



How to Dance with a Duke

Manda Collins

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What's a wallflower to do when she's suddenly in need of a husband? Use all the pluck and moxie she can muster to get what she wants...

Miss Cecily Hurston would much rather explore the antiquities of Egypt than the uncharted territory of marriage. But the rules of her father's exclusive academic society forbid her entrance unless she weds one of its members. To clear her ailing father's name of a scandalous rumor, Cecily needs to gain admission into the Egyptian Club—and is willing to marry any old dullard to do it.

Lucas Dalton, Duke of Winterson, is anything but dull. He's a dashing and decorated war hero determined to help Cecily—even if that means looking the other way when she claims the dance card of Amelia Snow, this season's most sought-after beauty. But Lucas has a reason for wanting Cecily to join the Egyptian Club: His brother went missing during one of Lord Hurston's expeditions to Egypt. An alliance with the explorer's bluestocking daughter could bring Lucas closer to the truth about what happened...or it could lead him to a more dangerous love than either he or Cecily could have imagined...

How to Dance with a Duke Details

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From Reader Review How to Dance with a Duke for online ebook

Suzanne (Under the Covers Book blog) says

3.5 Stars

Miss Cecily Hurston is on the hunt for a thief and a missing, possibly murdered, man to try and clear her scholarly father's name. Her father has been struck down by a stroke and is unable to communicate and his journals missing, the only place that may hold some clues is the Egyptian Club of which her father is a founder. Unfortunately a woman must be married to a member to enter, deciding that it is the only way Cecily is determined to be a marry by becoming a social success after years mouldering away as a bluestocking wallflower with her cousins, cruelly called "the Ugly Ducklings". However, a chance encounter with the new Duke of Winterson, Lucas, changes everything, especially as he is the older brother of the missing man and is determined to find him.

This is Manda Collins debut novel and I have to say it is fantastic, her writing is polished and her mixture of mystery and romance engrossing as well as a great change from the normally fairly straight forward historical romances. This book is comparable to Amanda Quick's books, which normally have some kind of mystery centred round a archeological or some type of intellectual pursuit and a romance between the main characters.

What I liked a most about this book was the characters of Cecily and Lucas, Cecily was a headstrong and clever female worried about her future, especially with her father ill. I liked her strong personality and also how she tried to use her intellect as a defence and a shield to hide herself away, she was a very well drawn charater. Lucas was also very sweet, he was honorable and most of he had the good sense to fall in love with Cecily. The romance between them was there from the very beginning, you knew at least that they were attracted to eachother, but it seemed that the romance grew from a friendship and respect for eachother, rather than some mad desire to sleep with her, then fall in love.

The mystery element of the story was good, although perhaps not the strongest I have read, more it was a device for getting Lucas and Cecily together, but there were gaps where nothing was happening and I did guess the culprit fairly early. But this didn't detract from my enjoyment of the book.

But, although I did like this book and I had fun reading it, it hasn't captured me, it did have some great elements in it but it isn't a book that stands out too much from the crowd of other romances. But, I would definitely recommend it if you are looking for a quality example of a historical romance, and I will be looking out for the next book in the series.

Lisa says

What a delightful, entertaining debut! I was first drawn to the lovely cover and then when I read the blurb I was intrigued as it sounded a bit different than all the regencies out there so I was more than happy to dive in.

Miss Cecily Hurston is determined to clear her ailing fathers name of murder by gaining access to the elusive Egyptian Club, obtaining his journals and decoding them (as she is a mastermind at codes). Only one small problem....she is female and the club is only for males and their spouses. So what is a wallflower (who is stuck with the unflattering nickname of A Ugly Duckling along with her two cousins) and bluestocking to do? Find a husband that won't mind her scholarly pursuits and get inside that club. But another small

problem arises and that is in the form of Lucas Dalton, Duke of Winterson.

Winterson also has an agenda that includes Cecily's father but he is on the other side of the fence. Winterson's brother, Hurston's assistant, has been missing ever since the last excavation and Hurston seems to be the only one that knows what could have happened to him. Since Hurston is ill and unable to communicate, Winterson also wants the journals to dig for clues for his brother's whereabouts and when Cecily's plans become known to him, he reluctantly agrees to help her sift through the eligible men. There is, naturally, a problem with that as our couple already has quite an attraction for each other and Winterson has a hard time imagining another man with this bossy, clever, headstrong female.

