



The Lady's Secret

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London, 1810

Former actress Georgiana Knight always believed she and her brother were illegitimate—until they learn their parents were married, making them heirs to a great estate. To prove their claim, Georgy needs to find evidence of their union by infiltrating a *ton* house party as valet to Lord Nathaniel Harland. Though masquerading as a boy is a challenge, it pales in comparison to sharing such intimate quarters with the handsome, beguiling nobleman.

Nathan is also unsettled by Georgy's presence. First intrigued by his unusual valet, he's even more captivated when he discovers Georgy's charade. The desire the marriage-shy earl feels for his enigmatic employee has him hoping for much more than a master-servant relationship...

But will Nathan still want Georgy when he learns who she truly is? Or will their future be destroyed by someone who would do anything to prevent Georgy from uncovering the truth?

93,000 words

The Lady's Secret Details

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From Reader Review *The Lady's Secret* for online ebook

Andrea says

This was my first book by this author, and definitely not the last!

Unfortunately, while this book was intriguing and had some truly wonderful characters, there was way too much drama for my taste, which, to be fair, isn't hard, because I absolutely loathe drama if any kind. This had a few too many murders, attempted murders, crazy, gun-toting peers and their henchmen for me. I guess that was to be expected when the plot is about two siblings trying to prove their legitimate and an earldom is at stake, but honestly...

And then there was the heroine. Oh well. I guess her being the daughter of an actress and raised in and around a theater meant she had to be more dramatic and unreasonable than I like my heroines to be? But honestly, I couldn't stand her after a while. After nearly having been killed twice, she runs off with a concussion without a word to the one person who saved her on both occasions, and then is nearly killed again - only to be saved (yet again) by the hero (who was rather nice and reasonable about her little charade and all if you ask me), and then still has the nerve to throw a fit about him not respecting her and whatnot. Towards the end, I really didn't care about what happened to her, especially after she still complained about the hero after he saved her life for what I think was the fourth time.

On the bright side, after a while I adored Nathan (he was a bit of an ass in my opinion in the beginning - what with stating that his ex-lovers were always in high demand after he was done with them because men all lusted after his cast-offs for example). I liked who he was hiding deep, deep, DEEP under the ass he let everyone think he was, and his falling in love was cute to watch. His equally rakish bestie though was even more adorable after he fall hard for a good girl, but never mind.

Oh, and btw, does anyone know what happened to (view spoiler) Any chance they show up in any other book? Anyone?? I cared so much more about them than about Nathan and whatshername...

Brooke says

Love love loved this! I really enjoy gender bending stories I had hoped that Georgy's secret would stay secret a bit longer and we would get some major internal reflections from our hero on his sexual preferences but alas I'll take what we got.

Cheesecake says

Nathan the aristocrat and Georgie the 'boy'.

I do like a gal in trousers historical. Usually they require a lot of 'suspension of disbelief', but in this case the author obviously thought about it a lot. What the pit falls would be in making it believable and how you could surmount them.

Before this, the only book I've read by this author was *Unforgivable*, and it is a super angst fest. But this book is much more even handed, and less stressful to read, with a lovely little epilogue.

Georgie and her brother Harry are the rightful heirs to an Earldom. But they need to prove that their parents had actually been married. Harry rides off to the area where the wedding took place, and Georgie disguises

herself as the valet of another aristocrat (Nathan Harland) who will be going to a house party of the very pretender they intend to usurp. Both are determined to find the proof needed, if it hasn't already been destroyed...

The plot has a nice complexity because the author pays attention to how people's actions and jobs connect to each other.

But the story mostly revolves around Georgie and Nathan. The author doesn't drag out Georgie's disguise for too long. But then it is on to the ramifications of the disguise. Georgie keeps her and Harry's and her secret for a long time... but not too long. I mean the story is called, "The Lady's Secret". Even before Nathan knows, the murderous attempts to silence her and her brother have started.

The story is wonderfully romantic even though the MCs have their ups and downs, you can tell that they think the world of each other, even before they realize it themselves. Not to suggest that this is one of those insta love stories... There is a nice gradual awakening between the two of them.

Wollstonecraft homegirl says

I loved Chambers's m/m trilogy (Provoked). And off the back of that, picked this up, despite it containing everyone's least favourite trope: girls dressing up as boys [not a political statement: you do you, Lily Savage. It just never works as a romance plot, except when Pam Rosenthal does it].

I don't remember much about this book, which perhaps speaks volumes. But I remember it being clumsily written, with strange dynamics between the H/h. Their liking or disliking of one another chopped and changed with no real explanation. And the plot was headache inducing.

Great description of boobs though: '*teacup breasts*' (23%)

The stuff that continues to rattle around in my brain long after most everything else has been pushed out is a continuing mystery to me.

willaful says

4 1/2 stars. You know those romance tropes that make you internally go, "oh God no" whenever you see them in a blurb? Everyone has different ones, of course, but chicks in pants is one of mine. Strangely enough, in the right hands those tropes sometimes make the best books -- Heyer's *The Masqueraders* is a long time favorite of mine, and now there's *The Lady's Secret*, which also makes a chick in pants utterly sublime.

