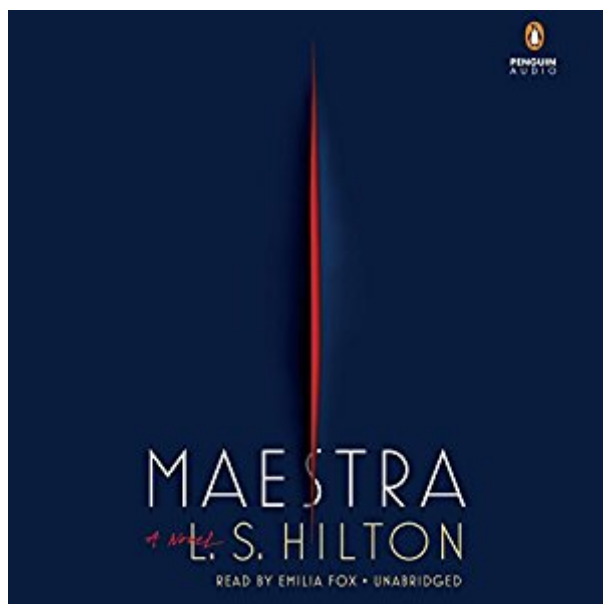


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# Maestra



## Synopsis

With the cunning of *Gone Girl*'s Amy Dunne, and as dangerous as *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*'s Lisbeth Salander, the femme fatale of this Talented Mr. Ripley-esque psychological thriller is sexy, smart, and very, very bad in all the best ways. By day, Judith Rashleigh is a put-upon assistant at a prestigious London art house. By night, she's a hostess at one of the capital's notorious champagne bars, although her work there pales against her activities on nights off. To get what she wants Desperate to make something of herself, Judith knows she has to play the game. She's transformed her accent and taught herself about wine and the correct use of a dessert fork, not to mention the art of discretion. She's learned to be a good girl. But when Judith is fired for uncovering a dark secret at the heart of the art world - and her honest efforts at a better life are destroyed - she turns to a long-neglected friend. A friend who kept her chin up and back straight through every slight: rage. She will cross every line Feeling reckless, she accompanies one of the champagne bar's biggest clients to the French Riviera, only to find herself alone again after a fatal accident. Tired of striving and the slow crawl to the top, Judith has a realization: If you need to turn yourself into someone else, loneliness is a good place to start. And she's been lonely a long time. *Maestra* is a glamorous, ferocious thriller and the beginning of a razor-sharp trilogy that introduces the darkly irresistible Judith Rashleigh, a femme fatale for the ages whose vulnerability and ruthlessness will keep you guessing until the last minute.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm waffling between 3 and 4 stars here ... On one hand, the trend of women in books/movies/TV being either rah-rah superwomen who can take down an entire SWAT team solo and barehanded, or aggressively naive wide-eyed victims, is tiresome, so the lead character's apex-predator moves are almost - \*almost\* - refreshing. The series of people who appear in her life with an agenda that either uses her or puts her safety/life at risk aren't anything new, but her ability to turn the tables and make it all work for her without wasting a lot of time navel-gazing about the implications of her actions .... it's so unusual as to be almost exotic. She's the female James Bond. The sex scenes get a lot of press, but there's worse and there's more shocking and there's much kinkier out there. They aren't as abusive as 50 Shades and the book doesn't revolve around them. The main character likes swingers' clubs. That is all there is to that. They \*are\* written in a very explicit way. They aren't pivotal to the plot, and especially at the beginning of the book, seem at odds with the rest of the character's personality. The character herself does seem ... disjointed. I agree with reviews saying it she seemed to be written by different people. Or rewritten completely as sections of the book were edited. It opens on a young woman from a less-advantageous background who has a taste for the upper-crust lifestyle and loves art. She's hungry and ambitious and used to living on the fringes of her desired circles, looking in. She befriends the other "outsiders" and is an opportunist. She's down and out and underestimated, but she's clearly going places, even if it kills her. She has a very stereotypically-male attitude toward sex and relationships - gets what she needs when she wants from whom she wants and doesn't make it a self-defining experience. Then she moves on. She's hardcore, but plucky - somewhat likeable. Then ... I don't know what happened in the writing process, but I suspect that's the real story. She morphs into American Psycho as she decides to "steal the picture" and everything goes into full psychopath mode. You admire her cleverness and foresight, perhaps, but the rest of the book over-the-top, disjointed, one-dimensional, and rather banally horrifying. I don't feel that I wasted my time reading it simply because a female James Bond story is rare and somewhat refreshing. I have an (undernourished) soft spot for female characters with a lot of agency over their life outcomes, choices, and their own bodies - they are surprisingly rare. That said, I can't feel comfortable recommending this to my friends either - there's so much here that seems poorly thought-out from an author's perspective, and that is simply added for scandalous shock value but without matching the character or her prior decision process. It detracts from all of the potential that the primary character starts out with.

Oh, wow. This was so bad. I read the comparisons to The Talented Mr. Ripley and adding in the fact this revolved around the art world (my own profession) I snatched this up. And I have to say, it is

one of the biggest literary disappointments I have ever had. Comparing this to the truly psychologically compelling works of Patricia Highsmith is honestly a horrendous insult to one of the greatest writers of the genre. Thankfully, now this book is listed under the Erotica section and not Thriller as it was perviously, so that should clear up some future confusion. Of course, I don't mean to comment on those who want to read Erotica. If that's what you chose, knock yourself out (although this is still horrendously written, so perhaps choose anther novel)! I'm just happy it is labeled properly to avoid further confusion. Honestly, the writing is worse than mediocre. Above all, Ms. Hilton fails at that preeminent rule of decent writing, showing not telling. The book is overly narrated and caught up in obsessively describing the sartorial choices of even minor characters. Does she really need to name drop the designers of the protagonist's dress, shoes, scarf, sunglasses and jewelry at every outfit change? It hardly makes for compelling reading. As the story went on, the plot became more convoluted, the characters less-believable (and likable) and ended up devolving into complete absurdity. As for the art history that originally drew me into purchasing the book. Well... again the author's lack of talent leaves this unwoven into the plot. Instead of using her knowledge as a driving plot device, she just haphazardly tosses seemingly unrelated information into the book. Ostensibly more to show how much the author herself knows about the topic, rather than have it relate to the character or plot in any way. I don't often review novels, because taste is so individual it's near impossible to definitively give a recommendation or not. But this was truly terrible, and I can't imagine many people getting any enjoyment out of it. It became an utter chore to read.

This author needs to learn how to write a compelling novel. If "50 Shades de Grey" was badly written, this novel is a sample of worst writing promoted as compelling and pushed to the buyers of , unfortunately, by the 's reviewer who selects books for recommendation. It is sad that current "sex, erotica" writers don't have the talent or experience of an Anais Nin, Alessandro Barrico ("Silk"), or Allison Fell ("The Pillow Boy of the Lady Onogoro"). Currently, there is a tendency to do shoddy writing to appeal to unsophisticated, uneducated readers. That's a shame. Writing used to have among its goals to educate, entertain, stimulate, or titillate, by the correct, appropriate, and wise use of language. "Maestra" fails on all levels and stoops to become unworthy of the reader's time and effort. Taking it off my Kindle library. Had it been a printed book, I would have burned it!

I thought this was going to be a thriller, and it was nothing of the sort. It was just an excuse to write about a really disgusting loser turned serial killer who loved kinky sex (graphically described, of

course). I would never recommend this book. It was a waste of my time and money.

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Maestra

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