changes, so it makes it difficult to rely on the narrator, and the writing is fair. The ending made me want to punch a few characters in the face, but hoping I can blame their actions on the times...

Wouldn't recommend this one unless you have nothing else to read and *plenty* of time on your hands...

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### **Becki says**

Irritated by love triangle plot devices, but the last 100 pages had me completely enthralled. Good historical read.

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### **Samantha Trillium ? says**

I was initially drawn to this book because of its stunning cover. It was so beautiful, I just picked it up and wanted to read it. But unfortunately, the story didn't enchant me like the cover did...

This story is about a great many characters, whose lives circle around each other for a period of time in 1875/76. The characters in this book are actually based on actual people, and some of the storyline is true, but most of it is fictitious...

So we have Charlotte Baird, who is a comely girl who is about to inherit a fortune. She either has to marry, or turn 25 to gain access to it. In the meantime, her older brother, Fred is her caretaker. Her mother died in a tragic hunting accident, but not before leaving all the fortune to her daughter. (After reading the Wideacre Trilogy by Philippa Gregory, and reading what a complicated business and scandal it was to leave money and property to a daughter instead of a son, I'm a bit confused why no one seems to be bothered by this detail...) Fred is about to marry Augusta, a woman on the verge of being too old to be a catch, yet still carries a worthy title with her name. Both Fred and Augusta try to control and influence Charlotte in the way she

acts, and who she should associate herself with, much to the annoyance of poor Charlotte.

One day at a party, Charlotte meets Captain Bay Middleton, a notorious horseman, and ever more notorious womanizer. For some reason, the two are very taken with one another, and begin courting, which Fred and Augusta immediately forbid. There could be no one worse for their dear Charlotte. He is a cad, and doesn't even have any money or title to offer. They dub him "The Fortune Hunter."

Charlotte and Bay ignore Fred and Augusta as best as they can, and agree to wait until Charlotte turns 21 so they may marry without Fred's consent. In the meantime, the Empress of Austria, Elizabeth (everyone calls her Sisi) has come to England to experience a hunting season. She recruits Bay as her pilot to show her around and guide her, and Bay suddenly finds himself infatuated with the Empress; indeed, he has never seen a rider quite like her, never mind that she is a woman to boot!

I'm sure you can guess the way the rest of this story goes. The story is quite predictable, but that wasn't even the worst of this book for me. None of the characters felt real to me. They all fell flat. I couldn't really identify with Charlotte, even though we are meant to sympathize with her. She really annoyed me. She started out independent and strong minded enough - then instantly falls in love with the first man that shows her a bit of attention, and completely falls apart when things don't work out right away. I wanted to give her a great slap.

Sisi was also very annoying. She was portrayed as a vain and spoiled woman. I'm not sure if that is what she was like in real life, but I know that she was very unhappy with her marriage to Emperor Franz Joseph, and she fled to England to try and live a little. But in this book she would throw tantrums or sulk when she didn't get her way. I didn't find that she had much chemistry with Bay; I found their love affair to be quite cringe.

The whole idea of Bay Middleton did not work for me. He is described as handsome, and I was having trouble picturing him as such considering he would tug on the ends of his mustache... ick. (Beards are a completely different story, by the way!) I didn't find him charming, and I struggled believing that he was truly in love with Charlotte so quickly, considering he was a womanizer before meeting her. It's not like they had a stimulating conversation, or anything in common... I just didn't buy it.

The book fell flat for me, I really didn't enjoy it that much. Such a shame, because that cover really is gorgeous.

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## **Heather VanWaldick says**

Hated it. You know you're in for a bad time when the dashing hero comes across as a self-involved prick within the first 5 pages of his introduction. He didn't improve, either, no matter how much the writer tried to paint him as conflicted yet sensitive. We were clearly supposed to sympathize with him and his infatuation with the Empress, but I was just annoyed with him, because he was SO ready to marry Charlotte, the heroine, but the NEXT DAY, he met the Empress and was like, "Ooh, shiny!", and wandered off for some quality banging. I spent the whole book wishing he'd fall off his horse and save everyone the trouble of dealing with him.

I read Goodwin's previous book, "The American Heiress", a year or so ago, and disliked that one, too. I decided to give her one more try with this one. I've learned my lesson. She's incapable of writing characters

who are sympathetic, or even interesting, and the jacket blurbs that insist her stories are "like Downton Abbey!" and have characters "that make you fall in love with them!" completely confound me. Next time I'm going to trust my instincts, and leave her book on the shelf at the store, where it belongs.

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## **Lori says**

Huzzah! The Fortune Hunter is scrumdillyicious! The heroine, Charlotte Baird, is an unspoiled heiress that I found easy to like and admire. She lives in the sparkling world of the privileged, yet prefers to pursue photography, an unacceptable hobby for a lady of means. The hero, Captain Bay Middleton, is a good man with a kind heart who is hopelessly flawed. Like life, their journey is filled with detours and obstacles. Oh, and I loved the debut of Clementine, who will eventually marry Winston Churchill.

This is a beautifully written, satisfying and sensuous love story that unfolds in England's most sumptuous settings. It also encompasses many of my favorite elements - England, a handsome British officer, dresses with bustles, horses, a high-minded heiress, and a tender first kiss!

I highly recommend this book to hopeless romantics, Downton Abbey fans, and readers who like a happy ending!! :D

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