Overall, this truly was a delightful book! I was drawn to Cecily from the first page and drawn to the sparks that flew between Cecily and Lucas right away as well. Cecily has a wall built up around her from a previous heartbreak so her back and forth attitude with Lucas was a bit frustrating and I wished Cecily would have just left her guard down for good instead of toying with Lucas and his feelings one to many times. I really enjoyed how Lucas, a wounded war hero who did not expect to inherit his title, seemed to take life in stride and was a bit proper until he met Cecily and he slowly let some of that properness abate and let love in. You can just feel the love that grows between these two and you truly see how it affects Lucas and how it finally affects Cecily. The mystery aspect surrounding Lucas' brother and her father kept me flipping the pages and it took me a bit to piece it all together and I was still surprised by a few curveballs thrown in. For a debut I was very happy with the mix of romance and mystery, neither seemed to be overshadowing the other and it blended together into a wonderful, sexy romance. If you are looking for a historical romance that has a lovely romance that grows over time, mixed with some interesting settings among the excavation world in London and a bit of mystery to keep you flipping the pages, Manda Collins has delivered a winner! I know I can not wait for the next two books in the series :) 4 stars

I won an ARC of this book from Ms Collins off of Twitter. Thanks so much!!

Isa Lavinia says

DNF @ 52%

I was so excited about this book! A bluestocking egyptologist lady (for the sake of the enjoyment of this historical romance I set aside my disgust for the imperialistic mindset of the British Empire's subjects over the rest of the world), an injured war hero Duke, a mystery, a curse, missing people, murder!

Sadly the hero and heroine had zero chemistry

They only paid the minimum thought to propriety and the societal expectations of the time, what with kissing in public parks, slipping away together in the middle of a musical soirée, etc..

Everything they did was done regardless of what was established about their personalities. They merely did what was convenient to the author to advance the plot.

They'd constantly contradicted their convictions, aspects of their character, and even things they had said mere chapters before simply because it would help the plot along.

The conflicts that would arise regarding their relationship were contrived and nonsensical.

The supporting characters weren't fleshed out, and the mystery was easily solved.

I got tired of reading about the characters acting out of character for the sake of the plot, hence not having finished it.

Aly is so frigging bored says

Rating: 3.5*

The main characters are Miss Cecily Hurston and His Grace, Lucas Dalton, Duke of Winterson. She is looking for her father's diaries hoping that with information found there she will clear his name. Lucas is looking for his missing brother, lost in the last expedition of Lord Hurston in Egypt.

I liked all characters and I want to find more about her friends and cousins Madelin and Juliet and about Lord Deveril. I loved that Cecily was thinking on her own and didn't accept Society's dictates and that Lucas was so sweet and he listened to her and didn't discount her opinions as being wrong because she was a female or that he didn't try to stop her work with dead languages.

Manda Collins has a great writing style. Her debut novel is very good and I loved reading it. Even if it doesn't stand out from other romance novels it was a lovely read. This is the first story in the series *Ugly Ducklings* and I can't wait to find out more about her cousins.

PS: I loved the cover and also the names *grin*(my friends will understand this mention a lot better LOL)

ARC courtesy of St Martin's Press via NetGalley

Susan says

Good book. I really liked Lucas. In spite of his first appearance, when he was truly rude to Cecily, he is a really nice guy who is currently under a lot of stress. Once he has calmed down, he realizes he owes her an apology, and soon discovers he is very attracted to her. He and Cecily decide to work together to find out what happened to Lucas's brother, and as a result spend a lot of time together. Due some unforeseen circumstances they end up married, and continue their investigations. I really liked Cecily's intelligence and the fact that she had no problem using it. I thoroughly enjoyed the discussions that she and Lucas had, especially when she was able to convince him of her point of view. I really liked that he wasn't intimidated by her intelligence, but rather enjoyed it. I could see them falling in love, though neither one wanted to admit it. Cecily had been hurt in the past and was trying to protect herself and Lucas just didn't want to admit it. The mystery itself was good, though I did figure out the bad guy fairly early. There were parts of his infamy that were a surprise which did make for a nice bonus. The romance was very good, and I liked the way that Lucas continued to woo Cecily even after they were married. My only complaint was that I found the story dragged a little in a few places.

