



Love Disguised

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Will Shakespeare is about to meet the girl who will change his life forever. After a mixed-up courtship with the Hathaway sisters ends badly, Will jumps at the chance to go to London, where he can pursue his dream of becoming an actor. There, Will meets the unusually tall (and strong) Meg who has earned the nickname "Long Meg" for her height. She's also fleeing her own past as an orphan turned thief. Disguised as "Mack," Meg was once a member of a band of boy thieves who betrayed her. When Will is robbed by those same villains, Meg disguises herself as "Mack" again--telling Will that Mack is her twin brother--in order to help Will recover his money. As Mack, she finds true friendship with Will. But is there more? And who is Meg really fooling with her disguise?

What ensues is a tale involving love triangles, mistaken identities, and the pursuit of hapless villains, as Shakespeare becomes a key player in a lively drama that could have sprung from his own pen.

Love Disguised Details

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Author : Lisa M. Klein

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From Reader Review Love Disguised for online ebook

Chelsey Wolford says

Everyone that knows anything about Will Shakespeare most likely knows that he married a woman by the name of Anne Hathaway. However, this fascinating story gives us a different outlook on his love life. This book tells the story of Will and Meg, two young souls looking for a way out of their current circumstances and looking for the place they belong most in life. Anne may have been Will's love, but Meg was his muse. This is the story of how they met and where life took them from that point. Readers will be able to identify small details that will eventually end up in Shakespeare's writing and plays. They will see how Meg inspired some of the most common sayings that we relate to Shakespeare.

First I want to talk about the parts that I didn't care as much for. The book started off with a lot of telling instead of a lot of showing. We get Will and Meg's backstories that seem to drag out for quite some time. Will was also not what I expected in this story. He was actually a bit of a jerk, especially when it came to the Hathaway sisters. I like to picture Will as this charming, romantic man, whether he was or not, but this book almost messed that up for me.

Now this book was not all bad, and in fact there were many parts that I greatly enjoyed. I loved seeing Will's passion for becoming a player in the local companies, and through it his passion for writing and creating was awakened. Meg was a fun character and her parts were often my favorite of the entire book. I loved the interaction between Meg and Will because I felt like Meg was Will's match. Will often came off more cocky than confident, and I think Meg brought him down to size at times. This was a quick read and allowed readers to experience a good insight into the Elizabethan period.

A copy of this book was provided to me by the publishers at Bloomsbury USA in exchange for my honest review

Courtney says

Starting out this book i was transfixed. It had all the things i love in a book, A strong female character who doesn't take crap from any man or women, a smart male lead with a curiosity that leads to all kinds of fun, and i loved that it was about William Shakespeare and set in that time. The plot was a little confusing at times as far as keeping all the characters straight. Towards the end i fault restless with how quick everything unfolded as it was the main part of the book and it was resolved 50 pages from the end. However the ending did not satisfy me. I know that a lot of people are happy that it stayed historically accurate but i wanted more for Meg, she was a fierce and brilliant character and i felt though she did have friendship and was performing for the queen, i was saddened that Will did nothing more than a sonnet for her. Maybe if he had come back years later after their child was grown and finally went to find Meg i would've been more satisfied. I hope this doesn't make me angry every time i read a Shakespeare book, because i did not like Anne at all in this book. But i will always love Will, and secretly look for tie ins this book has made.

Libby Ames says

In a story reminiscent of Shakespeare's own plays, Love Disguised invents what might have happened during Shakespeare's Lost Years. A young Will Shakespeare travels to London with a sum meant to relieve his father's debts. On his way to settle the debt, Will is robbed and finds himself friendless and penniless in England's largest city. Long Meg, tavern maid and peace keeper, recognizes the thieves and disguises herself as a boy to help Will hunt them down. The drama that follows includes a multitude of Shakespearean literary conventions including mistaken identities, love triangles, and comic fools.

Love Disguised artfully echoes Shakespeare in a tale where he is the main character. The story is engaging for those who have never read Shakespeare, but is even more delightful for readers well versed in his works. Lisa Klein includes hints of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, Antony and Cleopatra, and The Merchant of Venice in this story of Shakespeare's young life. Shakespeare purists might oppose it, but it is a perfect book for teen readers getting their first taste of Shakespeare's plays. It introduces similar plots to Shakespeare's own comedies, but keeps them in a style more easily understood. It is also a fun book for those who have studied Shakespeare, because it aptly imagines how Will Shakespeare the boy became the famous playwright.

Alice in Readerland says

First things first: I enjoy historical fiction, I enjoy books about Shakespeare, and I enjoy books about mistaken identities. The synopsis also gave off a Twelfth Night vibe, which (along with Much Ado About Nothing) is one of my two most favorite Shakespeare plays.

