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The Fortune Hunter: A Novel



Synopsis

Empress Elizabeth of Austria, known as "Sisi," is the Princess Diana of nineteenth-century Europe. Famously beautiful, as captured in a portrait with diamond stars in her hair, she is unfulfilled in her marriage to the older Emperor Franz Joseph. Sisi has spent years evading the stifling formality of royal life on her private train or yacht or, whenever she can, on the back of a horse. Captain Bay Middleton is dashing, young, and the finest horseman in England. He is also impoverished, with no hope of buying the horse needed to win the Grand National—until he meets Charlotte Baird. A clever, plainspoken heiress whose money gives her a choice among suitors, Charlotte falls in love with Bay, the first man to really notice her, for his vulnerability as well as his glamour. When Sisi joins the legendary hunt organized by Earl Spencer in England, Bay is asked to guide her on the treacherous course. Their shared passion for riding leads to an infatuation that threatens the growing bond between Bay and Charlotte, and all of their futures.

The Fortune Hunter, the brilliant new novel by Daisy Goodwin, is a lush, irresistible story of the public lives and private longings of grand historical figures.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was drawn in by this novel's premise -- the Victorian-era battle between the stunningly beautiful Empress Elizabeth of Austria and the nice-looking, but not stunning, heiress, Miss Charlotte Baird of England, for the affections of a handsome cavalry officer, famous horseman and notorious womanizer, Captain Bay Middleton. The novel is clearly-written, carefully researched -- manners, social customs and language -- and has an intriguing plot that kept this reader engrossed. I award

those elements in the book a "5."But despite the author's careful research, so many major historical facts are altered -- clearly intentionally -- that my enjoyment of the book was substantially diminished. I would give it a "2" for historical accuracy in terms of its characters' lives, with an overall "3" score..For example, the book packs the struggle between the two women into a less than one year, 1875-76 -- but Charlotte is said by some sources to have been engaged to Middleton for seven years between 1875 until 1882, during which time Middleton remained the Empress's horse master during the Empress's repeated visits for hunting to England and Ireland. There's quite a difference between 1 year engagement and a 7 year engagement!The author also notes that very little is actually known about Charlotte Baird, so she has taken the liberty of giving her a passionate interest in photography. While photography was popular with some women and many men in that era, turning Charlotte into a proto-feminist with a career -- Charlotte was a shipping heiress -- seems a real stretch.

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