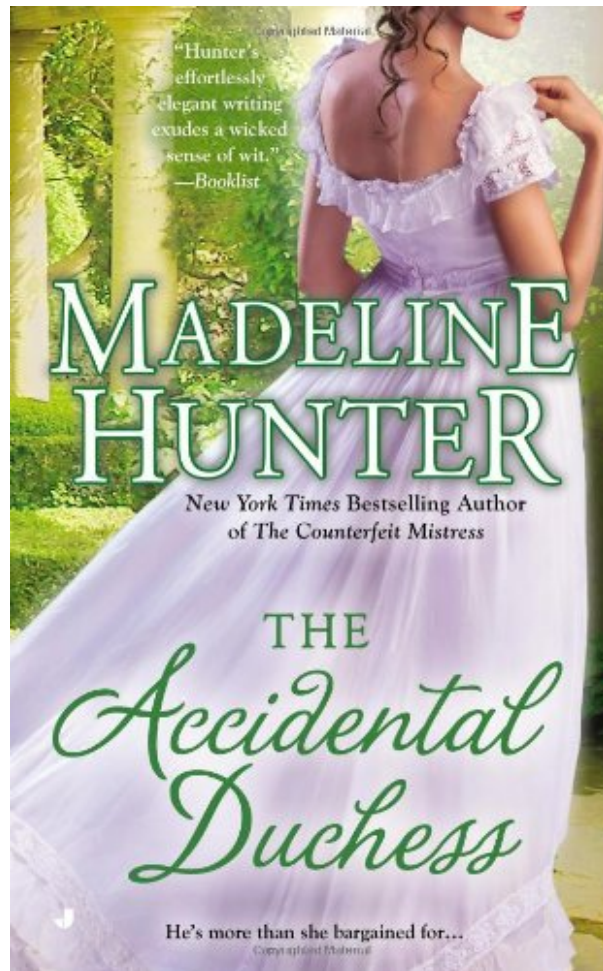
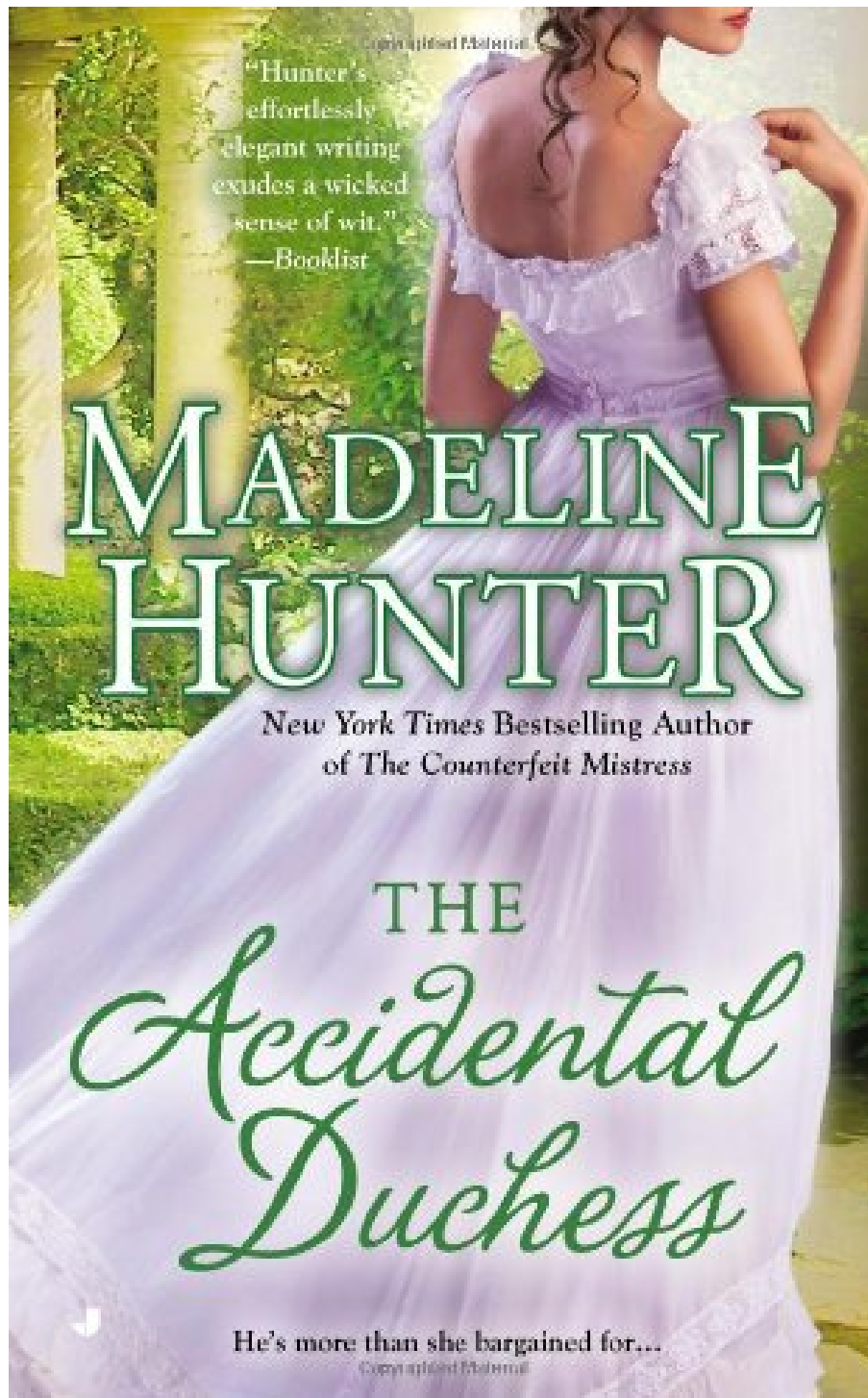