Like her actress mother, Georgiana works in a theatre, but is too prone to stage fright to act. But when an opportunity arises to seek the truth about her and her brother's parentage, Georgy has the skills necessary to take on an unnerving role, that of a male valet to the Earl of Harland. Perhaps the most unnerving part of the job is how fascinated she becomes with her employer, discovering that servants are "uniquely placed to observe certain truths," and that there's a different person behind the Earl's fashionable facade:

"Life as a valet wasn't so very different from her life in the theatre. In the theatre, she dressed the actors according to their parts. Dressing Harland in his exquisite clothes was much the same. The naked man she saw each morning started the day silent and introspective. But as he donned his civilized clothing, he

gradually began to assume the mantle of the Earl of Harland.”

In a book primarily about masquerades -- Georgiana in the role of a male valet, Nathan more metaphorically in the role of a cool, supercilious lord -- one of the most striking features of this book is its feeling of authenticity. Carefully crafted details bring even the most minor settings and characters to life: I could believe in Georgy and Nathan because I could believe in the worlds they lived in. (And as an aside, can I mention how pleasant it is to read about secondary characters who are obviously *not* sequel bait, but just exist as part of the story?)

And then, there's a certain reality to their roles as well. Georgina is good at her job, and makes excellent use of the male freedom to employ her body and her strength, and Nathan, without even thinking about it -- without consciously believing he deserves it -- accepts the privileges of being a lord. He is somewhat startled when Georgy points out that in his household, he's like the sun in the sky: "Everything here revolves around you--your wishes, your desires." (I was a little disappointed that there wasn't more follow-up to this aspect of his character and what it might mean for their relationship.

The day-to-day aspects of Georgy's role as a servant are one of the most interesting parts of the book, and come to be one of the most sensual. Intimately caring for a man she's very attracted to -- dressing him, shaving him, massaging his face when he has a headache -- makes for a delicious torture to read about. And quietly competent Georgy becomes fascinating to Nathan as well, both before and after he realizes that she's not a man.

I loved these characters -- so rich, so compelling, without a lot of flash or drama. Especially Nathan, who's a classic example of still waters running deep. The plotting is occasionally a little clunky, but overall the book is astonishingly polished for a debut author. I'd highly recommend it to anyone who loves an intelligent, well told historical romance -- whether or not you love chicks in pants.

(reviewed from e-arc received from netGalley)

Elizabeth says

Pro bono advice: when you're going to reference the theatre and Twelfth Night (especially if you fancy Viola/Cesario as the source of your inspiration) you simply must come up with something that justifies the noble ambition. Similarly, when you include a side story of homosexual love (and the writer seems to specialise in same sex HRs, so you'd expect her to know better) in Britain circa 1810, do take the trouble to spend 10 minutes trying to imagine what it would have been like to be threatened with execution (the awful 'Buggery Act' of 1533 was still in effect in 1810, and homosexual acts/relations between men -for women were thought as without sexuality- were punishable by death). As you must try and imagine what would have been like to be a woman, to be illegitimate, to be 'lower class', etc., in 1810. References to frocks and carriages and Whitby jet don't satisfy anyone but the most insouciant.

I simply find writers who pretend to write historical romances, when in truth they are spinning a hackneyed contemporary and picking a past date to plant it in, very very tiresome. I'd have thought one writes HRs because one is intrigued by the past. And that intrigue commits one to taking that past on its own terms (otherwise it's better left alone). The way idealisations ('romances') and happy resolutions can be obtained from the realities of a past world, must, surely, constitute the main challenge of writing in the genre. Well, it seems not.

The extra star of this review is for the few scenes where the hero (who starts as an interesting character in his own right and ends up as a mere prop mouthing what those who read the relationship advice in Cosmo want to hear) having discovered his valet is a woman, spends some days observing her with scientific-voyeuristic delight. The rest of the time, the book is unevenly paced. It takes ages for something to happen and then, in the last 40 pages, we hit the rush hour where everything happens. Badly pacing your story always makes for a dull read, and the intriguing premise cannot save the day.

P.S. I was surprised to see the author lives in Scotland. Usually British writers in the genre stand out (not in the sense that they are the best, far from it, but in the sense that I can tell they are British). Joanna Chambers' voice sounded very American to me.

Vampire-lk says

AWESOME!!!!!! Love the storyline & characters!!!! Towards the end the language and intimate scenes are more bold than any true regency era novel would of been I.e. Jane Austen & Georgette Heyer as the leading authors of that glorious era!!!! GREAT NOVEL none the less!!!! Love that the in-depth research and use of items & daily lifestyles of both the aristocracy & servants were portrayed!!!!!! Such a fun adventure of a read!!!! :)

Mei says

It's a cute and funny book about a girl who dresses like a man and gets employed as a valet to go sleuthing for proof of hers and her brothers legitimacy.

The best part was when the hero felt attraction for his valet without knowing that said valet is a girl! It was hilarious to read his reactions and his fear of being gay! LOL

Ira says

I didn't realise this author usually write MM romance.

