



## The Horsemaster's Daughter

*Susan Wiggs*

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**The Horsemaster's Daughter** Susan Wiggs

**An unbroken horse, a broken man, an estate that needed her**

Once a privileged son of the South, Hunter Calhoun now stands a widower shadowed by the scandal of his wife's death. Burying himself in his success with breeding Thoroughbred racehorses, he's left his family to crumble and forgotten how to comfort his grieving children.

When a prized stallion arrives from Ireland crazed and unridable, Hunter is forced to seek help for the beast. Removed from the world of wealth and social privilege, Eliza Fylte has inherited her father's famed gift for gentling horses. And when Hunter arrives with his wild steed, her healing spirit reaches further yet, drawing her to his shattered family and to the intense, bitter man who needs her, just as she needs him.

Eliza understands what Hunter refuses to see...that love is the greatest healer of all. But can her kind, humble being manage to teach such an untethered man what truly matters in life?

## The Horsemaster's Daughter Details

Date : Published June 15th 2012 by Mira (first published January 1st 1999)

ISBN :

Author : Susan Wiggs

Format : Kindle Edition 400 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Fiction

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## From Reader Review *The Horsemaster's Daughter* for online ebook

### **Karla says**

3.5 stars

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### **Janja says**

I was slightly disappointed ...

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### **Alexandra Robertson says**

This book was okay. That's about it. Overall it was predictable, with aggravating characters, and absolutely no climax. The book floated along until it was over and the conflict between the main characters was resolved like it was nothing and then completely forgotten about. The female lead in the book was interesting and I feel like the story could have been good, but the lack of conflict in the end and the caveman of a male lead were too much. The I liked the first one in the series when i read it years ago, but this one really let me down.

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### **Julie (Manga Maniac Cafe) says**

3 stars

I picked this up mainly for the horse elements, which were well written. I could not stand Hunter - what a selfish, immature ass. He has, for all but two chapters, the emotional depth of a pebble. He did not hesitate to scorn Eliza's upbringing, often calling her ignorant, and certainly not suitable material for a wife, because, you know, he's WAY TOO good for her. I did like Eliza - she refused to let the poor treatment of Hunter's society friends get to her, and instead gave back with equal, scathing measure.

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### **Marleen says**

My reading choices have always varied in genre. It's truly important for me to alternate from fiction to mystery/thriller to romance novel because I enjoy diving into a different world with each genre. Lately the so-called established romance writers seem to disappoint me a little: same here with the *Horsemaster's Daughter* by Susan Wiggs. It was cute and heartwarming at times, but mostly predictable. I waited for something to truly captivate me, but it never happened. As for the lead characters, Eliza Flyte and Hunter Calhoun, well, they were unsurprising, although Eliza's down-to-earth nature was refreshing, and she had more maturity and depth to her than Hunter. He was the classic stubborn and handsome Virginian landowner, who needed to come to his senses and of course, this happened thanks to Eliza. However I did enjoy the presence of Bettina and Blue, Hunter's children, and I liked how the four of them interacted and

grew towards each other to - finally in the end - form an unconventional but nonetheless solid & loving family, away from their roots, in Cielito, California.

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### **Ayanna Smith says**

[ Her reaction to being of "colored" birth was a bit overwhelming. But, the ending result was more realistic given the circumstances. I wanted to strangle these characters but as an omniscient mother wanting the best for her children. Great BOOK! (hide spoiler)]

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### **Heathy says**

This book had such potential, but then the author filled it up with stereotypical tripe about Virginia and the South.

I started to dislike the heroine (Eliza) pretty much from the beginning. She says something to Hunter (the hero) like, "You're from Virginia. You actually expect me to believe you're against slavery?" As if EVERY Virginian owned a slave. That really irritated me because the fact of the matter is that most Southerners did NOT own slaves. The heroine also goes on several prissy rants about how she's a vegetarian, which also grated my nerves.

