



A Return of Devotion

Kristi Ann Hunter

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Daphne Blakemoor was perfectly happy living in her own secluded world for twelve years. She had everything she needed—loved ones, a true home, and time to indulge her imagination. But when ownership of the estate where she works as a housekeeper passes on, and the new marquis has an undeniable connection to her past, everything she's come to rely upon is threatened.

William, Marquis of Chemsford's main goal in life is to be the exact opposite of his father. Starting a new life in the peace and quiet of the country sounds perfect until his housekeeper turns his life upside down.

They've spent their lives hiding from the past. Can they find the courage to face their deepest wounds and, perhaps, find a new path for the future together?

A Return of Devotion Details

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From Reader Review A Return of Devotion for online ebook

Rosanne Lortz says

Daphne Blakemoor is terrified about the impending arrival of the new owner of Haven Manor. How can she and her friend Jess conceal that his estate has been used to house a dozen illegitimate children? When William, the Marquis of Chemsford, arrives, her terror grows to new heights. He is the exact image of her son Benedict, and who will believe her that she's never met the man before in her life?

William is confused by the strange behavior of the housekeeper on his new home. Not only does she stare strangely and try to manage all of his movements around the estate, she also seems singularly unqualified to be a domestic. But as the secrets of Haven Manor begin to unfold, William's opinion of Daphne begins to change.

In this sequel to A Defense of Honor, shy and retiring Daphne must overcome her fears of re-entering Regency society if she's to find love with a man who takes his public duty seriously. She must decide how to break the news to Benedict of who his mother and father truly are. And she must come to terms with her own past, overcoming the shame of previous actions through the forgiveness that Christ offers.

This book was an interesting continuation to the first book in the Haven Manor series, but I found it a little long in parts. Both William's initial opinion of Daphne and her recurring daydreams made her seem somewhat dimwitted. All in all, I preferred the prequel to this one, but I anticipate that the third book in this series (Jess' story) should be a good tale.

Disclosure: I received a complimentary review copy of this book from the publisher via Netgalley. All opinions expressed in this review are my own.

Adrienne says

As a new marquis, William heads to a small holding to retreat from the world for a little bit and find some peace as he renovates the house and takes on his new responsibilities. However, after arriving at the estate, he finds peace might not come so easily, as his bewildering housekeeper, Mrs. Brightmoor, alternates seems simple-minded and devious. He realizes she's hiding something, but getting her to tell him what is going on proves to be no easy task.

Daphne Blakemoor left London society, unwed and pregnant, more than a decade earlier. She made a nice life for herself, taking in the children of other women in similar situations, rearing them, and preparing for a life in service or trade. She quite enjoyed her life, but now that the estate is being inhabited by its owner, her meaningful work has come to an end and she has to adjust to being a housekeeper, which doesn't come easily to her for many reasons--not the least of which is the handsome, intriguing man who is now her employer and the fact that she needs to keep him from finding out about how she used his family's house twelve years and that her own illegitimate son is his spitting image.

Daphne's story was so captivating and she's a very interesting character--endearing and occasionally exasperating and very well-developed. William was slower to grow on me--but that's just because he was frustrated with Daphne so often early on! He's a good guy and I knew things would turn out well, and it's totally realistic that it took him a while to appreciate Daphne for who she is--because she took so long to let

him see who she was. The plot is really interesting, and the dialogue was awesome--there were so many zingers that I just loved. There are so many heart-stealing secondary characters, and there are good (but not preachy) messages about forgiving oneself and finding oneself. Another great book from Kristi Ann Hunter.

I read an ARC provided by the publisher. All opinions are my own.

Clara says

Conundrum. Bewilderment. Touched on the head.

Those are the words William, Marquis of Chemsford, chooses to describe his housekeeper. From the moment she bangs the door of *his* house on his face to when she acts as she owns *his* house, not to mention when she acts as she owns him - bossing him around, corralling him in *his* own house-, he knows something about the entire situation is absurd. Especially since he has to remind himself now and then that the house is actually *his*, not hers. Thus, his dream of a secluded country life might just be unfulfilled if he doesn't get rid of her. Soon.

We've known Daphne for a while, we know her story, we know she's not touched in the head but loves fiercely. We also know part of her life has been shadowed by lies. Despite good intentions and the blessings that have come from hers and Kit's endeavors, the thick layer of lies is undeniable. She hopes the new owner of the house might ignore a few scratches on the wall and not raise too many questions about the number of goats and chickens in his property, enough to feed an entire band of soldiers (or children). But, she didn't expect that one person could bring all she's built in the past fourteen years crashing down and take her back to where she found herself in that fateful day fourteen years ago: alone to deal with the consequences.

