



## How to Deceive a Duke

*Lecia Cornwall*

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When deception leads to desire...

When her stubborn sister runs off the night before her arranged marriage, Meg Lynton hardly hesitates before donning the wedding veil and walking down the aisle herself. It's the only way to save her family from sure destitution. By the time her wealthy groom discovers he has married the wrong sister, it will be too late to annul their vows. And too late for Meg to escape her wifely duty to a man reputed to be a devil in battle and the bedroom...

A bride is the last thing Nicholas Hartley, Duke of Temberlay, wants. Then he sees Meg and realizes that his wedding night will be a great pleasure indeed. But aside from the agreeable business of begetting an heir, Temberlay will never change his wicked ways for a wedding vow—until he discovers Meg's deception, and decides to teach the scheming beauty how to be a proper duchess, kiss by devastating kiss...

## How to Deceive a Duke Details

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## From Reader Review How to Deceive a Duke for online ebook

### Huma Rashid says

This is the first Lecia Cornwall book I've ever read, and at first, I was blown away. Well, that's not fair: for the first three-quarters of the book, I was blown away. I was ready to sing this author's praises from the rooftops and lovingly creep on her Twitter updates.

The story starts off with a bang - or rather, a tantrum. Marguerite "Meg" Lynton's older sister, the first Rose in the Lynton garden of beauties (Meg being a russet-haired weed, apparently), has been visited by the dowager duchess of Temberlay, who has basically ordered her to marry her grandson, Nicholas, the Duke of Temberlay. Instead of swooning or coyly demurring, Rose throws an all out tantrum and refuses. She comes around - because her mother forces her, due to the family's finances - only to run away from home the very next day and elope to Scotland with one of her many admirers.

This leaves Meg, shown early on as the backbone of the family, to figure out what to do. And she settles on a plan: she'll be the one to marry Nicholas instead, and use his fortune to save her family from certain ruin. She pulls off her miserable wedding day thanks to a very thick veil, and believes none are the wiser.

But Nicholas isn't about to make anything easy on her. A complicated man with a military past, he inherited the duchy upon the passing of his older brother, who died under mysterious circumstances (a duel) defending the honor of his then-fiance, who had gotten herself pregnant by another man. Due to David's last words, the dowager duchess believes that Nicholas is at fault for her beloved grandson's death, and only agrees to pay the bills for the recently bankrupted duchy if Nicholas agrees to marry where she pleases.

There is no love lost between grandmother and second-grandson, and Nicholas resents his bride-to-be as well, referring to her as "granddame's creature." (Hilarious.) Still, he finds himself inexplicably drawn to her. But then again, he's called "Devil" for a reason and manages to take every opportunity - intentionally and unintentionally - to convince his beautiful, stubborn, resilient wife that she is unwanted, unloved, and not good enough for him.

There's a lot of other things going on in this story - such as the mystery of how David died, the circumstances surrounding Meg's father's death, and so on - but what I loved the most were the characters. The supporting characters were excellent, and Cornwall employed them flawlessly in this story. Relationships that the reader might assume were significant turned out to be fluff that added a sense of warmth to the story, and relationships the reader might assume were insignificant turned out to be very important. It was unpredictable and wonderful and really rounded out the little universe created in this book quite well.

But the main characters - goodness. There are no words. I absolutely adored not only the characterization but the development of the two leads. Nicholas is deeply complicated, quite an angry and stubborn man, who realizes that he can no longer afford the irreverence that characterizes his life in polite society, especially now that he has a wife. It was incredibly rewarding to watch him grow up, shed his ton-self, and do what needed to be done to set things right, first and foremost for the woman he married.

And Meg - Meg is a darling. I challenge any reader not to love her, not to root for her. She's strong, smart, and determined right from the start, and is an incredibly charming character. The lengths she goes to in order to protect those she loves are astounding, and the best part is that no matter what kind of scrape she finds herself in - a social encounter with one of her husband's many, many former mistresses, or an actual violent

encounter with someone who wishes her serious harm - she holds her own beautifully and most importantly, she saves herself.