Andree says

2.5 stars.

There were elements of this that were strong. I actually quite like a lot of the characters, and I feel like some of the dialogue is particularly good. I even liked parts of the relationship arc. However, in the end, the sum of the parts didn't come together. The sort of mystery(ish) plot worked well enough, but the character arcs weren't so much arcs as zigzags. The personal conflict between Cecily and Lucas felt contrived. Cecily's backstory wasn't fleshed out well enough (at the right point of the narrative) for her views on love and marriage to make any sense.

Also, I wish this hadn't been a marriage that came about by compromising behaviour, or if the book insisted on going that way (for reasons of getting them married early in the narrative), then that trigger should have been pulled earlier than it was. There were multiple instances of compromising behaviour, but they were never caught, so I began to hope that this wouldn't be a marriage-due-to-being compromised book, but rather a sort of marriage of convenience to achieve a common goal (which I feel like is how this should have gone down, and would have made more sense given Cecily's apparent terror at trusting another person enough to fall in love).

Ditto the (view spoiler)

I wish this had used slightly different tropes, is what I'm saying (or had framed the ones it did use slightly differently).

Also, the villain is immediately apparent the first scene they show up in for reasons of clearly having no other purpose or connection to the plot in any way, particularly as I think they have maybe 2 (incredibly brief) scenes before the last two chapters.

Really wanted to like this more than I did. It's a shame, because I feel like there was a lot of potential floating around different aspects of this novel, but they never quite came together into a cohesive whole that I could connect to.

Susanne says

"Though", he reflected gravely, "you know what they say. The bigger the nose..."

This debut is absolutely delightful. Manda Collins reminds me a lot of Julia Quinn and if you like her books this is a must. And in hindsight I should have read this before *How to Romance a Rake*. I giggled, sighed and was utterly charmed! I really liked the mystery even though my first guess was right. However, I couldn't be completely sure. And it was a nice device for throwing the hero and heroine together. I really like books where they get married early on and yay this is one of these books! However, (minor) (view spoiler). As with so many romance novels the first part was stronger than the second part. With that said, I still recommend it warmly and I think Manda Collins is a new romance author to be reckoned with! The Ugly duckling series is one of the most charming and delightful new series this year!

"I like slaying dragons for you. I think I'll enjoy this husbanding business."

Andrea says

This was a lovely surprise. I've had this book on my to-read pile for a while and decided to read it on vacation, and I was not disappointed. It has everything I want in a romance. It was sweet, funny, the writing

was really good, and the couple and their respective best friends were delightful. The only reason I am giving this 4 stars instead of 5 is that the investigation into the disappearance of the hero's brother overtook the romance toward the end, and became more important than the romance. I would have liked a little more insight into Cecily's mind and how she ultimately decided to let herself fall in love with her husband. Since the next couple has already been introduced, and I really liked them separately, I can't wait to read their story!

Kat ~ Forever Book Lover ♥ says

You can find the entire review at Forever Book Lover.

The story line intrigued me, it had a unique blend of historical fiction, romance and mystery. Manda Collins, is an amazing story teller, "How to Dance with a Duke" pulled me in from the very beginning and I was hooked all the way to the last page.

Her writing in some ways reminded me of Julia Quinn, more for her quick oneliners. I found myself chuckling out loud. I enjoyed the way her writing amused me all the way through, and the same time she was able to spin a mystery which kept me guessing . I thought I knew who was behind it and she proved me wrong. It was thrilling to see everything unfold and surprised me to find out who the "villain" was.

Although there were chuckles along the way, I did tear up a few times, my heart broke for... for the rest of the review

This is a must have, must buy book!! Manda Collins has debuted a wonderful book filled with mystery and romance and if this is just her debut we are in for many great books to come!! I am anticipating the next release in this trilogy, "How To Romance A Rake."