Funny how meeting someone can change our lives. Practicality might not be the answer anymore when feelings and personal stories start to interplay. But, most important of all, through this equation, refinement comes, and who you are and want to be in the end takes the biggest toll.

In a Return of Devotion, Kristi Ann Hunter brings a book filled with her usual humor, but also timeless truth delineating the characters' stories and tugging your heart big time. I love how through this series we're reminded that we never "overgrow" the process of learning and maturing. As life happens and our lives intertwine, we're always impacting and sharing stories with one another, consequently expanding each other's worldview. It's our choice to let this be for the best or to turn a blind eye to what we now know.

I've said it before and I repeat, this is one of the smartest series I've ever read, and Jess's book couldn't come soon enough :)

** I received a review copy from the publisher. This is my honest opinion.

Patti Whitson Stephenson says

In this book, Kristin Ann Hunter has given us the very sweet and unusual regency character of Daphne. Daphne is a jewel. She's fiercely loyal, loving, and quite protective of those in her care. She's very shy and has a hard time with the social niceties of the day; and views herself as the ultimate wallflower at any gathering. She's a dreamer and uses her daydreams to soften the sometimes harsh realities of her life. She's

made a good life for herself and the illegitimate children who have been left in her care. When Daphne's world is turned upside down by the return of the owner of the run-down manor house where she and the children reside, Daphne must find a way to continue to care for those she loves as well as protect her own heart. When William first meets her, he wonders if she's going to be able to learn to function as his housekeeper. The charm of this story is in the way Daphne lovingly fumbles her way from one situation to the other, yet makes a profound difference in the lives of all of those around her. William finds that he can't help but love her, but will Daphne find the courage to accept his love?

This is a completely charming, yet different, regency story. Daphne made me laugh, sigh, and smile. There's a whole supporting cast of wonderful characters that make this storyline complete. This is clean, sweet regency and it's a book that I'll read again. It would be helpful to have read the first book in this series before reading this one, but it's easy to quickly catch up with all the characters and the things that have gone on before. I love Kristi Ann Hunter's books, and this one gave me a reason to look forward to her next one.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher. All opinions are my own.

BlueJeansAndTeacups says

*****Another Superb Regency Era Read by Kristi Ann Hunter!*****

We return to Haven House following book 1, A Defense of Honor, with preparations having been made for the owner to take up residence. (It will be important to read book 1 prior to this one).

Daphne Blakemoor, by all accounts, seems to be a daft, incapable housekeeper upon the arrival of Lord William Oswald, the new Marquis of Chemsford. However, the Marquis bears so striking a resemblance to one of the children Daphne cares for that she is immediately struck dumb when she sees him.

The two have many questions they are able unable to voice or are not quite sure how to and various moments of hilarity, covert operations, and deep thoughts ensue.

Ch. 1 "It might be worth keeping Mrs. Brightmoor around simply for the plethora of surprises that came along with her."

At times Daphne's thoughts are so moving I felt them deeply and even cried for or with her.

Ch. 11 "She would never possess the ability or courage to guide anyone anywhere, but she could raise up a Joshua just as Moses had done. These children...were her next generation. They were the ones God was preparing to go forth into the world and live for Him.

Daphne has a huge imagination! **Ch. 11** "... leaving Daphne to go into her own pre-sleep routine. The one where she drifted away to a life other than the one she had." Ok, that right there shook me! I have done that since I was a very young girl and never expected to read about someone else (even fictional) doing it too. I think it's why my dream life is extremely crazy! ((smile))

I love the supporting character, Jess. We know she was a spy, but not much beyond that. She has mad knife and culinary skills and she makes me laugh a lot! Her sarcasm is on point. **Ch. 19** "I could put a bit of foxglove in xxx's breakfast," Jess murmured. (*xxx to avoid spoiler*). She also genuinely cares for the people around her, giving wise counsel and fierce devotion as needed.

William has wonderful strength of character. I really liked him. **Ch. 34** "Forgiveness is an interesting thing. Unlike a lot of other things in life, it's easy to ask for and hard to accept."

Tea Moment: Ch. 2 "In the new woman's hands was a tray. Steam rose from the teapot that sat in the center, surrounded by a cup, saucer, and an assortment of small sandwiches and biscuits." ... "As he bit into a biscuit, an explosion of flavors he couldn't identify but refused to live the rest of his life without filled his

mouth.”