Meg was written to be such an emotionally strong character from the start that I wouldn't have minded if Nicholas rode to her rescue once or twice. But that's not needed. She can handle herself and those around her and emerge not all that worse for wear. Still, she refers to Nicholas occasionally as her 'white knight,' in savior terms, and what I got from the story was that even though she wouldn't let herself, she wanted to seek emotional comfort from him. She wanted him to rescue her emotionally - and she wanted to let herself accept it. But she's one of those characters that has spent too long holding the world on her shoulders, and she's not quite sure how to do it. Her sadness when frequently confronted with the evidence of her (supposed) inadequacies was palpable, as was the loneliness she felt, having to take care of everything around her at the expense of herself. Meg was a wonderful character.

This book would have gotten the full five stars if not for the ending. A mere twenty five pages from the end of the story, after the hero and heroine have seemingly reconciled (although, honestly, the reconciliation happened at lightening speed and I had to repeatedly check the page numbers to make sure I hadn't accidentally skipped a page or two - it was disappointing when I was sure I hadn't), the hero pulls a stunt that I didn't like. I suppose it was hinted at during the course of the story - the author mentioned that he felt the most like his true self on the battlefield - but I didn't like it. It felt like it was thrown into the story far too suddenly. It felt disjointed and strange and completely removed the reader (and the characters) from the world set up in the story so far - I mean that in terms of scene, since the characters leave the country, as well as the tone of the novel itself.

It was odd and unsettling and I was tempted to just stop reading the book right there and pretend the reconciliation was the end of it. (Even though it would have made a sub-par ending, since they hadn't yet discussed some very important issues.)

I might be a bit unfair here, but to me, it honestly felt as if the author just got tired of farms and horses and parties and empty manors and wanted to play with guns for a while. The last twenty pages of so felt so completely out of place that I never really recovered from that jolt in the narrative flow. Plus, the main character did NOT look good, doing what he did immediately after the reconciliation. It wasn't explained nearly well enough at the time why he did it, and I didn't appreciate it at all. The heroine does follow him, which helps, I suppose, but Meg comes off looking quite stupid and reckless when it's revealed later that she wasn't the only one whose health she was jeopardizing. Both characters took quite a hit for that, and the last portion of the book made me have to knock it down two whole stars from five to three.

When I was halfway through the book, I was absolutely certain that I'd spend the next two weeks with my nose buried in Cornwall's other novels. Now? ...Though she writes beautifully, and her dialogue is wonderful and quick and snappy, and her characters are very well done, I'm not nearly so sure.

I hope I'm in the minority. I hope other readers can read this book through and adore it, even the ending. But I just did not like it one bit (the ending, that is). There were better ways to do it, in my own amateur opinion, and it really did feel so odd and foreign to the novel itself.

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### **Ash Ash says**

The Synopsis seems similar to The Husband Trap By Tracy Anne Warren was what i thought once i read the

book I could see it was completely different. The continuous harping that the hero was unfaithful in the book by the heroine was really irritating. This story or the plot of the book could have been better.

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### **Connie Fischer says**

Marguerite Lynton is a caring and strong young lady determined to find a way to care for her grieving, widowed mother and three sisters. Their father left them all with no money and they are about to lose their home as well. Her sister, Rose, is approached by the Duchess of Temberlay to marry her grandson, Nicholas Hartley, Duke of Temberlay. While the monies from this marriage would solve all of their financial problems, Rose is determined not to marry him, so behind a heavy veil, Marguerite takes her place and marries him. Nick did not want to marry and feels duped. While they are attracted to one another, they are both very stubborn and continue to spar. I was enjoying this novel and found some humor in it as well, however, the constant sparring and one-upmanship began to get old and, thus, the last 100 or so pages were difficult to get through. A little of this practice written into a novel can be intriguing but it can be boring when overdone. There are some interesting plots going on and I'm sure other readers will like this book.

