



A Masked Deception

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THE RIVALS

The handsome, dashing, wealthy Richard Adair, the seventh Earl of Brampton, was caught in a most devilishly difficult tug-of-war. Claiming his hand was shy and demure Margaret Wells, who became his bride in an icily arranged marriage designed to produce an heir in a boringly proper alliance. Claiming his heart was a nameless charmer who concealed her face behind a mask and displayed her body in a daring gown as she made the Earl give himself over to a scandalously improper passion. Both of them desperately wanted Richard Adair - and both dreaded to think what would happen should he discover that they were one and the same two-faced lady ...

A Masked Deception Details

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From Reader Review A Masked Deception for online ebook

Sheila Melo says

FINAL DECISION: I really enjoyed the concept of this book and Balogh's characters are always complex and imperfect. My only complaint is that I just could not suspend disbelief that a husband would not recognize his "mystery" woman as his wife. Putting that aside, I thought this was a very intriguing book.

THE STORY: Margaret Wells has loved Richard Adair, Earl of Brampton for years, but he has paid no attention to the quiet, mousey woman. But the time has come for Richard to marry and he figures that Margaret will do well as his wife and not interfere too much with his life. As the two settle into a quiet, if dull, marriage, Margaret cannot help but wish for the passion involved in her greatest secret. Six years ago, Margaret met up with Richard at a masquerade ball. While she was unrecognizable, she flirted and Richard was attracted. The two shared a passionate kiss that hasn't appeared in their marriage. Desperate to change something, Margaret again dons her costume and ends up having an affair with her own husband.

OPINION: This is a complicated book. Richard is dismissive of Margaret in the beginning of the book and frankly acts like a jerk for a good portion. But Balogh doesn't disappoint. Richard reluctantly begins to fall in love with his gentle wife. It is difficult to like Richard because he openly commits adultery, but Balogh's characters are imperfect. I enjoyed the progression Richard makes -- although I think he should have had to confess his transgressions to his wife.

The reason Richard works for me is because Margaret is also an imperfect mistake prone individual. She won't speak up for herself and rather than speaking with her husband concocts a crazy disguise to rediscover the passion she knows is missing from her marriage.

I found this book enjoyable but I didn't like that Richard commits adultery and never has to admit to it.

WORTH MENTIONING: Content warning that this book contains adultery. This book is also a reissue of a 1980s book.

CONNECTED BOOKS: A MASKED DECEPTION is a standalone.

STAR RATING: I give this book 3.5 stars. This review was originally posted on Top10RomanceBooks.com

Janet says

Balogh's very first book -- and it contains elements of all the themes she has written about over the years. Worth tracking down!

Kate says

For what it is (a 1990 penny Harlequin and one of Mary Balogh's first books), this was ok. But compared to modern historicals it's a total mess, and Richard is indeed a dick.

Maggie says

This is so stupid.

María José says

Perfecto, nueva reedición y solo en digital pero merece la pena porque es el primero que escribió o que publicó la autora y me parece genial. La historia principal y las que la acompañan son muy románticas, y muy buena narración dentro del género de Regencia, como siempre. Como siempre mi única pega es que no lo publiquen en español pero lo he podido leer perfectamente y lo he disfrutado mucho.

Maria says

I am re-reading my Mary Balogh books in order of publication, and this one is the first that I have as it was published in 1985. On the second reading, I found the plot slightly contrived but still interesting, and the writing not quite as polished as I have come to expect, but still well worth the re-read. I didn't put it down until I was done, so I guess that says it all.

tacitus says

I know a lot of people really dislike the hero in this story, and I can understand why. He does NOT appeal to modern sensibilities, but we have to remember that Balogh is trying to be realistic to the time period. Not only was it normal for men to have extra-martial affairs, many wives expected and even demanded it. Marriages were business contracts, more often than not. A romance that leads a hero to discard his assumptions is, in my opinion, far more intense and romantic than if the hero had never had such inclinations to begin with. You will see this to a much greater degree if you read *The Obedient Bride*, which I highly recommend.

Emily says

The central conceit of this story is kind of fun -- the mask, the hidden identity etc. But I really think the author misses some interesting opportunities. Like our hero doesn't really seem to examine his conflicted heart that much. He gets over his "angel" super quickly, but it could be more interestingly explored.