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and look forward to the next one in the series.

Thank you to Bethany House and NetGalley for an eCopy plus the lovely author for a paperback copy. My opinion is my own and given freely. Keep updated on the author’s website, Kristi Ann Hunter dot com

Haven Manor Series:

“The Haven Manor series follows a group of women who take what could have been a life-crushing circumstance and turned it into an opportunity to help desperate women and their children from the same fate. Their pasts may have brought these women here, but God has an amazing future in store for them.” -

Author’s Website

Book 0.5 A Search for Refuge (Margaretta’s Story) 03/2018 FREE eNovella (available in print coming 2019 in the 3 author collection *Love At Last*)

Book 1 A Defense of Honor (Kit’s Story) 06/05/2018

Book 1.5 Legacy of Love (Sarah’s Story) 10/2018 Novella in The Christmas Heirloom Collection featuring 4 different authors

Book 2 A Return of Devotion – Daphne’s Story - coming Feb. 5, 2019

Coming Soon – Jess’s Story

Meghan Lloyd says

I am consistently impressed by the intricate details Kristi Ann Hunter weaves into her books! I hadn't had a chance to read the first book in the series, so I was a bit worried I wouldn't be able to fully appreciate this book. However, I was able to easily catch up and have a good idea of the different characters' histories. And there were many! Some authors will introduce many characters, and my mind has a hard time keeping track of who's who. That was not a problem here, as I easily remembered who everyone was and their unique personalities. Some of the secondary characters in this story were really entertaining and deserving of their own stories, like Jess and Mr. Thornbury. I don't suppose they will end up together, but I am shipping them so hard.

Daphne Blakemoor is hiding a big secret and her past is catching up with her. Hidden away for 12 years in a rural village, with very little contact with London society, Daphne has finally become content with her role in life. She has been running a home for unwanted children of elite families, and almost every child has a family of their own now. The only trouble is that the home is run in a house owned by a negligent lord, and he has no idea what is going on under his roof. When the owner's son inherits the property, he comes to settle in, and Daphne comes face-to-face with her past. With her future in jeopardy and her new boss unaware of her true identity, things are about to get complicated at Haven Manor.

Daphne was a hoot in this book! Poor thing had no idea how to handle the situation she found herself in, and her fear of new people came out in the funniest of ways. She was a deer in the headlights for much of the book, constantly trying to hide her secret and act the housekeeper to a lord who looked a lot like her son's father. I found it interesting how similar she ended up being to William, as they were both very introverted. At first, I had a difficult time understanding William's personality - he seemed aloof and impersonal. But then it eventually came out how much he just wanted peace and quiet, and his aversion to society was evident. Daphne was the same way, although given her history, she was even more jumpy about it. Any time she thought she might have to deal with new people in the house, she was worried not just for her safety but

also her peace of mind. Ultimately her love for the children shone through, and her inner strength grew as the story progressed. I was so proud of how she handled herself around William as their relationship grew stronger. Her character development was amazing and inspiring.

My hope is that we get to see more of Jess and/or Mr. Thornbury in future books! I have a feeling Jess will have her book next, so I am excited to learn more of her background.

****I received a free copy via NetGalley and this is my honest review.****

Tara says

A Return of Devotion is a spectacular sequel in the Haven Manor series by Hunter. In book one, you saw Kit's story of finding love, but in this book, it is Daphne's turn. They are best friends whose mistakes lead to their exit from high society. Then, they created a new life together by saving other women who were also pregnant without resources, and then they raised the children at Haven Manor. This story starts when Kit has gone away to her honeymoon, most of the illegitimate children have been placed in homes, and the owner of Haven Manor is moving in with no idea with what the house was being used for. The first chapter, he tries unsuccessfully to walk in the front door passed the human road block. Daphne's life is changed forever in more ways than one because of his remarkable resemblance to someone else in her life.

Hunter has created a stunner. This is the craziest climax I have ever read; it was like all of book one and book two lead up to the climax of this book. I absolutely love her unusual characters, as well; the main female is unlike any that I have ever read. For the first time, I saw social anxiety and anxiety in general demonstrated well in a character in such a way that it effects everything she does. Despite this, she grows and blossoms by the end of the story. I look forward to reading Hunter's next novel, which I hope is about Jess, the third friend.

Diana Leigh says

Daphne Blakemoor has happily lived in her secluded world for twelve years. When ownership of the home where she serves as housekeeper passes on, and the new marquis has an undeniable connection to her past, everything she holds dear is threatened.

