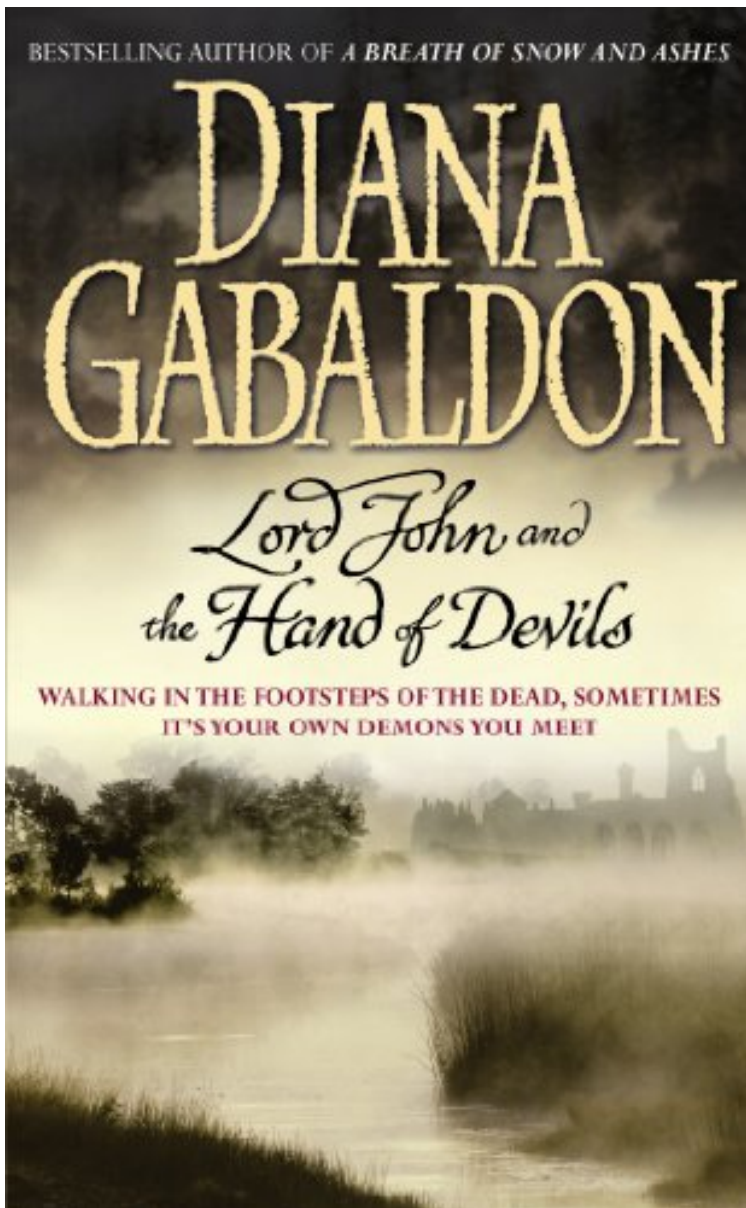


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# Lord John and the Hand of Devils



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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurSweeping historical drama from the Top Ten Sunday Times bestselling author.A keepsake collection of Lord John Grey's shorter adventures and a spectacular addition to any Gabaldon fan's library, Lord John and the Hand of the Devils brings these three unique novellas together for the first time.Lord John and the Hellfire Club marks the first appearance of Lord John outside the Outlander novels (and chronologically precedes the novel Lord John and the Private Matter). A young diplomat is killed in the street as he begs Lord John for help. Witnessing the murder, Grey vows to avenge the young man, as the trail leads to the notorious Hellfire Club and the dark caves beneath Medmenham AbbeyIn Lord John and the

Succubus, Grey's assignment as liaison to a Hanoverian regiment in Germany finds him caught between two threats: the advancing French and Austrian army, and the menace of a mysterious 'night-hag,' who spreads fear and death among the troops. Acknowledging that he is unlikely to fall victim to a succubus, Lord John is obliged to contend with the marauding night-hag before the enemy arrives. This tale with a touch of the supernatural bridges the action between Gabaldon's two full-length Lord John tales. Finally, in Lord John and the Haunted Soldier, Lord John is called to the Arsenal at Woolwich to answer a Royal Commission of Enquiry's questions regarding a cannon that exploded during the battle of Krefeld (a central action in Lord John and the Brotherhood of the Blade). Accusations ensue, and Lord John finds himself knee-deep in a morass of gunpowder, treason, and plot -- haunted by a dead lieutenant, and followed by a man with no face. Extrait Part I A Red-Haired Man London, 1756 The Society for Appreciation of the English Beefsteak, a gentlemen's club Lord John Grey jerked his eyes away from the door. No. No, he mustn't turn and stare.

