



## Stranger in My Arms

*Lisa Kleypas*

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"Lady Hawksworth, your husband is not dead..."

With these words, Lara's life turned upside down. Hunter, Earl of Hawksworth, had been lost at sea. Or so she'd been told. Their unhappy marriage -- with its cold caresses and passionless kisses -- was over. But now a powerful, virile man stood before her, telling secrets only a husband could know, and vowing she would once again be his wife in every way. While Lara couldn't deny that this man with the smoldering dark eyes resembled Hunter, he was attentive and loving in ways he never was before.

Soon she desperately wanted to believe, with every beat of her heart, that this stranger was truly her husband. But had this rake reformed-- or was Lara being seduced by a cunning stranger?

## Stranger in My Arms Details

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## From Reader Review Stranger in My Arms for online ebook

♥?elody says

It really depresses me to give anything written by Lisa Kleypas below a 4 stars rating but this just wasn't a winner for me. A complete first. :( She's my Queen of all things Historical Romance. I relish reading her work and never worry about what I'm gonna get when I start a book by her. It's always a treat and I end up devouring her books rather quickly. The first for me in this case was that I found the heroine Larissa absolutely intolerable throughout most of the story. Dear. gawd. She drove me up the wall. Bless her orphan-saving heart, I'm sorry but a fan of hers I was not. I found the contrasting side of her personalities or I should say high praises of her good virtues to be contradictory with how she acted around her husband, Hunter. We see other characters and the author tout her up as this caring virtuous selfless woman who devotes all her time to an orphanage in the village and saving orphans who have no home. I found that a complete clash and startling contrast to how she acted around Hunter. Quite a turnaround if you ask me. She was a complete sanctimonious shrew to be blunt. For someone so giving and kind hearted I failed to see that with her constant scathing remarks and hurling accusations at Hunter. Someone who she admits to wishing he was never found alive more than once. Who does that? \*cringe\* Yeah not a great start for me.

Her prudish, uptight, brittle haughty (and melodramatic as hell) attitude around Hunter got to be really tiring, frustrating and rage inducing. And I say this with complete understanding and realization of what this character was put through before her husband was believed to be 'dead'. Before his death, Hunter was brutish, arrogant, selfish and uncaring. That's a given. I won't make any excuses or pretend to understand or justify his behavior. He was a complete uncaring asshole. But that all being said, I found her to be unreasonable and unforgiving towards giving Hunter a second chance once he returned to her. He showed her over and over again how much he changed, showed her complete patience and willing to do anything to make her happy and apologizing more than once to no avail. But she kept pushing him away accusing him of manipulating her to get her in his bed. And this song and dance continues on pretty much through 90% of the book. It's safe to say my patience was pretty much gone half way in. She seemed to love to place herself as the victim and remind him on a daily basis how awful and brutish he was to her during their marital intimacies or as she loves to scathingly call it with a puckered face '*distasteful urges*'. Every time she spitted that out I just kept picturing one of those prudish matronly spinsters sitting in a corner turning their noses up at anything of the sexual persuasion with an ugly sneer. RME. Really? NOT endearing.

The thing that's so fabulous and addictive about Kleypas's stories are they are filled with incredibly flawed three dimensional characters, flawed characters who come off so real and relatable in some way or another. They are far from perfect and some of them even have qualities that could be even shelved under villainous and not so virtuous. Which just makes a reader want to root for them more and see where they end up. We get to stand in their shoes, fuss and rummage around in their heads and completely connect with them. And here, I found myself struggling, fighting to feel that connection with Lara and her relationship with Hunter. The more she fought her connection with Hunter tooth and nail the more I bucked as well. She went out of her way and seemed to love to play the part of the martyr a little too well. Even up to the point when the situation had nothing to do with her and the fate of Hunter's life rested in her hands, she made it about her and gave into hysterics and melodramatics. When everything falls apart or I should say is revealed she had the gall to blame Hunter and his family for putting her in 'this situation' a situation mind you that was taken out of Hunter's hands and by situation I mean their arranged marriage. The minute he's accused of doing something wrong, she of course decides to do the 'right thing' by turning him in, not even giving him the chance to explain and defend himself. And she doesn't waste time with the pity party. Oh no, she quickly sits in a corner and continues her 'why meeeee!' inner dialogue lamenting and moaning over how Hunter could do this to *her*, not us, not him, but of course.....*her*. Oh how could he! RME. \*fumes\* Put a damn sock in it woman and GROW UP.

