



## Too Hot to Handel

*Sheri Cobb South*

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When a rash of jewel thefts strikes London, magistrate Patrick Colquhoun deploys his Bow Street Runners to put a stop to the crimes. The Russian Princess Olga Fyodorovna is to attend a production of Handel's Esther at Drury Lane Theatre, where she will wear a magnificent diamond necklace. The entire Bow Street force will be stationed at various locations around the theatre — including John Pickett, who will occupy a box directly across from the princess.

In order to preserve his incognito, Pickett must appear to be a private gentleman attending the theatre. Mr. Colquhoun recommends that he have a female companion — a lady, in fact, who might prevent him from making any glaring faux pas. But the only lady of Pickett's acquaintance is Julia, Lady Fieldhurst, to whom he accidentally contracted a Scottish irregular marriage several months earlier, and with whom he is seeking an annulment against his own inclinations — and for whom he recklessly declared his love, secure in the belief he would never see her again.

The inevitable awkwardness of their reunion is forgotten when the theatre catches fire. In the confusion, the Russian diamonds are stolen, and Pickett is struck in the head and rendered unconscious. Suddenly it is up to Julia not only to nurse him back to health, but to discover his attacker and bring the culprit —and the jewel thief— to justice.

## Too Hot to Handel Details

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## From Reader Review Too Hot to Handel for online ebook

### Mary says

I came into this series cold not having read the previous books. I can honestly say there was enough information for me to get the gist of what had happened between John Pickett and Lady Fieldhurst previously, although I am quite intrigued as to how it happened so I will be getting books 1-4.

This book seems to be where Lady Fieldhurst comes into her own (how apt I finished it on international women's day) John Pickett lies injured whilst on duty and after saving Lady Fieldhurst. He rouses briefly to give a huge clue that we the reader can pick up on but is misinterpreted in the story. I loved this ruse. I liked having the knowledge and being the observer as things went awry. All the while confident that the story will have a happy ending. Wonderful to listen to.

I am a fan of Joel Froomkin's work. I think he is immensely talented. The range of voices he has is astounding. He completely did justice to Lady Fieldhurst in this story. The timbre of the voices he used sounded so right and appropriate, the verve and determination to support John came across so clearly in the narration. Not to miss out the side characters, everyone is given the same attention as they were the main character. Overall his narration is the perfect soundtrack to the images created by Sheri Cobb South's excellent writing.

*I was given a copy of this audiobook book in exchange for an honest review*

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### Joan says

This book was outstanding. In "Too Hot to Handel" John is injured when he is sent to work undercover as Lady Julia's escort to the opera following a rash of jewelry robberies at the Drury theatre. While John is the hero of the first order, he literally carries Julia on his back while scaling a rope from a burning balcony, it's Julia who steps up and nurtures a comatose John and makes a momentous decision about their relationship and accidental marriage.

Though I wish that John's first time wouldn't have been when he was still abed, medicated with laudanum due to a head injury and retained no memory of consummating his marriage with Jane. I appreciate so much that these are clean stories with fade to black love scenes. But for poor John to have no memory of finally losing his virginity to his beloved wife was a let-down.

Still, I loved how many mysteries...the who, what, and why, lead up to the theatre being burnt down. The author is a superb storyteller and she does an excellent job of creating a realistic Regency timeframe while bringing a wonderful balance of mystery and romance between the main characters. The John Pickett mysteries are an excellent way to spend time with wonderful characters and delve into a good mystery.

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### Pamela Shropshire says

At last, our John Pickett is no longer a virgin! In the last book, he and Julia, Lady Fieldhurst, learned they were inadvertently married under Scottish law because they presented themselves as husband and wife. Such a marriage is impossible due to the differences in their stations.

Mr. Colquhoun loves John like a son and he sees that John truly loves Julia, so when laying a trap to catch some jewel thieves, he suggests that John bring Julia as his guest at the theatre. He arranges for proper formal clothes for John.

