



# The Emperor's Conspiracy

*Michelle Diener*

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**The Emperor's Conspiracy** Michelle Diener

**From nineteenth-century London's elegant ballrooms to its darkest slums, a spirited young woman and a nobleman investigating for the Crown unmask a plot by Napoleon to bleed England of its gold.**

Chance led to Charlotte Raven's transformation from chimney sweep to wealthy, educated noblewoman, but she still walks a delicate tightrope between two worlds, unable to turn her back on the ruthless crime lord who was once her childhood protector.

When Lord Edward Durnham is tapped to solve the mystery of England's rapidly disappearing gold, his search leads him to the stews of London, and Charlotte becomes his intriguing guide to the city's dark, forbidding underworld. But as her involvement brings Charlotte to the attention of men who have no qualms about who they hurt, and as Edward forges a grudging alliance with the dangerous ghosts of Charlotte's former life, she faces a choice: to continue living in limbo, or to close the door on the past and risk her heart and her happiness on an unpredictable future.

## The Emperor's Conspiracy Details

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Author : Michelle Diener

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Romance, Fiction, Historical Romance, Regency, Historical Mystery

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# From Reader Review The Emperor's Conspiracy for online ebook

## Kaetrin says

I have both of Michelle Diener's other books on my TBR pile. When the chance came to review this book, I was keen because, apart from the beautiful cover, I knew it would force me to move this author up in the queue—something I had been meaning to do. Review books get priority! :) The conspiracy of the title is actually true—Napoleon did try to bankrupt Britain by stealing all of their guineas. Who'd have thunk?

I went into the book thinking it was a romance but it isn't really. It's an historical novel with romantic elements. Perhaps if I had understood that going in, I would have enjoyed the book more but as it was, there wasn't quite enough relationship to satisfy this romance reader's soul.

Charlotte Raven was the daughter of a rookery whore, sold to a chimney sweep at age four and rescued from that life at age 12 by a wealthy Ton widow. Charlotte helps people from the slums by giving them jobs in her household and she still has close ties to Luke Bracken, now a crime lord. Luke and Charlotte had a very close and unhealthy relationship, parts of which were quite problematic for me. Luke isn't presented as a particularly 'good' man. Even the close eye he keeps on Charlotte isn't merely for her protection and he's not shy about murder.

Lord Edward Durnham provides discreet assistance to the Crown and is tasked to investigate the smuggling of vast amounts of guineas from England. His path crosses with Charlotte (which he is glad about) and Luke (by which he's less than pleased). Charlotte and Edward begin to fall in love (but remember, this is not a romance so don't expect the usual romance story arc) as they work to solve the puzzle of who is behind the smuggling.

I enjoyed the second half of the book more than the first but I felt that the end was somewhat abrupt. There are a lot of things I would have liked to know more about—particularly about the fallout regarding the smuggling conspiracy. Recommended for readers who like historical novels with a touch of gentle romance.

This review first appeared on the ARRA blog at <https://australianromancereaders.wordpress.com>

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## Julia says

This book's heroine either needed to be a lot less anachronistic in her attitudes and experiences or the book a lot less staidly historical. The love triangle, such as it was, wasn't compelling either. MY LORD AND SPYMASTER has a heroine with a similar background, but the narrative works to make it believable (or at least match the tone and believability of the rest of the world).

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## Stephanie (Bookfever) says

The Emperor's Conspiracy is a brilliantly written Historical Fiction with a dash of romance. Not only did I love the entire novel, I was completely entranced by the amazing plot, rich details and striking characters that

sucked me right into nineteenth-century London until the very last words.

This story is about Charlotte Raven, who once was a poor chimney sweep until Lady Catherine Howe took her in after Charlotte became trapped in her chimney. Charlotte never lost her ties to the streets though. She continued seeing her childhood friend and ex-lover Luke Bracken who grew to be a bitter and ruthless crime lord, even so Charlotte could never really get it over her heart to shake herself loose from him, nor he from her. They shared a tight bond.

When Charlotte meets Lord Edward Durham, a secret agent for the Crown, she immediately feels attracted to him, which surprises her more than anything, since she has never allowed any man close to her after Luke. Through events she finds herself in the middle of a conspiracy that threatens England. Charlotte has to walk between both worlds to find out what really is going on. That's where things really start to get dangerous. Murder, intrigue, danger and passion follows.