Because of that (and so much more) I found her actions and attitude lacking integrity, character growth and just not root-worthy. For a heroine I found her to be self-centered, overly judgmental and ridiculously cruel. I really wanted to slap her on countless occasions. I'm not looking for a perfect saintly heroine. Far from it. If I was I wouldn't be reading a Kleypas book. But what I do want is to read about characters that I can relate to or have sympathy for and unfortunately for Lara I couldn't muster up any sympathy for her. She seemed to have plenty for herself. I don't want a heroine who likes to play martyr.

And I don't know why I'm making this review so long winded and going off tangents like some silly essay. lol I just feel like I'm breaking a sacred rule and having the need to explain why I hated this book as much as I did.

The only thing that was a saving grace for me and I was DYING to see more of in this book were the scenes in the last 3 chapters. Those trial scenes and everything after are what had me giving this a half star rating. Just *barely*. I just wish I saw this loving compassionate selfless side of Lara come out more through the rest of the story. I was waiting and waiting and...*waiting* to see a warmer, loving, courageous side that we see come out when she's defending her husband (about freaking time) at the end show up earlier.

Hunter while he's not my favorite Kleypas hero, he was interesting. I just wasn't as enthralled with him as I wanted to be until again, the very ending. We see this heartbreaking vulnerability that just took my breath away. Really wasn't expecting that. And his confession to Lara was so bittersweet and beautiful. Had me wishing the heroine was more deserving of his devotion to her.

**Story: 3 stars**

**Characters: 2.5 stars**

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### Marisa Saucó says

¡Me encantó! ❤️?

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### Samadrita says

**Caution:-** *This is going to be a long review despite the fact that this is a romance novel and I usually don't write long reviews for romance novels.*

A year ago I had discovered Lisa Kleypas when I got my hands on the Blue-Eyed Devil. A book which did not capture my imagination right at the onset but which reeled me in very slowly and left me quite charmed by the end.

I thought, here's a romance novelist who doesn't sugar-coat domestic abuse, try to make it appear less than it actually is and gives you quite a chilling account of the brutality of an abusive relationship, the rawness of it. And she also provides you with valuable information on how the abusive husbands/lovers are always people who suffer from *Narcissistic Personality Disorder*, a psychological condition.

At least, going by romance novel seriousness standards her narrative was quite gripping.

Like for example, I cannot imagine any other writer of cliched romances, pondering questions like '*what makes a bully, a bully?*', '*how do they pick their victims?*', '*why do they suffer from the psychological compulsion to prey on someone weaker than them?*'.

It was informative in many ways and definitely not just another romance novel out there, that you devour like a piece of cotton candy and forget about.

A year later, I'm back to Lisa Kleypas for some good old-fashioned romance because that's what my holiday mood wants. And this fine lady impresses me once again.

I don't want to write out a summary of the book now because the blurb is more than enough to provide the reader with a brief overview.

What I want to do instead is heap praise on Lisa Kleypas for particular reasons, some of which have very little to do with a regular reader's enjoyment of a romance novel.

Let me list them one by one:-

i) Kleypas does not stick to mere stereotypes. Mind you, I'm not saying she steers clear of them but she does rack her brain to come up with something new and interesting and doesn't take the easy way out by improving on or recycle existing material.

Even the lovemaking scenes are original (or I think so) and not various imitations of the ones we've read over and over again.

ii) I thank her for having the good sense to do her research on British India even if few paragraphs of the book are devoted to it.

Most historical romance novels more intent on reflecting the anti-India sentiments among the British just to cater to the stereotypical notions held by the uninformed. But in doing so they portray a very untrue picture of that particular period.

iii) I applaud her on the way she throws light on the barbarity of the custom of sati in India and equates it to the abuse inflicted on a helpless wife by her English husband. Women, irrespective of which nation or culture they belong to, are always victimized and even the so-called advanced civilizations/cultures openly practise misogyny.