But much more upsetting is what a dill-weed he is. Let's review a few things. His approach to sex with his wife is rapey and inconsiderate and gross. Sure it is supposed to be a period piece, but there are plenty of anachronisms (like the explicit descriptions of sex) so she could make it less awful. It could be dispassionate without being so rapey. Next: He goes off and sleeps with his mistress. Then has an affair with "angel." It says he's tortured and guilty but that aspect isn't really explored. Meanwhile our heroine is supremely boring and self-sacrificing, and our hero loves her mostly because she orders good meals. Considering they're HIS servants it seems like he could have been doing that for years. The only remotely interesting moment is when she confronts him about his hypocrisy, which abruptly ends when he shoves his tongue down her throat.

Linda says

Why, Mary, why?

This is Mrs. Balogh's first published romance from 1985. I read the original paperback: I am not sure if she made changes to the Kindle format. She possibly did since one GR friend gave it five stars and another one gave it three. I believe I am very generous with one star.

Please, *please* only look at my *spoiler* -and indeed, **I rant!**-if you have NO intention of reading the story.

In the first chapter it was revealed that Richard Adair, Earl of Brampton, had finally given in to his mother's constant requests to marry. *Together*, they settled on the quiet Miss Margaret Wells unaware that Brampton had met her years before at *a masked ball*. Incognito. She had used a French accent when she spoke to him. They kissed "very thoroughly" outside on the veranda, he left to get her a lemonade and upon his return, she was gone.

Six years later.....

(view spoiler)

What an emotion-fest. Blech. Ptooeey. Gah!!!! I. Need. Chocolate.

Renaë says

Not enough groveling.

Jan says

This book was originally published in 1985. And while I'm a huge, huge fan of Mary Balogh (I think she's an incredible writer), this was my least favorite book so far...perhaps because it was written at the beginning of

her career.

I've read a LOT of her books and they always earn '5' stars. I've read several of her books twice :)

The hero was---how can I say this delicately? He was an arrogant ass.

There. I said it. I could find no redeeming qualities in him.

But you might feel very differently, so as always, take my opinion with a grain of salt :)

Laura Levada says

Eu fiquei horrorizada com esse suposto romance, e só terminei a leitura por 3 razões, primeiro é um livro escrito pela Mary Balogh, de quem sou fã de carteirinha e esse mês mesmo li mais um livro dela 5 estrelas que me arrebatou e entrou para minha lista de favoritos. Segundo lugar porque era pequeno e terceiro porque eu queria ver como esta porcaria iria terminar.

Que livro horrível, o mocinho é um idiota, mal resolvido, "traidor de uma figa". A mocinha uma molenga, com sangue de barata nas veias e na minha opinião sem nenhum amor próprio. Leva uma estrela exclusivamente pelo irmão do mocinho que era divertido e muito mais homem que o irmão.

*Nota, descobri lendo a resenha de uma colega leitora, que esse foi o primeiro livro da autora, e portanto a gente dá um desconto e perdoar essa falha.

Ileana Hernandez says

What did I just read?

So that was not your typical romance book. I bought this book late at night when I thought the concept sounded good. However once I started to read it in the light of day it proved to be very overwrought. I finished it out of pure curiosity, but was horrified by the ending. It starts off slow and there's a lot of explanations about why the protagonists can't just talk to each other. Then at the end they blow up and everything comes out in an awful bout of make up sex.

Honestly, though I can't see why this couple loves each other. She loves him because he kissed her scandalously at a masquerade ball and he loves her because she's the perfect Victorian wife? In fact if anything she should fall out of love with him after all the bad sex. But she's such a paragon of patience she still loves him and forgives him even though none of their issues get solved.

I gave it 2 stars because at least I could finish it. Hope to forget it soon.

Leigh says

3.75 stars!

Theme: Regency era, ugly duckling, spinster heroine, notorious rake Hero, outwardly stoic heroine (but very

passionate inside lels), masquerade, Hero had sex with OW (even when he's married)

I know that many would not like romances where Heroes had sex with OW. I don't like it too but reading romances settled in pre-21st century such as Regency, I have to have a fight with objectivity and subjectivity that men in this era kept mistresses (and it was somewhat a norm). I want my H to be perfectly faithful but sometimes I have to bend my own preferences when the plot was right IMO lels.

heroine = she was the eldest child of a gentleman (neither with wealth nor title) but with impeccable lineage. She was brought up by strict and rigid parents so she was somewhat stoic (yet very passionate e.g. when she's alone she rode astride). To me she screams like "I am a proper lady!" no matter what happens.