# THE ACCIDENTAL DUCHESS BY MADELINE HUNTER



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## Review

Praise for *THE ACCIDENTAL DUCHESS*:

"Blackmailed and faced with embarrassment and the suspicion of treason if the draft of her ill-advised, racy adventure novel is made public, unconventional Lady Lydia Alfreton heads to the gaming tables to raise some cash. Sadly, her gambling plan goes awry, and she is forced to call in an old bet with the Duke of Penthurst and recklessly wager (and lose) her virtue. Although the duke doesn't plan to collect, he keeps Lydia guessing. Then Lydia's ill-advised attempt to deal with the blackmailer brings Penthurst to the rescue, compromising them both, and suddenly it's marriage, not simple seduction, that lay ahead. VERDICT A rash, adventure-seeking heroine and an honorable, take-charge hero clash splendidly as passions blaze in this complex story that pairs another marvelously singular couple, brings the bad guys to justice, and cleverly ties up the loose ends...—to the delight of all concerned." --Library Journal

"Fueled by an abundance of subtle wit and potent sensuality, *The Accidental Duchess*...is another exquisitely crafted love story by one of the romance genre's masters." --Booklist

Praise for the novels of Madeline Hunter

"Another stellar Regency-set historical romance that hits all the literary marks. Hunter's effortlessly elegant writing exudes a wicked sense of wit; her characterization is superbly subtle, and the sexual chemistry she cooks up between her deliciously independent heroine and delightfully sexy hero is pure passion."—Booklist (starred review)

"Intelligent and memorable...As smart and sharp as the best of Regency romances can be. With its tangy dialogue, *Pride and Prejudice* themes, bits of mystery and nefarious characters, readers may be reminded of Jane Austen."—Romantic Times (Top Pick)

"Hunter's books are so addictive."—Publishers Weekly

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## About the Author

Madeline Hunter has published 24 critically acclaimed historical romances. Her books regularly appear on the New York Times and USA Today bestseller lists. More than six million copies of her books are in print, and her books have been translated into twelve languages. She has won two RITA awards and is a seven-time RITA finalist. Madeline holds a PhD in art history, which she teaches at the university level.

