



## Animating Maria

*Marion Chesney*

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Maria Kendall is stunningly beautiful, impeccably mannered, effortlessly graceful--in short, a perfect candidate for marriage. Thus all of polite London society is astonished that she is the latest charge of Amy and Effy Tribble, eccentric spinsters specializing in making matches for unmarriageable misses. But when Maria's suitors--among them the roguish and exceedingly aristocratic Duke of Berham--meet her vulgar and boorish parents, proposals of marriage invariably vanish. Now the Tribbles face their greatest challenge--taking on, not only Maria, but the hopelessly common Kendalls as well.

## Animating Maria Details

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## **From Reader Review Animating Maria for online ebook**

### **Lady Delacour says**

Specter Sisters Amy and Effie  
have their own way of doing things.  
As crazy as some of their schemes are  
they continue to be successful.  
Another girl makes it to the alter.  
Listened with text to speech app.  
Cleanish. Mild Foul Language.

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### **Rosie Strange says**

My least favorite it was like the story line was totally different from the others they write. The girl was always in lala land and her parents pains in the ass the duke sounded dreamy. Plus my last book I read when I left Maui

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### **Amy Garnica says**

fun escape from reality - witty characters!

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### **Jodi says**

Fun. Wonderful series.

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### **cookiemonger says**

No death and mayhem this time, other than some family upheaval. I'm not disappointed, I just thought that after the last two books, it was worth mentioning.

Personally, I think that the majority of the women the Tribbles have taken in have hardly been troublesome girls. Felicity, extra double major Yes. That girl needed instruction in being a lady and a spanking in the bargain. Fiona was already well-schooled in manners and the like, and all she really needed was to want to marry. She wasn't a compulsive liar, she mostly only lied so that she wouldn't have to marry. Delilah was hung up on one particular man and only needed to be taught to cut out the flirting when she didn't mean it. And while Clarissa troubled her parents by being the wrong kind of beauty, she was happy to go to the Tribbles and most of her problems were that her mother was kind of a total cow.

As for Maria Kendall... I am on the fence. Her parents are hilariously vulgar--they constantly trumpet on

about their possessions and how much they cost--and they beat her, but they absolutely blasted money into her education and upbringing. Her greatest personal struggle is that she is an inveterate daydreamer. And that the real world cannot compare, nor can it deliver when she's gotten herself some pretty expectations.

As we've seen before, she meets the man she'll end up with before she even arrives at Holles Street. Bad weather traps her and her companion, the dreadful Miss Spiggs, in a posting house where the Duke of Berham takes over. He takes their room, the private parlour, and when Maria goes to complain to him, he takes offence and a kiss.

He is a taker, obviously. He has to learn to give.

Luckily, his mother is as interfering as the Tribbles like to be, and she corners him into an engagement with Maria. Most of the book is spent with everyone flip-flopping on whether they want Maria to marry him or if they are going to pay someone to end the engagement.

One of the things that contributes to the duke wanting to cry off is that he can't stand Maria's parents. They are kind of horrible. And what is the solution? Well, the Tribbles do run a sort of School for Manners. So they talk Mr and Mrs Kendall into taking instruction on their own part. This is a good idea, except for the fact that this leads them into (view spoiler)

There's a comedy of errors sort of vibe as usual, but I think it suits this story best. Maria is not afraid of standing up for things, even if she's basically made them up, is not a bad liar, and I liked the way that the duke's character develops.

As for the Tribbles... Amy and Mr Haddon are pretty clearly in love by now, and while I hope Effy ends up with Mr Haddon's Friend (I keep forgetting his name. Randolph?) but honestly I don't care about her. Never mind all of the simpering and primping, she's just done one too many awful things to stymie her sister's hopes. Oh well. Those Tribbles. They're so eccentric. Dressing up like men and dealing with duels all the time. Oh wait that's only Amy. Hm.

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### **Elizabeth says**

I think this one was my favorite in the series so far.

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### **Mo says**

I remember reading a slew of Marion Chesney novels when my children were very young. They were just the right kind of light, mindless entertainment that I needed at the time. I had to read things that were very put-downable ... books that would not consume me. My free time to read was very limited.

Basically, all of the books in any given Marion Chesney series were the same book. She had a formula, and stuck to it. She changed names, places and circumstances, but the basic plots remained identical. They were all set during the Regency (a period in history that I still adore to this day), and they were all usually under

200 pages each. The writing was simplistic, and really gave you nothing to ponder. These books fit the bill for me perfectly at the time.