Ann says

[First the heroine is upset she didn't get to go on an expedit

Christina ~ Brunette Reader says

If I'm not mistaken, this should be Manda Collins's debut novel and while the book shows some flaws, I see some great potential here as the writing is elegant, the dialogues are witty with sometimes hints of sheer humour and the plot feels interesting and refreshing.

The love story between Lucas, the Duke of Winterson, and Miss Cecily Hurston, a "bluestocking-turned-fashion-plate", is really sweet.

In this case, is the heroine, still suffering from having been jilted three years before, who is more reluctant in admitting her love for the hero who, instead, tries to demonstrate his feelings by joining Cecily in her quest for the truth about an unfortunate archeological expedition in which her father was involved and which caused the disappearance of his secretary, who happens to be the hero's brother too.

The denouement of the mystery from the 2\3 of the book on is well constructed and is able to provide some badly needed action. Where I found the novel more lacking is in the chemistry between Lucas and Cecily. The first love making occurs too early in the story to provide enough sexual tension as any romance novel should show and the heroine behaves with a great deal of inconsistency: she states that she doesn't want to suffer for love ever again in her life, but then she's willing to share a sexual affair with the hero having met him just few days before (in 1800-something) and then she accepts his proposal without batting an eyelash, sure to be able not to fall in love with him by shutting him out of her life during the day, but letting him in her bed at night once in a while (?!).

Again, the author's skill in writing is very promising, but I think Ms Collins should work a little bit harder on the historical setting, on the heroine's characterization and the dynamics of the leading couple's falling in love needs to be better and more deeply fleshed out. That said, this remains an enjoyable, if average-fare, romance and Ms Collins appears to be a brand new author well worth a try and I'm more than willing to look for her next efforts.

Heather says

I enjoyed this book so much that I (1) went out and bought a copy and (2) pre-ordered book two in the series. Cecily is a strong, intelligent woman who is frustrated by her lack of equality in the eyes of men. She is just as capable as they are – and they close the door in her face. And that's how we meet the Duke. The Duke thinks she's in love with his name, and runs away with his tail between his legs. But when he discovers who she is and thinks he can manipulate her, he finds that he is already putty in her innocent hands. Her well-meaning to get married for access to the Egyptian Club (and to restore her father's good name) gets the Duke all riled – he wants to protect, and he wants to seduce. And she never reacts quite the way he'd expect. I love that Cecily gets him so confused, and that he steps out into society just to protect her, and yet he can't keep his hands off her. Their dialogue was fast paced and smart, and they had great chemistry. The resolving of the mystery of the expedition was a little contrived, but it worked, and served as a great vehicle for the progression of their romance. I can't wait to read book 2!

Amanda The Book Slayer says

Originally posted at Sisters Unedited

Rated: 1.5 Stars

Before I get started you must know that this review will have rant-like tendencies. Yes, I know authors abhor such things and some reviewers detest it as well. But I can't help but want to shout that **This book was awful**. There is nothing that makes me more mad than buying a book that looked so promising just to have said image completely shattered. You have been warned that *this review is not going to be pretty*.

Now let's start from the beginning. I actually really enjoyed the beginning of the book. The beginning is part of the reason it has a little over 1 star. It was so strong and I was sucked into what was happening and couldn't wait to find out how the characters would play out their roles.

Let me share with you parts that I loved.

The very first lines are of Cecily beating up a member of the Egyptian Explorer Club because he was not

allowing her in. Her father is a key member of this club and she is desperate to get her hands on his journal of the recent journey. He has taken ill which leaves her to decipher what happened in Egypt. The guard remains firm that because she is not a married woman or a man of the club she could not enter. Slamming the door in her face she decides to vent her frustration further by kicking said door.

Defeated she heads down the stairs trying to come up with a plan to get the journal and in so doing show that her father had nothing to do with William Dalton's disappearance. For this is the second reason she needs the journal.

Her disgraceful behavior was caught by... just take a guess I am sure it will come to you. Lucas Dalton who is not only William's brother but a Duke, **the Duke**.

