



Undone by the Billionaire Duke (Harlequin Presents)

Caitlin Crews

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Can she tame the shameless duke?

The brazen antics of Hugo, Duke of Grovesmoor, and the string of women to grace his bed are tabloid gold. But Eleanor Andrews, newly hired to care for the duke's young ward, refuses to see him as anything but her boss. She desperately needs this job. No matter how gorgeous Hugo is, the stakes are simply too high...

Well acquainted with lies and betrayal, Hugo is jaded and cynical, unconcerned with dispelling the salacious rumors about him. But there's something about Eleanor that fires his blood, and he can't turn down the challenge to unbutton his uptight employee!

Undone by the Billionaire Duke (Harlequin Presents) Details

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From Reader Review Undone by the Billionaire Duke (Harlequin Presents) for online ebook

Geraldine Sadiku says

An intense modern romance with a historical twist that added a certain sparkle to the story. Loved it

Vintage says

Count me in too.

This was fun step into a gothic romance complete with a Duke on a horse on the Yorkshire moor, a gothic mansion, the Duke's ward, a stern housekeeper, and a governess clothed in a grey cloak puffy coat set in contemporary times.

Jane Eyre aka Eleanor has signed up to be the fifteenth governess for Hugo the Duke's ward that he inherited from an old stalker. Eleanor is there as governess so she can support her shallow, selfish sister's attempt to capture a rich husband. So Victorian! Victoria Holt vibe with humor.

From the minute Eleanor meets the dark Duke as he charges up on the horse that hates him, he is enthralled. Eleanor, not so much. She gets down to business with the little girl and meets the Duke periodically as he prowls the halls looking for her.

Duke Hugo has some baggage. The world thinks he is a horrible seducer who abused and abandoned the angelic mother of his ward which forced her into his best friend's arms. Although the couple is dead, the tabloids are still trashing him. This was actually the least interesting part of the story.

What was so engaging and charming is Hugo's fascination with Eleanor as well as his banter. I say his banter as Eleanor is a little buttoned down and repressed after living under the electric lamp of her little sister who happily tells the hero how frumpy Eleanor really is when she slithers in for an unwelcome visit.

Not a perfect book, but I was charmed by the eloquence, humor and whimsy of the hero. He's pretty unusual for an HP hero as he knows he's his own cliché. As he rides up to heroine he thinks, *All I need is a billowing cloak*. He's also self-deprecating, charming, whimsical and can't wait to get his lordly hands on the little governess. Even when it looks as if he was betrayed he blows it off without the usual tantrums and arm twisting of a petulant billionaire tycoon.

The seduction scene is nicely done, and there is an extended happily ever after that rings true for the couple and their ward.

Carol Storm says

Did you ever have a nightmare that you just can't wake up from?

I thought that after THE GUARDIAN'S VIRGIN WARD Caitlin Crews would have to improve. Remember,

the first book I ever read by this author was MAN BEHIND THE SCARS. I gave that book five stars, and I would have given it ten if I could have. Tough, scarred hero, sexy, smart heroine, a completely fresh take on some very old and beloved tropes . . . I thought I was seeing the birth of a major, major, Rosemary Rogers type of talent.

Now it's happened again. A book that not only leeched away hours and hours of my leisure time, but that also has me doubting my judgment, my maturity, even my sanity. Because there's no way I could have read what I read. The author who wrote MBTS couldn't possibly have written this. How? How? It's like going from EXILE ON MAIN STREET to GOATS HEAD SOUP.

I don't think I've ever given a negative review to a dedication before. I mean, that's below the belt. When an author dedicates a book to a spouse, or a child, or a pet, it feels mean-spirited and childish to make fun. But this book starts with a dedication to two fellow authors, Nicole and Maisy, and it says that they gave CC the go-ahead to indulge her Gothic cravings in this contemporary Presents. They said fluttering cloaks and rearing horses were okay. They said to "go with it."

With friends like these, Caitlin Crews doesn't need enemies.