*"How little a woman's life was valued in so many cultures. Even in this one, supposedly so modern and enlightened."*

That is a brave thing to say Ms Kleypas. I think few citizens of first world countries would make such a candid admission.

Another quite well-known writer of contemporary romances [\*cough\* Jill Shalvis \*cough\*] once wrote a dialogue which goes along the lines of '*Jesus your fiance bought you a ring with a stone larger than a third world country!*'.

First of all a third world country's being a third world country has nothing to do with size. It's more about the socio-economic status of the majority of its population.

Very shallow. Very stupid. Very offensive.

Authors like Lisa Kleypas make me hold out hope for this genre which specimens like the author mentioned above systematically destroy.

iv) The female lead dares to find an alternative life for herself after the death of her husband. Despite being on shaky ground financially she donates to the poor, the underprivileged and considers their welfare her priority.

Charity rings true only when you have the heart to give away even when you have nothing. Kleypas understands this very well for which I'm glad.

v)Adoption. We prefer to adopt children with the best complexion, best cuteness quotient and analyze the DNA he/she maybe blessed with a thousand times before taking the plunge. But what about the children of the less fortunate, the despised?

Do we not shove them away without a second thought?

But Kleypas' heroine does not. She opens her arms wide for the son of a convict, one who has been hanged moreover, and loves him as a son.

So my enjoyment of this book was considerably influenced by my personal feelings and opinions about certain things.

Why do I still want to deduct a star from it then?

Some bits of the plot seemed far-fetched and I don't think this kind of a relationship can withstand the test of time.

But oh God I forgot this is a romance novel. Here I'm not supposed to question the legitimacy of even the most preposterous form of happily ever after.

Final rating:- 4.5 stars.

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### **AgentScully says**

It pains me to give only 3 stars to a book with such a wonderful hero. Hunter is everything you could want. Loving, strong, patient and devoted to Lara. He longs for her tenderness and love, but she has none to give him. Lara is a cold heroine. Worse she is an annoying one.

All right so you used to dislike having sex with your husband. After 200 pages of woe-is-me, get over it already. Hunter tries to woo her with gentleness and she won't budge. The author goes into way too much detail about Lara's charities and kindnesses in an effort to make her sympathetic, but it doesn't work. Enough with the orphans, the sick and the matchmaking already. She's the epitome of the person who's charitable in public and treats her own family like dirt in private. Poor Hunter. He's reduced to bargaining for just 1 night with his wife in return for hosting a costly ball for yet another of her charities. Lara is indignant that he won't help for free and is using this chance to satisfy his disgusting manly needs. Grudgingly she agrees and even then she tries to welsh by shoving her husband's ex-mistress at him.

Finally hero and heroine hit the sheets, and Lara finds sex with Hunter is a good thing. She claims to love him. I'm hoping things will pick up in the romance department. Then Lara finds out that Hunter's an impostor and denounces him, knowing he will be tried and hung. With love like this, who needs enemies? She goes to see him to demand an explanation for his lies. He tells her about his miserable childhood and life. She barely sympathizes, she's all woe-is-me. Then, still knowing he is likely to hang, she tells him self-righteously that she won't lie for him. At this point I'm ready to bang the wall. The book ends with a HEA of course, but she never apologizes for anything. There's no redeeming the coldest heroine this side of Cruella DeVille. Hunter deserved so much better.

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### **Eastofoz says**

An « okay » read at best for me. The writing is good but for some reason the story just didn't click for me. I didn't really feel much of anything for Lara and Alex. Impersonation stories are not a favourite of mine but if done right they could have potential. This one was missing a bit of 'something'.

I had a hard time believing the hero could have loved or even desired the heroine based on some sad letters. All that seemed too far-fetched. The heroine was also somewhat too good. She needed to shriek or freak out from time to time or something (!). She lacked substance and was too stereotypical. The mystery part was well-done. I was second guessing myself more than once. The sub-story with the heroine's sister and her abusive husband is something that you don't see that often in HR or with such detail. Some of the other characters were excellent: the heroine's patronizing uncle and his lunatic wife, the upright Captain Tyler, cute little Johnny the orphan.

