



## The Duke's Secrets

*Abby Ayles*

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Mary Elridge of York doesn't know what to expect now that she's of age to marry—and to her surprise, her selection pool is... one man.

Mr. Haskett is handsome, witty, and charming... Is it too good to be true?

Mary is stuck with no alternative options. She is also stuck with a man she can't trust.

Can Mary give her heart to a suitor who keeps so many secrets from her? Can Mr Haskett trust Mary, and her parents, or do they know too much about him? Will their love succeed against the odds, or shall this courtship end in disaster?

## The Duke's Secrets Details

Date : Published October 22nd 2017

ISBN :

Author : Abby Ayles

Format : ebook 160 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Regency

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## From Reader Review The Duke's Secrets for online ebook

### Domi says

The book was a fun read. The parents didn't seem to think their daughter would disobey them and try to find out what the secret of Mr. Haskett was. They didn't seem to know her very well. I liked that she was determined but in that time period I find it difficult to believe that a daughter would be so independent from her family. Still, the clean story was enjoyable and I will read more of Abby Ayles books.

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### J. W. Garrett says

“A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth.” –Aesop

This was a clean Historical Regency Romance story. It was a story of first love, filled with secrets, Regency drama, a match-making mama and a focus on station, status and the marriage mart of the ton. Because of the age of our heroine, this probably would be suited for young-adult. Our girl has not had her first season so that makes her very young... just leaving her girlhood behind. I found it hard to relate to her; however, it does explain some of her foolish and immature behavior. However, that doesn't excuse her mother.

“A single lie destroys a whole reputation of integrity.” –Baltasar Gracián

Marianna ‘Mary’ Eldridge was no longer a girl and was facing her mother’s machinations in finding a suitor and/or marriage that was proper and suited to her station... rather... at least a step up. This seemed to be the focus of the story. Mary’s Lady mother had married down and she didn’t want that fate to fall on her daughter even though Sir Eldridge was a good sort of man. Position, status and station was the ‘god’ of the ton. You could simply look at someone, how they were dressed and know their place and yours in relation to them. They were either below, equal with or above you in station and prestige and everyone knew their place. This got on my nerves. It was all Lady Eldridge thought about and insidiously drilled it into her young daughter.

“First love is only a little foolishness and a lot of curiosity.” –George Bernard Shaw

Enter Mr. Haskett as a potential suitor for Mary. Haskett had a secret and curiosity became a living thing and Mary just had to know what it was. She just couldn’t let it go. Once she found out, her world crashed around her and her mother. Her emotions and feelings vacillated back and forth so many times I developed whiplash. Mary was up, she was down, a bit modern at times, she was mad, then she was distraught, she was... a teenager... that says it all.

I received a free ARC [Advanced Reader Copy] from the author. The views expressed are my own and an honest opinion. [3.5-stars]

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### Narcy says

LOVED THE BOOK!!! I was given a copy to review and fell in love with Mary. She is a strong and

determined young woman for her time. Mr. Haskett had good motives for his lies unfortunately to Mary the lies meant and hurt more than he realized. Mary's mom wants her to marry in her station or higher in her haste to push her daughter into Mr. Haskett's hand she unknowingly doesn't realize she is jeopardizing the young couple. Upon getting ill her mom makes a hasty decision that causes Mr. Haskett to denounce his courtship to Mary. Mary is already vested and feels the front of what she had done when she found out he lied to her, so when her mom gets ill and puts her foot in her mouth once again she tries to fix things, unfortunately Mr. Haskett has had too many bad encounters himself and can't look past what happened. This story is about true human errors and the consequences one faces when lies are told and others are hurt. No matter your status in life everyone is human and we all bleed the same. Mary is a strong determined young woman who is true to herself, she doesn't do well with liars and his actions determine their future, so he must prove himself to her if they have a future. Loved the story. They are adorable together.

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### **Annette Drewett says**

The Duke wants to be loved for himself, not his title, but his lies and secrets put a barrier between himself and Mary. Will he forgive her family for trying to push them together? Will she forgive his lies? Who will win in the end? I loved the story, and this author has correctly portrayed the attitude of the people living in the Regency era. I would recommend this book to lovers of Historical Romance.

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### **5 Kindles says**

The story line was mostly believable, but could have been expanded. It was a sweet, clean story.

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### **Esther says**

It was wonderful. Loved the plot and the characters they were just amazing.

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### **Ivy H says**

So, if you're looking for hot sex scenes, bodice ripping action and the conventional tropes one expects in a novel with a title such as this, then you're going to be very disappointed. There is no grand overt passion between the MC's. Instead, this story line develops more along the lines of a morality novella. It's a story that seeks to impart an important moral lesson; it's almost like a modern day regency fable ( minus the use of animals as characters ) in the novella format. The message that this novella seeks to disseminate is: Wealthy people also want to be loved for themselves and not for their affluence and influence. The H is Christopher Haskett, the young Duke of York and he longs for a bride who will love him for the man he is and not be a sycophantic gold digging title hunter like his late mother. The heroine Mary, is a young ingenue who hasn't yet made her first debut in Society. Mary's mother, Lady Eldridge, is the daughter of a Baron. Lady Eldridge is a social climber who has lived to regret her own marriage to a Mary's father, because the latter is a mere "Sir". Lady E has lofty ambitions for her beautiful daughter Mary.