Because Hugo sucks. The Duke sucks. The premise sucks. There are many ways to build up a hero, but to have him riding a horse and wearing a cloak when he's obviously a 21st century billionaire just does not do anything but make him look silly. And then he opens his mouth, and it gets worse. Much worse. Again, the catty remarks, the weirdly effeminate put downs, the stuff that made GUARDIAN'S VIRGIN WARD like a trip through hell for me.

Hugo whines. A hero does not whine. Hugo actually expects sympathy because the tabloids said nasty things about him. Like he slept with a lot of women. You know, I can think of thousands of traumatic experiences that would generate more sympathy for a modern hero than this. Losing a friend in combat. Losing a parent to cancer. Losing a sibling in an accident. And on and on. Hugo has absolutely no claim on the reader, nothing. No sign of resilience, courage, humor, no sign of any original personality. It's like in *The Great Gatsby* when Nick hears Gatsby's phony life story and says he pictures some "character" out of a bad pulp novel "leaking sawdust at every pore."

When Hugo meets Eleanor, he pulls rank. Announces himself as a duke. And she's turned on by him because he's rude and he's on a horse and . . . oh, God, please make it stop!

Again, I think back to classic literature. In *KING LEAR*, Kent is in disguise, looking to work for King Lear, who's down and out after his daughters steal his throne. Kent tells Lear, "you have that in your countenance that I would fain call master." Lear asks, "What's that?" Kent replies, "Authority."

Hugo is less like Lear, and more like Joffrey in *GAME OF THRONES*. "I am a king! I am a king!" There's just nothing there to back it up. Never once do we see him deal with his peers, or triumph over any kind of obstacle. He's utterly unreal on every level, except when he's bringing Eleanor to orgasm with his tongue. That part feels real. Nothing else does. And I mean nothing!

Two stars I gave this book, not because of the romance, which is vile beyond any measure. But the nasty little sister Vivi, who has been leeching off Eleanor for years, has a pretty good scene at the end. The sister relationship is about ten times more believable than the romance. That's not saying much, but still.

Maisy Yates and the other lady should have sat Caitlin Crews down for a long talk, about how to create heroes who are compelling without resorting to clichés that provoke nothing but horror and incredulity.

Mary says

[Over all, I loved Eleanor and how she saw the real man behind the tabloid stories, and I loved how Hugo came to care for Eleanor. I *didn't* like that the sister seemed to get away with her actions. She *said* it was to help her sist

Shanelle says

I really loved this one. I haven't enjoyed a 'Mills & Boon Modern' quite as much for quite a while. The hero and heroine reminded me a bit and 'Pride and Prejudice'.

lily waheed says

sexy , damaged duke and virgin , uptight heroine?

Vicky says

Such a promising start and an interesting Gothic tone. It really, really caught my interest but I was disappointed with the ending-I found the main character to be as bad as her sister, and so, so unlikeable and cruel. The happy ending was sudden and came out of left field. Too bad, because I loved the idea of a Gothic influenced harlequin.

Danielle says

3.5 stars

There were some bright spots in this book, but there were also some low moments too. The concept and story was good overall, but I wasn't feeling the romance between Hugo and Eleanor. I just didn't dig them as a couple, and I felt their romance was a little bit unbelievable for my taste. I don't know what it was about them but for the most I didn't like them together really. They just didn't make sense to me, however there were a few moments that I could see the potential between them, but it just wasn't carried all the way through.

They did have interesting chemistry because they did bounce off of each other back and forth from the moment that they met. It was funny and humorous, but some of it didn't quite feel as genuine and a little bit forced. I know it was to keep the tension radiating throughout the story, but I was just not feeling it. I don't know it was strange. They just had a strange feeling to them, and that was kind of felt throughout the story.

One of the stronger points to the story was definitely was the love scenes in the story that was when they made the most sense because they showed incredible passion flaring between them. Their first kiss was

pretty steamy. The library was beyond sexy and full of all the passion fueling the scene. And their love scene was sinful yet sweet and romantic. That was where they thrived and that was just where they fit the most.

