



## The Duke of Deception

*Darcy Burke*

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## **The Duke of Deception** Darcy Burke

After five years on the Marriage Mart, Miss Aquilla Knox is ready for spinsterhood until a benefactress steps in to help her secure a husband. Only Aquilla doesn't actually want to marry—her failure is entirely on purpose. When the earl she's nicknamed the Duke of Deception sets his sights on her, she refuses to be drawn in by her attraction to him. If there's one thing she knows it's that a gentleman is never what he seems.

Edward Bishop, Earl of Sutton, has a reputation for courting young misses and dropping them without a second thought. This has earned him a reputation for deceit, a description he can't refute because he does in fact, harbor secrets and will do anything—deceive anyone—to ensure they don't come to light. As he comes to know the charming Miss Knox, his resolve is tested. However, trust comes at a price and Ned won't pay with his heart.

## **The Duke of Deception Details**

Date : Published November 15th 2016 by Darcy Burke

ISBN :

Author : Darcy Burke

Format : Kindle Edition 222 pages

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

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## From Reader Review The Duke of Deception for online ebook

### Sometime says

2.5 stars. This book was a little up and down for me. In the end it just seems kinda silly. The endless insecurities, the secrets kept for way too long.

I'm left feeling Meh.

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### Caz says

#### I've given this a B at AAR.

Darcy Burke's **The Duke of Deception** is the third book in her current *Untouchables* series – the gentlemen so named by their ladies because their difference in social station puts the men well above their touch. The hero of this book is not a duke at all, however – the moniker is chosen merely to be alliterative – but he does have a reputation for, if not deceit exactly, then not always being above board.

Edward Bishop, Earl of Sutton, has, over the years, shown interest in a number of eligible young ladies but has never followed through with an offer of marriage. He is no lothario or jilt and genuinely wants a wife, but his family circumstances are difficult and he therefore has to be very careful about his choice. So he has unofficially courted several women, hoping to find one that would meet his exacting criteria – to no avail. This behaviour has not endeared him to the marriage-minded mamas and hopeful papas of the ton, although the real deception he is practicing is something far more serious.

Having witnessed the abuse, both verbal and physical, meted out to her mother by her father over the many years of their marriage, Miss Aquilla Knox is determined never to put herself into a man's power. She knows that the only value her father places on her is her potential as a bride for some rich, well-connected man, so she has been allowed several London seasons during which to find a suitable husband. For this current season – her fifth – Aquilla is being sponsored by her dear friend, Lady Sattersfield, and can't help feeling guilty because she has no intention of getting married and plans instead to find a position as a companion. It's an unequal choice to be sure, especially given that companions were subject to the whims of their employer and could be badly treated – but Aquilla has seen her own mother treated far worse, so her decision makes sense to some degree.

Instead of doing all the things a young lady should do in order to attract a husband, Aquilla does the exact opposite and has earned herself a reputation as a scatterbrained chatterbox, thus ensuring that she has not received a single offer of marriage, a state which she intends to maintain until the end of the Season. Until, that is, she is caught in a rainstorm one evening and has to ask a gentleman for help so she can re-enter the house at which she is a guest. The gentleman duly assists, making sure that Aquilla is not noticed returning to the house. She is grateful for his kindness and his concern for her reputation, and surprised to realise that the gentleman is none other than the Duke of Deception himself – the Earl of Sutton.

Edward – or Ned, as he is known by those close to him – has realised that the latest potential bride on his list is not going to meet his requirements, and knows he is going to endure censure once again when he does not come up to scratch. But Aquilla's gentle good-humour, her confidence and the flashes of wit she displays –

even when soaked through – intrigue and attract him and he starts to wonder whether she might not be what he is looking for.

Aquilla also feels the spark between them, but is determined to adhere to her plan of finding a position rather than a husband. But when her father announces that he has arranged for her to marry Lord Lindsell, a man she dislikes and knows will not treat her kindly, Aquilla is horrified, knowing too well that her father's decision is based on greed and that she has no chance of changing his mind.

Ned is similarly concerned because he is strongly attracted to Aquilla and had hoped for more time to get to know her. But time is no longer on his side. He knows of Lindsell's reputation and knows Aquilla dislikes the man, so Ned does the only thing he can think of – the thing he has never done before but desperately wants to do now – and asks her to marry him.