William, Marquis of Chemsford's main goal is for peace and quiet and to be the exact opposite of his father. Starting a new life in the country sounds perfect, until his housekeeper turns his life upside down.

Two people who are hurt and wounded, running from their past. Only the truth and courage can set them free to forge a new path for the future.

Eventually their past begin to invade their lives in ways they have to confront, unable to hide any longer.

Kristi Ann Hunter is a gear author, bringing the characters and surroundings to life. She keeps you guessing what's next and how are these characters going to find new ways to hide their secrets. Eventually they discover only the truth will set you free.

By the middle of the book, I found I couldn't put the book down wanting to know what would happen next. If you enjoy reading Christian fiction or English fiction then you will enjoy this book.

****I received this book for free from Netgalley in exchange for my honest opinion.**

Cara Putman says

For those of you who love Jane Austen Regency England, you must read Kristi Ann Hunter. You know how there are characters who crawl under you skin and won't let you walk away? Daphne is one of those for me. She was a sweet character in the prior book, but now she steps to the foreground. Daphne's story is poignant and one that needs to be told. William, the hero, grows personally as Daphne works her way beneath his defenses. His journey beneath hers is much more challenging, but her story is told so well. Loved every page. You will inhale it if you read the first, but will thoroughly enjoy this novel on its own. But be prepared to feel. Deeply.

Karen Palmer says

A Return of Devotion

Kristi Ann Hunter

This is a fantastic second installment in the Haven Manor series!

My daughter and my niece (16 year olds!) have a penchant for watching sad movies. They actually seek them out just so that they can have a cry fest at their sleepovers. My daughter is always asking me to join her for a good sad movie, but life has enough sad moments, and I'd much rather watch something that will lift my spirits.

After the loss of a beautiful friend this week, I was looking for something to read and in my library found the first book in Kristi Ann Hunter's Haven Manor series, Defense of Honor, a book I recently picked up at a yard sale around the corner. I was quickly wrapped up in the story, though I had already read it (I don't know when!). I was so excited to find the next book in the series in my Bethany House review list and decided to read it today. Return of Devotion does not disappoint!

The Haven Manor series is about two best friends, Kit and Daphne, who are ousted from 'society' after an indiscretion caused in part by mistaken identity that leaves one of them pregnant and the other with a ruined reputation. They decide to turn a bad situation into good by helping other women and their ill-begotten children. For over a decade, the women have lived in Haven Manor, an abandoned country estate that is hidden away in the countryside, helping women hide their conditions and then raising their children. Unfortunately, the owner of the home has died and his son unexpectedly decides to actually live in the forgotten estate, which leaves a dozen children and three women (the mysterious, ex-spy Jess has recently joined the group) in quite the quandary!

Fortunately, one of the women, Kit, and her husband, Graham, have decided to take the endeavor to the next level by finding homes for the children so that they can be raised in a real family. (You'll have to read Defense of Honor to hear Kit and Graham's love story and to find out how they decide to work together in this cause!) They find homes for the younger children, leaving five, including Daphne's own son Benedict, on the estate while Kit and Graham embark on their wedding trip. Daphne and Jess pose as the housekeeper and the cook, while the children (aged 9-13!) are given jobs as maids, etc.

Poor William, the new Marquis of Chemsford, has no idea what to think when he arrives on this supposedly

abandoned estate and finds a very unconventional arrangement and quite the strange reception. What he doesn't know is that Daphne's son, Benedict, is a mirror image of William. Daphne immediately sets out to keep the two apart to protect the secrets of the manor...and her son. Despite his confusion and annoyance, William finds himself drawn to his 'housekeeper' Daphne and is compelled to uncover her secrets.

As the book unfolds, both Daphne and William must discover who they truly are and decide what they are meant to do. The outcome of an unlikely situation is a beautiful resolution to the story.

I highly enjoyed reading Daphne and William's story. Their unconventional romance has some wonderful laugh-out-loud moments, and readers get an intimate peek at the hearts of these main characters who set out to do some good in the world. I can't wait for the next installment of the series!

Karen

PS I received a free e-copy of this book from Bethany House in exchange for my honest review.

Kristine Morgan says

Daphne has been content to live a quiet life hidden away from society for 12 years. She has her secrets and doesn't feel the need to share. Then suddenly her quiet world is disturbed when William, Lord Chemsford comes to claim his home. *A Return of Devotion* is a story of redemption. If God has forgiven us but we haven't forgiven ourselves are we truly alive?