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From New York Times bestselling author Madeline Hunter comes this seductive tale of a headstrong young lady, a scandalous manuscript, and the iron-willed duke determined to save her from her ruin. For fans of Mary Balogh, Eloisa James, and Julia Quinn.

When Lady Lydia Alfreton is blackmailed over the shocking contents of a manuscript she once wrote, she must go to the most desperate of measures to raise the money to buy back the ill-considered prose: agreeing to an old wager posed by the arrogant, dangerous Duke of Penthurst. At least Penthurst is a man she wouldn't mind fleecing—and she's confident she'll win.

Penthurst long ago concluded Lydia was a woman in search of ruinous adventure, but even he is surprised when she arrives at his house ready to bet her innocence against his ten thousand pounds—a wager he only proposed to warn her off gambling.

When she loses to a simple draw of the cards, Lydia is shocked. Now, her problems are twofold: a blackmailer determined to see her pay and a duke determined to tame her rebellious ways. One misstep and Lydia could find herself ruined—or bound to the seductive man who would make her his duchess.

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- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 400 pages

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

32 of 35 people found the following review helpful.

Much Improved

By arc

This is the last book of the four book series. Of the four, the second book about Cassandra and Ambury, and this one are the best. The previous book (*The Counterfeit Mistress*) was very disappointing and the characters in that book still annoy even when they appear in this one. The lead characters in this book have moved in and out of the previous three so we are somewhat familiar with them. Lydia was rather unpleasant and bratty and Penthurst eccentric and superior. The characters have filled out considerably and they are interesting, especially Lydia as she attempts to deal alone with the consequences of her own poor choices. Penthurst remains a bit eccentric but given the very young age at which he shouldered large responsibilities, his self possession and (mostly) adherence to the expectations of his class make sense.

One of the things I enjoy about Hunter's work is that she doesn't try to make her period heroes into champions of 21st century gender equality. These men are kind and understanding of their wives frustrations at the limits imposed on them, but that doesn't stop them from exercising their authority and imposing limits of their own. They subscribe to the belief that they have a right and obligation to control their wives behavior for their own good and do sometimes annoyingly treat them like children - and certainly like the dependents they are. Where the women prevail it is usually through manipulation. That might be objectionable from a modern perspective (I wouldn't put up with it!) but makes perfect sense within the context of the time period of the story. There is nothing much more annoying in period romances than plot, dialogue and social and political beliefs and activity that are based firmly in the 2000's. Authors committed to those elements should write modern romances and stay away from historical romance writing.

In some ways, Lydia acts immature for her age and Penthurst is older than his years. The shifting dynamic between the two is believable and the emotional attachment develops slowly for both of them. Both have what appear to be good reasons to resent and dislike the other but they both see advantages to their marriage of necessity and instead of wallowing in self pity and anger try to make the best of the situation. In the end of course (the very end) they are in love.

You can skip books one and three but reading book two before this one will fill in some critical information regarding the conflict between these two - not strictly necessary but helpful.

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

A Duke Such as Only Madeline Hunter Can Provide

By Coop

I was thrilled when I won an ARC of this book on Ms. Hunter's website drawing, because I am a huge Hunter fan--this is my 24th book of hers that I own, and the first that I didn't pay full price for. This review is geared specifically to her fans. Amidst all the self-pub and drivel that hardly appears edited out here in the romance reader's world, Ms. Hunter's books are always engaging, well-written, plot-driven page-turners. In my book, she can only get a 5-star within the Amazon rating system because if we're comparing her talents to any other romance author out there, she is plainly and totally A-Team. Her books are always readable, enjoyable page-turners, and worth their price in sheer entertainment, romantic value. So 5 Stars is her minimum Amazon Rating.