I was hooked instantly by Michelle Diener's writing. So wonderful to read. Not to mention fast paced and detailed. I was truly blown away. The story, setting, characters and mystery kept my attention non-stop. I felt compelled to keep on reading and reading. Even into the middle of the night when I knew I should've been sleeping. I kept turning page after page and saying to myself; "Just one more chapter..."

I love complex characters and there were quite a few in *The Emperor's Conspiracy*. Charlotte was my favorite character. She was an amazing heroine to read about. Beautiful, strong, independent, straight forward, smart and very loyal to her friends. Everything a good heroine needs. I loved her bond with Luke, although one might see their relationship as unhealthy or messy, and yet I loved to see them together in scenes, interacting. Even so, I liked Charlotte and Edward together even more. I loved Edward! He was pretty amazing. Protective, handsome and intelligent. I just fell completely for him. Luke on the other hand was very intense, bitter, fierce, wanting Charlotte for his own, obsessive even. He wanted so much for Charlotte to love him, when she'd never love him in any other way than a friend or family. So, yes, that was pretty sad for him even though I was immensely rooting for Charlotte and Edward. My sympathy for Luke will never go away.

This book is based on real facts and events, which I just love because I'm such a history geek. I totally devoured it all.

The ending of this novel was a little inconclusive as to where her relationship with Edward would go. So I sincerely hope there will be a second instalment. But even with the inconclusive ending, I liked it. Charlotte finally had sort of freed herself from the ghosts of her past. So this was a very good ending in my opinion. I loved the romance between Charlotte and Edward. It wasn't overdone or anything, even if sometimes it verged more on lust. They made such a good and beautiful couple. They really had the electric attraction. But like I've mentioned before, it was inclusive if they would make it or not. But I do hope so. I have to say, there are some tough topics in this book that are definitely Rated R. Just a little warning there for the sensitive readers.

So, it's obvious how in love I am with this book. It's a new personal favorite of mine and I'm definitely not hesitating to read the other books by Michelle Diener for she has gained a new fan with me. I'd recommend *The Emperor's Conspiracy* to anyone who loves historical fiction or romance books with a suspense twist to it. Even if you're not a fan of this genre, I would ask you to read it, because this novel is absolutely brilliant.

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## Marg says

When Michelle Diener contacted me to offer a review copy of this book, I was interested, but mainly because Michelle lives in Australia and therefore I could count this book for several challenges. And then I noticed that Amy from Historical Fiction Virtual Tours was running a tour for the book. I volunteered because then not only would I intend to read it, I would actually read it and in a timely fashion! The thing is though, by the time I finished the book, I was happy to have read the book, not because of challenges or impetus to read, but because in the end this was a really good read!

The book opens with a scene that is quite unusual. A London lady finds herself with a chimney sweep stuck up her chimney because the sweep had grown too large, and the sweep is abandoned by her master because if the sweeps can't work, then he can't afford to feed them.

Fast forward a number of years, and we are introduced to Charlotte Raven. She is a young lady who is mostly at ease in the glamorous world of the ton but equally at home in the rougher parts of London. She is something of an oddity in the ton, because she is ward to a well respected lady who took her into her home and introduced her into the rarefied ways of the ton. She is also unusual in the stews because she is one of the lucky ones, one of the people who climbed out of a life of poverty. Charlotte is acutely aware of her own good fortune and does her best to help others get a start on a better life if they are prepared to make the necessary changes.

To read more head to

<http://www.theintrepidreader.com/2012...>

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## Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

This was a very poorly written book, with an incredible, inconceivably perfect Mary Sue of a character, with inexplicable insta-love. It is categorized under such genres as "Historical Romance," "Mystery Thriller." Both, all, really, would be wrong. I would like to suggest another genre under which this book should be shelved. **"Terrible."**

I don't always have to like the main character in order to love the book, but more often than not, the main character and his or her gradual development makes or breaks a novel. **In this case, the novel is irretrievably shattered by the fucking unrealistic paragon that is Charlotte Raven.** Before you decide whether to read this book, I would like to present to you some facts about Charlotte, which should be useful for you in deciding whether to try this book out for yourself or not.

