



## A Date at the Altar

*Cathy Maxwell*

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### A Date at the Altar Cathy Maxwell

*New York Times* bestselling author Cathy Maxwell's glittering *Marrying the Duke* series continues—Twice he has been close to the altar and still no duchess.

Will the third time be the charm? A duke can't marry just anyone. His wife must be of good family, be fertile, be young. Struggling playwright Sarah Pettijohn is absolutely the last woman Gavin Whitridge, Duke of Baynton, would ever fall in love with.

She is an actress, born on the wrong side of the blanket, and always challenges his ducal authority. She never hesitates to tell him what she thinks.

However, there is something about her that stirs his blood . . . which makes her perfect for a bargain he has in mind: In exchange for backing her play, he wants Sarah to teach him about love.

And he, in turn, has a few things to teach her about men . . .

### A Date at the Altar Details

Date : Published October 25th 2016 by Avon

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Author : Cathy Maxwell

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## From Reader Review A Date at the Altar for online ebook

### Dawn says

++SPOILERS++

Worth the money! 5 Stars!

Oh my heart!

This was an emotional read.

I have nothing negative to say, which is rare.

The hero was awesome, the heroine strong and independent, there was good conflict, a believable antagonist, and a fantastic HEA! Read this in one day.

Not going to re tell the story as I am sure there are already many reviews that do that so I will just touch on some key things people may want to know.

Notes for those who are considering this book:

-Be patient with the heroine. She is not "unlikable" in the beginning but certainly frustrating, so hold on and give her a chance, because the author does a brilliant job turning her character around. I loved her and felt so sad for her when she began revealing her past. She married young, and for what she thought was love, but her husband became a brute and abused her. She was relieved when he died, and she hadn't been with another man until the hero (14 years!). She never enjoyed the marriage bed with her first husband, dreaded it in fact, and she lost a child when her threw her down the stairs, leaving her barren.

-The hero is perfect, but has his flaws, which he eventually overcomes. The author did well in keeping him true to his character and allowing him to see his own faults and change. He was always a good man, don't get me wrong, his flaw was to be too responsible, too accomodating to his family, and society, disregarding his own wants.

There is a happy ending no worries, but I can't help feeling a little sad when the heroine is barren. I always hope that something happens and she ends up having a child..but here it is not the case. They do end up adopting, but I still feel sadness, it's just me.

Glad I read this one. Thank you GR friends for your reviews or else I would have missed this gem!

Safety:

Hero-Virgin-First last and only with heroine

Heroine-Widowed. Celibate 14 years. Didn't enjoy the marital bed with first husband.

Cheating-No

Rape-No

Abuse-Heroine, in past, not detailed

Cursing-No

Insta love/lust- No to insta love. Insta lust by the hero.

OM/OW- IMHO - no. There are others interested in both MC's but they don't interfere with the MC's.

Sex- Yes 2 times. Sweet, somewhat detailed.. not OTT.

HEA-Yes

ILY-Yes

Baby-No. Adoption.

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## Tash says

Reviewed @ Confessions From Romaholics

**Review copy kindly provided by author in exchange for a honest review**

A Date at the Altar is the final book in the series and gives our poor suffering Duke a HEA. Well I wouldn't deem poor suffering exactly since he wasn't exactly , Painted as aloof doesn't even begin to describe Gavin, the Duke of Boynton, who was determined to do his duty. However he has grown over the course of the series and presents a completely different man

Whilst I missed the second book and missed the introduced of Sarah and her niece into the series. I t was obvious things had changed, Gavin have wised up on certain things but he stickler to the rules of the ton. He may be eligible but after twice nearly getting to the altar. This man is ready to settle

Until he is thrust into the spotlight when he discovers the truth about Sarah and something London will like to know. Already born on the wrong side of the marital bed , Sarah had her work cut out from her birth. Now a struggle playwright at her wits end, she is determined to get her time to shine.

She done the whole marriage thing and despite her father being a lord, she far from suitable and Gavin will never look at her that way. She far from a docile woman, she a woman ahead of her time To top thinsg things off, she doesn't respect Gavin and his title. As so right she can as he made her chase her niece across country and jeopardy her happiness.

So Gavin takes things into his own hand and whilst he may be ready finally to find the girl by letting his mother do the deed once again . Gavin got other problems, in the name of Sarah. Sarah has wormed her way back in this life and he thinks she perfect to help in his quest.

As they need each other and could of come at a better or worse time for each of them. Which one is yet to decide. As A Date at Altar isn't going to let these two have their HEA so easily. As feelings maybe one things when falling in love, but there way more to this love story and need a journey .

