



The Dream Hunter

Laura Kinsale

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To love him is to face her deepest fear . . . In search of a legendary mare, Lord Winter enters the crucible of the red sands, forging unbreakable bonds of loyalty and trust with his young companion in the desert. But hidden beneath the ragged costume of a Bedouin boy is a remarkable young woman: Zenia Stanhope, daughter of the extraordinary Queen of the Desert.

Zenia wants nothing of the danger that Lord Winter lives for. She wants only to reach England, far from the blood and sand of the desert. But in one night of terror, condemned to death, their lives are irrevocably bound. Zenia escapes to an English world of elegance and comfort, leaving behind the lonely, fearless man who has changed her life and conquered her heart . . . until he returns to invade her sanctuary.

Now she must choose between safety and love, but can she find the courage to be the person she was truly born to be?

The Dream Hunter Details

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From Reader Review The Dream Hunter for online ebook

D.G. says

On a scale from mildly eccentric to complete psycho, this heroine is a total nutjob.

Egads! This was the most irrational, control freak heroine that I've ever read. I cannot say she had ONE redeeming characteristic, everything was about her, her, her. Even her supposed love for her child was a controlling love where she had to approve of every little breath her daughter took. It was revolting.

Why, oh, why was an special man such as Lord Winter in love with this wacko? I saw no reason whatsoever and the explanations was so freaking vague. This was a woman who was so jealous of his relationship with his own child that she tried to separate her from him, a woman who didn't even ask him how he survived after the poor guy showed up 3 years after being presumed dead, a woman who hysterically rejected him over and over, no matter what he tried to do for her. She did NOT deserve him and I did not believe her about face. I'm sure she kept acting up until her grave.

By all accounts I should have rated this lower but I loved the historical detail, the hero's characterization - what a rich, complex man! - and the narration by Mr. Bolton. That saved this from being a total waste of time although I confess that I'm even warier of reading any more books by Ms. Kinsale, as I know she has a penchant for this thoroughly unpleasant heroines.

Ashley says

One of the easiest 5 star ratings I've ever given. I even made myself wait almost an hour after finishing this book to make sure I loved it as much as I thought I did. And yes, I can safely say that I loved it and will probably still be thinking about it a week from now.

GPOY, after I finished reading it.

I can't say which Kinsale book I like best at this point. Seize the Fire? The Dream Hunter? Flowers from the Storm? The Shadow and the Star? Of the four, I really couldn't pick a clear favorite as I love them all. I will say that I think The Dream Hunter is Kinsale at the top of her game. As a novel, not taking into account only my own emotional response to the book, which was prodigious, I rank it alongside Flowers from the Storm, which I consider the best historical romance ever written. There were a few clear standout moments in this novel, like the whole of Chapter 8, but overall the prose was so gorgeous throughout that my response was twofold: 1.) shame that I even attempt to write when there are people producing prose like this and 2.) inspiration to write, write, write so I can at least get better and try and approach this level someday.

I really don't have anything coherent to say, apart from that I buddy read this with Melissa (who reads much faster than I do and always finishes books before me :D) and that I thought this was a fucking amazing book.

Not to sound like a jerk who's trying to be ~profound, but I saw Liam Scarlett's new ballet Fearful Symmetries (inspired by Blake's The Tyger) last night. I kept replaying the music it's set to, by John Adams, while reading the latter half of this book this evening. Even though the back half of the book doesn't take place in the danger of the desert, as the beginning did, there's a real haunted and hunted sort of feral quality to this novel as a whole that aligned so well with the music. (view spoiler)

Sometimes screwed up, socially awkward, neurotic characters who belong in therapy twice a week fall in love too. Sometimes that can be unbelievably affecting and romantic, as it was in this novel. As always, your mileage may vary. :)

5 stars.

UniquelyMoi ~ BlithelyBookish says

Brilliant, romantic, passionate, intense, poignant, sexy, exciting...