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### **Jaclyn says**

Nicholas Hartley, Duke of Temblerlay and notorious rake must wed by order of his grandmother. Nicholas has recently come into the title due to his brother's murder and the only way his grandmother will supply funds to keep the family estate running is if Nicholas marries. He promptly suggests that his grandmother find him a bride, and she selects Rose Lynton, an admired beauty and picture of deportment. Unfortunately, Rose doesn't want to marry Nicholas because of his reputation and runs off and elopes with another man. Rose's younger sister, Meg, steps up to the plate in order to help her family. Since the death of her father, Meg has been keeping the family afloat and she knows that marriage to Nicholas will protect her family, so she dons a hideous veil and marries Nicholas in the place of Rose.

With the uncovering of her deception, Nicholas and Meg have their share of problems, but there is an attraction between them so they slowly try to work on their marriage. However, Nicholas's interfering grandmother almost ruins their happiness with her manipulation of Meg and the mysterious circumstances surrounding her father's death. On top of this drama, Nicholas is also hunting down who was responsible for his brother's death in a duel, and it seems that Meg's own father was somehow involved.

The plot described above was well executed and enjoyable, and to a point I quite liked how Meg and Nicholas were overcoming their difficulties and getting to know one another. However, the drama didn't stop there. On top of the manipulative grandmother, the father's mysterious death (Meg's secret), and Nicholas's brother's murder, there was also a war going on. Nicholas was previously a soldier before becoming the Duke, and he was called to action by the government towards the end of the novel. Therefore, towards the end of the book, the whole plot and pacing changed dramatically. Unfortunately, I don't think this change was pulled off that smoothly. I found the change of pacing very awkward and it felt tacked on to the book and ultimately seemed over the top.

While I liked most of the book, I was very disappointed by the change in pacing and the very quick ending. I liked both characters, but I felt that the last few chapters that took place in a war zone seemed awkward and I didn't get the same feelings from the characters. I also found the resolution between Nicholas and Meg to be

extremely abrupt, and I'm not convinced that they really did resolve their problems. I think an epilogue would have been a good addition to this book.

Ultimately, I didn't mind the book, but I'm not sure that I would recommend it. The idea of switching brides was entertaining, but I found the drama to be a little over the top.

\*Review copy provided by the publisher via Edelweiss.

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## Diana says

\*May contain spoilers!\*

First, let me say, I opened this book with no idea if I would like it or not. I had heard of this author, but hadn't encountered anyone who had read her before or seen much discussion in my circle of blogs, so I was able to start reading with any expectations about it. (I hear some people scoffing at this, but it's true. How many books do you open with preconceived notions about the author or previous books in the series?) So I got to start a book from a frame of mind that allowed me to judge a book without any emotional involvement. Needless to say, I was really excited.

Margeurite Lynton's family is in trouble. Her father's death has left them penniless and on the verge of losing their home. Rescue comes in the form of the Dowager Duchess of Temberlay, who offers marriage to Meg's sister on behalf of her grandson Nicholas, the current duke. When the sister runs off, Meg steps in her place and marries the duke, securing her family's safety. However, when the duke discovers her deceptions, he vows to make Meg pay in the most seductive of ways.

I was of two minds about this book--enjoyment and disappointment. From the opening scene featuring a strict duchess, a high maintenance young woman and her calmer, older sister, I was sucked into the story. The tension among them all: wow! And then Nick entered the story and I was even more intrigued. Was he or wasn't he a rake? How did Meg feel about him? What was the tension that kept pulling between him and his grandmother? I kept turning pages to get answers and to see what each character would do next. I no longer paid attention to grammar and editing or reviewing plot; I just enjoyed the story.

Then I got toward the end of the book, around chapter 35. I could almost hear tires squealing as I read the scene where Meg and Nick's grandmother are having a "discussion". Meg lost the spirit that carried her through the first part of the book and became a weenie (not a technical term, but appropriate). She gives in to Nick's grandmother's demands after being so determined against her background and her family. She also starts acting jealous, ranting and making outrageous accusations. What happened to the calm and practical woman who stepped up and took control of her family after her father's death?