However, fans might like to know how this book compares to her other works...Madeline Hunter as compared to Madeline Hunter.

The heroine: Lydia is probably the most difficult h that Ms. Hunter has ever written. She is not only dangerously naive, but arrogant about it--which is sometimes difficult for the reader who would like to reach into the pages and shake some sense into her. However, those of us who have read the full Fairbourne Quartet series were completely prepared for this, as she was fully introduced in the previous books. We knew she had some serious growing up to do, and that we were going to watch her do it. Because this was, at times, somewhat painful, Lydia gets 3 stars for common sense and 4 for her plucky attempts to be a plucky woman during a time when pluckiness was neither admired nor encouraged, and 4 for a certain sweetness that she manages to keep, despite occasional stubbornness. Man, it wasn't easy to be a spirited woman back then.

The hero: The Duke of Penthurst is as good a hero as Hunter has ever written. Noble, quietly heroic, with enough rakishness to keep him extremely \*\*attractive\*\*. He gets 6 stars. Maybe 7. Okay, 8, but that's my final offer. The book price is worth it for him alone.

The plot: the unlikely relationship between these two IS the plot, but the threads of subterfuge and treason from the other Quartet novels are continued in this one. Hunter kept these pages turning for me, with (of course) plenty of the extremely romantic interludes that she writes so well. No one writes a love scene like Hunter, and she was generous with them in this one. She kept Lydia from becoming insipid or TSTL, and kept me rooting for her despite her mistakes. As we grow to see Lydia through Penthurst's eyes, we, too, learn to care for and about her.

My final rating: My very favorite Hunter books (The Romantic, Ravishing in Red, The Rules of Seduction) are unequaled still, but I give this one a space on my second tier. I've already reread it once and I know someday it will be dogeared. Must buy the Kindle version now, I suppose, so I won't save money after all, but Hunter is an entertainment bargain regardless. The Accidental Duchess will stand alone perfectly well, but read the whole Fairbourne Quartet, in order, beginning with The Surrender of Miss Fairbourne, to gain maximum enjoyment. (As a side note, I did not enjoy Surrender nearly so well until I'd read all 4 books...this is one set that is truly meant to be enjoyed as a whole series.)

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Hated the story; Penthurst deserved a better heroine

By Romantic Heart

I waited for Penthurst's story. In the other books, Penthurst seemed like a mysterious and misunderstood character. I really wanted his love story to be good. He deserved a loving wife because his friends had spurned him in the first two novels of the series.

Lydia, the heroine, was a complete idiot. She had a loving brother and loving husband, and yet, she wouldn't seek their help. I don't normally like stories about blackmail because they can be easily solved. Why would anyone pay tons of money (10,000 pounds which was a boatload of money for that time period) for a novel? The blackmail plot was a weak contrivance and I was not convinced that any harm could have been done. Sure there were lists of ships and she could have been seen as a spy...but have your brother or ducal husband help you out of this mess, you dumb bunny! Furthermore, Lydia never asked for the blackmailer to prove

that he actually had the entire novel. Meanwhile, it irked me that Lydia kept paying money without any proof that he had the entire novel.

Additionally, Penthurst was a duke and he could have overpowered the blackmailer. He could have shot the blackmailer in a duel, or arrested the blackmailer and Penthurst could have used his ducal influence to put the blackmailer in jail for life. End of stupid blackmail plot. End of stupid blackmailer.

Also, Lydia was supposed to be a "woman of the world" and yet she was subservient to this blackmailer. She pretended to be worldly, but she was a naive, spoiled brat. I don't know what Penthurst saw in her. He gained nothing from his association with her. He deserved a strong woman who could support his strengths and promote his good reputation. Instead he was shackled with an embarrassing spoiled wife. I waded through 4 novels to see Penthurst vindicated. What a disappointment.

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