...all this is true of *The Dream Hunter*, but there are no words that can do justice to the amazing narrator/author team of Nicholas Boulton and Laura Kinsale! Every story is perfectly written by one of historical romance's best authors, then poignantly, passionately, brought to life through one of audio-books most talented, sexy, male voices.

Do yourself a favor and try these audio books. Any story by this pair. So far I've listened to *Flowers from the Storm*, *The Prince of Midnight*, and *The Dream Hunter*, and each one is pure brilliance! (But *Flowers from the Storm* will *always* be my favorite!)

It doesn't get better than this!

Giedre says

This is not a review. I have zero motivation to write one. Here's what was running through my mind when I was reading this book: *I don't get him. I don't get her. I don't get them. What is this. What the heck is this. When can I be done with these annoying people. Please. Just. Stop.*

So. When it comes to Kinsale's work in general, there are some very high highs, very low lows, and things that fall in between. At least, for me. When it comes to *The Dream Hunter* specifically, it was pretty much all lows.

Sombra says

Y solo porque la ambientación me ha encantado. En cuanto a los personajes, baste decir que ambos me han parecido egoístas, indecisos y cansinos hasta decir basta. No he visto el amor por ningún lado. He tenido tantos sentimientos encontrados que es difícil plasmarlos todos en un review, sobre todo cuando la mayor parte han sido "malos" en relación a Zenobia, la protagonista, con la que me han quedado ganas de darle unas cuantas "zascas" a ver si así espabilaba.

Alexis Hall says

I wrote about this book as part of a series on my favourite queer romances for Queer Romance Month over at

The Bookpushers.

You know what I like about the word queer? It's been around since about the 16th century, meaning a bunch of things, but nobody really knows where we got it. Best guess seems to be the German *quer* meaning oblique or sideways (or, of a person, peculiar- although I believe this meaning is now obsolete) but, let's face it, the semantic correspondence is pretty darn hazy.

So queer is queer even unto itself. A word of absolute particularity.

This week – for my final article – I'm going to be talking about Laura Kinsale's *The Dream Hunter*. But wait I hear you cry, well, maybe not cry but muse idly to your computer screen, *The Dream Hunter* isn't a queer romance. To which I answer: yes it is. It's probably one of the queerest romances I've ever read. And the fact that the protagonists are straight doesn't make a blind bit of difference.

Before I get into it, I should probably say straight off: I am a fan of problematic Victorians.

You can read the rest here

Heather Anastasiu says

This one made me cry it was so good! So far my second favorite of hers after *Flowers From the Storm*, I'm going on an insane Laura Kinsale reading frenzy, I've read five of hers so far this week. How had I not heard of her when I went on my insane Historical Romance reading crazy two summers ago? Apparently I'm making up for it now. I've been ill this week and barely even been bothered by it because Kinsale's books are keeping my imagination so busy. I CANNOT STOP READING.

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

THIS IS ALSO CURRENTLY \$1.99 FOR KINDLE!

...WHO ELSE WANTS TO BR IT WITH ME??

Liz Dryer says

Let me just start off by saying that I love Laura Kinsale. Her heroes and heroins are generally strong, and the chemistry between them usually electric. But in this one I was a little disappointed. I thought this one started off strong. The premise of the story was good as was the situations the hero and heroine got themselves into, fun. I loved the first 1/3rd of this book, but by God, there are parts that make me want to smack the crap out of the heroine. I didn't mind her fear in the desert, as it was entirely reasonable and she was able to work through dangers despite it, but later, she's absolutely smothering in her nervousness. There is no longer any reason for her to be this afraid, but here she is cowering and using her stubbornness to stay stuck as this overbearing creature. She was barely tolerable for the last half of the book. While the book is over all readable, this is definitely my least favorite of Laura Kinsale's books thus far. The hero was over all wonderful, and definitely the most sympathetic character in the entire book.

