

An Heir of Deception (The Elusive Lords Book 3)

By Beverley Kendall

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A man devastated by love

After three years of carousing and debauchery, Alex Cartwright, heir to the Duke of Hastings, has put his life back in order. Having embraced sobriety for two years, he has no intention of revisiting the past or risking his heart again. But the return of the very woman who introduced him to the darkest side of hell brings not only the painful, haunting memories of bittersweet love and abandonment, but the son he never knew he had...

A woman silenced by secrets

Threatened by the revelation of a secret that could destroy her family’s place in society and forever tarnish a dukedom, Charlotte fled England on her wedding day five years ago. Now, although it appears that secret is safe, when Alex discovers her other secret—their son—Charlotte has an altogether different battle ahead. She must now fight one love to hold onto the other—the man whose touch still makes her burn, for the child who is her very world.

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Editorial Review

Review
"What drives this surprisingly deep novel are its revelations and their aftermath... Highly recommended for historical romance fans." **~ Library Journal, starred review**

From the Author
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She is back.

Alex descended the front steps toward his carriage, his pulse pounding a staccato beat. After two years of sobriety, he wanted--no *needed*--a drink. He needed enough to wipe her image clean from his mind. Which meant he'd have to consume the whole damn bottle. But thankfully not a drop of alcohol existed at his residence. Today he was safe, temptation of that sort well out of reach.

Though not impossible to acquire should his resolve crumble, a voice inside him taunted. Alex ruthlessly quashed it. He'd come too far and worked too hard to be dragged down by that particular vice. By her.

Why the blazes had she come back? A damned eternity would have been soon enough to have to see her again.

Is she back for good? Is she married?

The questions crept insidiously into his thoughts, catching him unaware. Once, years ago, he would have sold his soul--and at times thought he had--for any news of her. How often had he lain in his bed and prayed she'd come back to him or wished he would wake up to discover his wedding day had just been a dream? A nightmare. Today the thought that only a few miles separated them made his blood run cold.

She is so damn beautiful.

Though unwanted, the observation was in no way a compliment to her. It was simply a statement of fact. And if he dared flirt with facts, he would have to concede she was even more beautiful than before. At nineteen, she'd been a flower on the brink of bloom. Well, she had bloomed and was certain to be a danger to the gentlemen in Society. No doubt she was a danger to men everywhere. Lord how he wished those four years, ten months and three weeks hadn't been so kind to her.

Suddenly, the plaintive cry of a child rent the quiet of the March midday. Just about to bolt into his carriage, Alex stilled, his gloved hand resting on the cold metal door of the barouche. Angling his head in the direction of the sound, he noted for the first time a hackney coach parked a fair distance behind his in the circular drive. No doubt *her* transport. And it appeared she hadn't come alone.

Without stopping to consider the injudiciousness of his actions, but compelled by a force beyond his control, Alex tossed the envelope onto the seat of his barouche and started toward the carriage, unsure of his purpose

or what he hoped to learn.

He passed the idling driver without a glance, his mind preoccupied.

Whose child was it? Not that any of this mattered to him. It did not.

Despite his denials, he found himself peering into the dark green interior. Ensconced in the back was a woman, and tucked at her side sat a young boy, whom she spoke to in quiet, soothing tones.

"Is there something wrong with the child?" He was fully cognizant that he had no business asking the question and that the answer was none of his concern. None of that seemed to matter.

The woman's head snapped up at his voice, revealing a breathtakingly beautiful face belonging to a young woman of no more than seventeen or eighteen years. With brown spiraling curls peeping from beneath her bonnet and a complexion that resembled his own tanned several hours in the sun, it was apparent she was of mixed blood. A mulatto.

"No sir, we is--are waiting for his mama," she replied in an accent that proclaimed her American origins.

She had a child.

Although Alex had prepared himself for such an answer, upon actually hearing it, he stiffened, his breath escaping between his lips in an audible rush.

Swallowing hard, he stared at the boy who sat crowded against the girl, a fisted hand rubbing his eyes as if he'd just awakened. Then the boy tipped his head back to gaze up at him. Alex staggered back a step, his stomach feeling as if it had plunged clear down to his toes.

When he was five, his mother had commissioned a portrait of him and his older brother, Charles. Vivid in his recollection were the three lashes he'd received that day from his father for some small infraction. It had never taken much for him to raise his father's ire--it still did not. The portrait borne of that unhappy incident in his young life hung in the gallery at Windsor Place, the duke's seat and country estate. The child who peered up at him now, his blue eyes still drowsy with sleep, his hair a mop of blond, looping curls, could have been the six-year-old boy in the portrait.

The child peering up at him could have been his brother Charles.

About the Author
Beverley discovered her love of books while growing up in, the then, small city of Barrie, Ontario Canada. With her love of books and romance, she always wished that everyone would find their happily ever after. Add in her love of London, England set in a period when ladies strived to be genteel and dresses could barely fit through doors, and it was obvious she could write nothing but historical romances. As the mother of one too bright and mischievous young boy, she pulls full-time duty on all fronts. When she's not working full-time, mothering, writing or reading, she's probably sleeping and dreaming of a time when she'll have time for her favorite hobbies: knitting, crocheting and sewing. Beverley has lived on two continents, in three countries, two provinces, and four states. She stopped her nomadic existence and settled in the southeast. All things artistic feed her creative passion, but none more than writing. Readers can visit her at: www.beverleykendall.com.

Users Review

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