- She was born and raised a street urchin and chimney sweep until she became stuck in one at the age of 12. Our extremely fortunate girl-in-disguise chimney sweep is then abandoned by her employee, still stuck headfirst within the chimney, and adopted and made the heiress of a wealthy society peeress, Lady Howe.

- Somehow she has managed to pass flawlessly as a society lady without anyone being the wiser, despite having grown up in the streets. **She is equally at home in a back alley as in a society ball.**

- She not only balances life as a society woman (whose character is beyond reproach, "unimpeachable," "irreproachable," while maintaining a double life in the grimy seeds of the London underworld for 12 years, without the Ton being any wiser to her low connections and base beginnings.
- She figures out the clandestine occupation of a Lord, which he has kept secret for years, within a day of meeting him, with no clues whatsoever
- She has no last name, but is so named by her fellow urchins as a child because her hair is "**as black as a raven's wing.**"
- She is stunningly beautiful, intelligent, and observant. She literally has no faults throughout the course of the book.
- *"I [Charlotte] became Luke's lover because it was the only thing he wanted, and it seemed wrong to deny him when he had done so much. **I was twelve years old.**"*

I am not slut shaming. I am only stating it for the preposterousness that it is. It is even more so when both said criminal mastermind of the Rookeries (Luke) and a high-born nobleman, Edward, both fall senselessly in love with her. Luke has been in love with her since he was 16 and she 12. Edward, our stoic, politically-minded nobleman, falls for her intrigue within hours of their encounter, despite smelling that something just ain't right.

*"...he'd thought there was something about her—a cheekiness, a liveliness that reminded him of the streets."*

**There is no character development. None.** The characters make grand speeches about change, about love. It means nothing, because the evidence of how their character develops and mature is just not there.

*"No. I've chosen to be myself. To follow my own heart for a change. I don't think I ever have."*

**That is bullshit.** In the events of the book, it is complete and utter bullshit. It is a grand speech with nothing to back it up. As far as we see in the book, **Charlotte does whatever she fucking pleases.** That is a beautiful, grandiose statement that I quoted from her, and grandiose is all it is, because it is full of hot fucking air and completely lacking in fact.

Let's recall, shall we, that Charlotte has **chosen** to lead a double life. She was not forced to choose one nor the other. Charlotte has been given free reign to do whatever she fucking pleases, by both her wealthy guardian, and by her overprotective crime lord who would slaughter people at the drop of a hat if they dared so much as to harm a hair on her head. There is no self-denial here, no tragic martyrdom. Charlotte is the luckiest bitch ever born.

The mystery is supposedly based on real historical events, Napoleon's plan to control England's gold resources. It is absurd, the way the mystery unfolds has no rationality, it is too dependent upon *deus ex machina*.

Aside from the obvious characterization failings of the book, there are two other faults with it that keeps it from any semblance of being even a merely "good" book. Like with the characters, the plot is completely filled with telling, not showing. We are expected to believe this happened, that that happened, we are not shown and demonstrated as to how such and such happened. I would have loved to read about Charlotte's transformation: it does not happen. There is no fucking *My Fair Lady* moment in this book that would make

me believe or empathize with Charlotte.

**It truly is all telling, no showing.** We are supposed to swallow, deep-throated and choking, the fact that Charlotte completes her upper-class education and passes for a society lady without any proof whatsoever. We are supposed to believe that Lord Edward is a nobleman, and a gentleman spy, well-educated, a fucking Renaissance Man, with no evidence whatsoever. We are told she does this, she uncovers this. He does this, he discovers this grand fucking plot, and expected to swallow it, hook, line, and sinker, without evidence. **It is a fucking insult to my intelligence.**

Oh, my. This review is just getting angrier and angrier as I go along, isn't it?

The other fault is with the writing, the dialogue. The writing itself is decent, although it contains some really weird metaphors that just left me wrinkling my forehead. **What I cannot overlook is the atrocious dialogue.** The dialogue is completely inconsistent. We have Cockney street accents with a dropped H in one word, and a completely pronounced H in the next. We have modern contractions and phrases, coupled with archaic speech. We have usage of the word "Daddy." In Regency London.