The book was so melodramatic and seemed to drag on forever (nearly 400 pages). Once Hunter & Eliza get back to his farm, we are introduced to other Virginians, most of whom (the women, especially) speak with that Fiddle-dee-dee type nonsense. As a native Virginian, I can honestly say that I have NEVER encountered anybody who spoke like that. There is one "Yankee" in the book, and the author never lets us forget it because she's actually called "the Yankee". People say, "Where's that Yankee wife of yours?" or "Here comes Isabelle, the Yankee."

Eliza comments that the Yankee is the only intelligent person she's met since coming to the mainland of Virginia. Does the author think Virginians are just a bunch of inbred dimwits? That was pretty much the icing on the cake for me. I can't deal with ignorant nonsense like this. On the back cover of the book, it says the author lives in Washington State. I'm willing to bet she's never set foot in Virginia, otherwise she wouldn't have portrayed us like that.

Even without the stereotyping, the book would still be horrendous because of the characters' unlikability. The last 1/4 of the book is just Eliza saying, "I can't stay. I have to go" and Hunter saying, "You have to stay. We'll make it work."

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### **Sabina (Whatsername\_reads) says**

Meh. If I could describe this book, it would be just one word: boring, boring and again boring. I was really dissatisfied and I skipped some pages.

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## **Jen says**

For some reason, this book really pulled at me. I was almost at the end before I had to leave for work but didn't get to finish it and due to the point where I stopped, I was depressed all day. I couldn't stop thinking about the book, and I actually hurt for the characters. It was weird how much it affected me, really. Not sure why. Anyway, it was really good.

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## **Red says**

Picked this up at half-price books while turning in others. I thought it had the makings for a good story: horses and romance. Sounded great. That was before the 2 person rule went into effect. The writer clearly violates the rule, and the story is just not that good, and neither is the writing. Or else I'm simply getting bored with just these 2 people (alone on an island yet), so we don't even have a variety of locations. Another problem with 2 character stories, writers don't engage in dialog as much as in thinking, so now your stuck in one person's head. For hundreds of pages. I'm bored.

Thankfully the last 3rd of the book moves onto the mainland and has a lot more people in it. The story picked up and the rest of the book was enjoyable.

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## **Suzette says**

I appreciate that Susan Wiggs paints such a complete picture in her stories, that it's not necessary to have read *The Charm School* in order to follow along with the events of *The Horsemaster's Daughter*. Unfortunately, the flip side of that thoroughness is the extra 20 pages in *The Horsemaster's Daughter* feels more like an extra 200. The sense of timing seems a bit off as well- the author would describe the transpiring events in a way that made me think they took place over days or weeks, only to realize a page later it was all supposed to have taken place on the same day (and vice versa).

Susan Wiggs writes strong, independent heroines, who are most importantly believable, even as they refuse to conform to the class structures of their era. Her heroes, sadly, do not get quite the same amount of attention. *The Charm School* is the stronger title, with both hero and heroine growing and maturing in reaction to each other. Hunter, the hero in *The Horsemaster's Daughter*, is presented with huge obstacles to overcome, and after meeting him in passing in *TCS*, I found him intriguing, and wanted to root for him and his inevitable HEA. However, he takes huge steps backwards literally and figuratively every time he supposedly adapts and grows beyond the mental constraints he has place upon himself, and it gets tiresome after awhile. His final act of self-awareness and sobriety happens far too quickly to be believable, but since Eliza already loved him, flaws and whiskey and children and all, the HEA is thankfully preserved.

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## **Cindy Kirkland says**

So I have this huge pile of books that I am trying to get through and I just pick the one on top and read. I could have skipped this one entirely. The story was okay, the characters interesting. BUT there was no reason for some of the excess descriptions, lets get to the point. MOST DISAPPOINTING was the ending,

so Eliza goes to California. It seems like it would take a long time, right? and she is pregnant. Very little time is spent on her life in California when Hunter and the kids appear on the coast on his 1/2 brother's boat. How? The Panama canal was not built yet, they would all have had to go all the way around the cape. REEEEAALLLLLYYYY - SO very disappointed. Details matter.