Another stronger point of the story was when the sister came to play then the story got really interesting and a lot more engaging. The sister just added another dynamic to Hugo and Eleanor's relationship. It became more complicated and a lot more intense between them. It displayed the true character of Hugo and Eleanor, and it also pushed them closer. This was when Hugo showed his sweet side to Eleanor and actually show some type of feelings towards her.

Other than the story just wasn't my cup of tea. The potential was there, but the romance was just not believable. I didn't believe they were falling in love or were in love. They had a connection for sure but it just wasn't quite as deep and meaningful yet. They were headed there but not there, and that was on both sides. It just didn't give me the feels, which was very disappointing. I just couldn't get behind them as a couple. There just wasn't enough developed in their relationship that I could root for them. It just had something missing, making this just an okay book for me.

Tonya Warner says

Eleanor Andrews is not the beauty in the family. Her sister Vivi is the golden eyed fantasy men looked for. Eleanor is only the one working to keep Vivi in the lifestyle they believe will get her a great marriage match. She also the main one to handle the bills, including the medical bills from when Vivi had survived the crash that took their parents, but left her unable to walk. Being the governess for the child left in Duke of Grovesmoor's care will earn her the income to help them get by.

Hugo is the Duke of Grovesmoor. Having Geraldine in his care is not the burden most believe. But then, most of what had been written about him has nowhere close to the truth. While he ignored the gossip, he also did nothing to reduce the speculation. More likely to give them more fodder to dwell on. Until the new governess appears. And fills a hole in his heart he never knew was there. Finding him when he thought all was lost. Seeing him for the man inside.

A very nice story. Maybe a little quick to end, but overall, a sweet tale.

Sue Child says

I really liked the heroine-on-hard-times-supporting-her-younger-sister beginning, as Eleanor approaches the house where she's to be governess. I also really enjoyed the atmospheric setting, historical tone, and Pride and Prejudice feel of her falling for Groves House.

Hugo, notorious Duke of Grovesmoor, is very easy to fall for despite his 'England's most reviled man' reputation, which felt blown out of proportion even for the tabloids! I don't mind a slightly historical tone in my Presents, but this is a bit too Jane Austen at times e.g. the hero telling the heroine she's far too young to be missish and coy.

Having Eleanor's sister act like the woman who had poisoned Hugo's life and this being the trigger for their emotions to touch is fab. I really felt for Eleanor here. Seeing her through the hero's eyes almost overcame

that she is so on board with her younger sister marrying a rich husband. It made me feel for her sister, Vivi, too. Vivi being a "tabloid bit of arm candy" feels left field as she's not been written quite this way or her actions wouldn't have been such a shock, and Eleanor would have been more concerned about what Vivi might do.

When Vivi sells Eleanor's story, I wished Eleanor had tried to do the decent thing rather than sneak off taking what's left of Hugo's reputation with her. I was glad when she showed remorse for not having the decency to look him in the face.

The Happily-Ever-After happens very suddenly. Which is probably why the epilogue covers several years, as this reader needed reassurance as the conflict wasn't the kind for all parties, including Vivi and Geraldine, to recover from in one scene.

3 Harlequin Presents stars for voice and characterisation that almost makes up for heroine issues, pacing and tone.

Bernice Mills says

I really loved this story. I would have loved it for the heroine alone, but the hero absolutely stole the show. He's so...well, he's sassy and kind of cynical (okay, VERY cynical) and sarcastic in a self-deprecating way. Despairing, too - he reckons it's not worth the trouble to fight what the tabloids say about him, so he's not even bothering.

Seriously, I adored this story.

Storm says

He's a billionaire! And a duke! *facepalm*

OK, I walked right into this one. And believe me, I *love* Caitlin Crews. She's the only author that still gets me to read a typical, cliched Harlequin romance plot, but that ending was nonsensical. I liked the banter between the hero and heroine (Caitlin is great at this - even when the story is lacking, you can always trust her to give you great banter) and even the story was engaging before the last 30 pages on this book. And then I skipped to the end. An otherwise satisfying story if it wasn't for that rushed ending.