So, did this book seem like a good match for me?

Yes, definitely!

Was it a good match for me?

Er, well, here's a Sleepy Kitten gif. What does that tell you?

I tried to like this book, I really did.

Here's what I liked:

There were some really fun Twelfth Night allusions, which I enjoyed. I was happy to see that Meg wasn't a weak character; she held down a job, persevered and picked herself up when things got bad, and was street-wise. I also really, really loved the prologue. It presented me a mystery, intrigued me, dealt with mistaken identities, and of course, ended on a huge cliffhanger. The plot idea was absolutely wonderful. However, it went downhill from there for me.

Cynical Cindy Says

My major complaint about the book was the long beginning/introduction into the story. The prologue is

amazing and intriguing, but after the prologue we get Meg's long back-story. Then, after Meg's long back-story, we get Shakespeare's long back-story. After we've been through all of that, we still have to "meet" the current Meg and have to see her current lifestyle and it feels like it's a story setup after story setup after story setup instead of an actual story. Because of this, I lost interest in the book rather fast. Which is a shame, since the book did eventually pick up and get more interesting, but by then, I didn't feel excited about/invested in the story. The dual Meg and Shakespeare storylines also felt choppy and disjointed.

This has been one of the hardest reviews I've had to post, since I have read Shakespeare's plays, loved the synopsis, was really looking forward to this book, and generally really enjoy Bloomsbury's books. All in all, it had a fantastic premise, but the actual story felt bogged down by the long (and multiple) intros.

This review was originally posted on ALICE IN READERLAND: aliceinreaderland.com

Shelley says

I love the idea of taking someone real like Shakespeare and imagining his life makes him all the more irresistible, especially since we have little record of parts of his life. So, this is a fun, romantic tale.

Bookworm1858 says

Source: Received an e-ARC via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Though I'm not the biggest Shakespeare fan (I appreciate his contributions to the English language but I just don't read many plays), I find myself continuously drawn to stories about his life. There's just so much we don't know about the guy so it's ripe for various interpretations.

In this version, Shakespeare has a run-in with the sisters Hathaway that ends wrongly and he eagerly jumps on an opportunity to go to London and pursue his fortunes as a player. Meanwhile Long Meg has had trouble follow her for ages and is eager for a safe place to call home. When she meets Shakespeare, she undertakes to disguise herself as a man to aid him in his quest while also unwittingly serving as his first muse.

I've read some discussions lately about deciding when or even whether or not to DNF a book and this is an instance where I decided not to DNF and it paid off. I found the beginning of this book rather dull-it's clunky and it's hard to see how everything ties together. But I persevered and though I never fell in love with the characters, I found several elements to really admire.

First and foremost would be the language. I feel like Klein had a ball selecting just the right Renaissance-era language to reveal Shakespeare's quick and ready wit. Once the story gets moving, the writing really sparkles. It is just making it through the beginning that is difficult. Second, a big inspiration for this book was Shakespeare's comedies rather than his more famous tragedies. I recognized several elements (women dressed as men being the main one) but I bet fans of the plays will make out even more and enjoy it accordingly.

Meg is a really cool character! She gets to do so much over the course of the book, serving as enforcer,

helping Shakespeare with his word choice and plots, and running all over London. Is there anything she can't do? And the book applauds her for her derring-do. Unfortunately Shakespeare is kind of a jerk and my inability to sympathize with him dragged down his bits. Yes, I enjoyed his way with words but as a person, he sucks.

Overall: I'm glad I stuck with this book and I think people who like language will find much to enjoy in that regard. Character and plot people will probably be less enthusiastic.

C. says

I did not finish this book, because I am really trying to do a thing where if I'm not engaged in the book, I just move on, and this one failed to really spark interest for me.

I really wanted to like it. I felt as if it had potential to be a fun read, but I found myself uninterested. It didn't feel as if the history was deep enough to really be great historical fiction, I found William Shakespeare's characterization just didn't work for me. I liked the idea of this book but it felt shallow, and there was nothing other than the idea of the plot, to pull me in.

I think it is possible that it might hit better with its target audience, which is definitely teen girls. There is romance, there are disguises, and some adventure. I wouldn't probably give it to the preteen set because of how Will waxes on about the female body (something that I have less and less patience with these days myself), and I consider that a con in the overall set up of the book, but perhaps not inappropriate in the sense of Shakespeare's writing which is definitely bawdy at times. I suspect I would have enjoyed it more at 15 or 16 than I did as an adult, and would have likely easily read it in an afternoon at that age.

Two stars for the concept and idea, although I feel as if the implementation and characterization needed additional polish.

This review is of an Advance Reader Copy of this book I picked up at ALA several years ago.

