



The Unexpected Duchess (Playful Brides)

By Valerie Bowman

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IN THIS BATTLE OF WITS

Lady Lucy Upton's tongue may be too sharp to attract suitors but her heart is good, and when her painfully shy friend Cassandra needs help she devises a brilliant scheme to help her discourage an unwanted suitor, the Duke of Claringdon. Lucy will hide behind the hedgerow and tell Cass just what to say to discourage the Duke of Claringdon...but it turns out that he's made of sterner stuff than either of them anticipated. And Lucy is shocked to discover that tangling with the tenacious man is the most fun she's had in ages.

KISSES ARE THE BEST WEAPON

Lord Derek Hunt made a promise to his dying friend to marry the demure Cassandra, and for a man who wants nothing more than peace and quiet after the horrors of war, she'll make the perfect bride. If only the impudent Miss Upton will let him court the girl! Doing battle is the last thing on his mind, but bantering with Lucy behind the bushes is too tempting to resist. And in *The Unexpected Duchess*, the spoils of this war just may be true love...

Valerie Bowman's Secret Brides novels are:

"Intriguing [and] engaging." *Publishers Weekly*

"Too delightful to miss!" *Lisa Kleypas*

"Sparkling...witty...engaging." *RT Book Reviews*

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Lucy Upton knows she can talk; the problem is that Derek Hunt, Duke of Claringdon, just won't listen! Lucy's friend, Cassandra Monroe, simply can't find the words to let Derek know she has no interest in him as a potential husband. Because Lucy has no trouble at all in speaking her mind, she offers to provide Cassandra with the clearest possible language for letting Derek know, once and for all, that his offer of matrimony is not welcome. However, no matter how many times Lucy—either channeling her words through Cassandra, or speaking as herself—tells Derek to go away, the infuriating man continues to court Cassandra. Lucy knows that Derek has had more than his share of success on the battlefields of Europe, but this is one battle he simply isn't going to win. Rising historical fiction star Bowman builds on the potential she displayed in her first Regency-set trilogy (the Secret Brides series) with *The Unexpected Duchess*, which launches her new Playful Brides books. This novel's engaging characters, snappy banter, and judicious infusion of smoldering sensuality will have readers clamoring for the next installment in this smart and sexy series. --John Charles

Review

"Engaging characters, snappy banter, and judicious infusion of smoldering sensuality will have readers clamoring for the next installment in this smart and sexy series." *?Booklist (Starred Review)*

"A fun, smart comedy of errors and a sexy, satisfying romance." *?Kirkus (Starred Review)*

"Smart, witty, sassy and utterly delightful!" *?Romantic Times (4 1/2 Stars; Top Pick!)*

"...a charming take on *Cyrano de Bergerac*." *?Publisher's Weekly*

"Fun, engaging romance with great characters!" *?Fresh Fiction*

About the Author

Valerie Bowman grew up in Illinois with six sisters (she's number seven) and a huge supply of historical romance novels. After a cold and snowy stint earning a degree in English with a minor in history at Smith College, she moved to Florida the first chance she got.

Valerie now lives in Jacksonville with her family including her rascally rescue dog, Roo. When she's not writing, she keeps busy reading, traveling, or vacillating between watching crazy reality TV and PBS. She is the author of books including *Secrets of a Wedding Night* and *Secrets of a Runaway Bride*.

Valerie loves to hear from readers. Find her on Facebook, Twitter, and at her website.

Users Review

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Michael Brown:

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