More about this ending: it just didn't make sense, for a heroine who is as smart as this one, to do what she did. It's as if we were reading about a completely different person the moment the crisis happened. I wanted better for her. The writing, dialogue and the fact that this is a Harlequin Romance is the only reason it's not a 2-star review.

With that said...*sigh*...I will keep reading books by this author, because it's hard to find contemporary romance authors that can balance cliché with amazing dialogue. In this case, it didn't go so well, but usually she's amazing at it.

Vashti says

Another enjoyable read. Gave off a Gothic vibegoverness to ward off a hated Duke in the wilds of Yorkshire castle setting.

StMargarets says

I loved this one! Thank you Vashti for reviewing this and putting it on my radar.

This is an homage to Jane Eyre and all the other governess/lord of the manor stories in the long glorious history of romance novels. Thank you, Caitlin Crews for giving a nod to this trope – a trope I have loved since the first time I picked up Jane Eyre as an impressionable teenager.

A couple of things out of the way:

First – you will hate this if you hate doormat heroines. Heroine is a doormat when it comes to her sister. Full stop.

Second - you will hate this if you are looking for a typical HP. The characters act and talk and think like they are in a gothic novel. I'm not kidding. I might have been thrown off if I hadn't been warned, so I'm amplifying the warning.

There are the (patent pending) Caitlin Crews thinky thoughts. However, for once they are thinky thoughts of the present moment. No angst dives into the past of child abuse on the streets of Palermo or locked in a closet like other HP backstories.

An example:

“Dare I hope that your unexpected appearance outside my private rooms is an invitation, Miss Andrews?”

Eleanor told herself she was hallucinating. Auditory hallucinations, which were really just another part of a regular old haunting, according to all the scary films she'd seen in her time.

She took her time turning to check. And it was worse than any run-of-the-mill haunting.

Hugo stood there at the other end of the long gallery. And this time, he looked exactly like a duke. Exactly like every fantasy Eleanor had ever had of a man that powerful, for that matter. He was dressed all in black and looked vaguely historical. It took her a shattering beat of her heart or two to realize it was because he wore a top hat that should have looked absurd over a long black cloak that did. Or anyway, should have. Would have, even, had another man worn it.

But Eleanor was very much afraid, as her throat went dry and her stomach twisted into something that wasn't quite anxiety, that there was nothing Hugo could do that was truly absurd. Now when he looked the way he did.

And certainly not when he was looking at her.

“You appear to be dressed as if you've been off visiting Regency England,” she said dryly. And only she had to know that the dryness in her mouth was more physical response to him than any attempt on her part to

sound indifferent.

“Naturally,” Hugo said, as if an agreement. “I’ve been out terrifying the tenants and topping barmaids in my stagecoach.” He raised a brow. “Or possibly I was attending a Halloween party, complete with fancy dress. You must be aware that it’s the end of October.”

She was aware of almost nothing but him. That was the terrifying truth that seared its way through her then, making her entire body feel...different.

So why I liked it:

The tongue-in-cheek tone.

The hero was completely smitten from the beginning with the heroine.

The heroine’s sister was an ambiguously evil character.

No OWs. No slut-shaming. No golddigger slurs. No tragic backstory.

The author stayed in the present with the characters – and for the most part the H/h were in the majority of the scenes.

The hero goes after the heroine after she betrays and flees from him.

The hero’s ward is a sweetie.

The epilogue is adorable and heartfelt. I loved that she kept her puffy coat.

I felt happy when I finished reading this story.

Warning:

Further thinky thoughts about this story and Jane Eyre.

There is a theme within this story about storytelling. The hero is harmed by the storytelling of the tabloids. The heroine is harmed by the narrative she has devised to justify her sister’s selfishness and her survivor’s guilt. The cycle is broken when the hero tells the heroine his real story and when he decides to fight the tabloids. Years later, when his ward reads the gossip about her parents the hero sets her story straight.

Storytelling is powerful – especially when quiet voices are finally heard – when the truth comes out. I don’t think it’s an accident that Caitlin Crews linked the theme of storytelling to the Jane Eyre trope.