Maxwell wraps this series wonderfully with the final book in the series and loved where she took us as readers with this series. Gavin grew up in this series in some ways and I loved how seeing having his happily ever after and everything come around full circle . Sarah was the perfect paring and I loved their story.

If you are looking romance with a heroine who know her own mind and not afraid to share it and turn London's upside. Maxwel's latest romance will be sure favourite with historical fans.

4.5 couples

For more of my reviews, visit Confessions From Romaholics. And drop by the blog's Facebook page

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## Caz says

**I've given this an A- for narration and a B- for content at AudioGals; the narration pushes this up to 4 stars for the audio version.**

It's no secret that I've been rather disappointed with the previous books in Cathy Maxwell's *Marrying the Duke* series; my reviews of *The Match of the Century* and *The Fairest of Them All* have praised the performances given by Mary Jane Wells, but the stories themselves have been lacklustre. Part of the problem was that, in both cases, the major secondary character of Gavin Whitridge, the Duke of Baynton, was far more interesting and attractive than either of the heroes and I was at a loss as to why either of the heroines would have thrown him over for someone else!

But throw him over they did, and now, in this final book in the trilogy, Gavin finally gets his HEA. In the latter stages of **The Fairest of Them All**, Gavin met Mrs. Sarah Pettijohn, a widowed actress and playwright, when the pair had to join forces to track down her niece, Lady Charlene, who had run away with Gavin's twin brother. The sparks flew between them, with Sarah labelling Gavin an arrogant stuffed-shirt, and Gavin insisting Sarah was an infuriating harpy. Both of them were extremely relieved when their journey came to an end, and they did not expect to see each other again.

You can read the rest of this review at AudioGals.

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## Samantha says

I own this book. Review to come on my blog.  
<https://storyobsessedblog.wordpress.c...>

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## Hasnamezied says

5 Big Dreamy Lovely Stars.

This is an amazing book and I enjoyed every word in it. I smiled, laughed and cried hard during my reading to this book. The best ending for the series. Thank you Cathy Maxwell.

Please meet  
Sarah

Gavin

and their love was the true love to accept the other as he/ she really is.

## Laura the Highland Hussy says

Review posted on Got Fiction?

\*\*\*Some Spoilers\*\*\*

This is the third book in Cathy Maxwell's Marrying the Duke trilogy, and it can be read as a stand alone. You'll see mentions of the previous 2 books, and from what I gathered, the previous 2 books were about this hero's previous 2 fiancées. It seems that the Duke of Baynton can't keep a fiancée. They keep running off with other men (one of whom is his twin brother)! So this is finally his moment.

When I first read the beginning, I found out he was a virgin and that our heroine was a playwright...A virgin hero and a duke at that?! A 34 year old heroine who's also a playwright? I'm in!

But as with the previous books I've read by this author, I just felt meh.

Sarah Pettijohn is a struggling playwright who is doing one performance as the Siren. Only one. A decade before, she had done one performance and was an instant sensation. However, she didn't want to be known as an actress who sings practically nude. She wants to be a playwright. Well, her dream will come to fruition if she does this one night as the Siren. But, there's one guy in the audience, Rovington, who basically puts a bounty on her head. He has bets going that he can bed the Siren, and if he doesn't, it'll bankrupt him.

He's got the potential to be an amazing villain, but he's used poorly and often only in the background.

The blurb and the title are slightly misleading as well. The title implies that a wedding will feature more heavily than it does. The blurb makes it sound like their bargain is different than it is.

This book left a lot unsaid-the engagement to Leonie, a debutante the duke was supposed to marry. His mother basically got them engaged, and all of Society knew of it. Yet, what, the reader is supposed to forget about her? Then most especially, we have Rovington. He's been the bad guy from the first page. He has shown he won't slink quietly into the night. But they just let him go. Again. And of course, the missing theatre owners! What ever happened with that? Gavin was supposed to find them for her as part of their bargain, but they are never even brought up again! Ridiculous!

This book tries to be too many things. The writing isn't good enough to carry off angst, yet she has heavy themes that needed it. She tries to be light, but she's not funny. And she tries to be feminist, which I felt was all undone at the end. The fact that after they married, Sarah stops writing. She sometimes writes, but really just dreamed of babies. This almost insulting especially coming from a romance writer. She can absolutely do both. Why would she stop writing plays just because she fulfilled her dream of producing a play? Is that dream done? She no longer wants to write? That made no sense to me with how driven she had been her whole life.

I don't know, guys. I think I'll have to admit that this author isn't for me. She tends to have interesting beginnings, boring and tedious middles, and rushed endings.

\*\*\*ARC courtesy of Avon Books

## Giselle Bradley says

This was so delightful.

