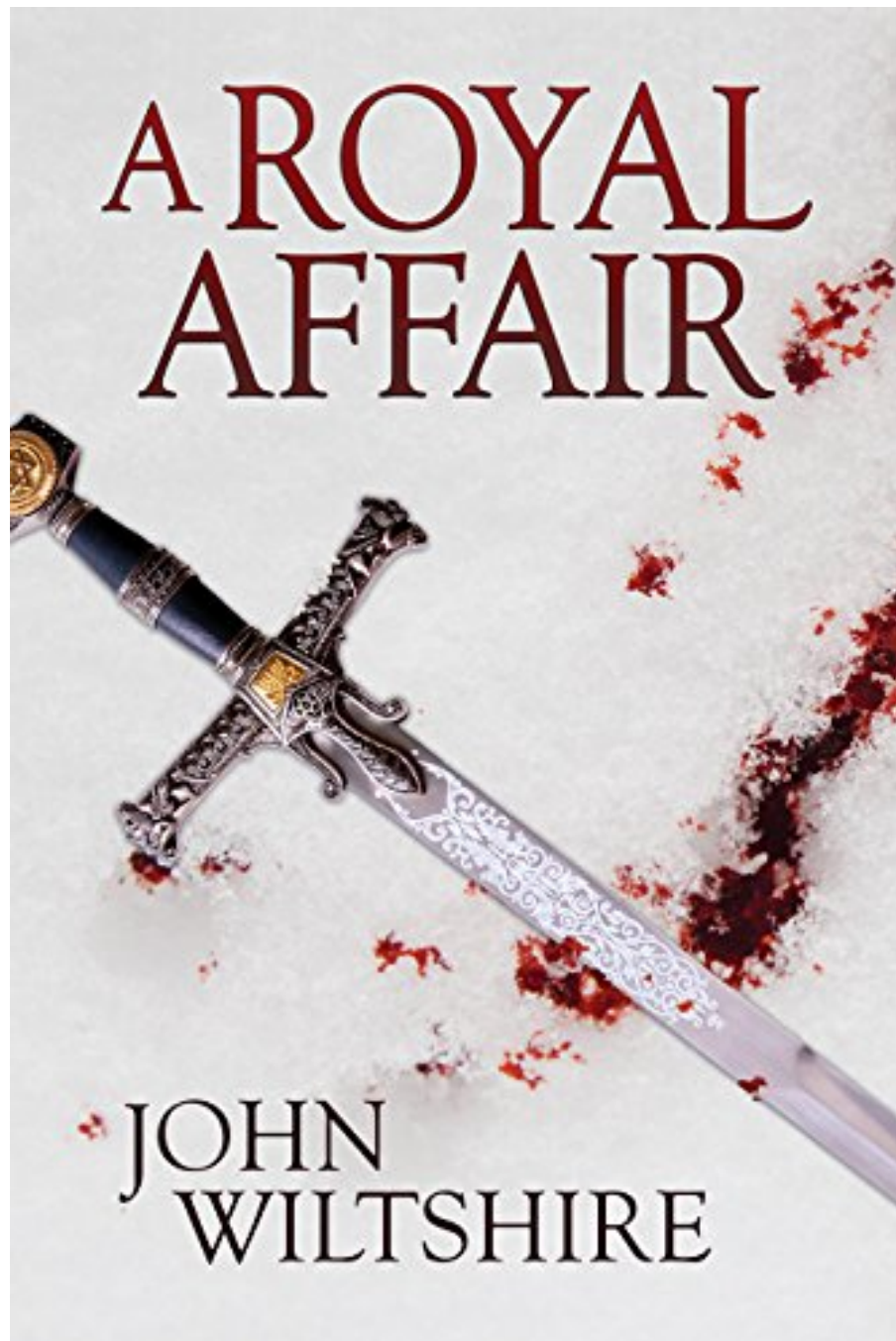


A ROYAL AFFAIR (BOOK 1 IN THE ROYAL AFFAIR SERIES) BY JOHN WILTSHIRE



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About the Author

John Wiltshire is Adjunct Professor at La Trobe University, Melbourne. He is author of *Jane Austen and The Body: 'The Picture of Health'* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *Recreating Jane Austen* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), and editor of *Mansfield Park* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) in The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen.