Charlotte Bronte wrote Jane Eyre, at a time when women were second class citizens and a husband could literally lock his wife in an attic and no authority could question him. And yet, in the middle of the novel when everything has gone to hell, the prim governess could bravely and defiantly say to Rochester that their souls are equal in the eyes of God. And after many trials and tribulations, she and Rochester **are** equals by the end of the novel (she’s gone up in wealth and status and he’s gone down) to have a true marriage.

Jane Eyre is a romance novel and it’s an empowering novel in many ways. It’s a story told by a woman about her experience in relationships (the good, bad and ugly). Some say it’s a feminist novel – some say no. I don’t think it matters, really. What matters is that Jane’s voice has never been silenced because we keep reading her story generation after generation. Her story is positive. It’s upsetting to the status quo (and yet not destructive). To me, it’s the quintessential romance novel. I suppose that’s why I’ve never been ashamed of my romance reading habits. Jane Eyre taught me that.

Brenda says

I've not had a very good run on the romance books front of late, so when I chanced upon this book that promised of an alpha male and a sweet, non-nonsensical heroine and considering the debut book of this author is one of my favorite books, I decided to read it.

So, we have Hugo, the tabloids favorite monster, the most hated man in the whole of England, due to the salacious rumors spread by a rich ex, a darling of the press, who couldn't digest him breaking up with her after only two weeks of dating, went on to paint him as a villain not only to the press, but also to his best-friend too, with whom she later had a child and also to Hugo's father, who died disappointed in his son. She and the best-friend died in an accident, leaving their child to become Hugo's ward.

Hugo was callous toward these rumors, not allowing them to bother him. Instead of doing something to dispel them, he said and did things only to fuel them. He was having a tough time with his ward's governesses, who were more keen to jump into his bed than take care of his ward. He had to sack fourteen governesses until his housekeeper hired twenty-seven year old Eleanor.

Eleanor, had almost lost her sister, Vivi, who was eighteen months younger to her, in an accident that killed their parents years ago. Vivi was however badly injured in that accident and was told she wouldn't be able to walk again, but surgeries and some sort of miracle had her walking again. Since she was the beauty amongst the two sisters, it was decided by the two that she would socialize and hopefully snag a rich husband someday so that the two of them would be financially set, and until then, Eleanor being the sensible one would be the one working in order to pay their bills. Eleanor was so glad to have her sister alive that she didn't mind the struggle she had to face with low paying jobs and rising expenses of her sister as she partied hard, in the bargain allowing her sister to get away with thinking the whole world revolved around her.

When the sisters get to know through Vivi's high-flying friends about the job of governess to Hugo's seven year old ward and the astounding salary it paid, they decided Eleanor should take the job. Although Eleanor, having read the tabloid gossips about Hugo like everyone else, was at first hesitant to take up the job, her sister convinced her that Hugo wouldn't be staying at the Yorkshire mansion as he was dripping with properties all over the world.

But, Hugo was in residence at the time of Eleanor's joining and happened to come upon her trudging up his drive with her suitcase, when he was out riding. With Hugo being skeptical about all governesses and Eleanor, already having formed an opinion about him from what she's read, the two started off on a bad note despite the spark of attraction between them, exchanging polite barbs and sarcasm with one another at their very first meeting, which continued on for nearly first half of the book. Except for one steamy foreplay, the story kicks into gear only after Vivi visits Eleanor at Hugo's mansion.

Until then, although she'd spoken almost daily to her sister, Eleanor had refrained from mentioning about the opulence she was living in or that Hugo was in residence afraid that her beautiful sister would show up and in her typical, vibrant way wrap Hugo around her finger. And, her sister was indeed unhappy with Eleanor for hiding these facts from her. She immediately started making a play for Hugo, in the bargain being unkind to Eleanor.