I will admit there were one or two scenes where the circumstances between her husband and another woman were suspicious. Instead of confronting him and communicating, she acts like a toddler and throws things, stomps her feet and yells at him. Then she ignores him and runs away. She runs away! At this point, I don't blame Nick for leaving her alone; I would have wanted to avoid that mess, too!

Even the mysterious circumstances surrounding Nick's brother's death that was woven throughout the story fell flat at the end. The build up with the secondary characters, Meg's father, and the valet made it seem like

it was a really big deal. This "big deal" had to be big to make Nick's grandmother blackmail him, give Nick a blackened reputation and make his brother's last words a curse upon Nick's head, right? Wrong. The actuality was no where near the build up and didn't really make sense to me. I read it twice and still didn't quite understand it. I can't get specific without spoiling it and it has more impact if you see the resolution yourself.

There were other parts that bothered me in this story. For instance Meg's sister Rose's sudden appearance with a suitor. She just shows up, pregnant and under the care of another family, and everyone is okay with this? Or Meg's battlefield rescue; where she hightails it to Brussels, during a war, to show her love for her husband. And then, of course, she goes onto a battlefield to search among the dead and dying to look for him...Really?! However, these instances didn't bother me as much as the one discussed previously.

With the story being 3/4 right followed by 1/4 wrong, I hesitate to say if I will read this author again. It might have been better if I had never experienced the joy of the first part; it is less disappointing to start off not impressed than it is to be impressed and then plummet into disappointment. Again, let me state there was nothing wrong (that I noticed anyway) with grammar, editing or the flow of the writing. My problem was with the wonderful start and engaging characters that morphed into shadows of their original potential and a story line that felt rushed and unsatisfying. If I decide to try this author again, I may ask someone I trust in to read it first and tell me how it ends to be on the safe side. This book had potential, but the ending chapters bumped my opinion of this book down considerably.

\*I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.\*

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### **The Window Seat says**

How to Deceive a Duke started off well for me in the initial set-up of the story. Lady Marguerite Lynton's family has been skirting the line between impoverished nobility and flat out broke since the death of her father, with Meg's ability to economize and her common sense rescuing the household from penury. The answer to her family's prayers comes in the form of a marriage arrangement between Meg's oldest sister Rose and an infamous rake known as the Devil Duke of Temberlay. When Rose runs away rather than fulfilling the terms of the arrangement the only possible solution is for Meg to sacrifice herself to the Devil Duke and marry him to save her family.

As the story progressed I had a very hard time actually liking Meg, even though she initially had all of the traits I love in a heroine. She was smart, had a wit and dry sense of humor and she was attractive without being vain or prissy like her sister. Unfortunately author Lecia Cornwall saddled Meg with an awful inferiority complex about her looks and her personality that started to bleed into how her relationship developed with the Lord Temberlay. Her insecurities came from a terrible relationship with her father who favored the "pretty" daughters and spared no regard for the "plain" daughter Meg. There was also the father's philosophy that a gentlewoman's only value was to add to that of her eventual husband. Having these poisonous thoughts go through Meg's head even as she attempts to build a life with her new husband became tedious because she never really found her own strength until it was too late to redeem the character.

For the full review, please go to <http://www.thewindowseat13.com/2012/1...>

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### **Katie Michaels says**

I've got mixed feelings on this one. There was potential there. I liked it in the first half, but the story took a hard left turn in the last nine chapters or so, that just didn't gel with everything that came before it.

Meg and her family have been struggling ever since her father died, leaving them destitute. When the Duchess of Temberlay calls, trying to set up a wedding between her grandson and Meg's sister, Rose, it seems like a perfect solution to their financial troubles. But Rose wants nothing to do with Nicholas and his terrible reputation as a rake of the first order. She runs away on the marriage, prompting Meg to take her place at the ceremony. Having never met Rose, Nicholas has no idea of the switch.