Now we have our two most important players meeting by chance and the sparks start to fly in more ways than one. They banter back and forth until they have both revealed who they are and who they are related too. At this point they both go their separate ways. We meet their families... blah blah blah. I instantly adored his mother.

"Never let it be said, my dear," his mother said, closing the door behind her, "that I am such a wilting flower that I cannot endure a temper tantrum from one of my boys."

"There is not a day that passes when I do not wish to share some bit of news or some observation with him, and then I am heartbroken all over again to find him gone. "

I think these two quotes say a lot about his mother and what type of influence she has on Lucas's life. Yea for his Mom!

Cecily is part of what the ton calls "*The Ugly Ducklings*." Apparently, their mothers(all sisters) were all so beautiful and caught great men that when they had less than stellar daughters they gained this term. The three cousins went through an awkward phase and then tended to be more wallflower than anything else at dances.

Recap: Strong willed women - Cecily / Dashing mature man - Lucas.

Here is where it started to loose me. *The Ball*

Now we all know that the scene where the man spots the woman is suppose to be a turning point of some sort, but it goes a little awry.

Cecily ends up stealing Amelia's (her worst enemy) dance card. She not only finds the names of several eligible bachelors who are members of the club she desperately needs to get into, but also three words or as later abbreviated:

S: Smile

B: Blink

T: Tilt

Really I am actually worried that this advice is what makes her so popular. Yes, our strong willed women has now stepped down to **SBT!** The worst part is that suddenly all the men want to dance with her. This in turn means that Lucas steps in to keep her all to himself because now he magically doesn't want anyone else to

have her.

Tug-of-War Match:

Pull_Push_Push_Shove = they now have an agreement to help each other. She will help him search for what happened with his brother and he will help her search for a good husband. Crazy but this is not the worst part. Let me just say that this agreement takes a while to come up about. Therefore bringing the book down yet again.

During this build up the characters are nothing but

If they just would get it out of their systems the story would have moved on. But alas we had to wait till page 167. Way too long I tell you. To make matters worse the whole scene comes out of the blue when they are trapped with *mummies* no less. I mean it is kind of gross that they could smell something rotten. The door slams shut on them and they have to retrieve the key so naturally out of all the times they have been together alone this is the time they "**seal the deal**" if you will.

This then leads into the ever predictable, "**We will get married because there could be a baby,**" speech the next day. This scene is where I lost it.

Remember Cecily is supposedly a strong willed free thinker. Lucas now is full of guilt and must convince her to get married. START:

L: Miss Hurston, there is something which-

C: Your Grace, if I might speak to you regarding the events of-

L: I will speak first, if I may Miss Hurston. Miss Hurston...Cecily.

Our...encounter of last evening makes it imperative that we wed without delay.

Before you object to my proposal, I beg you to hear me out.

Blah Blah Blah Banter back and forth..

C: I do, in fact, wish for a home of my own. I even, though you will be surprised to hear me admit it, wish for a family a husband, children. But it has never been my objective to marry for those things alone. I had hoped to marry someone with whom I could share my scholarly pursuits. A man who would encourage me in my work, rather than object to it outright, as my father did with my mother.

L: And you think that I would not encourage you? That I would resent your mental acumen? Your skill with languages and your translation abilities?

C: I do not know. I know very little about you at all.

L: I should think you know me well enough after our activities of last evening. Even if we are not so closely acquainted as to sense one another's every thought, we 'know' one another in the biblical sense at the very least.

C: But that is just it. I do not want a typical ton marriage. I want more than just conversation over the breakfast table and bodies occasionally joined. I want the sort of marriage Miss Wollstonecraft speaks of. A marriage of partnership and mutual understanding.

L: And you do not believe you could have that with me?

C: I do not know if I might or not.

At this point can I just say that our decisive Cecily now does not seem to know anything.

1st Point

L: And how, pray, did you intend to overcome your objections when you planned to marry one of the men of your stolen dance card?

Yes Cecily how?

C: Those gentlemen would have been easy enough to manage.

What? So the marriage of partnership turned into her wanting to manage her husband. But it gets better.