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A ROYAL AFFAIR (BOOK 1 IN THE ROYAL AFFAIR SERIES)

BY JOHN WILTSHIRE PDF

A Royal Affair: Book One

Doctor Nikolai Hartmann represents himself as a learned man of science who believes wholly in the rational and scientific above all else. In reality, he is a man haunted by an unusual past and running from his own nature. While the Reformation transforms much of Europe, it has yet to touch Hesse-Davia; this is a land mired in superstition with cruel punishments for crimes such as witchcraft and sodomy.

While traveling to the dying king's bedside to offer his medical expertise, Nikolai is set upon by a bandit. Reaching the king's ancient stronghold, he discovers his mysterious brigand is the beautiful, arrogant Prince Aleksey. Aleksey is everything Nikolai is not: unguarded, passionate, and willful. Despite their differences, Nikolai feels an irresistible desire for the young royal that keeps him in Aleksey's thrall.

But Hesse-Davia is a dangerous world for a newly crowned king who wants to reform his country—and for the man who loves him.

- Sales Rank: #87151 in eBooks
- Published on: 2014-09-08
- Released on: 2014-09-08
- Format: Kindle eBook

About the Author

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Most helpful customer reviews

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Very interesting premise, needs some work.

By Das Englisch von Königin

This is okay. I wouldn't call it the "best book ever" like some other reviewers. It's a very good premise and the story is sound. My biggest beef is that the characters, beyond the narrator, are not very well developed. The love story between him and the prince would be more believable if the prince were more than just a good looking 23 year old with startling green eyes. There is so much potential for rich story lines and characters throughout the book. The other characters enter the stage say a few lines and they walk off with very small bit parts after that and we're supposed to see them as flesh and blood people and understand and care about their motivations. I would like to have gotten to know all of them much better. It was very difficult placing the time in history that this takes place. Sometime after the American colonies are beginning to be established but somehow there are no guns? The fighting takes place with swords and spears, and they

have gunpowder to cause explosions, but no cannon, and no guns. There are some holes in the plot. There is an invasion from a nearby kingdom but we never know why. The old king is poisoned, but we never find out who the perpetrator was and suddenly the threat just goes away (I guess). Also, I think a bit of historical research would have been in order. Kings are never alone, and have no privacy, yet in this story, somehow they do and are able to carry on affairs in secret in the middle of a full court. Don't get me wrong, this is not a terrible book, I just think it needed a bit more developing. Apparently it is the beginning of a series and I hope the sequel will have less rough edges. The author has excellent writing skills, he just needs a little more development and a good content editor.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Compelling characters, vivid, action packed setting, believable romance, all wrapped in a fresh and captivating narrative style

By Dianne T.

This book is, in a word, brilliant. Definitely one of my favorite reads this year – I could gush on and on. John Wiltshire is a new to me author, and I went looking for more of his work immediately.

The “voice” of 35 year old Nikolai is the heart and soul of this story. His narrative begins with a veiled prologue. I was hooked from the first sentence, and found myself wanting, no make that craving, his full story. In vivid and absorbing detail Nikolai recounts his somewhat harrowing solo journey across a stark and brutal Europe to reach the court of Hesse-Davia, where the king is suffering from a long illness. Nikolai is an unconventionally trained doctor who, by virtue of his healing talents, found himself held in high favor with English aristocracy which in turn earned him the summons to tend the foreign king.

Nikolai's first interactions with the king's youngest son – the brash and alluring 23 year old Aleksey – involved a fair amount of snark and an underlying spark, setting up a powerful dynamic between the two that builds cleverly and deliciously throughout the course of the story. This is an exchange between the two men after Nikolai's initial examination of the king:

“What did you think of my father?”

“He is very sick.”

He scoffed lightly. “And you come all this way to tell us that. How grateful we all are.”

“Sarcasm isn't likely to improve his health. I will tell you that for free.”

I loved both men from the moment they appeared on page, and they proceeded to exasperate and delight me in equal measure. Nothing was simple and nobody was quite what they seemed to be. Though Nikolai is narrating this story – with wonderful insight, great detail and some of the wittiest and funniest dialogue I've had the pleasure of reading – his recognition of exactly what was transpiring between him and Aleksey lags behind that of the reader. Nikolai, by necessity born of the time and place in which he is living, has to suppress his true inclinations. Men in Hesse-Davia were brutally tortured and killed for sodomy – he had been an eye witness to it. Throughout the story, there is a slow reveal of Nikolai's past. I was mesmerized by what it turned out to contain. As he was forced to recall events from his life, he found himself having to remember, share, and process many unpleasant memories. The use of this narrative style delivered powerful, authentic character and relationship development.