Nick hates the idea of getting married, but his grandmother blackmailed him into it. He is shocked when he actually begins to fall for his bride. She is fiery, beautiful and smart. But his reputation and a string of misunderstandings threatens to destroy their hopes at happiness. The story follows their power struggles and emotional entanglements as they try to make their marriage of convenience work.

I liked Meg a lot. She is practical and smart without being overly stubborn. Nick's not bad, though sometimes he is a bit too arrogant. My only problem before the weird twist was the fact that Nick refused to clear up their misunderstandings when he had a chance. He knew Meg was hurting; he knew he could fix it, but he chose to wait --for some reason that completely eludes me. I still held out hope that it would give me a satisfying ending and then, well, it just went in a totally different direction. I didn't like it --and I felt cheated that the dire circumstances brought about the resolution more than character growth on its own.

Like I said, it had potential. The writing was good and the sexual elements were there, but in the end, I was left off-kilter.

Rating: C-

*\*ARC Provided by Avon*

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### **kris says**

Well. I can say with absolute certainty: that was not what I was expecting. I don't know if it's exactly a compliment to say that every time I thought I had some clue where the plot was going, it veered off in an entirely different direction.

Like, there was an arranged marriage plot, a hidden identity plot, not one but TWO revenge plots, a horse plot, a war plot, a baby-making plot, an evil mother-in-law plot, an over-dramatic mother plot, an ugly-duckling-blossoms-into-a-swan plot, a rake-is-more-than-he-seems-to-be plot, and that's just between the leads.

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### **Ad Rocks Socks says**

I can't believe I wasted the last three hours of my life on this book.

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### **Megan says**

Meg Lynton is about to undertake the ultimate deception. When her sister Rose runs away before her arranged marriage to Nicholas Hartley, Duke of Temberlay, better known to all through the scandal sheets as Devil, she takes it upon herself to take her sister's place to save her family from destitution. So, she dawns a thick veil and steps in, and since the Duke has never met his intended bride she hopes that her deception won't be figured out until all was said and done. But what is not known to those who know her is that she always was curious who the man is behind the scandalous stories written...

Nicholas never wanted to get married or have the responsibilities of the dukedom. But after Nicholas' brother dies, he was forced to resign his commission in the army and become the next Duke of Temberlay. With the dukedom's finances in dire straits he makes a deal with his grandmother, if she gives him the funds to use where it is needed, he will marry the woman of his grandmother's choosing. When he sees his bride walking down the aisle with a thick veil he fears that she is must be hideous. But when she later removes the veil and he sees her face, he never expected her to be a very beautiful woman...

When I first started reading this book I didn't know what to expect and I ended up really enjoying this book. When Meg's deception was brought up, I was worried that it would be dragged out until the middle towards the end until Nicholas found out. I thought Nicholas' reaction to the deception was genuine, and I enjoyed how they were able to resolve the situation after he dragged her back home. I really liked Meg's and Nicholas' relationship. Though they have a rocky start I liked how they decided to get to know each other and spend some time together and get to know each other.

I really liked Meg's character. She was tough, spirited, and strong willed. It was understandable that it was hard for Meg to figure out her feelings for Nicholas given his reputation. I liked how she was able to discover Nicholas' true character behind the man mentioned in the scandal sheets. I enjoyed how she was able to gain confidence in herself though she was always let down by her father when he referred to her as his Ugly Duckling out of all his daughters.

I thought Nicholas' character was a welcome difference in comparison to other heroes of in books that I have read. I liked how he was loyal to his family even though he didn't have the best relationship with his grandmother. I liked how you found out he is a true hero and that you find out he is nothing like what he is portrayed in the scandal sheets. I enjoyed how he actually mentioned to his last mistress that he is ready to be reformed. I enjoyed reading his character grow along with his relationship with Meg.