Melissa says

I find it so hard to write about Laura Kinsale's books with any objectivity anymore. I adore her writing to the point of hero-worship, and love so many things about her novels -- the beautiful, sophisticated prose, the deep and complex characters, the wild risks she's willing to take with plots and settings, and the way no two of her books are alike. She consistently takes premises that in less accomplished hands would be an embarrassing mess, and turns them into something compelling and emotionally truthful. I never finish one of her books that I don't sit around in a daze for hours afterward, just pondering what I've read, and her stories stay with me for a long time in a way few other romance novels do.

That said, for all the wonderful aspects of this book, and there were a lot of those, I do feel like the latter part of the story is a little bit weaker than the first part. And the heroine, who in the first half of the novel I admired and liked, turned into someone much more difficult to sympathize with, too. I'd give the first part of the book an unqualified 5-star rating, and the latter part a 4. Overall, I'd rate it as a 4.5 -- really good, but not *Flowers from the Storm* perfect.

Arden, Viscount Winter, is an English aristocrat who has spent much of his adult life seeking adventure and running away from the family and society that make him miserable. For all his bravery and willingness to take risks in strange foreign places, inside there's still a lot of the lonely, overprotected and under-loved little boy he once was. He has a hard time connecting with people, and is often awkward in social situations. When his father begins to put pressure on him to marry and produce an heir, he takes on the job of retrieving a valuable Arabian mare in the deserts of the Middle East, in order to escape the pressures at home.

Zenobia ("Zenia") Stanhope is the illegitimate daughter of Lady Hester Stanhope and Michael Bruce -- two people you can read about here. (Their daughter is fictional, but they themselves were not. Lady Hester Stanhope lived a bizarre life that makes one of Laura Kinsale's plots look mundane in comparison!) Lady Hester was a cruel mother to Zenia, eventually forcing her go away disguised as a boy to live with Bedouins. Zenia's great desire is to leave the desert forever and go to England to live with the father she has never met. She longs for green, lush lands, to be able to live as a proper English lady, and for safety - above all for safety. When Zenia meets Arden after Lady Hester's funeral, he believes she is a boy named Selim. He takes Selim under his protection as a servant, and in exchange promises to grant Selim's desire to go to Britain, once the two of them have accomplished their mission of finding the mare, called String of Pearls.

Zenia continues to hide her true gender and identity, believing that if he learns she's a woman Arden will abandon her and not fulfill the promise he made to Selim. During their time in the desert, Arden and Selim become close as they navigate through terrible conditions and get mixed up in tribal skirmishes. They rely on each other, and Arden, who usually has a hard time connecting with others, finds it easy to talk with and be himself around Selim. Zenia, meanwhile, develops romantic feelings for her employer -- an open adoration which eventually disturbs Arden, who still thinks his servant is a boy. When Arden realizes that Selim is a woman, on the eve of their execution -- he is to be beheaded by order of a Saudi emir, and she is to be stoned -- they spend a night comforting each other and making love. They aren't executed after all, however, and when they get mixed up in another battle soon after their escape, Arden sends Zenia away and is (apparently) killed while rescuing her. Now pregnant, Zenia makes her way to England using Arden's passport, mistakenly presumed by her fellow travelers to be Lady Winter, Arden's widow. Arden's father decides to accept Zenia as Lady Winter, in order to have an heir now that his son is dead, even though he knows full well that no marriage actually took place.

This first part of the book is wonderful -- exciting, full of ambiance and adventure, and genuinely romantic.

There's a level of subversiveness in Arden at first thinking Zenia is a young man, and his developing a close friendship and bond with her in this disguise before learning the truth. Kinsale brings the desert atmosphere vividly to life -- I was right there with the characters, feeling parched with thirst and blinded by sandstorms as they fought for their lives against the elements and the locals. Chapter 8, in which Zenia and Arden spend a night together before their execution, is one of the most beautifully and romantically written chapters in all the Kinsale books I've read. I found myself highlighting passage after passage on my Kindle.