Julia has admitted to herself that she has missed John dreadfully and is thrilled when she receives his invitation. She refuses to wear black and instead, wears a blue satin dress. John is speechless when he sees her.

They go to the theatre but the plan goes awry when the building catches fire. The door to their box is jammed and when John finally gets it open, the corridor is filled with smoke and flames. John contrives a makeshift rope from the velvet curtains and with Julia clinging to his back, they reach the theatre floor. They push and shove their way out, but when the roof caves in, John is struck very hard on the head, losing consciousness.

Julia manages to hire a sedan chair and gets them to John's rooms on Drury Lance. It soon is apparent that he is badly injured. She removes his clothes, soddened by the water used to fight the fire. Removing his coat, she discovers the diamond necklace belonging to the Russian princess who attended the theatre.

Julia is determined to nurse John herself and to discover how the necklace ended up in John's pocket. The mystery is fairly obvious, if highly satisfactory to fans of John Pickett; however, the romance really takes over this story. As I said in the opening sentence, the ending is very romantic and what we fans of the series have wanted and expected for quite a while.

It will be interesting to see how they make their very unequal marriage work!

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### **Lorraine says**

Absolutely delightful! In re-doing part of our house, some of my books have been temporarily moved, and I have misplaced John Pickett or I should say The John Pickett Mysteries. As all is slowly getting back to normal, I found Sheri Cobb South's Too Hot To Handle, Another John Pickett Mystery #5, opened it, started reading, and as it is said, the rest is history. Congratulations, Ms. Cobb South! Now I hope to locate For Deader or Worse, John Pickett's next mystery - yesterday!

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### **Claire says**

What a great story line, I could not put this down, it held me captive.

I haven't read the other John Pickett books and I could tell that I was missing things, but not enough to affect my enjoyment of the book, it has however left me wanting to go back and get the earlier books.

The characters in this book are really vivid and I enjoyed getting to know a bit about them. I was quite impressed with Julia, she's rather remarkable for the era that she lives in, very determined.

The narration is well done, I enjoyed the character voices and the delivery was smooth and emotive.

I received a free copy of this book from the author and/or narrator and/or publisher and I voluntarily wrote

this honest review.

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### **Neta says**

This is an interesting, charming book with fantastic narration.

it is no secret that Joel Leslie Froomkin is one of my favorite narrators, though I usually read M/M books narrated by him. His amazing talent in portraying characters, accents and emotions shines in this book, especially when most of it is lead by a female. His narration of Julia is so accurate, the magistrate, Patrick Colquhoun is also a delightful character. John is a rather sweet fellow, and he compliments Julia's activeness and level-headed personality well.

the plot is rather interesting, but I would say it was a bit boring at times and I wished it to be more fast paced. Also, I felt a big clue was revealed about half way through and the reader is left with the knowledge until the characters figure it out towards the end. The depiction of the time is fantastic, the life they lead, written in a flowing fashion I enjoyed. There was also an interesting touch of reality when John faces his injury in the short story at the ending I found refreshing to period books.

this was a sweet interesting book I enjoyed greatly.

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### **Suzan says**

I love this series. Shari Cobb South has done a wonderful job of creating a cast of characters who you want to get to know and then fall in love with. I do have to say that Joel Froomkin is amazing as the narrator of this fun series. He brings great depth to this series. I finish one and just want to go to the next. This is my honest opinion, I was gifted this by the author.

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### **Kiesha ~ 1Cheekylass says**

I love John Pickett & Julia

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### **Reader says**

I must say the story of John the low born, once a pickpocket, now a Bow Street Runner and the aristocrat Julia, stayed consistent and true right to this point and no doubt will carry through to Book 6 where Sheri rightly explore such union.

I was quite impatient to point of stomping my feet when John's telling of what he knew kept getting stymied by those deliberate little convenient inconveniences Sheri saw fit to thrust into the 'works'.