I wasn't sure if Nicholas' Grandmother would be a likeable character or not. I liked how the author kept me guessing until the last possible moment.

Meg's family were interesting side characters. And I was happy that Rose wasn't the main heroine. I think the author did a good job revealing her as a spoiled and having a high opinion of herself in the few scenes she is mentioned. I did enjoy the banter between Meg's mom, Flora and her godfather and Uncle, Hector. I thought Hector had some funny one liners and enjoyed his scenes.

I didn't much care for how those that were responsible for Nicholas' brothers and Meg's fathers death and financial ruin didn't really get their full come up pence. I also didn't like how the truth wasn't revealed to those that were close to Nicholas that believed he was at fault for his brother's death. And I think I would have like to have known what Nicholas actually decided to do about his grandmother. Other then that, all in all the book was really enjoyable to read.

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### **Mary - Buried Under Romance says**

I was extremely excited for this book to come out. Really. Unfortunately, the excerpt and back blurb of the book didn't quite do the twists and turns in the book justice.

Marguerite Lyndon, daughter of the stiffy Earl of Wycliffe, had grown up learning how to be a virtuous wife to a member of the nobility. She is the second oldest sister in a family with 5 daughters, but is the most responsible and sensible among them. She is also the family's black sheep in a way; her dark looks considered inferior to her sisters' blond locks and angelic beauty. When the dowager duchess of Temberlay arranges a marriage between her eldest sister, Rose, and the notorious "Devil" Duke of Temberlay, Nicholas Hartley, Marguerite unexpectedly steps into her sister's shoes as Rose eloped to avoid marrying Nicholas. Nicholas, having inherited the title at the death of his brother David, is angry. He is angry of his fate, or his brother's death, or having to return home and marry a bride he's never before met. Suffice it to say, Marguerite, having only married Nicholas out of a obligation to her family, started off on the wrong foot with the furious Nicholas, who disliked his future bride before even meeting her.

This series started off great. It was filled with tension, and we are allowed glimpses into the thoughts of Marguerite and Nicholas, and find sympathy with them both for having each carried a heavy burden. Marguerite had to step up and take care of her weak-willed mother and sisters after her father's untimely death, bearing both a financial as well as emotional burden as a voice of reason in her family. Nicholas was the unneeded second son, and according to his snake of a grandmother, he's also the one who ruined them all. This is no easy burden for either character to bore, so it becomes clear that the central conflict in this story is not precisely love, but rather trust.

Marguerite is a wonderful character, and I loved both her responsible side as well as her wild, hoydenish side. She is only 20, after all, and having grown up under heavy restrictions to suddenly transition to caretaker of the family was bound to instill a few rebellious streaks. Throughout the story, she constantly puts the needs of others above her own, and gradually cares and loves the angry stranger she married. Her fierce protectiveness of her family made her an outstanding character, yet with enough intelligence and good sense to shine like a jewel.

As for Nicholas, I was really liking him and wanting to comfort him until around the middle of the book, where he let a mistaken notion fill Marguerite's head, and does not resolve it until nearing the end. He had several chances to tell her, and he contemplated doing so, except that he did not. There is a huge congruence in his wanting his wife to believe his words and sincerity, and yet lead her to keep believing that he is an adulterous rake, does not agree with me. He said he didn't want to hurt his wife, and he was doing so anyways, knowingly! I don't know whether to account this to his pigheadedness, or just the crafting of his characters, but it dearly hurt the quality of the story. Even at the end, I wasn't able to forgive Nicholas for all the emotional hurt he gave Marguerite.

Then, there's the ending of the story. This was one of the weirdest twists I have ever read, and I just want to ask Mrs. Cornwall why she chose it. I won't give away any spoilers, but the ending is just out of place! I had to skim over the last part of the novel because it made absolutely no sense why Nicholas did what he did. And poor Marguerite, she was once again given no explanation from Nicholas, yet resolved to follow him anyways. I was willing to give this 4 stars just for Marguerite's character, but due to the hacked and utterly confusing ending, I'm giving it 3 stars.