No wonder the part where the hero thought his valet is a guy and he attracted to him and terrifying with his feeling had written so good:)

If you love traditional HR, you probably won't love this book much because the way of our heroine thinking is too modern for her time. I don't mind in this case, no unnecessary angst to trick your emotion in this book and the girl is no fool, she knew exactly what she was doing.

Simply a very entertaining story and I love it for that:)

Vanessa North says

Oh gosh, I finished this book days and days ago, but launched immediately into a proofreading job and just resurfaced from that. SO, it really DIDN'T take me five days to read, it took me less than one, because it was

DELIGHTFUL.

I adore Joanna Chambers's writing, and I adored this crossdressing valet story, from the sex-positive heroine to the queer subplots I just... *happy sighs* this was just great fun from one of my favorite historical romance writers.

D.G. says

I love when an author shows me something new in a genre I know very well.

I have read over 200 historical romance books and I confess I didn't completely understand what being a valet entailed. Well, I learned with this book and let me tell you, I didn't realize it was so much freaking work! Just to put it in perspective, being a valet of a stylish Regency gentleman was like being in charge of wardrobe, makeup and styling of a celebrity who needs to be immaculately dressed twice a day, 7-days a week. Exhausting work, I tell you!

Never fear that the details of the heroine's work as the valet were boring because the author put those things in service of the story. The intimacy and sensuality of dressing (and undressing) a person you find attractive was simply delicious and it served to contrast the public and private personas of the hero.

The cross dressing aspect was extremely well handled. The heroine was very well qualified for the masquerade as a valet given her past as an actress and custom/set designer in the theater. I wish though that we have seen how she developed the character of 'Fellowes' (the valet). We don't know how she came up with his voice, his movements or his impassive face. Our only clue that she can perform as a man is the fact that she is offered the part of the cross-dressing Viola from *Twelfth Night* but performing in a play when everybody knows you're a woman dressing as a man is not the same as doing it in real life.

I also liked how this was handled from the hero's perspective. It took him some time to realize that there was something funny going on with his valet and even then, his subconscious seemed to figure it out before he did. The parts where he knows but she doesn't know he knows are so deliciously naughty and you cannot help but feel some glee at the heroine's surprise when her very manly boss shows a sexual interest in his valet. My only complaint is that this part didn't last long enough. :)

Once the valet masquerade is uncovered and the suspense plot takes more precedence, the book lost some steam and becomes more predictable. Also, the relationship was tied too quickly and I couldn't believe that Harland would fall in love so quickly. I knew why she felt in love with him (she had been lusting and knew the real him for months) but the same couldn't be said for him. That didn't diminish my enjoyment of the story though because at least the hero explained the reasons he loved her and they made some sense.

Overall, a really good historical that I totally recommend.

(Provided for review by Carina Press via netGalley.)

Estara says

Actually I liked the excerpt at Carina Press (why are those always so short?) - but the DA review made me move it up my TBR list, as I am on a regency romance trip at the moment.

I can see the problems that the DA reviewer had with the book but I'm quite willing to read another book by this new-to-me author because I really liked the slowly developing parts of the attraction and the way the development was shown and NOT talked about - because we got both viewpoints (with the angsty hero mainly getting the larger share from when he discovers the true secret of his manservant).

What I personally did not like much is that two people who appreciate each other's intelligence are so unable to talk to each other - and, really, that late realisation of Nathan's (only with the help of his friend) that he loved Georgy was really weak. He also ought to have had to grovel more - the end was much too rushed, although the action sequence with Lady Dunsmore was well scripted.

I could see what attracted the couple to each other, and there was a deft hand with side characters like Lily or Harland's best friend or Osborne. The sex was loving and not too much and not too little. I think this didn't have to be a regency though, as not much of the specific times was used, it could just as well have been Edwardian, Georgian or Victorian.

I really enjoyed the house party parts especially as they showed the life of the servants, or indeed the work a valet does for his lord.

Umm - I think I would have liked a story about Georgy and her friends at the theatre even better. Heh.

K.J. Charles says

Oh my God this was so much fun. Unconventional heroine who enjoys sex, lovely hero who's strong, flawed and communicates, nice twisty lost-heir plot. And very well written, too, nice minor characters. Absolutely delicious.

Preeti ♥? (Romance She Reads) says

An amazing premise with a very promising first 10 chapters or so that show the h masquerading as the H's valet and the H's bewilderment at being attracted to the young man was particularly amusing and fun to read. And so many mm/ff references!

But then after the 'un-masking', it became a routine story about a nobleman H and a h with a decidedly un-tonnish heritage who can be good to bed but not to wed perhaps – interspersed by a simple whodunit and secrets that are right there in full view all the time.

So yes, I felt let down. A 5 plus stars story settles into the 3.5ish category.

Karen Wellsbury says

Most enjoyable romp.

Shades of real old style regency romance here, as well as nice bit of cross dressing.

While not as polished as Enlightenment the talent shines through.

Plot good, characters lovely, moderate sex.

Liked it !