Nikolai was able to successfully treat the king, but could not quite bring himself to leave Hesse-Davia, or more specifically – Aleksey. Aleksey was not ready to lose the companionship of Nikolai, and so asked him

to join his army as a field doctor in their looming war against a neighboring land. Nikolai accepted. Going to war actually brought the men in closer and constant contact with one another. The escalation of their romance took place juxtaposed with savage battle and brutal medical scenes (the blood soaked snow and dagger on the book cover have definite relevance!). Nikolai seemed better able to deal with all the death and destruction than the fact that he was in love. Aleksey in turn had never experienced a relationship such as he finds himself in with Nikolai, and he is slow to acknowledge the romantic nature of it, but once he does, there is no holding him back. Once they are finally able to accept and embrace the reality of their feelings – and each other – Aleksey’s legacy and the weight of the kingdom crash down around them.

Poison was definitely a running theme throughout the story. There were the obvious poisonings that Nikolai dealt with as a doctor, but he also viewed organized religion as a poison of sorts. Nikolai questions Aleksey as to the king’s routine:

“Who has access to the king when he prays?”

“No one except God, and I do not think God is trying to poison my father.”

Why not? I thought. He’s poisoned almost everyone else he’s had contact with.

Power is also viewed as a poison. This shows up in Nikolai’s memories of his childhood and formative years, as well as in the high courts and on the battle fields of Hesse-Davia. Interestingly, the build- up and culmination of the relationship between Aleksey and Nikolai could be considered a slow poison as well.

Strong secondary characters – including a loyal wolf and a couple of supremely brave horses (always a plus in a story for me!) – compliment Nikolai and Aleksey. The surprising and actually very original revelation of how Nikolai spent his younger years hit a nerve for me as well, and lent credence to his negative views on organized religion, European “law and order” and the Hesse-Davian battle tactics.

The intriguing set up in the prologue, combined with great dialogue, witty humor, snarky banter, careful reveals, more than a few plot twists, and some “oh what the hell, no this can’t be happening!!” moments toward the end, left me turning page after page, often with my heart in my throat. Not to worry though... no cliffhanger. Well, actually, there is a cliff....

I can’t recommend this book highly enough. There are many details and plot devices I’ve purposely not touched on, as the discovery of them and the way they are spun out over the course of the story are huge reasons for what makes it so memorable. A Royal Affair absolutely delivers all that I’m looking for in a story: unique and compelling characters, a vivid, action packed setting, believable romance, all wrapped in a fresh and captivating narrative style.

A sequel is promised by the author. I’ll be first in line!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Like a bodice ripper. But with no bodices.

By A. White

Loved this book! Far more violence (think Game of Thrones style) than the m/m romance books I usually read. A couple of scenes were pretty hard for me to get through. BUT, it's very true to the time and place, I'm sure (think, Outlander), so, it works. I loved the main characters and I loved their growing relationship.

I had a hard time placing this book in a specific set of years. There's talk of a microscope, and country names

that we use today, but also talk of the Dark Ages and Enlightenment. And some of the descriptions felt Medieval. So, I was a bit lost in time. But, the story made up for it and I'm assuming the author did his research....

I felt a tad bit that the two main characters were too good to be true. Both the tallest, most handsome, well-toothed (is that a word? lol), enlightened men in the whole country. With romantic, mysterious pasts (how often do you run across a raised Native American in Germany by the way of the UK who is a doctor with a horse that practically reads his mind? (where DID the horse come from, btw? England? Then how was Niko THAT in tune with it? And if it was on the ship with him from America, then why wasn't it a part of what happened to him on the ship? - no spoilers). Anyway, it felt a little like bodice ripper hero territory.

The MCs did spend a bit too much time being crabby with each other over misunderstandings or slights (really, with ALL the horror going on, you're going to get upset because you don't see someone for a few hours?). Niko, in particular, is overly sensitive to any imagined slight. But then, they both go off and kill a bunch of people, so, you know, I guess they aren't THAT sensitive.

Anyway, it was a bit of departure for me for m/m, but I really liked it and I bought the sequel right away.

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About the Author

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