It was a good story, and really would be made it on my keeper shelf if not for Nicholas's flaws and the ending.

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## **Jess the Romanceaholic says**

I loved it right up towards the end. Without giving anything away, the whole dynamic of the book changed by one of the hero's actions, and never even apologized to the heroine for any of it. This ended the book on a very sour note for me, and as a result, it's only 3.5/5 Stars.

It was still a good story though, and a full review is to follow.

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## **Carmen says**

I just do not understand when authors make jerk heroes.

This guy, Nicholas, is a duke. He doesn't want to get married but his evil grandmother is forcing him to. He's supposed to marry Rose, a destitute gentlewoman. But she is silly and shallow and has no sense of duty and she runs away before the wedding. Her sister Meg steps up to take her place, not telling anyone in the Duke's family, hoping to sacrifice herself by marrying "the Devil" in order to save her family from poverty.

Nick is an asshole. He takes delight in sexually humiliating his kind, virginal bride for some reason. I don't understand it, and neither do his friends.

*Stephen folded his arms. "You surprise me. You show Julia such compassion [a fallen woman who had a child out of wedlock], yet you have no regard at all for your bride? You were always most chivalrous with women in Spain, whether they were ladies or camp followers."*

I can't understand it. I don't understand how you can be married to a kind, intelligent, frightened woman and just want to hurt her by saying sneering sexual comments all the time. It's fucked up. He knows she's a virgin - he "took" her virginity for heaven's sake!!!! - and he just makes her feel like shit about not knowing what to do in bed. This is doubly stupid: one, you're not giving your wife much incentive to be fun, open, and playful in bed if you do this: two, it's ridiculous because he'd never marry a NON-virgin, so what the fuck is his problem?!?!?!

Besides the sexual humiliation that he insists on foisting on his wife, he also is fond of insinuating she's a slut. I know, I know. We just got done explaining about how she is a clueless virgin and he obviously knows this. But yet this happens twice in the book, once when Meg goes to the ball without him (he often just leaves the estate for weeks without telling her where he's going or why) and his friend comments on how charming she is. This leads Nick to say some unkind things to her in front of his friends, as if she's sleeping with them or cheating on him or something. (Side note: not only is it obvious she'd never do such a thing, but he has about a dozen mistresses who are very public.)

The second time is the worst of all, when on page 315/373 he finds her bloody and beaten after she fought off a rapist, and he is like, "Oh, you would have slept with him willingly in order to get your precious horses back?!?!?" I'm like: o.O If this far in the book the hero is still treating the heroine like shit - even after she's proven herself to him over and over and over and over again (unnecessarily, I might add) - and has the audacity to look at his wife's bruised and bloody body after she's had a near miss with a rapist and cruelly say stuff like, "You probably wanted that" or some shit, I'm done. I know Cornwall expects us to think it's a happy ending when these Nick finally decides to love and trust his wife, but I'd only consider it a happy

ending if some better man challenged Nick to a duel, killed him, and married his widow.

Meg is good - she reminded me a lot of Elinor Dashwood - practical, smart, keeping her impoverished and silly family together with her willingness to sacrifice and her good business sense.

Nick is a piece of shit. I can't see how female readers are supposed to look at this guy and swoon. I know this is 1815, but surely kind men existed in this time. What could possibly be the appeal of a man who is such a shitheel to his wife - a wife who is trying desperately to make the best of a bad situation? You'd think a bit of mercy or compassion would be in order, but it's in short supply here.

Also, he constantly leaves without telling her jackshit - at one point even RE-ENLISTING and GOING OFF TO WAR without even a word that he's doing this, letting her wake up in a cold bed and then find out from the servants that he's IN BATTLE. And this is at the end of the book. If by the END of a romance novel the hero has so little respect for his wife that he can't even be bothered to tell her "I'm going into battle, I might die. Goodbye." then I don't even know what to say. This marriage is doomed and has been a cesspool of cruelty no matter what Cornwall tries to tell me like "These two care for each other." BULLSHIT. He treats his horse with more tenderness than he treats her, and this still hasn't changed by the end of the novel.