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## **Elaine says**

I'm sorry to say I didn't like this book. I was so bored while reading it and both of the main characters annoyed me to no end. I couldn't connect with either of them. And on top of that, there was absolutely no love or attraction between them that I could see. Their love declarations came out of absolutely nowhere, I still don't understand why they supposedly love each other. The book was a disappointment and if you're looking for a good historical romance to read I'd skip this one if I was you.

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## **Naksed says**

Though *The Horsemaster's Daughter* had its moments, it ultimately fell far short imho.

I liked the beginning of the book, which introduces troubled Southern gentleman Hunter Calhoun as he drinks to get the courage to shoot his recently purchased wild stallion, and along with it, shatter all the dreams he had of turning his decrepit plantation into a thoroughbred breeding farm.

At the eleventh hour, he is convinced to sail to an isolated island where a horsemaster of unsurpassed skill is rumored to live. Naturally, it is Eliza, the horsemaster's daughter that he meets instead. Soon, he realizes that not only can this strange, wild woman heal the traumatized beast that he has brought to her, but that she may hold the key to heal the still bleeding wounds that his family has suffered through.

This story's premise was interesting and had potential. The themes and issues it hit upon, such as gender politics and slavery in that era, were certainly treated with earnest care by the writer. There were some sentences, and even passages that I enjoyed very much.

Eliza lets her "emptiness fill with fury" when sufficiently provoked. When gentling Calhoun's horse, she takes her first ride on him while almost submerged in the ocean, "the picture of surrender and trust, her body draped over the stallion, her arms around the big arched neck and her cheek against the damp hide." A grieving, despairing Calhoun "adored his children with a ferocity that ached in his chest. But he didn't know—perhaps had never known—what to do with that love, except hurt." Calhoun's traumatized young son wields his silence like "an active, live thing. Not a void but something large and almost tangible."

The author goes to great length to hammer the point that Eliza, living the wild and free life on her isolated island even as she dreams of a prince rescuing her, is like Miranda in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. When she moves to the mainland to become a governess to Calhoun's children, the parallel is drawn to *Jane Eyre*.

Unfortunately, this story neither delivers the fairy-tale like quality of Shakespeare nor the gothicky goodness of Bronte. The characters speak and act like contemporary characters dropped into a 19th century cosplay, furthering the disconnect I had with them and this story. The lavender prose was also cringe-worthy, the ending completely unrealistic, sugar-coated, and hokey, yes, even by Romancelandia standards. Overall,

there was not enough substance or "meat" to the story to really invest and believe in it.

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## **Gemma says**

I've enjoyed books by Susan Wiggs before (some have even made it onto my keeper shelf), but this one was one that I didn't even finish.

I liked Eliza, the heroine, immensely. Her ability to heal horses and connect with nature was a delight to read. Though she'd lived an extremely sheltered life, she never came across as stupid or immature. She was unique in a very intriguing way. It was easy to see why the hero would fall in love with her.

This wasn't the case with Hunter, the hero. He was quick to leap to conclusions, quick to get put out. At times, he came across as downright petulant. I also found him to be extremely self-centered. He lost his first wife by pretty much not giving a darn about her, and he didn't give a darn about his kids who were left motherless. And they might as well have been fatherless for all the time he spent with them. And he drank. A lot. All the time. I'd even go so far as to say he was an alcoholic, though not a violent one. Maybe this was dealt with later in the book, but I never got that far.

I couldn't really see why Eliza should fall in love with Hunter. I kind of felt that she was only attracted to him because he was the first man to spend lots of time with her since her father's death. As she'd lived pretty much isolated for her whole life, I felt like she only fell for Hunter because he happened to be around, not because of anything real.

Still, the romance was developing at a nice pace when the author suddenly had them start having sex. I felt cheated by this, as it was way too early in the book. They hardly knew each other, which made me feel kind of dirty. I couldn't muster up any desire to finish the book after that. I didn't like Hunter, and not liking the hero (or the heroine) is the kiss of death for a romance novel.

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