I'm just glad to have finished this terribad book so I can delete it and save the wasted space that it presently occupies on my Nook.

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**Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says**

**Read This Review & More Like It On My Blog!**

I hate to damn *The Emperor's Conspiracy* with faint praise, but the best adjectives I can come up with to describe it are: Decent. Okay. Not bad. Adequate. I was entertained, but never invested or engrossed in the story. All in all, it was an alright novel with less than perfect characterization. It also wasn't the exciting mystery I had hoped to get, and at times this read much more like a historical romance than a historical fiction novel... but it wasn't horrible. It just wasn't a great read for me, personally, though I can easily see why others might feel differently when it comes out later this year. It can be entertaining and amusing, but the flat characters, the cliched love triangle, and the third person limited POV didn't do much to make me fully invested, either. I didn't hate it and I would probably read another novel from this author -- especially since she has two Tudor-era novels, which is much more my forte than Regency England -- but this one, plain and simply, just didn't live up the inner expectations I had for it. (Yep, damning with faint praise it is.)

Easily started and finished in the same day, this Regency-era look at Britain and the main characters of Charlotte Raven and Lord Edward Durnham came off as somewhat cliché in several areas. I will say this for it: it reads quite easily and quickly. There's the down on her luck lady with a checkered past, caught between the crime lord she owes her survival to and the Lord who wants her for independence, fiery will, and humor. Unfortunately, these are all pretty shallow characters and their interactions across the board come off as formulaic and predictable throughout the novel. Neither Charlotte, nor Edward, or Luke, really get the time and attention they deserve. And what we do know about them is told to the reader, instead of shown by their actions or dialogue. They might be interesting, but they are sadly one-dimensional.

There's much more time and pages spent setting up a contest over protagonist Charlotte's affections than there is time spent on constructing a good conspiracy, or y'know, actually moving the plot along. Complete with one of my least favorite plot devices, instalove (honestly, what draws Charlotte and Edward together so

fast? I read the damn thing and I can't tell you), *The Emperor's Conspiracy* falls victim to many easily avoidable traps. The plot takes way too long to kick in due to the first hundred pages being big on setting the scene, establishing the smallish cast of characters and their respective relationships. In a book of only 320 pages for the final edition, that is too long without any momentum or action or revelations about the conspiracy at the heart of everything. The overall antagonist lacks a presence and I found the red herrings to be obvious as well as the final reveal. A little more subtlety or more authorial sleigh of hand would have gone a long way to making the conspiracy of the title more riveting.

For all my issues, I did like this for a couple reasons: it actually introduced me to some new facts about Britain and Napoleon's long-lived enmity for the country. Luke's experiences in the prison hulks was something I had never ever heard of, and gave his plotline a little more life than the others had. Also, the fact that the conspiracy Diener writes of is based in actual fact. That is fascinating to me; much more so than the scant attention it warrants here -- until the final 50 pages, that is. If there had been more interaction and attention spent with that aspect of the novel, rather than the pissing contest over Charlotte's time and attention and all people watching people watching *other* people *for* other people, I would've found myself giving this at least a 3.5/3.75 stars instead of merely a three.

The ending was nicely handled, and for once with this book, it didn't go the way I had predicted. The open-ended nature of the last page leaves room for maneuvering and a possible sequel, which is totally alright with me. I may have been less than enthused with my first experience with Michelle Diener's writing, but it probably will not be my last.

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### **Jen Adams says**

Very light and easy read. If you're looking for historical fiction that takes you away from your own world for a few hours, this is it. Not something that will sit in the best books of all time but hit the spot, which is why I go 4 stars.

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### **Blodeuedd Finland says**

It started so good..and yes it continued to be that good! :D

It was a nice mix of historical fiction, suspense, mystery and romance. Charlotte the heroine was no simpering miss of the ton. She used to live in the slum, daughter of a whore, worked as a chimney sweep but was saved by a nice lady and raised as her ward. While still be connected to the underworld. Oh yes I loved that premise at once.

In this story there is a mystery too. Gold smuggled out of England and a Lord who tries to figure out the plot. A Lord who become the romantic interested of our cool heroine. As he is not one of those silly Men of the ton who wants her dowry and are all talk. And it works, because they do not fall at once, they do not even like each other at once. It's a story that will take time.