She had 5 seasons already so she considered herself as spinster and wore a cap (to emphasize her point probably haha). She had a secret though, during her first season she met the Hero in a masquerade ball and she got to experience some hard kiss and a light foreplay. And so she knew that there was something about a passion between a man and a woman. A very different lesson she learned from what she knew since growing up.

Hero = he was an Earl and a very known playboy, jumping bed to bed preferring women with experiences (eg married). He saw the heroine dressed as Marie Antoinette at the masquerade and was drawn to her. He called her "angel" and they had a passionate encounter. But instances did not let him see her again that night even to get her name. In the years to come, they met in her "original" form in gatherings without him knowing that the heroine was his "angel".

Now, the Hero needed to get married. He was pestered by his mother and sisters. And the choice was the heroine because of her manners and impeccable lineage despite her wealth and social status (neither with wealth nor title). And so our Hero proposed to our plain heroine which she heartily accepted.

Hero + heroine = so they got married and the heroine hoped that the Hero knew about their encounter years ago lels! But nope. The wedding night was horrible! Even though the heroine was taught that coupling was for producing heirs (proper ladies must endure it when husbands visited their beds), she was so disappointed and hurt because he neither kissed nor caressed her.
(view spoiler)

And our Hero was of course being a man in his era, turned to his mistress and lustily shagged her many times (lelelels). He justified to himself that it was a common practice to show their passion and lust to their mistresses than their wives (who had delicate sensibilities).

But then he felt wrong. She was so good to him and she was a good countess as well. And it was wrong to hurt her like this - seeing/keeping his mistress. So he ended his relationship with his OW. Now, the heroine's sister knew about the masquerade thing and that the h loved the Hero. So, she came up with a plan that her big sister should go wear a mask and see what happened next if she and the Hero met again.

And so the masquerade where the Hero and his "angel" met again and again.

(view spoiler)

The Hero had a new mistress and he did not know that it was his wife. Although he noticed the similarities of body built, he was so obsessed with this angel and that his wife was a proper woman that he perhaps unconsciously disregard the same qualities of both women (smell, mannerisms, etc). One night, they both decided that their relationship had to end. She was in love with his husband and the Hero discovered & confessed that he loved his wife (despite her plainness). Their parting was sweet and heartbreaking.

Hero wanted to made love to his wife but afraid that she would despise passionate intimacies because of her upbringing (proper ladies' upbringing actually). And heroine was afraid to tell Hero that the "angel" was her.

Events happened that the Hero discovered his wife's secret (FINAAAAALLYYYY!!!). They fought and was particularly surprised that his wife had a fire. She accused him of having affair with OW. And she was honest when she told him that she hated every time he visited her bed (doing his husbandly rights) and felt that he was cold and mechanical when she knew how passionate he was. And they had passionate make up sex lelelelels! The end. Bow. Lelelelelels.

What I liked about this one was the Hero came to lover the heroine in her plainness. heroine did not change her style (she lowered the bodice of her clothes, she changed her hair, etc etc etc) and yet because of her being calm and proper that the Hero loved her. It was unlike with other romance novels with ugly duckly themes where Heroes fell in loved with heroines when they became beautiful, sexy, etc etc. Plus Hero was a human being who made mistakes. Even though it was a norm to see other women discreetly, he was still conflicted about his actions.

Oh there was also a secondary or perhaps a third romance story in this book. I just didn't like that characters were thrown and their story was shown - it's kinda annoying actually. Lels. heroine's sister was alright (though sometimes irksome to me) and I really thought she deserved her own book lels!

As I say, this book isn't for anyone who liked their Heroes to be perfect and faithful to their heroines.

Yui says

I think this one's hero is a jerk. I've always preferred jerks to soft-hearted weakling except in this case. I more attracted to innocent young Ralph in Gentle Conquest than I am with Richard. Hmnn.. Maybe I should change the stars? A Masked Deception just seem more active than Gentle Conquest. I enjoyed them both but decided on 3 stars here because it seem to have more happenings than the quiet but no means boring everyday life portrayal in GC. Back to Richard, I did not hate him really and am quite convinced of his romance with Meg but I find myself applauding Meg at the end for how quickly she forgave Richard. It isn't surprising really given Meg's character but I don't think I can forgive him as easily. Good for Richard that it is Meg he married and not me then, huh? *grins* Still I was happy for them afterwards. Again I just wish there was an epilogue.

*Decided on 2stars after all because I found out I have to try very hard to remember the story for this even though I've just finished reading it.