In England, Zenia is taken to live with Arden's parents, the Earl and Countess Belmaine. Zenia gives birth to a daughter, Elizabeth, and is absorbed into the life of an aristocratic widowed lady. Zenia is an extremely overprotective mother, who rarely lets her child out of their two room suite in the mansion, and who lives in fear that her daughter might take ill. The loss and terror she experienced in her previous life make her extremely and cripplingly risk-averse. When Elizabeth is 18 months old, Arden returns alive, shocked to find he has a "wife" and daughter. Arden is instantly smitten with his little girl, and the love and bonding between the two of them is endearing to see. Zenia, however, is terrified. She doesn't approve of Arden taking Elizabeth outside, of him letting her out of her rooms, of him letting her ride with him on his horse. She thinks Arden is going to take Elizabeth away and return to the desert, in spite of his attempts to acclimate to life in England and his willingness to marry Zenia in truth.

Zenia constantly pushes Arden away. She doesn't like him being around Elizabeth, and she's jealous that Elizabeth takes such an instant liking to the father who carries her around on his shoulders and lets her have some fun and excitement in her toddler life. The second part of the book is basically a battle between Zenia and Arden over the care and custody of their child. Arden misses the brave "wolf cub" he knew in the desert; he doesn't see much of Selim in the fearful Victorian woman he's "married" to. He wants to regain the connection and closeness he felt with Zenia in the desert, and he wants to be a father to his little girl. Zenia is drawn to him and loves him, but her fear is stronger and she's often shrill and cruel to him because of it. Watching her try to sever Arden's tie to his daughter is heartbreaking, knowing how much the two of them have come to mean to each other. Even though I understood Zenia's fear, it was sometimes hard to sympathize with her.

The section of the book set in England is very different from the part set in the desert. The feeling of adventure is gone, and in its place is a domestic drama as these two broken individuals find a way to cope with their psychological wounds and hang-ups in order to be together as a married couple and as a family. As usual, Kinsale brings it all together at the end in a poignant, heart-wrenching way. I may have shed a tear or two, unsurprisingly. I think all of Kinsale's books have done that to me at one point or another.

I read this book and listened to the audiobook at the same time, using my Kindle's Immersion Reading feature, and as always Nicholas Boulton's narration blew me away. He's incredibly talented at bringing Kinsale's stories to life, and added so much enjoyment and emotion to my experience of this book.

Ania says

Second time reading:

I seriously love this book. Another one that I enjoyed re-reading immensely.

It pains me not to give it 5 stars, but Zenia was so annoying towards Arden by the end I couldn't deal with it. That was the only thing I didn't like. I could understand her reticence in the beginning but after a while she just behaved like a petulant child.

Actual rating: 4.5 stars

I basically put my life on hold to read this book.

It was such an amazing book! I'm tempted to start reading it again.

Laura Kinsale has the talent to weave such a complex story with well-developed characters and a great plot! At one point so many things had already happened that I looked to see if the ending was close and I wasn't even halfway through the book! For me that is the sign of a great story-teller.

Sally ?? says

4.5 stars but rounding up to 5 stars because I can't control myself.

It's not quite a favourite of mine. Probably because I did lose patience with Zenia a number of times. I can understand why she's so closed off and determined to make herself suffer but I did get frustrated when it was happening so late in the book.

Once again, the writing is beautiful and I can see everything happening so clearly in my head and it's wonderful. I'm so happy that LK has written so many wonderful, beautifully written stories with amazing complicated characters with issues even if sometimes they end up pissing me off.

Chapter 8 was amazing.

Children ruin everything 99.9% of the time.

Wicked Incognito Now says

Oh, Laura Kinsale, how I love thee...

I've been saving the Kinsales since I first discovered her last year. I've been taking them out and reading them like Godiva chocolates. This was my last. Boo hoo! :-((at least she has a new release coming out this year! Score!)

So, first of all, there are three things (aside from plain 'ol bad writing and romance novel cliches) that usually make me HATE a romance novel:

1. an unnecessary suspense plot--you know the sort, where the h/h finally get together but now there is a crazed murderer on the loose, or a random kidnapping, or a plot for destruction that must be solved. Blah. It's a cop out designed to wrap up the storyline with a grand climax. I hate it, and often it ruins a really good romance.