Aquilla and Ned embark upon their marriage with optimism, but each of them is keeping secrets from the other, Ned about the reasons for his frequently aborted courtships and Aquilla about her reasons for not wanting to marry at all. Ned is a truly decent man who is trying to do the best for his family and his best by his new wife, and unfortunately, makes some poor decisions in the belief that his choices will prove to have been the best for everyone in the long run. The thing is, while it's easy for the reader to see that these decisions are going to cause more problems than they solve, Ned's desire to do right by everyone is very easy to relate to and his actions actually feel quite realistic. The difficulties Ned's actions begin to create in his new marriage are compounded by the fact that Aquilla has not yet told him about her upbringing and how it has affected her ability to trust others – especially men. Fortunately, however, Ms. Burke doesn't drag this out with a long series of misunderstandings – although there is an event about three-quarters of the way through the book which seems overly contrived and which stretched my credulity somewhat.

Otherwise, **Duke of Deception** is an enjoyable, well-paced story that, while fairly short, is not lacking in depth or insight. Ned and Aquilla are an engaging, well-matched couple – strong, caring and compassionate; and their romance is developed in such a way that it's easy to believe that they will continue to be happy together long after the book is ended. The relationship between Ned and his brother is often heart-breaking – I teared up at one point – and I could completely sympathise with Ned's frustration at the way he has been forced to put his life on hold through no fault of his own, and then at his guilt for feeling that way. The detail concerning the treatment of the mentally ill at this time makes an interesting background to the story, and further shows Ned to advantage in his abhorrence of the conditions and treatments endured by those who were institutionalised and his determination to take care of his own.

I haven't read the previous books – although I will probably pick them up at some point – but while this is the third in a series, and there are cameo appearances by some of the characters who have appeared previously, the novels are loosely connected and can be read as standalones.

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### Anita says

Advanced Reader Copy (ARC) provided by the Author and Publisher via NetGalley in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Few writers in the Historical-Romance genre dare to tackle the really tough issues. Darcy Burke is bucking the trend here in *The Duke of Deception*. Most of the time when serious issues such as mental illness and spousal abuse are addressed, they are presented as issues of the lower classes, not something that touches the

heroes and heroines of the Ton directly. Both Aquilla and Ned are captives of the rules and restrictions of their positions in Society, yet manage to find ways to honestly connect and revel their true needs and wants to each other.

Miss Aquilla Knox is in her fifth Season on the Marriage Mart and has made plans to make it her last. No, she is not interested in finding a husband, she plans to become a companion. She wants to live independently and has her reasons for not wanting to ever be married.

Edward Bishop, Earl of Sutton, is in the market for a wife. Due to his family circumstances, not just any woman will do for this position and he has developed a way of weeding out any that don't measure up. This has earned him the "Duke of Deception" moniker bestowed on him by Aquilla and her friends for leading many a young woman on. A chance encounter with Aquilla and he is intrigued. She is sure that he is just looking for another prospect.

It is a wonderful story with humor of how these two navigate the social mores. They finally come to honestly share their feelings and to a true understanding of what the other really needs in a partner for life. 3 1/2-Stars

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### **L.R.W. Lee says**

I enjoyed this story. Just the right amount of action and intimacy without far fetched plots. Nicely done.

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### **Edwina " I LoveBooks" "Deb" says**

I really enjoyed reading this light hearted, funny and engaging story. Edward Bishop the 9th Earl of Sutton known as Ned, is keeping a secret and it is not the secret the Ton thinks it is. Ned has been wife hunting and these young ladies he is considering must pass a few test he and his Aunt Susannah has conjured up. So far only one has made it to the final stage all the other young ladies have failed his test. Therefore it appears to the Ton that Ned leads the ladies on and drops them without proposing. Until he meets a young Miss Aquilla Knox who has been locked outside in the pouring rain on a patio at a dinner party they bought are attending.

The sparks fly between Ned and Aquilla and they are a lovely couple. Both of them are kind, compassionate and loving. They were fun to read. They had pretty sensual relationship. The sex scene were well and tastefully done. The secondary characters were lovely too.

I like the way Darcy Burke handle the mental illness of Ned's brother George. It was sad but nicely written.

I just wish that Aquilla's father and brother had gotten some kind of punishment for their cruel treatment of their wives. They were abusive men and this should have been handled in some manner in the storyline.