I think the problem for me was that there wasn't enough tension building between Hunter and Lara. She seemed to just accept her lot and I didn't really feel like he had to try all that hard to win her. Some of the bribery/'punishment' parts on behalf of the hero had potential but they didn't really pan out as I thought they would.

This book is along the same lines as the Hathaways series for me. An ok story but nothing different like Kleypas normally does. That said, it's still a pretty good book just more "average" for me.

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## **Bark says**

Using the premise of the famous "Sommersby" movie, but set in Regency England, STRANGER IN MY ARMS tells the tale of a woman married to a horror of a man who has been lost at sea and is presumed dead. When he returns she is shocked and upset. She's made a new life for herself and does not want him back. But the man who returns to her is a changed one, he's kinder, he's honorable, he acts like he genuinely cares for her, and he awakens feelings in her she never had for her husband. He's now a man she could easily fall in love with. But is he an impostor and is everything they're building based on a lie?

I thought this was a very romantic and sensual story. It had a strong, lovable hero and a heroine who was easy to empathize with but in all honesty some of her actions/reactions mystified me. She was a smart, self-sufficient person but she let her nasty Uncle and his abhorrent wife treat her like dirt without a word of complaint. She was also a bit of a tease throughout most of the book. Her "kiss me", "touch me" then "no, wait I've changed my mind stop NOW" made sense the first few times considering her past sexual experiences but quickly got on my nerves when it was continually repeated. She really tortured this poor guy ;)

Even though I saw Sommersby I found this spin on the plot just as interesting and liked it even better because it ended happily. I cared about the characters, felt them fall in love and was only a little annoyed towards the end when their actions didn't ring true to their feelings. All in all this was a very well developed and a touching romance. I really enjoyed it.

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## **UniquelyMoi ~ BlithelyBookish says**

***Attention!** It appears that someone thinks this story is full of spoilers, however, it's been so long since I read it that I'm not sure if there are spoilers, or if it's just a recap of the book blurb. Therefore - proceed at your own risk.*

This is one of my favorite storylines; unaffectionate husband leaves, presumably dies, shows up not dead and has miraculously become one hot, passionate and attentive lover. What more could a woman ask for? Perhaps it's my love of this story theme that had my expectations too high, and while I liked Stranger In My Arms, I didn't love it.

Even though Lara had accomplished so much good through her charity work after her husband's death, I just didn't feel like she was a strong heroine. I didn't connect with her the way I would have liked to. I also felt that her sister Rachel, who suffered abuse at her own husband's hands, was a weak character who, even as she lay battered and bruised, had decided to return to her husband because she had nowhere else to go.

I liked Lord Hawksworth well enough, but I even felt that his character development was lacking. Although, he was hot and sexy and dreamy... I guess that part of him was well developed... well... you know what I mean \*blushing\*

For me, the most engaging character by far - and the most real - was Johnny, the adorable orphan who Lara took in. He was cute, innocent, inquisitive, and just all around loveable! And I do wish we had seen more of his little pet, "Mousey." Johnny is going to be one hunk of a heartbreaker when he grows up and I would LOVE to read his story!

I felt like there was so much potential for an amazing story, but I was somewhat disappointed in this one.

My favorite book with the "return from the dead" theme is Wild Card by Lora Leigh and I loved the movie Sommersby starring Jodie Foster and Richard \*sigh\* Gere. Link of Sommersby trailer:  
<http://www.imdb.com/video/screenplay/...>

This is actually a 3.5 star for me.

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## **valee says**

2.5 stars.

I can't believe I'm seriously rating an LK book this low but seriously, I just can't give more.

It started out pretty good. A very interesting plot. I found the idea of her husband coming back from the dead after being lost for a year incredibly entertaining. Specially because he was an ass before and then he turned everything she had ever wanted.

But then we get to meet the heroine better, and let me just say that that was the worst thing I have had to read about for a long time. She is always trying to help everyone every single second of the day. And it's not that I have a problem with this but you just can't go every damn minute of the day, trying to be mother Teresa and helping every person. It was too much, it didn't feel believable at all.