None of that in The Dream Hunter.

2. A BIG misunderstanding. Someone assumes something, and someone else says something misleading, and then there is more assuming that leads to hating and heartbreak and it could easily be solved but that would end the book too soon so it drags on and on and on and ARGHHHHHHH!!!!

3. Unnecessary hatin' on the heroine. Hero just ends up PISSED at heroine for no good reason, usually involving the big misunderstanding or something equally stupid. This can also be reversed to unnecessary hatin' on the hero. I can't stand this. Makes me cringe.

So, there are bits of numbers 2 and 3 in the Dream Hunter.

If so, then why did I love this book? Because Laura Kinsale didn't QUITE go there. She started with a bit of 3, then didn't completely delve into the ugly hating. There was the threat of number 2, until I was sure I would have to be really disappointed in Ms. Kinsale, but she didn't quite commit to the nasty misunderstanding either.....so all was saved.

The Dream Hunter was heartwrenching through and through. Complete with tortured hero and tortured heroine. Plenty of angsty angst, and emotional emotions up the whazoo. But Kinsale DOES IT RIGHT.

You're all: "Oh no! She is NOT going there!!" and she doesn't. It's like being on an angsty precipice. Off the cliff lies 80s melodramatic daytime soap. But she never takes us over the edge. She stays real, reasonable, appropriate, and just plain lovely. But heartwrenching!

The Dream Hunter ranks just under Flowers from the Storm and For My Lady's Heart for me.

Katharina says

I am already planning to buy the paperback version, because while my kindle is great, I need to have a physical copy of any book I truly love.

I've read a couple of Kinsales books in the past and while I enjoyed her writing style a lot, I was never crazy about her stories; a bit too extreme, a bit too out there. It actually kept me from buying more of her books. This is the first time that I truly loved the storyline she came up with. Heartbreakingly beautiful, it couldn't have spoke to me more.

When I started the book I had zero idea of what I was in for- tbh I expected an odd, slightly crazy adventure cum love story set in the Arabian peninsula. I wasn't even super keen to start this book, but a severe lack of alternatives made me pick it up. And I am so glad that I did!! I couldn't have been more wrong. While the story starts in the dessert, and while this part of it is of course formative and the set-up for the later part, the setting fairly quickly moves on to England and from there the story develops into so, so much more than I ever expected it would be.

From reading reviews, I understand that many readers had problems with the heroines behaviour. For me, her actions and intentions were always understandable, thanks to Kinsales skillfull characterisation. Same goes for the Hero actually.

Yes, I would have wished for them to have done things differently at times but I also understood why it wasn't possible.

If there was one thing I did not like in the book, it was the fact that the couple wasn't shown happy together for long enough at the end.

While their hea is believable to me, I would have loved to have seen them together more, maybe working on unresolved conflicts such as his family dynamics. As it stands, I as a reader will simply have to have faith in the fact that they would have been able to overcome their obstacles.

I don't even know what to say that could do this book justice. But I could go on an on babbling about it, if anyone feels like discussing it, please reach out!!!

Christa Schönmann Abbühl says

Apparently I read this years ago in the German translation, and did not like it all that much. This time it worked very well for me, I was in great emotional turmoil throughout, fervently wishing for an end to the characters and my suffering.

I was a little uncomfortable with the first part, which takes place in the Arabian desert. It is very much in tune with travel records of the time, but the fearless white hero among the „barbaric tribes“, who bests the „superstitious natives“ at everything with his gun and cunning... it reminds me too much of the works of Karl May and similar books.

Apart from that it was all very romantic, and sad. And the characters, even though quite annoying in parts, seemed well written and realistic to me. The end, while beautiful and a huge relief, did not quite resolve certain matters, especially with the heroes parents.

The sexy times were sexy even to me, who constantly complains about the way sex is depicted in romance. And especially on audio.

The narration or rather performance of Nicholas Boulton was a work of art. It might be entirely his fault that Lord Winter worked so well for me.