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## Lover of Romance says

This review was originally posted on Addicted To Romance *Summary*

Gavin Whitridge, is the Duke of Baynton and expectations are high for him to marry and he can't just marry anyone especially the penniless playwright Sarah Pettijohn. She is the last woman that anyone would expect that Gavin would set his eyes on. Gavin knows that he can never marry Sarah, his mother and aunt already have a woman in mind. He knows he needs an heir however there is something different about Sarah that draws him. And when Sarah finds herself in trouble, Gavin proposes she become his mistress and he will support her and her dreams of seeing her play become a reality. Sarah finds herself agreeing to a bargain she never though she would agree to but becoming Gavin's mistress isn't what she expected. He makes no demands on her that she isn't willing to make. Gavin desires a woman that he can be himself with, someone that is safe and makes him feel like he is at home with. Gavin however is forced to make a difficult choice duty or love...or will he realize he can have both?

### *Plot and Story Line*

What a story and Cathy Maxwell closes this series out with a bang with A Date At The Altar. I was highly impressed with this book, and I got it in audio format and I listened to it in TWO DAYS!!! I never listen to a audiobook that quickly, but after a couple of hours and I just wanted more and more and couldn't put it down. This story starts out with Sarah putting herself in a position to dance as the "siren" so she can have her play. And is shocked to see the infamous Gavin, Duke of Baynton at her show of all place. She is horrified, but when he saves her from a mob of men trying to get her she sees something more in him. Gavin has searched for the right wife for so long, and even though he wants a love match like his two brothers, he doesn't know if he will find it. Gavin and Sarah aren't the type of couple you could see together to be honest. They are so different from each other, however once they are together they just fit so perfectly well. I really enjoyed what I saw in this one. And we are also introduced into some surprises as well. This story does have its dramatic moments, and even though it seemed a bit unrealistic...it was so uniquely written that you have no real issue with it. I loved seeing the conflict that this pair is faced with and certain truths that they learn about themselves and about each other. There is a pivotal moment toward the end of the book, that brought tears to my eyes. A moment where Gavin and the hero (of the first book, the novella) and it made me fall in love with this series even more. It changes the whole tone to the story and is worth every moment until then to see how Gavin changes in certain ways. I loved the character growth and seeing one fight for LOVE over the threat of scandal. A love story you don't want to miss out on.

*Children mean nothing to me if I can't have you. You are the one I choose. I was meant to love you Sarah.*

### *The Narration*

Sarah Jane Wells is simply brilliant and she did this series so well but especially Gavin's book is my favorite of her work. Her voice and the way she dispaly different tones of feelings of the story and character kept me captivated. She has such a pretty British accent, and I love the way she reflects that in the work she does. She is a must listen to if you like historical romances on audio.

### ***The Cover***

What a gorgeous cover...I just love her dress and the playful smirk. Sets a playful tone

### ***Overall View***

A Date At The Altar is a lively and dramatic romance that keeps the reader engaged, anxious and highly eager to see this couple get their HEA. A FUN ROMANTIC GEM!!

### ***Books N Tunes Pick #2: Your Hands Are Cold***

I was hearing this song in my head as I was listening to this book especially some of the later scenes of the book.

### ***Click To Buy On Amazon***

[foogallery id="23089"]

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### **Desi says**

[fertility issue with the usual "oh look she's pregnant against all prior ex

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### **The Book Junkie Reads . . . says**

Sarah was the absolute wrong person to become the next Duchess of Baynton. She was a playwright. She was not a Lady. She was free-spirited. She was illegitimate. She was strong, courageous, outspoken. She was not afraid of the wrath of the duke. She was perfect.

Gavin step in it again. This time he wanted to learn a little something for his trouble. He got a lot more than he bargained for. Sarah was all that he need and none of what he wanted for the proper Duchess to his Duke of Baynton. He was arrogant, rude, stubborn, self-consumed, manipulative, and has a superiority complex.

I found the pegs that he was knocked down were just what he needed. Sarah was the perfect woman to hand him his self-importance on a platter and not with kindness.

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### **Leone (She Reads too Much Romance) says**

Review: 4.5

"A Date at the Altar" is truly an exceptional read, quite divergent and a bit of pure spicy romantic entertainment that was entirely what I was looking for in a historical-romance novel.

I need to clarify in this review that this is my first time reading a novel in author's Cathy Maxwell's "Marrying the Duke" series. I am actually quite glad about this (although a little disappointed too) because I was able to have a clear mind when reviewing this specific story because honestly I fell in love with the book from the opening chapter till the end.

