

# American Duchess: A Novel of Consuelo Vanderbilt

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Before there was Meghan Markle, there was Consuelo Vanderbilt, the original American Duchess. Perfect for readers of Jennifer Robson and lovers of Downton Abbey.

Karen Harper tells the tale of Consuelo Vanderbilt, her "The Wedding of the Century" to the Duke of Marlborough, and her quest to find meaning behind "the glitter and the gold."

On a cold November day in 1895, a carriage approaches St Thomas Episcopal Church on New York City's Fifth Avenue. Massive crowds surge forward, awaiting their glimpse of heiress Consuelo Vanderbilt. Just 18, the beautiful bride has not only arrived late, but in tears, yet her marriage to the aloof Duke of Marlborough proceeds. Bullied into the wedding by her indomitable mother, Alva, Consuelo loves another. But a deal was made, trading some of the vast Vanderbilt wealth for a title and prestige, and Consuelo, bred to obey, realizes she must make the best of things.

At Blenheim Palace, Consuelo is confronted with an overwhelming list of duties, including producing an "heir and a spare," but her relationship with the duke quickly disintegrates. Consuelo finds an inner strength, charming everyone from debutantes to diplomats including Winston Churchill, as she fights for women's suffrage. And when she takes a scandalous leap, can she hope to attain love at last...?

From the dawning of the opulent Gilded Age, to the battles of the Second World War, American Duchess is a riveting tale of one woman's quest to attain independence-at any price.

On a cold November day in 1895, a carriage approaches St. Thomas Episcopal Church on New York City's Fifth Avenue. Massive crowds surge forward, awaiting their glimpse of heiress Consuelo Vanderbilt. Just eighteen, the beautiful bride has arrived not only late but in tears, yet her marriage to the aloof 9th Duke of Marlborough proceeds. Consuelo-bullied into the wedding by her indomitable mother, Alva-loves another, but a deal was made, trading Vanderbilt wealth for a title and prestige, and Consuelo was bred to obey. At Blenheim Palace, Consuelo is confronted with an overwhelming list of duties, including producing an "heir and a spare," but her marriage is a sham. Consuelo finds an inner strength, charming everyone from debutantes to diplomats, including Winston Churchill, as she fights for women's rights. From the dawning of the Gilded Age to the battles of the Second World War, American Duchess is a riveting tale of Consuelo Vanderbilt's quest to gain independence at last.

New York Times and USA Today bestselling author KAREN HARPER is a former Ohio State University instructor and high school English teacher. Published since 1982, she writes contemporary suspense and historical novels about real British women. Two of her recent

Tudor-era books were bestsellers in the UK and Russia. Harper won the Mary Higgins Clark Award for *Dark Angel*, and her novel *Shattered Secrets* was judged one of the best books of the year by *Suspense Magazine*.

#### Other Books

*Making Masterpiece*. The Emmy Award-winning producer of PBS's *Masterpiece Theatre* and *Mystery!* reveals the secrets to *Downton Abbey*, *Sherlock*, and its other hit programs. For more than twenty-five years and counting, Rebecca Eaton has presided over PBS's *Masterpiece Theatre*, the longest running weekly prime time drama series in American history. From the runaway hits *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *The Buccaneers*, to the hugely popular *Inspector Morse*, *Prime Suspect*, and *Poirot*, *Masterpiece Theatre* and its sibling series *Mystery!* have been required viewing for fans of quality drama. Eaton interviews many of the writers, directors, producers, and other contributors and shares personal anecdotes—including photos taken with her own camera—about her decades-spanning career. She reveals what went on behind the scenes during such triumphs as *Cranford* and the multiple, highly-rated programs made from Jane Austen's novels, as well as her aggressive campaign to attract younger viewers via social media and online streaming. Along the way she shares stories about actors and other luminaries such as Alistair Cooke, Maggie Smith, Diana Rigg, Benedict Cumberbatch and Daniel Radcliffe, whose first TV role was as the title character in *David Copperfield*. Readers will also get to know Eaton on a personal level. With a childhood steeped in theater, an affinity for nineteenth century novels and culture, and an "accidental apprenticeship" with the BBC, Eaton was practically born to lead the *Masterpiece* and *Mystery!* franchises. *Making Masterpiece* marks the first time the driving force behind the enduring flagship show reveals all.

“ . We stroked our beards and wisely, quickly—and fatally –decided that even though Daniel DayLewis was a friend of Sue's and a very remote possibility to play Mr. Darcy, the BBC and *Masterpiece Theatre* had done *Pride and Prejudice* before, ...”