2nd Point

L: Do you mean to tell me that you do not wish to marry me because I am not a simpleton? Because I am not easily managed?

C: I would not put it so bluntly. But, in effect, yes.

Wow I am not quite sure what to think of that! Hum. What does this say about her....

3rd Point

Now the crowning jewel of this whole conversation. Cecily has told him repeatedly NO! Lucas goes all caveman on her.

L: What if I won't take no for an answer, sweet Cecily? What then?

Kiss Kiss Kiss When in doubt use your body to make her say yes!

L: I cannot, I will not, profess an undying love for you, Cecily. I will not flatter you or tell you what you want to hear. I am drawn to you, however. I have been since I saw you that day in front of the club. Now, circumstance and fate have brought us together, and by God *I will not be denied*.

4th Point goes back to the 1st Point

Last ditched effort

L: Cecily, you were prepared to marry men for whom you had little affection and even less attraction. I do not offer you the sort of partnership you crave-I am not even sure I know what you mean when you speak of it.

Well don't we all have that problem. What the hell is anyone talking about?

They go back and forth a few times and suddenly Cecily chimes in with "**Then, my lord, I accept your proposal of marriage.**"

.Bam! She is suddenly married off a few pages later and life goes on. But we are only halfway through the

book? I know, I know where do we go from here. Well there are more odd scenes sprinkled here and there. A bath scene which has Lucas saying:

"I will tell you a secret," he said.

At this point I was excited maybe we would learn something interesting. I was wrong.

"It is difficult for a man to hide his reaction to a beautiful woman."

Well Damn I thought this was already brought up when he popped her cherry.

"What do you mean?"

He let go of her chin and took her hand, guiding it down to brush against the evidence of his reaction to her particular form of ugliness. *"This is what you do to me."*

Um. I am really not sure why this is in the book. Of course why not add it into the mix. Then to make things worse she actually needed him to tell her *yes they have consummated the marriage*. Sigh. Where did her brain go? Because I tell you it is gone with the wind or maybe full of it might be a better way to describe it.

She also describes his appendage as "*elegant*" and then they go into a talk about having good manners.

Life goes on for these two as they keep their distance because that is how to maintain a **good marriage**. Enter the sexual frustration yet again. Really?

Cecily goes behind Lucas's back to investigate even though he is investigating as well. It just seems like it is one thing after another. This only gets her *shot at and in more fights with Lucas*.

Now I will no longer bore you but will say Will died.

Lord Brighton stole off with Cecily and held a gun to her at The Egyptian Explorer Club. Let's not forget the sarcophagus he wanted to stuff her in to die. But the kicker was that Geoffrey is the one who killed her mother. Lucas saves the day right after Brighton's confession and all things are wrapped up.

I can't say I was surprised by any of this and honestly it just keep going downhill from the bickering through kidnapping it just lost my interest.

So I have given this book **1.5 stars** because at least I enjoyed how it started.

The worst part of this book is that **The Duke** can't actually dance due to a war injury. So it is all metaphorical which tends to grate on my nerves. Couldn't it just have been called "Who'd Done it?"

If you choose to read it, Good Luck!

Hopefully you will enjoy it more than I did.

Jess the Romanceaholic says

This is a Quickie Review. For the full review, please visit The Romanceaholic.

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Series Best Read In Order: N/A

Steam Level: Steamy

This book reminded me a lot of some of the earlier novels by one of my favorite authors, Amanda Quick, as well as possibly Julia Quinn or Loretta Chase. There was just enough heaviness to make me take the book seriously, but the adventure and the romance definitely are what kept this story going.

Cecily's stubbornness as well as her intelligence made her quite endearing, and her chemistry with Lucas was delicious. The entire escapade with the stolen dance card was a bit unrealistic but still added a level of humor to the story, and the mystery behind what was happening in Egypt helped keep the pacing exactly where it needed to be.

Overall a very cute, fun read, with the perfect amount of steam and danger.

A solid 4/5 Stars, and I look forward to future installments to the series.

Lisa Kay says

Lovely book by a "new-to-me-author." I'll definitely continue the series and hope the rest are as charming as the first.