As a PR I have made a notion to include how historical-romances are beginning to read so much alike. The

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same dry plot, the same hero and the heroine and of course let's not forget that same ole love story. I point these flaws out because I want fellow readers to understand just how amazing well the author wrote this story by taking the time to deliver something refreshing to her readers. I've always liked the author, but if her stories keep reading like "A Date at the Altar," pretty soon I am going to have a new favorite.

The entire book was an excellent, strong storyline with the heroine that is a bit known for scandal. Add an a haughty hero who is sexy as he is game and I was hooked. I do have to add that the heroine was such a nice relief. Sarah, was not the heroine that I was expecting to see in this novel likely because of her witt, her sass and of course her determination. The attraction between Sarah and Gavin was sizzling from the start. I enjoyed how Gavin pursued Sarah as it made the novel fun to see how these two opposites were going to end up reaching their HEA-ending.

Without a doubt if you haven't already grabbed this book, do so! If you are like me and haven't read this series yet it is not a big dilemma. I was not lost in this novel at all in comparison with the rest of the novels of the series which is yet another prime example of how Cathy Maxwell pens her books. In the end I couldn't ask more for a historical-romance than what Maxwell delivered.

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## Amanda says

Although not the best, nor the most memorable of reads, A Date at the Altar did have these two standout aspects going for it:

1) The pairing of a clueless virgin duke hero and a world weary widowed playwright (GINGER!!!) heroine. Oh! And both of them were in their 30's as well. When does that ever happen?

While their differences did drive each other mad in the beginning (which was often great fun for the reader to pay witness to), Sarah and Gavin eventually discover that they are actually quite similar in a lot of ways. Their ability to find common ground and mutual understanding blended well with their already strong physical attraction. They weren't my favorite pairing ever, and there were times when I wish there had been a much stronger tension between them, but overall the romance was nice, just not outstanding. But the way they changed each other for the better? Yeah, that was great.

2) An accurate depiction of what life is really like for many rich men's mistresses and their illegitimate children.

*"My father is Lord Twyndale, the late one. I was born on the wrong side of the blanket, Your Grace, but how does that make me less respectable than his daughters born to his lady wife?"*

*"I believe you know the answer to that."*

*"You are right. I fought it for years. In fact, **my sense of worth doesn't come from who my father was. It comes from who I believe I am.**"*

The book's emotional core centered on Sarah's journey from distrustful, herself against the world way of thinking, to her truly wanting to let Gavin in. It was a struggle and I appreciated that. Sarah had so much baggage to deal with too, starting with her mother, an actress turned mistress who died alone and destitute. Her mother left behind a legacy of sorts, one in which Sarah refused to let be. It dictated that because Sarah was bastard-born from a lord's mistress, she would inevitably end in the same position: am expendable mistress and nothing more. Sarah's fight to keep the fears her mother instilled her at bay ultimately led her to make bad choices and putting her trust in the wrong people, ending with her closing her heart off completely for the sake of protection. And yet, the strength and fire (that matched her glorious hair) within her refused to

die. Even when life was at its most bleak, Sarah kept on fighting and that was just incredible to read about. Without question, Sarah was the soul and driving force of this book and without her, it wouldn't have worked.

Once Sarah did finally decide to open up to Gavin and reveal all she had been through, he did not find her wanting or less than as she'd always feared. No. He accepted and wanted her wholeheartedly, even more than before. Gavin also supported and encouraged her writing which of course made Sarah and I both adore him in return. Speaking of...

*“Every path in his life had been leading him to her.”*

Gavin, while darling, was not the most interesting of heroes, at least in contrast to Sarah. And his virgin status became a bit of an eye roll as the story went on. Most especially when during their first sexual encounter he's able to bring Sarah to orgasm on the first try. *RIIIIIIIGHT*. Still, he was adorable even at his most ignorant which surprised me since dense heroes are usually the bane of my existence. Maybe it was because he was super starchy or so in awe of the amazing heroine, but his willingness to learn from his misconceptions or shortcomings and to be a better person made him a step up from a lot of other dumb lords of his kind. Gavin also fought off convention (both society's and his own) to be with Sarah, (view spoiler). This, combined with the fact that he and Sarah were such a good fit helped ease whatever disparity there was between their individual characters, for the most part anyway.

What ultimately didn't work so well for me was the lack of plot. Or, more specifically, the way 'plots' seemed to magically appear and then were just as miraculously solved with little to no tension or stakes. It didn't help that a lot of what happened, especially in the latter half of the book, was super unrealistic. I mean, a Duke taking the stage as an actor in order to save his mistress's play from disaster? **COME ON NOW**. In the end, the only conflict to fall back on was the emotional plot and class distinctions which were decent enough, but I still needed **MORE**.