Gretchen Hohmeyer says

I will make an admission here: I am an English major who hates Shakespeare. Well, most Shakespeare, except for Twelfth Night and a few others. So when I found out Lisa Klein had written a ya novel about how Shakespeare came up with the plot for Twelfth Night, I jumped on it. Sadly, what I found was mostly a trite and overwrought story that left me laughing at its weirdness in the end—and not in a good way.

The book opens up with a LOT of telling. (you know, in the show vs. tell fashion that most writers hear about at some point.) We get the complete background on Meg and Will, which reads more like a bio than a piece of writing meant to engage a reader. True, Meg has a really interesting background, as her father died in prison and her mother went mad with grief, thinking she'd killed him, then killed the priest she was sleeping with to try and relieve his debts before jumping off a warf. Will's is stitched together from historical fact, all about his father and blah blah blah. I found myself skipping ahead just to get to a point where something actually happened. Then Will falls in love with the younger Hathaway sister, sleeps with the older

one by mistake and runs off to London to stand for his soon-to-be-imprisoned father in court. There he meets Meg, once a thief, now a tavern maid, who is unusually large for her age. Will is robbed by some of Meg's old companions, and Meg becomes "Mack," Meg's "twin brother," in order to help him get his money back. If you've read Twelfth Night, you can put together a lot of what happens after that. If not ... so much confusion ensues.

I've mentioned that the beginning was slow, but even more than that, the language used was overwrought. I can tell Klein was trying to use English as Shakespeare and his companions would have spoken it, but it didn't work for me. I've read a lot of historical fiction, and I've seen people use older English in ways that isn't clunky, but this ... didn't work. I was bored and the characters seemed like cartoons from a melodrama instead of people I wanted to relate to. Because of this, I disliked most of the characters from the start, from the overly dramatic Violetta to the overly boisterous Overby and the overly stereotypical faux-villains, who were more like something out of a dark Three Stooges.

The one shining character in all this, who kept me going through the entire book, was Meg. Her ingenuity got her out of a dark hole when her parents died, her loyalty was fierce and her heart was good and righteous at all times. Sometimes, yes, she did feel a little overly righteous, but I was pretty ok with it all most of the time. Her confusion between her identities of Mack and Meg were more than comical—it was serious and it was real. It was her personality and inner struggles that kept me going, even when all the other characters had me ready to put the book down and DNF it.

This also includes Will Shakespeare. As a main character, he was clumsy, naive and bland. He had moments of genius, but those ideas could only work if Meg was right there, pushing them along. I understand that Meg and Will's friendship was the main point of this book, but it started seeming like Will was incapable of doing anything unless Meg was secretly pushing it from behind.

All in all, I was not impressed by this book. I thought the plot was crazy and overdone—and in the end got so confusing I wasn't sure how it even worked out. The characters were mostly irksome, except for the one shining light that was Meg. If you're a real lover of Twelfth Night, then this might interest you out of parody's sake, but otherwise I'd suggest getting this one for the library if you're at all interested.

Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says

This really was a fun tale of the adventures of a young William Shakespeare as he left his home town to venture to London to pay off a debt of his father's. Along the way he meets Meg and Mack as well as many others who, as you read the story, start to see as characters that will later star in many of his plays and tales.

We learn of his woes in love and life and the dark comedy that he so loves to writes about, we see in his life experiences.

Truly a fun take on how Will came up with the stories he wrote and the life he lead because of them. We get facts thrown in with fiction and a merry London tale set in the late 1500's to boot. What more could you ask for? How about unrequited love, thievery, brawling, death, plays, and of course a woman dressing up as a man, men dressing up as woman, a pregnancy, a mistaken identity, comedic relief in the form of Will fighting, prison time, more brawling and more unrequited love. Any of this sound familiar yet? A tale truly to rival any that the master himself created.

This was a light fun read that can be quickly read in one sitting and give you just a taste of the historic London in the 1500's and their manner of speak and dress, a light romance, some adventure and a comedy of errors that only Shakespeare could have been a part of.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

A good 'what if' book about the period when 18-yr-old William Shakespeare comes to London to begin his career as an actor/playwright, and the incredible young woman who could have been his muse.

Reviewed for *Affaire de Coeur* Magazine in the August issue. <http://affairedecoeur.com>.

Celine says

I was really unimpressed with Will's character, as was I unimpressed by the writing regarding the story's progression. I often found it unfocused and muddled, nor did it often convey the emotions of scenes very well. The thoughts of characters could change on a whim with little development. On the other hand, I very much enjoyed the language used and the wit of much of the dialog. I also ADORED Meg's character!!!