So with dear John out of commission, dear Julia has to carry the torch of investigation starting with an ad no

less -Lord Julia girl, you make any respectable detective squirm in shame.  
Excellent writing and story telling.

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### **FangirlNation says**

Having accidentally gotten himself irregularly married to the widowed Julia, Lady Fieldhurst, Bow Street Runner John Pickett works to fight a jewel thief in Sheri Cobb South's *Too Hot to Handel*. Mr. Pickett earlier declared his love for Lady Fieldhurst and then announced that he would never see the lady of a much higher station again. However, he resorts to asking Lady Fieldhurst to join him at a performance of Handel's oratorio of *Esther*. There the Bow Street Runners are holding a sting to catch the jewel thieves, and Mr. Pickett needs the help of Lady Fieldhurst to help him go undercover at the theater. As the final act begins, Mr. Pickett is surprised to see the royals start to leave, long before scheduled, and soon the word spreads that the Drury Lane Theater is on fire. Mr. Pickett performs some acts of heroism and saves Lady Fieldhurst, but he ends up seriously injured himself.

Read the rest of this review and other fun, geeky articles at [Fangirl Nation](#)

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### **Jessica says**

Audiobook review:

"Best One Yet!"

*Too Hot to Handel* is a bit different than the first few, because John has gotten injured and is unconscious for most of the story.

This means that Julia takes it upon herself to solve the mystery.

We also get to see a bit more of Mr. Calhoun than we usually do, he is very concerned for Mr. Pickett's well being.

All of Sheri Cobb South's books are very good with a nice mix of sweet, mystery and humor.

Joel Leslie Froomkin's performance is, as always, outstanding. His narrations are always a delight to listen to.

I would definitely recommend listening to this series.

I received a copy of this audiobook at my request and this is my voluntary review.

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### **Sally says**

I'm going to consolidate (repeat myself) reviews of this series, numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 4.5 and 5 because I had to get through all of those to resolve the romantic story begun in the the first book. I supposed most women like a touch of romance and these have it, albeit full of angst that is drawn out over a time period of about 10 months. I got impatient with the progress of the romance taking so long. I would characterize these stories as Romance with only a touch of Mystery rather than the other way around. At least there were mysteries to be solved by the Bow Street Runner, John Pickett and he was good enough to figure it out. I figured them out pretty easily myself.

I very much liked John Pickett. In my mind I pictured Colin Firth (as seen in Pride and Prejudice, except with longer hair). I could not quite get a visual image of the Lady Fieldhurst in my mind. I felt a little jolted every time it referred to her as a golden-haired blonde, so I suppose I thought she ought to be a dark-haired beauty.

The audiobook narrator, Joel Froomkin was pretty amazing. You'd swear it was another reader doing the female voices, as they sounded so naturally female. I did have a little problem, as a listener, with the heavy Scottish accents he used in Book 3, Family Plot, but felt that he probably did those fairly true to dialect and my ear was just not tuned in for the accents. (I was a bit curious to know if the print version had the dialect written out or if Mr. Froomkin just knew how to do them.)

There is a Book 6, but I might be satisfied to imagine that the romantic couple will live happily every after.

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### **Barbara says**

Delightful.

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### **QNPoohBear says**

Lady Julia is moping. Her best friend Emily is newly reconciled with her husband and rustinating with him, it's Lent and entertainments and scarce, but if she's honest with herself she knows the real reason is because her annulment will soon go before the Ecclesiastical Court and she'll no longer be Mrs. John Pickett. That's what would be best for everyone given the differences in their station. John Pickett's duties have been light lately. He asked not to be sent to Mayfair and a fellow Runner, Mr. Foote, is on the case of missing jewels. As luck would have it, John and Julia are about to be thrust together to help solve the mystery of the missing jewels. All the Runners are needed on hand at a Handel concert at the Theater Royal while a delegation of Russian aristocrats are visiting with the royal family. John and Julia take a box where they can observe the royals unseen but when a fire breaks out in the theater, everyone is forced to evacuate. In the chaos, John and Julia must escape. Unluckily for John, he is hit in the head during the escape and rendered unconscious. Julia must confront her feelings and channel her inner aristocrat to keep John alive and try to solve the mystery of the missing Russian diamonds.