I feel sorry for Hunter because he was a great hero. But at the end he was also a bit annoying loving her above everything. Even a bit creepy, he was obsessed with her just by reading some letter. Come on, seriously, so many things were wrong with this story.

The kid was very cute though, Johnny,lol, so sweet. I have a soft spot for 5 year old kids,love them. So that helped a bit.

Another problem I had with this one was that even though it should have been historical romance, if it wasn't for some lines every once in a while it didn't feel historical at all. Many things that happen in this book don't make sense according to the times they were suppose to be in.

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### **Shawna says**

5+ stars – Historical Romance

This is a brilliant, poignant, and achingly romantic read with an element of mystery and suspense as well from the master of historical romance, Lisa Kleypas. Hunter, the Earl of Hawksworth, is a captivating, tortured hero to die for that you can't help but fall hard for. It's another winner and LK favorite worthy of big 5 stars!

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### **Carrie says**

DNF in audio. I really, really hate the heroine. She's cold and self-righteous. The details of her charity work are sticky-sweet and boring. I may skim the library copy so I can satisfy my curiosity about Hunter, who is a great character, btw.

Rosalyn Landor is the narrator for the audiobook. I didn't care for her voice for Hunter. She is too gruff and he sounds old instead of sexy.

Edited to add: I skimmed the library copy of the book. It was okay, so I'm upgrading to 2 stars. I still disliked the heroine, who was so hypocritical when she couldn't forgive the hero but says she care so much about orphaned children. I'm glad she finally came to her senses, but she needs help.

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### **Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says**

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Lisa Kleypas is well known for her light regency romances with smart heroines and breezy prose. But she didn't start out that way. Once you start hitting her back list and reading the books that were published, say, in 1993 or earlier, you get into some weird sh\*t.

STRANGER IN MY ARMS was originally published in 1988, according to Goodreads, which makes it the earliest Lisa Kleypas book I have read to date. It's about a noble widow named Lara whose life is upended when her late husband, Hunter, the Earl of Hawksworth, presumed dead on a journey to India, returns alive and well and ready to resume his position. This means kicking out his wretched relations, Arthur and Janet,

and resuming marital relations with his beautiful wife - or so he thinks.

Guys, STRANGER IN MY ARMS features one of the most unlikable, selfish, sanctimonious, hypocritical heroines I have ever had the displeasure of encountering in fiction. Even though I'm rounding up this book to 1.5 stars, please, please consider this review an honorary 1-star review because I definitely considered bestowing that honor upon it for the sh\*t I was forced to endure.

**\*\*warning: SPOILERS\*\***

Let's talk about Lara. She's *disappointed* when she finds out her husband isn't dead. Which is kind of jerkish, but okay, her husband wasn't a nice man, so that's understandable. When she finds out that he has undergone a personality transplant in his absence and actually become a pretty decent human being, Lara *still* treats him like dirt. She adopts an orphan without telling him, expecting him to accept the child's presence and then acting surprised (and not grateful) when he does. She refuses to sleep with him, which, again, is her right. But she also taunts him about it, ordering her gowns cut an extra two inches lower with the *intent* of torturing him, enters into sexual bargains with him (for the orphans, again) and then speculates on how to welsh on the deal (this is the term that the book uses, so please excuse the potentially pejorative phrasing). When she realizes he's not the man to force a woman into having sex, she is *amused* by that and tries to figure out whether she can use his honor to renege on their sex bargain while still getting what she wants. When he tells her that she's the only woman he wants, *she writes a letter to his ex-mistress*, inviting her to their charity ball, causing a scene, embarrassing him in front of all his peers, *and then acts surprised when he's angry*.

But let me tell you about the cherry that is the b\*tch sundae special that is Lara.

Kleypas seems fascinated by doppelgangers and mistaken identity. In a twist that mimics the twist in ONLY WITH YOUR LOVE, it turns out that "Hunter" is actually the bastard half-brother of the Hunter that Lara married. We never find out "Hunter's" real name, so I'll just put his name in quotes when I'm talking about her impostor husband.