It took Hugo to spell it out to Eleanor that her sister's running her down was not simple spouting of thoughtless words, as she'd let herself believe, but pure poison. Because he'd gone through the same thing with Isobel. He'd become a victim of Isobel's poison just like Eleanor had become Vivi's. He then not only confided in her about what Isobel had done to him, but also showed her that he preferred her to her sister. Her sister then seeing she had no chance with Hugo whilst he was enamored with Eleanor, did what Isobel had done to him, going to the press about him taking advantage of his governesses and sleeping with them

not caring that it was not only Hugo's reputation she was ruining, but her sister's too.

So, what does Eleanor do? Despite knowing how betrayed Hugo would feel, despite being aware that her sister didn't do it out of any love or protection for her, she quietly slips out of the mansion in the middle of the night as instructed by her sister, goes back to England and resumes living as her sister's slave, cleaning her sister's mess and telling herself to grin and bear it.

Up until then, I'd passed off Eleanor's judgmental and insolent stance toward Hugo as sass and fearlessness, but after the betrayal, she completely fell in my eyes. She may not have personally spoken to the tabloid, but by cowardly leaving with her sister, instead of staying back and letting Hugo know what was to come, by leaving him alone to bear the repercussions of her sister's action she damned herself in my eyes. Why was it okay to be mouthy with Hugo on the basis of what the monster tabloids had published about him and not with her sister, who she could clearly see was selfish and avaricious?

Nevertheless, I still held on to hope that she'd redeem herself, making allowances for her fleeing to London on account of fear of facing Hugo's wrath, anticipating her sending some sort of apology to Hugo, but was hugely disappointed when she did nothing of the sort. Instead, she made excuses for herself on the basis of him not being a monk and listened to her sister's misconceived opinion of men like Hugo, allowing her to take her to the club to party so as to obliterate the incident, dressing up like her sister which meant showing a lot of skin. I ask, where was her love for Hugo in all this? Forget love, where was her conscience in this? She was expecting her sister to feel remorse for shredding Hugo's reputation to tatters, but never considered how her silence would hurt him. Just because he was a man, and not blood, it was okay to betray him?

From then on, my irritation and anger just surged seeing how callously her betrayal was handled by her, Vivi and Hugo himself. Yes, Hugo too, because of his martyrish stance for readily forgiving Eleanor without any apology from her only because he discovered he loved her and couldn't live without her and she was great with his ward.

Even when Eleanor sees Hugo waiting outside the club at three am, she does not immediately rush to apology to him. She, instead, allows Vivi to get belligerent with Hugo as she told him she was unapologetic about going to the press, going on to excuse her sister's action as not being Vivi's fault cause "she was protecting Eleanor."

Only when Hugo and Vivi tussled over Eleanor going with Vivi or going with Hugo, did Eleanor finally wake up and took the decision to stay and hear Hugo out. Even then, her thoughts were, 'Eleanor could feel was what hung there between them. That tabloid story. Eleanor's innocence. Geraldine. Or the fact she was in love with him, just like a silly, clingy virgin in a story who didn't know enough to guard her own heart. Too many things to bear.'

She still thought just because she wasn't the one to talk to the press, she was innocent in the whole thing. Her apology that finally comes also sounded so half-hearted.

"The tabloids..." She whispered. "Hugo, I'm so very sorry. I don't know how I can ever make it right."
"I don't care about the tabloids."

Eleanor scowled at him. "Well, you should. It's not a small thing to have all these lies told about you. You should care and you should fight," going on to tell him what Isobel had done to him was wrong, "If anyone's a monster, it's that Isobel."

So, with this little defense of him and martyr Hugo going on to take the blame for everything, how he should not have touched Eleanor while she was in his employ even if it was consensual, everything became hunky-dory between them.

I didn't feel any love on Eleanor's part for Hugo. She may hold Vivi and Isobel responsible for ruining Hugo's reputation, not caring how it would hurt him, but I felt she wasn't much different from them. I did not feel any deep sense of guilt or remorse or worry about him being hurt on her part. The very little that was displayed came across as superfluous, as they were just words, not in action. I felt cheated that it was Hugo, who, in spite of being the wronged party, made the first move and not her, that it was he, who made excuses for her, that her apology hadn't got in first.

Although, the epilogue was sweet, it didn't wash away my disappointment, irritation.