This is a much better story than the previous one, more like the book I was expecting. I LOVED the relationship aspect of this novel. At first I wanted to bang John and Julia's heads together but I realize that in their time and place it's more complicated than what their hearts want. As the story progressed, I gasped, cheered and clapped at the end. It makes a nice conclusion if you can't get the rest of the series. There are other non-romantic relationships in the story too and I liked seeing how John has affected those around him. The downfall of this novel is the mystery. It is SO painfully obvious! Mr. Colquhoun should have figured it out. John seemed to be on the verge of it when he was hit. Lady Fieldhurst also has some relationship drama to work out with her in-laws and I loved seeing how that played out. The historical details are great, especially the medical treatments. UGH! Thank goodness for modern medicine.

John is such a great character but I do feel he is too naive and innocent for a man raised in the worst neighborhood in London! At 13 or however old he was when he was rescued, he would have been hardened already and more jaded than he is. His naivety makes him sweet and appealing. He's sharp though and can

figure out things his more experienced colleagues can not. Lady Julia has been kind of wishy-washy-alternating between strong and whiny. Here she rises to the occasion and figures out what she wants. I loved the way she dealt with her adversaries. I was cheering as I read the story.

Other characters include Mr. Colquhoun who clearly loves John like a son. He recognizes John's excellent qualities. He also discovers first impressions can be wrong. I really like him and I'm curious about his Mrs. and what she's like. I also really liked John's landlady Mrs. Catchpole who also loves John like a son. She's very kind. John's friend Lucy is not so kind but she's had a rough life and loves John in her own way.

Not so enjoyable characters are Lady Julia's in-laws. I like only one of them. The Dowager is snobby and the cousin is annoying. Mr. Foote is more like how I would expect John to be. He is not a kind man. The doctors are not appealing but they can't help it given the limited medical knowledge at the time.

This book was a great conclusion but since the library purchased an e-book of the next book in the series for me I will be reading on. I will probably stop there, however. If you liked the rest of the series so far you will enjoy this one even more.

Content: I think one D-word, some sensuality and (view spoiler)

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## Caz says

### **I've given this an A for narration and a B for content at AudioGals, so that's 4.5 stars**

This fifth *John Pickett* mystery is a bit of a departure from the other books in the series in that our hero spends a rather large part of it unconscious, leaving his lady-love, Lady Julia Fieldhurst to the bulk of the sleuthing when it comes to solving the mystery of some missing diamonds. That said though, John is nonetheless a major presence in **Too Hot to Handel**, and Joel Froomkin's hugely entertaining narration kept me engaged throughout, so I didn't feel the slightest bit short-changed.

*Note: There will be spoilers for earlier books in the series in this review.*

It's three months since Bow Street Runner John Pickett said farewell to the woman he fell in love with almost a year earlier, and a matter of weeks before the case for the annulment of the "irregular marriage" they inadvertently contracted in Scotland comes before the ecclesiastical court. At the end of the previous book, **Dinner Most Deadly**, he declared his love for Lady Julia Fieldhurst, but also said that they should not meet again; he has always known that the huge gulf in their stations makes any relationship between them impossible, and it's become too painful for him to keep spending time with her while knowing she can never be his. For Julia it's been three long, colourless months and none of her usual activities hold much interest for her any more. Even a night out at the theatre is dull until, on the way out, she hears a distressed older lady claiming that her jewels have been stolen. Recalling that the Duchess of Mallen's rubies had also disappeared while that lady was at the theatre, and that they had been recovered by the Bow Street force, Julia suggests sending for a Runner, and for a few brief minutes, is excited at the prospect of seeing John again – only to come crashing down when someone else appears in his stead.

You can read the rest of this review at **AudioGals**.

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