Anyway, throughout the book, it's hinted *pretty heavily* that the man who returned isn't the one who left. Lara suspects but doesn't really believe it, until a stranger - a man she doesn't even know that well - tells her his real identity: that he's a mercenary he knew in India who saved his life. At this point, Lara doesn't know that "Hunter" is her husband's half-brother, she just automatically decides - *at the word of this perfect stranger* - that he must be telling the truth. Her husband is an impostor.

So what does she do?

Rat him out to those horrid in-laws from the beginning of the book who basically locked her away in the servant's quarters and verbally abused her at every turn. I'm not kidding. This is Lara's immediate course of action. Does she talk to "Hunter" about this? Nope. She totally goes behind his back, and when she finds out that he's probably going to be executed, she's all, "Oh well, it's the *right* thing!"

**B\*TCH. DID YOU COME FROM THE KELLOGG'S FACTORY? BECAUSE YOU CANNOT POSSIBLY BE CEREAL. WHY THE HELL WOULD YOU THINK THAT WAS THE RIGHT THING?**

What makes this even more disgusting is that there's a side-plot with Lara's sister Rachel, who is in an abusive relationship. Lara knows that her sister's husband is hitting her but does nothing. She doesn't like it, but she does nothing. She basically forces "Hunter" to go rescue Rachel after she "falls down the stairs." When it turns out that she had a miscarriage, "Hunter" sends for the doctor, lets Rachel stay *in his house*, and when the abusive husband (who used to be his best friend) shows up to reclaim her, "Hunter" protects her and sends him away. What does Lara do? Hide behind "Hunter" while tossing off insults and provoking the abusive husband. This results in a physical altercation that makes Lara attempt to run, fall on her ass, and watch as her husband throws the abuser out the door.

So after being a gentleman, putting up with all her sh\*t, allowing her to adopt an orphan and raise it like her own child, rescuing her sister, rescuing *her*, and choosing his ungrateful wife over a friendship that allegedly lasted *years*, what does Lara do? I'll remind you.

**SHE CONDEMNS HIM TO DEATH.**

Obviously she changes her mind last minute and decides he doesn't deserve to die (ya think?), mostly because she's pregnant with his child (you b\*tch), and mostly because she's afraid her sister will be sent down to her abuser because her horrid in-laws think he's the bee's knees. Oh, and because she loves him. Maybe. Can you see why this b\*tch drove me bonkers?

"Hunter" is the only reason this book gets that extra half-star that rounds this book up to the two stars that I don't think it deserves. "Hunter" is one of the better romantic leads I've encountered in a Lisa Kleypas book, and he didn't deserve the hot mess that was Lara by a long shot. I was so frustrated, because if this book had a better heroine, I really think I would have loved the book because it has so many tropes that I enjoy: spouse-back-from-the-dead, enemies-turned-to-lovers, second-chance-romance, and, of course, sexy bargaining. And Lara ruined it all with her horribleness.

Yeah, I'm *peev*ed.

1.5 stars

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### **Viri says**

Cuando comencé este libro tuve la constante sensación de que ya lo había leído.

¿Qué creen? Mis suposiciones eran ciertas. Pues o una de dos... o era una PRO en ser escritora frustrada y le atinaba a todo... o ya lo había leído. Resultó ser la segunda opción.

Un libro (como me pasó anteriormente) olvidable, pero bien narrado y con la pluma característica de Lisa. Tiene intriga, momentos divertidos y momentos tiernos. Pero no es de los memorables.

Ella me pareció demasiado renuente y no me encantó. Pero él... me hizo dudar demasiado. Al punto de no saber si ya lo había leído o no. Porque estaba segura del final pero dudaba mucho. MUUUUUCHO!

En fin, me gustó pero tampoco es genial. No es de los mejores de la Kleypas pero está entretenido. Y el toque de suspenso e intriga le aporta algo diferente a la historia.

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### **Rane says**

This was such an enjoyable read that I re-read twice already!