Bayla says

Review of ARC

While I do enjoy historical fiction, particularly about times and people (like Shakespeare) that I'm interested in, I was disappointed in *Love Disguised*. It felt much more fictional than historical. I've read plenty of nonfiction about Shakespeare, so I expect a certain verisimilitude that wasn't present here. The characters seemed flat, the plot problems too easily solved. However, for younger readers than I, or for readers looking for a light, simple, romance, this might be a good pick. I would recommend for fans of Lisa Klein's other books, including *Ophelia* and *Lady Macbeth's Daughter*.

Megan (The Book Babe) says

Other reviews at The Book Babe's Reads. Due to copy and paste, formatting has been lost.

I am not Mack; I am only Meg.

Honestly, I'm not at all sure of what I want to say about *Love Disguised*. I wish I could tell you that it was brilliant, or that the characters blew me away... but that would be a lie. While I liked this one, I didn't find it particularly or interesting or ground-breaking.

I really liked it in the beginning; it had a certain charm about it, what with all the characters referring to

themselves in third person, and the alternating points of view. But the more I read, the more I started to notice things. Like the fact that the writing style itself was a bit odd. I couldn't really get into it, and I never figured out why!

The alternating points of view (though a plus in the beginning) soon became a hindrance. They sort of bled together, and I couldn't differentiate Will's voice or Meg's in all the ruckus; which I felt was a shame. As characters, they were okay, maybe even good; but as narrators they lacked a certain wit. I mixed them up more times than I could count!

Will had a wonderful sense of humor, and I enjoyed his jokes... but how could someone so happy write such tragic literature? I never quite understood that, though I did like this "lighter" Will Shakespeare. There is, however, something that happens towards the end that I assume makes him the "tortured" man that we see in his work. (Something that I respect his decision about.)

Meg was also a good character. She had spunk, and I found her to be very brave. She wasn't whiny at all, but her friend Violetta was terrible! I couldn't stand her constant whining and bossing. And her man? Don't even get me started on how lovesick and annoying he was!

While I found several parts of this book to be rather entertaining, I didn't believe the story. *gasp* The idea that a woman could be friends with a man as a man? No. Several times throughout the book Mack was recognized to be Meg, and yet Will never saw it? That doesn't make sense to me, but it was a minor issue.

Another minor issue that I had was the dialect. I felt like it wasn't exactly authentic for that time frame. People from poorer areas would speak in a less polished tongue than those from richer areas, but that "tongue change" wasn't shown. It was easy to read, though.

All in all, I just didn't love this one. I liked it, and that's all you'll be getting from me on the subject.

Alexa says

Any mention of Shakespeare, any at all, and I will usually be down to read or watch something. So when Love Disguised popped up on my radar, I just had to check it out. While it was a fun, diverting read, it also fell into the realm of slightly predictable and not very memorable.

As always, here's the list of the things I liked and the things I didn't like about this book:

The references to Shakespeare's works were such fun. It felt like a bit of an Easter Egg hunt, really. With every chapter read, there were plots or personalities that reminded me of what Shakespeare works I have read. I thought it was fun, really, as it's already clear I'm a big fan of Will's. Plus, it seemed to all make sense... In a ridiculous sort of way,

It was basically a mad set of events, reminiscent of Shakespeare's own comedies. Despite being slightly over the top, it was basically hilarious! Honestly, it provided a good laugh when I read it on my plane ride. As I already mentioned, the story was ridiculous but in the best way. At the very least, I was entertained.

There was no real character development. While the cast of characters is no doubt part of the entertainment, they were also easily mixed up. I truly didn't feel much of a connection to any of them, even the main ones.

This usually happens when I don't sense that a character's grown throughout the story, which was the case here.

The story was fun, true, but it was also forgettable. The instant I shut the book, it was like I'd never read it. Facts and characters got all mixed up in my head, as it didn't leave a real impression.

In the end, the fact that there isn't much I can say about this book is what really says it all. *Love Disguised* could have been much more than it was but failed to really meet any of my personal expectations. It's good enough if you're bored on a subway and in need of something to pass the time, but overall, I wouldn't recommend it.

(originally posted on the blog)

Ariel Uppstrom says

Ugh. Painful to get through. Normally I like the retelling of other stories from a new or modern perspective, but this one was not good. Having read other Lisa Klein books, I found this one to be the most trite of hers.

The book is a story about Shakespeare and how circumstances in his life led him to come up with the plot for "Twelfth Night" (probably my favorite Shakespearean comedy). However, this retelling of the story was bad. I love historical pieces and this one did not measure up. Though it used language from the time, it was so forced and seemed (as an English teacher I'm sad to say) too much like an English teacher trying to write a young adult book to get them to like Shakespeare. Her other book "Ophelia" is such a great retelling and a new way to look at the story of "Hamlet," but this story was just not good. In the end, I was happy to be done. Sad.
