



The Maiden

Cynthia Harrod-Eagles

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1720: political intrigue besets the kingdom as the Stuarts try to claim the throne occupied by the Hanoverians and the Morlands have to use all their wiles to keep their fortunes intact. Jeremy Morland, sole heir to his father's will, has no option but to marry to cold-hearted Lady Mary to secure Hanoverian protection and safeguard his inheritance. Then the rebellion of '45 and the bloody massacre at Culloden thrust his daughter Jemima into the spotlight as the saviour of the family. Independent, single-minded, and a rare beauty, Jemima is a capable caretaker of the Morland heritage. Although Morland Place and its lands suffer from the excesses of her dissolute husband, Jemima's quiet courage earns her an abiding love and loyalty.

The Maiden Details

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From Reader Review The Maiden for online ebook

Chrissy says

Probably my favorite in the series so far, that is saying a lot!

Lolly's Library says

Book number eight in the Morland Dynasty series, **The Maiden** is set in the early decades of the eighteenth century, during the tumultuous years when both the Stuarts and the Hanoverians laid claim to the English throne. The plot revolves around James Edward (Jemmy), Annunciata's nephew and sole heir to the Morland heritage. To help counteract the taint of Catholicism attached to the Morland name and secure a Hanoverian connection to safeguard his family's future, Jemmy enters into an arranged marriage with the proud Lady Mary, a joyless marriage which produces their daughter Jemima on whose shoulders rest the entire prospect of the Morland Dynasty. (Nice, right?)

Annunciata has even less to do in this book than before (which is to be expected, considering the woman is in her seventies), but her presence isn't missed much considering we're given yet another despicable female to take her place, embodied in this volume by Lady Mary Holles: cold, haughty, and disdainful who treats her husband and her daughter with chilling hatred. The first because, thanks to a misunderstood eavesdropped conversation, she believes Jemmy also hates her (and they couldn't actually speak with one another to clear things up, oh no), a situation further exacerbated by her equally proud and standoffish companion, Lady Dudley, who only encourages the distance between husband and wife with her poisonous advice regarding Lady Mary's marriage as well as her supposed higher status to her husband:

'Being a young man, he will probably want to trouble you that way a good deal at first. But if you endure it, and shew your disapproval as a gentlewoman should, simply in your bearing towards him, I daresay that you will gradually be able to lead his mind towards better things. Most importantly, you must never cry out, however much it hurts. It would be exceedingly improper to make a sound of any sort at such a time, and it is a woman's fate to endure pain in silence. [That entire passage gave me acid indigestion.]'

'Like you? Why should he like you? ... When I was a girl... [i]t was not considered at all proper for a husband and wife to be affectionate towards each other. ... You should not encourage intimacy from him. ... No, Mary, I hope I shall never see you demeaning yourself to be friendly towards your husband. [I had to take some Tums after reading that bit.]'

(It doesn't help that Jemmy has the backbone of a jellied eel; I don't advocate wife-beating, but there was at least one instance where a good smack to Lady Mary's face would've done a world of good.)

And the second because, thanks to a hard birth which left Lady Mary crippled, she's resolved to take away any happiness which might come to Jemima. Which includes her marriage:

But she did not want Jemima to be happy: if possible she would like her to be as unhappy as she [Mary] had been all these years. Where to find a husband for her daughter who would appear to do her credit, yet would make her miserable?

Even as a fictional character, what kind of mother could think that way? It's utterly depraved and hideous.

Reading this series, I have to wonder: What kind of women does Cynthia Harrod-Eagles have in her life to keep writing such twisted bitches?

Edith Clayton says

Still enjoying this series. I have 3 more on my shelf after this & will probably buy more after I finish those. Thankfully, Annunciata played a much smaller role in this one. The focus was on her nephew, Jemmy, and his daughter, Jemima. Both are much more likeable characters than the spoiled & arrogant Annunciata.

Frances says

Another good read, don't look for likable characters in this one

Sara G says

Another great installment in the Morland Dynasty series, this one covers the '45 and the events of Culloden, as well as the Hanoverian goings on of that time period. It's one of the more boring/confusing parts of British history to me, quite frankly, but this book covers it pretty well. Just don't expect to like any of the characters. Jemmy, the Master of Morland Place, marries a timid lady who never makes an effort to like him or the situation. She almost dies while giving birth to their daughter, Jemima, and blames Jemima for it forever. Aliena's half Stuart daughter is a pain in the ass, basically Annunciata revisited. It was fun though, and I'm ready for the next one!

Luci says

I like these books because the author places the characters in key historical places. She also creates characters you can respond to, creating a family tapestry with many unique threads. The books are slow at first and then towards the middle pick up momentum. A fun read.

Mary says

The 6th book in the Morland Dynasty series is the reason I abandoned the series back in the 80's after enjoying the first 200 years or so of the Morland family. I honestly wanted to slap Annunciata because she became so shallow and stupid in the book, and her children weren't much better. Over 20 years later, I found books 7-20 as a lot in an estate sale and bought them to give the series another try. I hated The Chevalier too; the story did not improve until book 8 The Maiden, but then it really got better and the ensuing French Revolution/Napoleonic War era books are excellent. I'm glad I hung in there, but The Long Shadow and The Chevalier are pretty awful. Unfortunately, you have to read them to understand what comes later, but brace yourself.

Marcia says

My least favorite of the Morland books so far. I don't like the Hanovers or the Stuarts. None of this generation of Morlands are particularly likable either. A dull period in English history was not made any more interesting.

Jane Irish Nelson says

As I read further into this series, I am reminded of the opening line of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

Each new generation of the family seems to find new and different ways to be unhappy, whether through personal misunderstandings, misplaced love, politics, or religion. That said, the books also create an intriguing view of English history, from a slightly different point of view. I highly advise starting at the beginning of the series, and therefore have hidden the rest of this review.

(view spoiler)