I adored Hunter and Lara, both were great with one hiding from the past and another hiding in plain sight. Hunter was the type of male character I love, strong but not forceful, as he slowly drew Lara out of her hard shell she lived in before and after his disappearance. Although he acted like he didn't give a damn, his actions prove otherwise time and time again. He did hide many things from Lara but, you knew he loved her very deeply.

Lara was a gentle soul looking to help other before herself, getting herself into a few little messes along the way with Hunter there to help her out.

I loved how the story played out always making you second guess yourself along with Lara why Hunter changed into this wonderful man. I could understand the way Lara acted as I would doubt the change in a man who could care less about you then suddenly go out of his way for you as you fall in love with him. But Hunter was always waiting and although he would sometimes force his hand, you knew he cared deeply enough to let Lara go.

Overall: an amazing story and makes me wish I had my very own Hunter!

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### **Huma Rashid says**

This book was an absolute waste of time, except for the hero, Hunter. Hunter was a great character with an

interesting backstory. The same could not be said for the rest of the characters, especially the heroine.

Lara is cold and unreasonable, and it gets incredibly annoying. At first I was prepared to be really sympathetic: Kleypas bangs us over the head with the fact that every time this woman slept with her husband, it was painful, and she was very aware of how he was in love with another woman. But after a while of her coldness and irrational behavior, I couldn't use her past marriage as mitigation anymore.

And in a weird twist, even her charity work got super annoying after a while. When she flipped out because Hunter pointed out that she couldn't adopt every homeless orphan in England, I just shook my head. When she dared to call Hunter selfish and uncaring just because he was being - gasp! - practical, I just couldn't stand it. Also, her little relationship with her adopted son was just ... dumb. She sees the kid crying at the orphanage, offers to take him home and give him a bath, and is then madly in love with him and will totally fight her husband or anyone else that tries to take him away from her - in, like, the matter of a day. Bitch, please.

Everything about her is cold and unreasonable and hypocritical. She makes a bargain to sleep with her husband the night of the benefit if he offers to throw it and pay for it and host it, and then tells her sister she has no plans to follow through with it and keep her word, and then tosses her husband's ex-mistress at him in front of everyone and then DARES to get upset when Hunter goes to talk to her (Lady Carlyle). Then when she brings a lawsuit against him for fraud and conspires with her horrible uncle-in-law, all because she's angry at Hunter, and even though she knows that what she did means he'll be hung, and then dares to tell him she won't lie for him. (There's more twists and turns after that, but I won't ruin it for anyone who thinks he/she might actually still like this book.)

As for the other characters in this book, there's not a charming one in the lot of them. The scenes with Johnny are ham-fisted and annoying - we're apparently supposed to fall in love with him as quickly as Lara did. Yeah, no. And Mousie, his little pet? First of all, original name! :| Second, that mouse disappears like 2 pages after we meet him and doesn't meet the standard of 'comic relief animal' in romance novels. (Unlike, say, Dodger from the Hathaway series, or even Newton from the Bridgerton series.) All in all, the kid seems like a try-hard way to get the readers to like the heroine and it just doesn't work. Her sister is a similarly weak character, and in real life, I would never blame a woman for going back to her abusive husband, but in fiction, I have a little more leeway with my feelings. And Rachel wasn't written to be redeeming at all. She was written to be a pathetic, weak, grating character, and that's what she was. Also, HUGE error in terms of historical context: Hunter would never have been able to take Rachel from his brother-in-law's house and keep her at his, especially if Lonsdale wanted her back. And Lara was unimaginable in her bullshit, demanding that Rachel stay with them forever and then seeming surprised when things didn't work out that way. WHAT DID YOU EXPECT. The historical inaccuracy, which I can usually forgive, was just so glaring that I couldn't stand it. That would never, ever have happened and just reading about it was ridiculous. All of the other characters were similarly flat, even the mother in law, who I'm sure we were supposed to like. The only relatively interesting ones were Arthur and Janet, the villains, but even they weren't that great as far as villains go.

All in all, this book was ridiculous, and a total bust. Lara is the perfect example of those people that are all sweet and saintly, and goodness and light in public, and then treat their own family members (I'm talking more about Hunter than Rachel, although she's not that great to Rachel, either, always yelling at her about her terrible husband instead of listening and trying to understand why Rachel does what she does) like crap, and all the other characters are flat and completely without charm. Except Hunter, who's pretty interesting.