A good mystery, evil guys, flirting and the underworld. Yes that other thing I liked. She has an old friend, Luke who is now a crime boss and it just brought something new and very fresh to it. A woman torn between two worlds, dividing loyalties and a plot that kept it going. It was a book that was hard to put down, easy to

read and suddenly I had read it and wanted more.

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## **Tammie says**

The Emperor's Conspiracy is a blend of historical fiction and mystery with some romance. Historical mysteries are one of my favorite types of reads and I thought this one was well done. I liked that it wasn't too heavy on the romance, there were a couple of times I thought it might go there but it didn't. My only complaint would be that it ends too abruptly.

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## **Erin says**

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot...>

Sixth months. That is how long I eyed Michelle Diener's work before getting my hands on a copy. The premise intrigued me, but even after buying the book I was hesitant. I had never encountered Diener's in my literary wanderings before and despite my optimism, I was nervous the piece wouldn't live up to my expectations. As it turns out I needn't have worried. I found The Emperor's Conspiracy both a satisfying and enjoyable read. Fair warning, there are spoilers ahead.

Still with me? Fantastic. First and foremost I love how Diener incorporated a real event into her fiction. At first glance Napoleon's attempt to destroy the English economy by exporting gold guineas sounds entirely too far-fetched to be true but then again, the best historic events are the ones that don't seem at all possible. Diener got a lot of points not only for exposing me to an event of which I was previously unaware, but also for the creativity she exhibited in adapting it to her fiction.

As for the fictional premise, well a chimney sweep turned noblewoman was and is a little too implausible for my taste, but I will say it made Charlotte's adventures into the rookeries relatively believable. Don't misunderstand, I really liked how it all played out, but the amateur historian in me wasn't exactly jumping for joy. It is a delightfully fun idea, but lacking the authenticity I look for in historic fiction and though I expected this going into the book, I wanted to share this personal preference in my review as it helps explain the rating I ultimately issued and serves as a bit of a warning to those who prefer weightier historic pieces.

Now I want to talk about character analysis, or rather one particular character analysis: Luke Braken. Oh my goodness, I love this guy. Driven, dedicated, resourceful, I'll admit he is a little warped, but I still can't get over the depth Diener put into him. At first his possessive regard for Charlotte annoyed me, but he became increasingly fascinating as more and more of his background came to light. Then came the moment. "You want to talk to me about the thousands starving in the stews, while nobs like you ride past them in carriages that cost enough to keep them for life? You want to talk about the Hulks, and Old Bailey, where they lock up children as young as six years old, punishing them as if they were adults, all for take a scrap or two to feed themselves or their families? You want to stand there and tell me I betrayed England? No, Lord Nob, England has betrayed me." In that passage he became something entirely different; wounded, complicated, provocative, memorable. Did I mention I loved this character?

By contrast Charlotte and Edward left me wanting. Our heroine was interesting enough, but she never had that defining moment. She spends most of the story trying to keep a foot in each world and though she

ultimately stands up and declares she will no longer live to please those around her, the moment is significantly subtler than Luke's, almost anticlimactic by comparison. Edward's journey is similarly bland. Like Charlotte's, it never stuck the chord I wanted it to.

So, will I be reading Diener again? Without a doubt. The Emperor's Conspiracy definitely isn't your average regency romance, that's for sure. An entertaining series of imaginative story lines interwoven with a complex historic mystery, perfect for any lover of light historic fiction.

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## Olga Godim says

*This review was originally published at StoryCircleBookReviews:*

<http://www.storycirclebookreviews.org...>

A spy thriller intertwined with a romantic triangle, set in Regency England, with a peek into high society, a whiff of the gutters, and a dollop of blackmail. Such a recipe couldn't fail but produce an engaging tale of history and mayhem.

The heroine Charlotte was the daughter of a whore. The girl worked as a chimney sweep since she was four, but at twelve, luck smiled at her: she was adopted by Lady Catherine. Since then, Charlotte has lived in two worlds. While the ton knows her as a reserved society miss with the impeccable reputation, her friends from the stews call her Charlie. She visits her former rookery often and helps as many of her former mates as she can: with work or money.