Considering the number of books she has cranked out (Wikipedia lists 106 books under her own name and her pseudonyms), I'm not surprised that she does not write "great works of fiction".

So I figured that since they were really all the same book, the same review would suffice!

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### **Michele says**

This is a series of six books and my review for all six of them is the same. It is an enjoyable series about two twin sisters in their 50s who are part of the poor gentry in London. To be able to survive, they start a School for Manners, in which they take young women who are not yet married and try to get them married in a successful manner. The girls have many reasons for not being married: tomboy, clumsy, unrefined, too independent, etc.

It is fun following the sisters (who long to be married themselves) as they undertake the teaching of each client. They are generally successful but often, it is in spite of themselves, rather than because of them.

There is humor, great lessons for living and just plain fun. Easy but enjoyable reads.

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### **Terry Southard says**

#5 in the School of Manners. Miss Amy does it again - fights a duel, conks a man on the head, and receives a diamond pin. All this while schooling not just the girl Maria, but her mother and father as well. These books are the "read in an evening" type - just right for when you want a sweet little something.

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### **Gaele says**

#### **Audio Book Review**

This was a cleverly plotted story full of humor and clever insets of the Regency era as the Tribble sisters groom their latest charge, Maria Kendall for marriage to a gentleman of London Society. Lindsey Nettleton narrates the story, with her pleasant voice and range of English accents that served to depict the characters with intonation and speech patterns specific to their station in life. Particularly effective and interesting was the two voices of Amy Tribble: one proper for all manner of society, the other prone to frank speech peppered with invective and characterized by a far coarser accent than would be expected from a woman of her station.

M.C. Beaton is obviously comfortable and quite skilled in the Regency era – from clothing and slang to social custom and norms, this story transports to the time, while managing to present characters that while often are extreme examples of their class, are well done and entertaining nonetheless.

Particularly intriguing and enjoyable is the author's clear sense of humor: when Amy loses her temper and delivers a tongue lashing, the combination of epithets and insults thrown are laugh out loud funny. Maria is

cleverly drawn, with a penchant for daydreams and a determination to escape her bossy and overpowering parents. At the heart, this is a romance that spends much time with the couple ignoring or denying the attraction between them before the inevitable happens with a little push from an unlikely source.

A story that will entertain and brighten a trip or an afternoon, this volume was a good introduction to The School of Manners: not being familiar with the other books in the series did not affect my enjoyment of this book, and I look forward to the other instalments in the series.

I was provided an eBook by AudioGo via the Audio Book Jukebox review program for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

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### **An Odd1 says**

Mannish Amy is overcome by menopause when she and sister, fluffy Effy Tribble, school rich lovely Maria and her "mushroom" vulgar abusive Kendall parents. Amy gives lessons to the parents and the haughty Duke of Berham for his insults, challenges him to a duel as Maria's latest imaginary suitor, Captain Freemantle. Maria and the Duke bond over repairing his run-down tenements. He comforts her, disillusioned with longterm slum dwellers, steeped in generations of hopelessness.

Physical descriptions are convincing - good are pretty, bad are ugly, most in between. "Effy Tribble, who had been plain in her youth, had become a pretty, dainty woman with silver white hair, a sweet face, and a trim figure .. Amy .. had a sad, horse-like face, a flat figure, large feet, and was often clumsy" p 3. Both are jealous over bachelor nabobs Haddon and Randolph from India. Maria's detestable mousy round companion Miss Spiggs last washed months ago p 7. Maria has thick chestnut hair, green eyes, perfect lips and figure p 14. The muscular Duke has "thick fair hair, almost white, large black eyes under heavy lids, a proud nose, a firm mouth, and a square chin" p 14.

Minor roles keep interest high. Married Frank, the red-haired former Tribbles' footman, returns to swindle Miss Spiggs for a sequel. The Kendalls adore unmarried dressmaker Yvette's little George, and fund her a shop. Besides menus and culture of the time, social issues creep in quietly: poverty, menopause.

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### **Viki says**

#### **The School for Manners Series**

*"If you have a Wild, Unruly, or Undisciplined Daughter, two Ladies of Genteel Birth offer to Bring Out said daughter, and Refine what may have seemed Unrefinable. Religious and Social Training. The Seeds of Decorum planted where the Ground was Once Considered Barren. We make the Best of the Worst."*

The Misses Tribble, Amy (mannish) and Effy (simpering), twin spinsters of a certain age are 'bon ton' and live for the London season, find themselves destitute after expectations of a great inheritance fails to materialize. With the help of their dear friend nabob Mr. Benjamin Haddon, the eccentric sisters advertise as chaperones and do their best to 'help' refine their charges and ensure each finds love and marriage.