If this was the first Lisa Kleypas book I read, I would never have picked up another. Thankfully, a good friend steered me straight to "Devil in Winter" for my LK introduction, and that book is amazing.

## Jessica's Totally Over The Top Book Obsession says

### 3 All for Hunter Stars

#### All kinds of Spoilers and some ranting

I love me some Lisa Kleypas. She is my go to for historical romance. When I see her books for sale, I always auto buy, but maybe I should have saved myself some serious anger and skipped this book. Let me just say that the plot of this book was so good! And the hero... the hero was so yummy. BUT..... butttttt the heroine was a total CUNT! Lara drove me bat shit crazy. I was ranting so hard last night while reading this book that my husband had to keep telling me "shhhh Jess the kids are sleeping" I think I screamed "OMG I really hate this stupid bitch" like 10 times in the span of a few pages. I couldn't stand Lara!!

Okay so the plot goes something like this..... Lara is married to a total dick name Hunter who is the Earl of Hawksworth. He treated her badly the 2 years they lived married. He slept with his mistress openly. He was cold, and selfish to Lara, and when he would have sex with her it was only to try to get her pregnant. He would just come in her room and hurt her, no foreplay, no kissing just quick, cold and painful. So Mr Dickhead Hunter decides to go to India. About 7 months after Hunter sailed off, Lara was told the ship her husband was on was wrecked and he and everyone else died. Hunter's Uncle Arthur and Arthur's wife Janet Take over as Earl and Lady Hawksworth. They treat Lara like total shit. Have her living in a nasty little cabin that was moldy and falling down around her ears. So the book starts with Lara being told that her husband isn't dead like everyone thought. Now Lara, Arthur and Janet are not happy that Hunter may be alive. Arthur and Janet don't want to lose the Earl title and Lara doesn't want her hateful husband back. When Hunter shows up he is totally different. He looks pretty much the same expect he lost a ton of weight and he is tanner, but he is sweet, understanding, and he tells Lara he wants to do right by her. So is this Hunter really Lara's husband or someone trying to take his place?

I loved the plot. It was very entertaining and not something I have read before. I thought the "after shipwreck" Hunter was amazing which is the only reason I gave this book 3 stars. Hunter was so good to Lara. He treated her kindly, helped her sister Rachel get away from her abusive husband, let Lara adopt a little orphan boy, helped her raise funds for the charities she wanted to help, and he wooed her. He didn't take his wife to bed by force he romanced her. Now for some of the book I could understand Lara being standoffish but she was cold for too long. She could see that New Hunter was great and still she treated him cold and it bugged me. Then she finally slept with Hunter after she pulled some bullshit with his ex-mistress that I won't even touch on. She found New hunter to be a sexy beast in bed. She enjoyed sex with New Hunter and fell in love with her husband. She then realized she was pregnant with Hunter's baby. So at this point I am enjoying the book! Then she was told that her husband really did die and New Hunter is an impostor. She was told this by a man she doesn't really know but she totally believed what he said like his word was gold. She then goes home and rats Hunter out to the evil Arthur and Janet who have him jailed waiting for trial. Now this is were the heroine turns into a cunt that I will hate forever. She turned in the man she loved, whom she is pregnant with his child, knowing he will be hanged, to bad people who treat her and everyone else like shit just because it's the right thing to do. Yea well FUCK YOU LARA! You sanctimonious cunt.

I know Lara is a fictional character but I was so mad I wanted to beat her ass. It had me seeing red that she could backstab the father of her unborn child without even asking him if it was true. Now I know she changes her mind and she testifies that he is in fact her husband saving him because she decided she wants a life with him, but it was too late for me. I couldn't forgive her and I can't believe Hunter did. This book could have been amazing if there had been a better heroine. It was very disappointing how this story turned out. It had such potential but Lara truly put a sour note on the whole read. I gave this book 3 stars because I did love Hunter, and the plot it was just Lara that I couldn't stand.

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