Circumstances bring her in contact with Edward, a wealthy nobleman working for the Crown. Sparks of interest and desire ignite between them, but before they can explore their mutual attraction, they must untangle a treacherous conspiracy that threatens not only Charlotte's life but also the security of England. While Edward is searching for the traitors, Charlotte battles the ghosts of her childhood. Her heart is torn between her sisterly affection for Luke, her former sweetheart and the current crime boss of London, and her emerging love for Edward. Edward's work for the Crown pitches him against Luke, so both men pull her in the opposite directions.

In turns charming and sensible, kind and surprisingly ruthless, Charlotte struggles to reconcile her unfolding feminine passion with the unbreakable ties of her past. She can't betray her friends, she can't forfeit Luke, her soul brother, but she wouldn't abandon her hopes for happiness with Edward either. While she is trying to balance her double life, the villains are poised to strike, and Edward is running out of time.

I seriously doubt the historical authenticity of this novel (I mean, come on: a chimney sweep becoming a lady), but I enjoyed Charlotte's non-stop adventures all the same. The pacing is furious, as misfortunes pile up on both her and Edward from the first page. The depiction of poverty-stricken London slums digs for the reader's empathy, but despite the inventiveness of the plot, the emotional impact of this novel is not as strong as it could've been.

The problem lies in characters. Characterization is a weak point of this book. All the characters, including Charlotte, are interesting sketches, with lots of potential for depth that hasn't been fully realized. And that detracts from the value of this novel. Flat dialog doesn't help either.

Still, the novel reads fast, captures attention easily, and provides a few hours of pure escapism for the reader, like an adventure flick on TV. Hence, **3 stars**.

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## Rabidreading says

***\*\*Find this and other reviews at [The Demon Librarian book blog](#)\*\****

I cut my reading teeth on historical romances. I can still remember the first time my mom put a Victoria Holt book into my hands, and later, when my older sister and I discovered the joys of Georgette Heyer. To this day, I've got a soft spot for the genre.

The Emperor's Conspiracy is a very different type of historical novel. Set in England during the Napoleonic Wars, it contains the usual lords and ladies, balls and gowns, and of course the threat of scandal if you so much as breathe wrong. But don't be fooled. This isn't your typical Regency novel. From its very first pages, The Emperor's Conspiracy plunges you into society's seething underbelly, where plots and secrets and dubious alliances abound. It's a gritty tale, one that doesn't shy away from showing us just how dark this world can be. It's a bold move on the author's part, and I applaud Michelle Deiner for writing a story with actual meat and bones instead of a fluffy, and ultimately insubstantial, historical romance.

There is, I suppose, what you could call a love triangle, but once again, the author takes the road less traveled. Instead of subjecting us to the usual "torn between two lovers" nonsense, it is made clear, pretty early on, that while Charlotte and Luke may share a very complicated history, there is no chance of a romance between them. That doesn't mean, though, that their relationship doesn't play a big role in the book, because it does. In fact, without Luke, I'm not sure there would be a story at all. He's a key player in everything that happens. He just isn't the right leading man for Charlotte.

Edward, on the other hand, most definitely is.

I loved how the Charlotte/Edward romance developed. Though they share an immediate and mutual attraction, they can't afford to act on it, for a number of reasons. What you get instead is a lot of lingering looks, fleeting touches, and a whole lot of sexual tension. They were so intensely aware of each other....it was hot stuff, let me tell you.

The only thing I did not like about this book was the ambiguous ending. I wanted a clear-cut HEA and the author didn't give me one. Sure, it was obvious where things were headed, but I wanted to "see" it for myself. I don't like having to guess and assume. It annoys me. So for that, I am knocking off half a star from my rating.

If you love historical novels with substance, strong, intelligent characters, and simmering romance, The Emperor's Conspiracy is just the book for you.

3.5 Stars ★★ ★ 1/2

ARC provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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## ? Kimberly says

The cover drew me to *The Emperor's Conspiracy*, the synopsis had me grab it and the novel captivated me. Michelle Diener's novel has elements I love in a good book; suspense, mystery and a side dish of romance all set in nineteenth century London. I adored the unique characters and the plot against the crown. I was captivated by this tale and could not put it down.