Christopher receives permission to court Mary but he is adamant that her parents hide his ducal title from the

heroine. The H is tired of young women fawning over him merely because he is a duke. Mary has not had a suitor before Christopher and she is keen to learn everything about the dashing, handsome "Mr. Haskett". I loved the old fashioned courting that the H employed with Mary. It was so reminiscent of novels that were actually written by authors who lived in this historical era. That's what made this so original a novella in this specific sub genre of historical romance. Mary soon learns, from her busybody cousin Antoinette, that "Mr. Haskett" is the Duke of York. In her youthful enthusiasm, Mary blurts it all out to Christopher and he misinterprets her exuberance as sycophantic fawning. Christopher gets angry and ends his courtship of the heroine because he thinks she's just another title hunting gold digger.

Mary's depressed because she had grown to like him a lot but she resigns herself to accepting the end of his courtship. Lady E, however, doesn't take this decision so calmly. The older woman is determined to chase after the H and work herself back into his good graces. Lady E was supremely annoying and pushy. She came across as a stalker because she uses her temporary depression as an excuse to stalk Christopher to a seaside hospital on the Isle on Wight. The H is there visiting a childhood friend who suffers from a type of rheumatic disorder that targets young people. The duke feels stifled by Lady E's efforts to impose herself ( and Mary ) upon him and he ends up telling her off in a placid but rude manner. I felt sorry for Mary because she ended up being a collateral damage victim of her mother's social climbing ambitions. Mary eventually returns home and her father brings another suitor to court her. This guy is an overdressed Spanish dandy with greasy hair, who is shorter than the heroine. Mary is appalled but things work out in her favour since the Spanish guy is searching for a bride who will be a match for his flamboyant and loud personality.

The novella then has a major plot twist when the H turns up at Mary's home. This time he is unshaven and dressed in dirty, ragged clothing. He tells the Eldridges that he has lost his ducal fortune and is now bankrupt. He begs them to allow him to stay at their home for a while. Mary and her parents are very kind and welcoming to him and the MC's romantic relationship blossom once again. I found it weird that the snobbish and gold digging Lady E would be so accepting and kind of the H's poverty, especially when she agrees to allow him to marry Mary. The H tells Mary that all of his friends (and even women who had once chased after him ) have abandoned him now that he is poor. Mary is not the slightest bit bothered by his poverty and is happy when he proposes marriage to her. Things soon deflate for the H, though, when he confesses that he had been pretending to be poor because he wanted to see if Mary will still want him as a husband. Mary gets angry and refuses to marry him, because she hates the fact that he had to resort to such trickery. The MC's eventually do get married after he apologizes for his trickery and lies.

Btw, I loved this cover because of it's muted colour scheme and simplicity. The cover model even looks like she can be a real model.

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### **Caroline says**

Sweet n fun

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### **Barbara says**

Love the honorable concepts of this genre and the strength of women who had so little choices but kept to their ideals. A good read about how the male side was compromised by the era's values. An enjoyable read. Love this author! I did receive a free copy of this book to review.

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### **Suzette says**

Good clean romance. This is the authors first foray into the historical romance genre and I see only good things for her. She has well thought out out and beautiful characters. I look forward to seeing more from her.

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### **Lori D says**

This is a new author to me and I am really glad I was able to read this story. It was sweet and kept my attention. Mary is such a delight and really grew to hope that she could find her happy ever after with Mr. Haskins. But things are not always as they seem when the truth is not already evident. Mary's parents really want only the best for her but push he to try to marry above her station. Mary just wants to be happy and the hero just wants Mary to love him for himself. There is some suspense and funny parts that endear you to the characters. The author has written a well rounded story that will keep your attention until the end!! Well done..

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### **Shawnta says**

This is a good well-written short story. There was a bit of suspense and humor, just enough to keep your attention. It was a pleasure to read. The characters were well defined. Duke Haskett is a strong intelligent man not above trickery to get what he wants. Mary, while sweet and intelligent, didn't really know what she wanted in a suitor she was perfectly willing to just accept whoever her parents chose for her with no real opinion on the matter. Eventually she did realize with absolute certainty that she must have trust and honesty from her suitors and in her opinion the Duke's secret was nothing more than a lie. Thankfully he corrected his error. This was a beautiful story definitely worth reading.

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### **Melissa says**

I love this book. I started reading it and lost track of time. It's fast-paced and well-written. This was the first book I've read by this author. It will not be the last. She has a spot on my TBR list. Can't wait for more. I'm ready to lose track of time again!

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### **Wendy Tavener says**

Loved the read, the concept and the characters. Mary's parents wanted her to marry well but unbeknownst to her they also want her to marry for love. She is introduced to a potential suitor Mr. Haskett but she can tell he is keeping secrets. All she wants to do is get to know him but he is not forthcoming. A wonderful sweet read.

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## Lu says

3,5 stars

This is my first book by this Author and I was impressed by the time period accuracy and how the heroine, a young, sheltered daughter of a knight did not seem like a brat teenager from the 2000's.

She was very innocent, very ignorant of most issues relating to a couple's courtship and very fearful and respectful of her parents.

I confess that, at first, I had a hard time liking Marianne (Mary) because she didn't seem to have a will of her own. I wish we could have seen a little deeper in her mind what she was really made out of, even if she would end up complying with her parents' wishes. I wish she had found ways to compel her parents to follow her wishes instead of simply resigning to her fate.

The hero is also very in line with the time period. He is a duke that does not want to marry a gold digger and, therefore, tries to maintain his title a secret from his "various" intendeds. Yes, he was courting several ladies to see which one would suit him best. He, as a Duke, expected not to be questioned and to be coveted as the best possible prize.

He was intelligent and sweet too, and this redeemed him a little.

I started liking Mary better when she showed she couldn't abide lies and would sacrifice it all before committing to a person she could not trust.

I liked Mary's mother's ingenuity and think she is the best character of the book.

Good story! Will be reading more from this Author.

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