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### **Trish R. says**

Of the three Untouchables books I've listened to and read this was my favorite one. Darcy Burke handled the

insanity of George very well, and the subject of Bedlam. I liked every character in this book: Aunt Susannah, Lord and Lady Satterfield, and it was nice to visit with Nora, Ivy and Lucy. Lindsell, on the other hand was a drunk and totally insane with his thinking.

I can see why Ned was called the Duke of Deception. Because he had so much to hide and he really did have to find the perfect wife. He had to find a wife that he could tell the truth to and would keep his secrets. Aquilla was the perfect heroine for him. Where she got the caring nature and sweetness from was beyond me. Her family was sooo unfeeling and her father and brother were mean brutes.

There was explicit sex in this book, explicit but not dirty as in some books, definitely NOT erotic. And there was no swearing.

As for the narration: Marian Hussy did a great job with voices and emotions. She has become one of my favorite narrators.

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### **Janet says**

After five years on the Marriage Mart, Miss Aquilla Knox is ready for spinsterhood until Lady Satterfield steps in to help her secure a husband. Only Aquilla doesn't actually want to marry—her failure is entirely on purpose, as she goes out of her way to appear a chatterbox & scatterbrained.

Then she gets caught in a downpour when trying to sneak to the retiring room via the garden. She's let into the house by Edward Bishop, Earl of Sutton & they are attracted to each other. However she & her friends have nicknamed him as the Duke of Deception. Ned is looking for a wife but she MUST meet his rigorous requirements & he sets his sights on Aquilla, she refuses to be drawn in by her attraction to him. If there's one thing she knows from her family it's that a gentleman is never what he seems.

Edward Bishop, Earl of Sutton, has a reputation for courting young misses and dropping them without a second thought. This has earned him a reputation for deceit, a description he can't refute because he does in fact, harbour secrets and will do anything—deceive anyone—to ensure they don't come to light.

Another enjoyable book in the Untouchables series, this could well be a stand alone book but if like me you enjoy series then I'd recommend reading the first two books in the series, it was good to catch up with Lucy, Andrew, Nora & Titus.

The attraction between Ned & Aquilla is there from the beginning & builds throughout the book. It's a story that tells something of the treatment or non-treatment that was available for mental health patients. Both of them had their secrets, which they eventually reveal but these secrets have formed their lives for so long that it's hard for them to be open about them, which of course leads to misunderstandings. So it's not a smooth path to their HEA

I look forward to Ivy's story

I voluntarily reviewed an ARC of this book

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### **Susan says**

Very enjoyable. Can't get enough of this series!

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### **Tracy Emro says**

\*I received an eARC of this book from the author, I am voluntarily leaving my honest review\*\*

I liked this book and up until a certain point, I felt like it was a 5 star read. Unfortunately, a scene towards the end of the book just derailed the entire story for me.

I loved Ned & Aquilla - they both are likable people with dark secrets. Ned might be one of the most honorable heroes I have ever read!

The chemistry between them is apparent right from the start of the book and I found the story to be both heartfelt and believable (until the aforementioned scene). I totally understood Ned's reasons for "deceiving" Aquilla.

The writing was wonderful, the story moves along at a nice pace, the love scenes are steamy and I found myself invested in Ned and Aquilla's HEA. This book touches on some delicate subjects and I think the author did a fabulous job with Aquilla's secret and even Ned's, but the portrayal of George was just off the mark in my opinion.

I would happily recommend this series and I am really looking forward to Ivy's story!!

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### **Sissy's Romance Book Review says**

'The Duke of Deception' by Darcy Burke is the third book in "The Untouchables" series. I have read and loved all the book in this series but I do feel this can be a standalone book. This is the story of Miss Aquilla Knox and Edward Bishop, Earl of Sutton. This might just be my favorite book in the series. Ned & Aquilla both have things that have happened in their lives that make them who they are today...and what they both are trying to do. Ned does want to get married but is finding the wife he needs is not so easy when he puts them to the test. Aquilla doesn't want to be married due to her history and thinks this can be the last time she has to go through 'The Marriage Mart'. But things end up changing for both of them...and they find that maybe there is someone for them.

"My honest review is for a special copy I voluntarily read."

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### **Becca says**

The Duke of Deception is the third book in Darcy Burke's newest historical romance series, The Untouchables. While I've read and enjoyed every book in the series and think that the reading experience is enhanced by having read them in order, I believe the books are loosely connected enough that each could be

read as a stand alone.