The author's prose was serviceable and even poignant at times. I actually ended up highlighting quite a few quotes of interest. And there was a breeziness to the writing that had me finishing the book in no time at all which is usually a good thing but ultimately, I came away not completely satisfied. I really wish I could better pinpoint exactly why this book didn't hit me in all the feels because it had so many of my catnip tropes. Regardless, I would recommend this to those looking for a quick, light read with hints of depth and humor.

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## **Jaci says**

Finally!!!! The Duke of Baynton, Gavin Whitridge gets his story. Gavin is a Gentleman who has always done what was required of him as a Duke. He uses his position to keep his country safe and prosperous. Guiding and influencing where he must. He has never kept a mistress nor ever been the subject of any unsavory gossip. He is everything that a Duke of the Realm should be. He has never stepped out of the boundaries that were drilled into him by his father. If you have read the first two books in this series, you know that both times he courted a lady she has fallen in love with someone else, as a Gentleman he has stepped back and let the ladies marry their true loves.

Mrs. Sarah Pettijohn is an actress, a playwright, the illegitimate daughter of Lord Twyndale, a widow and a survivor of physical and sexual abuse by her late husband. Sarah is a fighter who is determined to succeed, she will have one of her plays performed at a theater in London. She is also stubborn to the point driving The Duke of Baynton stark raving mad!!!

It begins when Gavin has been talked into attending an event at a theater where the famous Siren is to perform. He is brought to his feet in shock when he recognizes that Mrs. Sarah Pettijohn is the Siren. He has had dealings with her in the past and never thought to have to see her ever again. His brother married her niece. Gavin has never been a slave to lust, but now he wants Sarah as his mistress and is in the position to help her if she will agree to Carte Blanche.

Sarah has vowed never to become like her mother, going from man to man as she ages and then dies broke and alone. But the Duke is offering something she might not be able to refuse. Deep inside Sarah is terrified of intimacy and simply is not any good at sex, or so her husband had told her. She doesn't know if she can submit to Gavin. For his part Gavin is tired of always doing the right thing. He realizes that he has never made any decisions to make himself happy. He has never known anyone like Sarah and is determined to have her. Add his mother pushing him to court a young lady of her chose.

This is a story that will touch you down to your soul. Sarah and Gavin are amazing characters that will tug at your heartstrings and you will cheer for them to get their HAE. Cathy writes a story that you will not be able to put down. I smiled alot at the witty dialogue between Sarah and Gavin and I cried as they both opened up and told each other their secrets. This is an extraordinary love story that you will want to read over and over again. All I can say about this book is you must read it!! This book can be read as a stand alone. I recommend if you have not read the first two in the series....do!!!

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## **Sammy Loves Books says**

### **3.5 "The Duke finally gets his Woman" Stars!!**

**After being jilted twice for his brothers, Duke Gavin finally finds love!!**

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## **Kazen says**

A fun read that did some things really, really well.

The good:

- Our heroine Sarah is strong and confident and happy in her own skin. She's doing what she wants with her life and it's refreshing and wonderful to watch. Some people may doubt the plausibility of the plot so Maxwell shares some of her research in an afterward.
- Many Regencies talk about mistresses, often in the context of "oh no you don't" or "I can't believe he/she did". Here we get to see that experience from the other side and how the transaction often worked.
- The plot moves at a nice clip with some effective external conflict. I like how it stayed just this side of romantic suspense, with realistic but not overly done angst.
- Some prickly situations come up where I thought, there is only one way this can end well. If the character does one of these ten other things I would be so mad... but it always ended that one way, well. Phew.
- Virgin hero, yea!

- Not being able to have children, and what it would have meant at this time in history, is thoughtfully and compassionately considered. I was afraid it would be a "barren until you" storyline but the issue is handled realistically and well. Kudos to Maxwell.

The neither-good-nor-bad:

- This book qualifies as a Regency-not-in-a-ballroom, which is kind of amazing considering nearly all of the action is set in London.

The not-so-good:

- The first chapter is pure info dump, and even so I didn't realize that I had already read the second book of this series. Oops. Partly because...

- In book two of this series the Duke comes off as a boor, while here he seems like a totally different person. If you read this as a standalone you won't notice, though.

- The hero, who we are told has zero experience "knowing" a woman, still manages to give the heroine an orgasm effortlessly on the first try. Sigh.

- The plot is telegraphed, sometimes chapters in advance. The suspense factor is low so it wasn't a deal breaker, but I don't think the twists had the effect the author intended.

Overall I enjoyed *A Date at the Altar* as a quick, satisfying read despite the nitpicks.

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