These books are really light comedies with a romance secondary story. The main characters are really the

sisters (more so Amy). The writing is tongue-in-cheek, bordering on farcical as the ladies deal with all kinds of over the top situations like servants revolts, kidnappings, blackmail, murder, a suicide attempt, and duels all while bickering and never giving up on their dream of finding love and marriage for themselves as well.

This series for me, much like all of Marion Chesney's regency series, is more humorous than romantic. You can really tell that Chesney likes to write eccentric characters with distinct quirks. They are less about the h/h and more about the colorful characters that surround them, it makes for a refreshing perspective on the early typical regency romances and make them a light, fun read. The h/h are more like stereotypical romance pairings, reacting to the antics of the twins and eventually coming to love them, faults and all. The romances are adequate, some even have an interesting moment of insight, but they are out-shown in each book by the sisters.

Book 01: Refining Felicity  
Book 02: Perfecting Fiona  
Book 03: Enlightening Delilah  
Book 04: Finessing Clarissa  
**Book 05: Animating Maria**  
Book 06: Marrying Harriet

#### **Summary:**

#### **Review:**

\*\*\*1/2 Personal Favorite ~ Light Fun Read \*\*\*1/2

The book is a 3, but the series as a whole gets another 1/2.\* Good/Bad, doesn't matter if I love them... it's just my personal opinion :) Something about this book / character / plot just hit that sweet spot for me and what I enjoy reading about. Easy and enjoyable read. Nothing really remarkable, but worth reading if you like the genre and/or author. Baseline for most books I read, they are neither good nor bad, they are simply a light fun read.

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#### **Leslie says**

This is the 5th book in a 6 book series. I really enjoy these formulaic books by Marion Chesney but they are very predictable. In this series "The School for Manners" two elderly poor ladies of good ton have turned their home into a finishing school for difficult girls. In each case the girl, often through no effort of the Tribbles have met an Earl or Duke and will make a grand marriage while Amy & Effie collect a big paycheck.

This season's difficult deb is a Miss Maria Kendall, of Bath. While Maria is sweet, charming, beautiful and rich her parents are vulgar and in trade. She is also inclined to live in her own fantasy world... so when she meets the Duke of Berham she is less than impressed. But of course they were made for one another and bob's your uncle they are quickly, if unwillingly engaged.

What I love about these books are the insane bits of comedy that leave me laughing aloud.

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### **Damaskcat says**

Number five in the School for Manners series sees Effy and Amy Tribble take on a quiet girl called Maria whose main problems seems to be that she is fond of daydreaming and that her father made his money from trade. But Amy and Effy have had some notable successes in the marriage mart which is the London season and they are not daunted by the drawbacks. Maria proves herself to be a likeable girl and very ladylike so they do not envisage too many problems.

Naturally nothing is as straightforward as they expect but Maria seems to have caught the eye of a unmarried, handsome and very eligible Duke so maybe she has done their job for them. This story is full of laugh out loud funny incidents with Amy putting her foot in it as usual and Maria's parents proving to be the biggest drawback to her ultimate happiness.

I loved the characters in this story especially the older women who this author does so well. If you want a book to take your mind of the troubles of the modern world then this will do the trick. It definitely has the feel good factor and you will feel better for having read it. I am looking forward to reading number six in the series.

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### **QNPoohBear says**

The Tribbles latest charge is Maria Kendall, the beautiful daughter of vulgar "mushrooms" from Bath. Maria's problem is that she dreams too much and no amount of beating from her parents will make her accept a suitor they've chosen. On the way to London, Maria runs afoul of the Duke of Berham and she instantly vows revenge. He is cool and distant and not roused to passion at all. However, when his mother finds out about her son's encounter with Maria, she decides to take matters into her own hands and arrange a marriage between the two. Maria and the Duke cross swords, then bond over reforming slums but the course of true love ne'er did run smooth! Meanwhile, Miss Amy and Miss Effy are having problems of their own as they try to attract the attentions of two eligible gentlemen and deal with menopause. This novel has a more somber tone than the others. I felt very sad for the characters while reading it. The Tribbles weren't as hilarious as usual but Amy has an outstanding adventure and is funny as always. I liked the romance in this book a little better than the previous ones because the hero and heroine are less driven by lust and get to know each other.

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