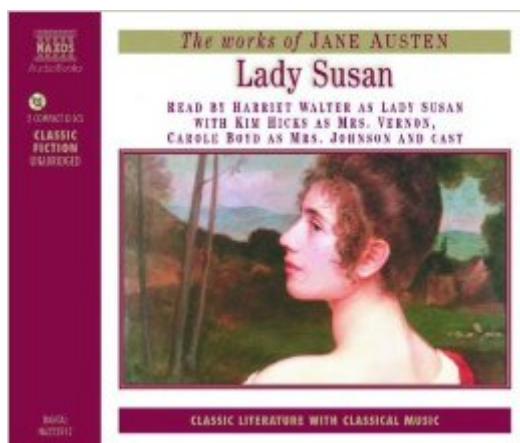


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Lady Susan (Naxos AudioBooks)



Synopsis

Unlike the women featured in Austen's other works, the recently-widowed Lady Susan Vernon is a beautiful and intelligent, but highly manipulative, woman in her upper thirties, who will stop at nothing to attain financially secure relationships for both herself and her wayward but shy teenage daughter, Frederica.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jane Austen is known for six complete novels, each one a masterpiece. This Penguin Classics compilation features one novel unpublished in her lifetime and two unfinished fragments. This book is proof that even an incomplete Austen is better than no Austen at all. "Lady Susan" is an epistolary novel whose eponymous anti-heroine, unlike the women featured in Austen's other works, is bad to the bone. When the book opens, Lady Susan, a stunningly beautiful widow in her upper thirties, has just been sent packing from the home of a family she had spent some months with, having been discovered carrying on a flagrant affair with the husband of the family, right under his wife's nose. She takes refuge with her kind-hearted brother and his sensible wife, who sees through Lady Susan from the day she enters the house and can't wait to see her leave. Also in the home are Lady Susan's teenage daughter, who has been expelled from boarding school after attempting to run away so that she won't be forced into marrying the rich, fatuous nobleman her mother has picked out for her; and the younger brother of Lady Susan's sister-in-law, who has heard intimations about Lady Susan's unsavory reputation; in retaliation for his initial disdain, Lady Susan sets out to captivate him and succeeds so well that she has him on the brink of proposing marriage to her,

despite the fact that he is 12 years younger than she is, much to the alarm of his family. It looks as though he is about to fall into her clutches, when a chance meeting between him and the wife of Lady Susan's lover blows all Lady Susan's machinations, as well as her reputation, to smithereens.

Though Lady Susan is considered part of Jane Austen's "juvenilia," having been written ca. 1805, it was not published till well after Jane Austen's death and is still not counted among her "six novels." In fact, this seventh novel, though not as thoughtful or thought-provoking as the "famous six," is one of her wittiest and most spirited. Written in epistolary style, it is the story of Lady Susan, a beautiful, recent widow with no conscience, a woman who is determined to do exactly what she wants to do, to charm and/or seduce any man who appeals to her, and to secure a proper marriage for her teenage daughter, whom she considers both unintelligent and lacking in charm. Lady Susan, the character, has no redeeming qualities, other than her single-mindedness, and her problems, entirely self-imposed, show the extremes to which an unprincipled woman will go to ensure her own pleasure and ultimately a more secure, comfortable life. As Lady Susan manipulates men, women, and even her young nieces and nephews, her venality knows no bounds, and when she determines that her daughter Frederica WILL marry Sir James, a man who utterly repulses her, Lady Susan's love of power and her willingness to create whatever "truth" best suits her purpose become obvious. Austen must have had fun writing this novel which "stars" a character who appears to be her own opposite. While this novel is not a pure "farce," it is closer to that than anything else Austen ever wrote. Containing humor, the satiric depiction of an aristocratic woman of monstrous egotism, her romantic dalliances and comeuppances, and her ability to land on her feet, no matter what obstacles are thrown in her path, the novel is a light comedy in which the manners and morals of the period are shown in sharp relief--Lady Susan vs.

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