### **How's the sex, Carmen?**

Don't even talk to me about having sex with this pig.

He also makes the unilateral decision to just stop having sex with her for weeks, in his mind to "get to know her better" but she thinks (for obvious reasons) that he just doesn't find her attractive and is in the beds of his various mistresses. She's so depressed and sad and despairing thinking that she was so repulsive to him that he'll never have sex with her again. So... way to go there, Einstein.

Tl;dr - I like historical romance, but often run across books like this: where I'm supposed to find a complete asshole appealing. What a shitheel! I feel so sad and sorry for Meg that she's shackled to this guy for life. Perhaps she can kill him in his sleep. That would have been a happier ending, she could marry one of his kinder friends afterwards.

ONE REAL STAR, ONE ROMANCE STAR

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### **Lisa says**

Lady Marguerite Lynton is doing whatever it takes to protect her family from the poor house and when a duchess appears and asks her older sister to marry her grandson, the notorious Devil Duke of Temberlay, she feels like their fate in life is finally changing since her fathers sudden death. But her sister is not strong enough to deal the the devil and runs away and Meg does what she feels she must do...she marries the duke instead. After all, it is his fault he does not know the difference between her sister, a beauty, and herself, not a beauty according to her family. However, when Nicholas finds out the truth he is livid. He is already disgusted with having to marry at all, but he needs his grandmothers funds after his brothers death. He never expected to inherit a dukedom and had no training for it and does not want to shoulder all the responsibility it

entails now, instead going to war and he has no desire to be with a woman that can be bought so easily and plans to treat her with little respect. However, after the truth is revealed, he finds himself falling for this fiery, strong beauty who seemed to be overlooked by her whole family. Yet he can not express his feelings and it does not help that Meg constantly sees the worst in him at all times. Nicholas takes a drastic measure that shakes the foundation of their shaky marriage and may cost them both everything . . .

I thought this was a wonderful book! I loved Meg. She is bold, confident, fiercely protective, smart and sassy and a great balance to Nicholas who comes across rude, arrogant and selfish but underneath that layer he is smart, sexy and also protective. Together they make a good couple but they both lack the art of communication a bit and trust is a huge issue between them that needs to be overcome. I loved watching the sparks fly between Meg and Nicholas and how they were trying to deal with their feelings without hurting themselves in the process. The added presence of the grandmother, who is determined to have an heir, adds more problems. I do wish Meg had had more faith in herself but having grown up with a father that believed ladies are to add to their husbands value and that she was the ugly one amongst her fair sisters made it hard for me to see her true beauty, inside and out. I also did not really care for the way the ending played out as I felt Nicholas behaved a little selfishly and there was really no explanation or apology for it. Overall though, I flew through this and found myself laughing, sighing, smiling and thoroughly entertained. 4 stars

*eARC provided by Avon books via edelweiss*

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### **Brandy Dorsch says**

I have to admit that I wasn't sure if I was going to enjoy this book or not. The idea that one bride can be substituted for another kind of left a funny taste in my mouth but I have to admit that this one actually made it seem real.

Meg has been the strong sister in the family since her father's death and has kept the family out of debtors prison. When the Duchess of Temberlay, asks her sister, Rose to marry her grandson Nicholas, the current Duke, she sees this as the answer to her prayers. Rose is not thrilled at the prospect of marrying the Devil Duke and elopes prior to the wedding. This puts Meg in the awkward position of marrying in her sister's place. Since the groom had never met the bride or even knew her name, this worked at first. Turns out this was in the Duchess's plans and Meg's name was included in all the marital documents.

Lies and distrust do not a marriage make and Nicholas and Meg share a lot of lies between them. When Nicholas leaves to return to war they both realize theirs is a love for the ages.

This is a really good story and I recommend it to all.

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