Kristi Ann Hunter is one of my favorite authors. She creates intriguing characters who have real life problems. Her characters have depth and she is a master of witty dialogue. I buy her books automatically when they come out as I am assured of a delightful read. So grab your Breakfast tea and settle in for a fantastic read!

I was given a copy of this book by NetGalley.com with no expectations. All thoughts are my own.

Jypsy says

A Return of Devotion is a well written thoughtful story. I enjoyed the characters, and the plot was engaging and entertaining. I recommend this one.

Becky says

A Return of Devotion is the second book in the Haven Manor series by Krisit Ann Hunter. It follows Daphne Blakemoor and swoon worthy hero William, Marquis of Chemsford. Our heroine, Daphne, had a baby as a single mom and had gone into hiding. William, our hero, is trying desperately not to be like his father and move forward. Both characters are trying to forget their past and to make a new and better life. But, running into each other has made that complicated, and that is where this story begins.

I loved the story of Daphne and William and was drawn in from the first page after opening the stunning cover. This is a delightful read, and is regency writing at its best. The story includes a grand house, beautiful

grounds, superb characters, a wonderful plot, sweet children, humor, an endearing heroine, and a hero you will fall in love with. Plus, moments to reflect on your relationship with God or wonder more about His role in your life.

To me what was also so impressive about this story was how Kristi Hunter was able to weave in all the different characters that were involved in such a complicated story, and the story flowed flawlessly. I could not put this book down, and highly recommend A Return of Devotion.

I was given this book by the publisher and not required to write a favorable review.

Kellyn Roth says

So good I had to wait until 2019 to mark it as read so I could count it in my "Top 2019 Books." xP

Review to come - but how shall I write it? It shall just be incoherent squealing. I have no negatives. I loved this book half to death - I stayed up until 5 AM reading it, after all, finishing it in about 7 hours. (Which is pretty good; I'm not a fast reader, haha!)

Anyway, yes, I shall try to review this soon, but I really don't know what to say!

FAVORITE THINGS --

-WILLIAM, who is honestly super sweet idek

-DAPHNE, who is the best motherly creature ever and she's also super brave and her imagination is amazing (I cannot not be aware of my surroundings so I found it super interesting) and she's just the sweetest girl ever -- but without a doubt the worst housekeeper.

-BENNEDICT. OMW. Sweet dear boy. <3 I feel bad for him, but still ... #STRENGTH

-But ... did the author realize ... his initials??? xD :P

-Daphne's dad, actually. He was a sweet gent.

-Seeing Kit and Graham again, even briefly. Argggg, these two! Also, Graham cracks me up. Like, "Oh, dear, everyone's fainting. *glances about* Better stop William from killing his cousin ..."

-THAT WHOLE LAST SCENE WAS OVERWHELMINGLY AWESOME. I mean, it wasn't the last scene, bUt LeGiT EvEryOne SHOWeD uP anD wAs AwEsOmE!

Okay, I'm done.

I don't like ... Jess? Is her name Jess? Or something like that? Anyway, I don't like her - and I don't know why because you'd think that'd be JUST my kind of character, but she rubs me wrong??? I don't know why! She's even a lot like me! But maybe she's just like ... Idek! Anyone else with me on this? I JUST DISLIKE HER.

Debbie says

"A Return of Devotion" is a Christian romance set in 1816 in England. This is the second book in a series. It can be read as a standalone, but reading the previous story will help you to better understand the situation that Daphne is in. This book does not spoil much of the previous story.

When Daphne was young, she let her imagination carry her away into a romantic fantasy which misled her into becoming pregnant with no chance of marriage. She has raised her son at Haven Manor, a remote house that was essentially abandoned by the owner. However, William, the new owner, has sent word that he's coming to stay and look the manor over. He looks exactly like Daphne's nearly teenaged son even though he is not the father. She tries to prevent the two from meeting, leaving her in a mess when answers are demanded both by her son and William.

William was a kind and very patient hero who tried to make things better for Daphne, partly because a family member hurt her in the past and partly because he comes to love her. Daphne still felt guilt over getting pregnant out of wedlock. Seeing no better option, she tried to overcome her extreme shyness and learn how to be a housekeeper for William. But she's miserable without a special purpose--something she can do to help other people. William helps her to find that purpose.

Daphne learns to accept the forgiveness that she knows God has extended to her. There was no sex or bad language. Overall, I'd recommend this enjoyable story.

I received an e-book review copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley.