Our heroine Charlotte Raven's by all appearances looks to be the perfect lady with an impeccable reputation. Charlotte has many secrets and her past is one of them. Chance has her reveal her true self and befriend the sister of Lord Edward Durnham. When he begins searching for gold disappearing from England's coiffures, he finds himself looking to Charlotte for aid. The tale that unfolds is suspenseful and mystery. I became completely immersed in this tale and its characters.

Charlotte Raven is a curious creature; she is beautiful, snarky and graceful. She is head-strong, witty, bright and very protective of those she loves. Resigned to never share her life, she is taken aback by her feelings for Lord Durnham. We see growth in her as a character throughout the novel and I really liked this complex woman. Edward is a serious bloke, burdened by family responsibilities and a diligent agent to the crown; he has little time for the social circles of the ton. He is brave, noble and smexy in his attempt to protect Charlotte. I loved how she completely unnerved him and made him lose his senses. That fact that it completely shocked him, made me giggle. Luke the local crime king-pin was an interesting and complex character. While I admired his loyalty to Charlotte, I also hated the price she paid for that loyalty. Diener provides quite a cast of side characters and each one was interesting and unique.

I love when a novel hooks you in the first few pages and that is exactly what happened with *The Emperor's Conspiracy*. The fast pace, twists and fleshed out characters immediately swept me up and kept me entranced. This is one of those novels where I just had to read "one more chapter" despite the late hour and found myself up till three am! It was worth the lack of sleep as I found the mystery and tale to be delightful. Diener took true historical facts about Napoleon and his plans to take down England's economy and wove them into this tale. At times it was very dark and gritty and the suspense was unnerving as the author blurred the lines of fiction and reality. I love when a tale and its characters become real to me. The romance was sweet, complex and totally takes a back-burner to the intense plot. The ending allows the reader to draw their own conclusions and I closed the book with a smile.

I so recommend *The Emperor's Conspiracy* to fans of mystery and suspense in a historical setting. Not sure you like historical fiction, but love mysteries, crime novels and suspense? I recommend you try this since the pacing is riveting. I look forward to reading more from this talented author. You can find all of Michelle Diener's works listed [here](#).

I want to thank Simon and Schuster for providing this ARC in exchange for my unbiased review.

originally posted at Kimba @ Caffeinated Book Reviewer

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## Jane Stewart says

The first third was good, but the rest had me wishing it were over.

There was a lot of dull conversation. The ending was not well resolved. Someone gives evidence to someone but we're not sure what will be done with that evidence. I wanted to see specific things happen to bad guys. The ending was too murky.

I really enjoyed Dark Horse by this author. So I thought I'd try this book. Sadly, it wasn't as good.

DATA:

Narrative mode: 3rd person. Story length: 317 pages. Swearing language: mild including religious swear words but not often used. Sexual content: none. Setting: mostly 1811 London. Copyright: 2012. Genre: mystery.

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## **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

"The Emperor's Conspiracy" is the story of Charlotte "Charlie" Raven, who goes from lowly chimney sweep to full-fledged society lady and her difficulty with having her toes in both of the worlds she is so familiar with. On one hand, she still remembers what it was like to be a child forced to work but still loving that world and the people that she knew in it but those very people could get her deeply into trouble. On the other hand, she absolutely relishes her position as a rich and educated woman of high society. She is constantly wondering whether or not she will ever be able to reconcile those two worlds. Through this book, it is clear that she will try her hardest in order to do so.

I really liked the conflicts that Charlotte faced between both the world of the workers and the world of the rich. While many of us will probably never have to choose between such different worlds, I think some of us can understand the struggle that Charlie faces. It can be hard to figure out where you belong and who you should be when you have so many different choices, so many different paths that you can choose. It was interesting to see how Charlie deals with all of that.

This book is filled with great historical detail of a gritty time in England's history. There is even a little dash of romance, which I really enjoyed. On top of that, there is a bit of mystery too! This book takes place in a changing time in England's history. All the gold is disappearing from the country's coffers. Because of Charlie's unique position of knowing both the rich and the poor world is in the perfect position to help figure out what is happening.

Although Charlie is a totally fictional character, Historical Fiction lovers will find so much to love about this book. The author did a great job of bringing the reader into Charlie's world. There is a lot of great detail that I could picture exactly what everything looked like in London at that time.

Bottom line: A great historical read!

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