In this story, I finally got to learn more about Aquilla Knox. She was always a bubbly character and I enjoyed her sly humor and sunny disposition in the other books of this series. Of all the wallflowers, she seemed to be the only one who actually wanted to get married! In this book, I found out that was not the case. Aquilla had secrets of her own that I did not expect. The hero, Ned, the Earl of Sutton, has a reputation for courting ladies and then moving on before making a proposal. This lack of commitment is why the wallflowers dubbed him the Duke of Deception. There is a reason for this reticence and it was a powerful one that made me instantly empathize with Ned. In this book, both characters are keeping painful secrets and I enjoyed reading their story as the layers were revealed. For such a short novel, there were a lot of layers!

Ned meets Aquilla when circumstances force her to request his assistance after she is locked out of a ball and caught in a rainstorm, ruining her gown. From their first meeting, there is a spark, and Ned finds himself irresistibly drawn to Aquilla in a way he's never been drawn to another woman. Their conversations are funny and I enjoyed the easy camaraderie the two had, despite the dark spots in their lives. It was like they were two puzzle pieces that belonged together and they were happier together (my favorite match-up). Even during the intimate scenes, there was talking and laughter. It wasn't very "hot," but it felt more real because of the humor and the constancy of the characters' personalities even once they were alone. I appreciated this. Nowadays, many sex scenes could be cut and pasted into any novel and that would work. Not the case here--the scene clearly belonged to Aquilla and Ned, which made it sweet and memorable.

This story dives into some interesting domestic issues, including mental illness and domestic abuse. I did not expect this going in, but I appreciated the surprising depth. Ned and Aquilla both have deep wells of compassion and kindness and the dark issues they faced allowed me as a reader to see that. Burke doesn't dwell on the issues endlessly though and the story remains light--I liked how the experiences of Aquilla and Ned tell the story instead of Burke using the narration to preach about an issue. It made for a richer story and characters that were fully developed.

There is some misunderstanding in this story, but I thought it made sense and it wasn't dragged out. I felt that each secret was revealed naturally and I didn't get frustrated. There is only one instance 3/4 of the way through that didn't quite feel right to me. It didn't fit with what I had seen throughout the story and it seemed forced to propel the story along more quickly. I am not an expert though in the intricacies of the issue that Burke tackled so I can't be sure. This was just my opinion.

In a nutshell, aside from one quibble 3/4 of the way through the book, this was delightful and well-paced story with layered, likable characters and a sweet love story that I'd highly recommend. 4.5 stars. I am definitely looking forward to the next one, *The Duke of Desire*.

Complimentary copy from the author in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Tracy T. says**

This was a decent story. Great narration by Marian Hussey (audible review)

I liked Ned and Aquilla together, they made a good match and had genuine chemistry. There is a one very long sex scene with a lot of talking during it, but very well written. Not erotica not rated G.

The story line and plot was okay. I think there could have been more with the brother and then the end seemed rushed. Not much else really that happened.

As for the narration, it was brilliant! I love Marian Hussey. She does a superb job on all the voices, and the men sound like men. She reads with emotion and has a great reading voice.

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### **WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says**

*Ned bent down and kissed his brother's cheek. "Lemon cakes," he whispered. George's eyes remained closed, but his lips curved into a familiar, beloved smile. "Lemon cakes. Yes, Ned. Lemon cakes."*  
*Those had been their favorite sweet. Cook, who'd passed long ago, had made them twice a week and always ensured Ned and George had the first batch while they were still warm. "Lemon cakes" had been something they'd uttered to each other as a gesture of comfort. A sort of "I love you" for boys who wouldn't dare say such a thing to each other.*

Lemon cakes. This got me.

Anyway, good but not wowing. The sex scenes read a bit contemporary, they do hold off until the latter second half of book. Except for the beautiful lemon cakes scene not really anything new or memorable. Hero's brother George was the most I got emotional about, hero and heroine had more of a sedate romance and chemistry; I personally like a bit more spark.

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### **? Irena ? says**

#### **2.5**

With that title you'd expect the deception would be more serious. What you get is a hero very dedicated to his family and a heroine who got very lucky. There's not real obstacle they have to go through and any misunderstandings they have are over ion a couple of pages.

I would have liked her own family got sorted out in the end but you can't have everything.

Overall, an okay story.

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### **Andrea says**

[(her father is abusive and her mother has drilled it into her that all men are scum; he has an insane brother he keeps hidden away) (hide spoiler)]

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