



The Perfect Royal Mistress: A Novel

By Diane Haeger

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Born into poverty and raised in a brothel, Nell Gwynne sells oranges in the pit at London's King's Theater, newly reopened after the plague and the Great Fire devastated the city. Soon, her quick sense of humor and natural charm get her noticed by those who have the means to make her life easier. But the street-smart Nell knows a woman doesn't get ahead by selling her body. Through talent, charm, intelligence, and sheer determination—as well as a keen understanding of how the world operates—Nell works her way out of the pit and onto the stage to become the leading comedic actress of the day. Her skills and beauty quickly win the attention of all of London—eventually even catching the eye of King Charles II. Their attraction is as real as it is unlikely, and the scrappy orange girl with the pretty face and the quick wit soon finds herself plunged into the confusing and dangerous world of the court, where she learns there are few she can trust—and many whom she cannot turn her back on. From the gritty streets of seventeenth-century London, to the backstage glamour of its theaters, to the glittering court of Charles II, *The Perfect Royal Mistress* is a love story for the ages, the rags-to-riches tale of a truly remarkable heroine.

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The Perfect Royal Mistress: A Novel By Diane Haeger Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In Haeger's impressive Restoration romance, King Charles II and his mistress, the fruit seller turned actress, Nell Gwynne, leap off the page. Following his exile and his father's murder, the notoriously lascivious Charles, who has a passel of illegitimate children, falls for Nell after seeing her appear in one of the bawdy comedies that have propelled her to fame. As the two become lovers, Haeger skillfully depicts the complexity of a relationship between the most powerful man in England and the beautiful girl from London's gritty Coal Yard Alley. Nell tries to keep up with her acting career and maintain her preferred status amid a coterie of beautiful competitors, including French noblewoman Louise de Keroualle, sent by Louis XIV to woo Charles as he mulls political negotiations between the Dutch and French. Charles and Nell are marvelously complex—jealous and petty, devoted yet fallible. Haeger (*The Ruby Ring*) perfectly balances the history with the trystery. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Historical novelist Haeger relishes every aspect of her true-life subject's rags-to-riches story. Raised in seedy public houses in fire- and plague-ravaged London, Nell Gwynne uses her capricious wit and insouciant charm to catapult herself from the desperate life of an orange seller outside King's Theater into starring roles on its stage, where her alluring combination of availability and vulnerability attracts the attention of King Charles II. Known as an insatiable womanizer, Charles adds Nell to his stable of comely mistresses, despite her humble past. Too proud to be merely a sexual conquest, however, Nell calculatedly yet unabashedly endears herself to the king, whose wanton reputation masks his underlying need for someone to love and, more important, trust. The ultimate saucy wench, Nell possesses a bawdy comedic talent that might make her queen of the London stage, while only an accident of birth prevents her from being queen of England. A sensuously lively tale of ribald passion and royal politics, Haeger's captivating historical drama abounds with tantalizing scenes of courtly seduction, secrets, and salvation. *Carol Haggas*

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About the Author

DIANE HAEGER is also the author of *The Ruby Ring*, *Courtesan*, and *The Secret Wife of George IV*. She lives in California.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Sanchez:

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John Bonilla:

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