Needing some other focus for his gaze, he fixed his eyes instead on Quarry's scar. A glass with you, sir? Scarcely waiting for the club's steward to provide for his companion, Harry Quarry drained his cup of claret, then held it out for more. And another, perhaps, in honor of your return from frozen exile? Quarry grinned broadly, the scar pulling down the corner of his eye in a lewd wink as he did so, and lifted up his glass again. Lord John tilted his own cup in acceptance of the salute, but barely tasted the contents. With an effort, he kept his eyes on Quarry's face, willing himself not to turn and stare, not to gawk after the flash of fire in the corridor that had caught his eye. Quarry's scar had faded; tightened and shrunk to a thin white slash, its nature made plain only by its position, angled hard across the ruddy cheek. It might otherwise have lost itself among the lines of hard living, but instead remained visible, the badge of honor that its owner so plainly considered it. You are exceedingly kind to note my return, sir, Grey said. His heart hammered in his ears, muffling Quarry's words no great loss to conversation. It is not, his sensible mind pointed out, it cannot be. Yet sense had nothing to do with the riot of his sensibilities, that surge of feeling that seized him by nape and buttocks, as though it would pluck him up and turn him forcibly to go in pursuit of the red-haired man he had so briefly glimpsed. Quarry's elbow nudged him rudely, a not-unwelcome recall to present circumstances. . . . among the ladies, eh? Eh? I say your return has been noted elsewhere, too. My sister-in-law bid me send her regard and discover your present lodgings. Do you stay with the regiment? No, I am at present at my mother's house, in Jermyn Street. Finding his cup still full, Grey raised it and drank deep. The Beefsteak's claret was of excellent vintage, but he scarcely noticed its bouquet. There were voices in the hall outside, raised in altercation. Ah. I'll inform her, then; expect an invitation by the morning post. Lucinda has her eye upon you for a cousin of hers, I daresay she has a flock of poor but well-favored female relations, whom she means to shepherd to good marriages. Quarry's teeth showed briefly. Be warned. Grey nodded politely. He was accustomed to such overtures. The youngest of four brothers, he had no hopes of a title, but the family name was ancient and honorable, his person and countenance not without appeal and he had no need of an heiress, his own means being ample. The door flung open, sending such a draft across the room as made the fire in the hearth roar up like the flames of Hades, scattering sparks across the Turkey carpet. Grey gave thanks for the burst of heat; it gave excuse for the color that he felt suffuse his cheeks. Nothing like. Of course he is nothing like. Who could be? And yet the emotion that filled his breast was as much disappointment as relief. The man was tall, yes, but not strikingly so. Slight of build, almost delicate. And young, younger than Grey, he judged. But the hair, yes, the hair was very like. Lord John Grey. Quarry had intercepted the young man, a hand on his sleeve, turning him for introduction. Allow me to acquaint you with my cousin by marriage, Mr. Robert Gerald. Mr. Gerald nodded shortly, then seemed to take hold of himself. Suppressing whatever it was that had caused the blood to rise under his fair skin, he bowed, then fixed his gaze on Grey in cordial acknowledgment. Your servant, sir. And yours. Not copper, not carrot; a deep red, almost rufous, with glints and streaks of cinnabar and gold. The eyes were not blue thank God! but rather a soft and luminous brown. Grey's mouth had gone dry. To his relief, Quarry offered refreshment, and upon Gerald's agreement, snapped his fingers for the steward and steered the three of them to an armchairs corner, where the haze of tobacco smoke hung like a sheltering curtain over the less-convivial members of the Beefsteak. Who was that I heard in the corridor? Quarry demanded, as soon as they were settled. Bubb-Dodington, surely? The man's voice like a costermonger. I, yes, it was. Mr. Gerald's pale skin, not quite recovered from its earlier excitement, bloomed afresh, to Quarry's evident amusement. Oho! And what perfidious proposal has he made you, young Bob? Nothing. Hean invitation I did not wish to accept, that is all. Must you shout so loudly, Harry? It was chilly at this end of the room, but Grey thought he could warm his hands at the fire of Gerald's smooth cheeks. Quarry snorted with amusement, looking around at the nearby

chairs. Whos to hear? Old Cotterills deaf as a post, and the Generals half dead. And why do you care in any case, if the matters so innocent as you suggest? Quarry's eyes swiveled to bear on his cousin by marriage, suddenly intelligent and penetrating. I did not say it was innocent, Gerald replied dryly, regaining his composure. I said I declined to accept it. And that, Harry, is all you will hear of it, so desist this piercing glare you turn upon me. It may work on your subalterns, but not on me. Grey laughed, and after a moment, Quarry joined in. He clapped Gerald on the shoulder, eyes twinkling. My cousin is the soul of discretion, Lord John. But that's as it should be, eh? I have the honor to serve as junior secretary to the prime minister, Gerald explained, seeing incomprehension on Grey's features. While the secrets of government are dull indeed, at least by Harry's standards she shot his cousin a malicious grin they are not mine to share. Oh, well, of no interest to Lord John in any case, Quarry said philosophically, tossing back his third glass of aged claret with a disrespectful haste more suited to porter. Grey saw the senior steward close his eyes in quiet horror at the act of desecration, and smiled to himself for so he thought, until he caught Mr. Gerald's soft brown eyes upon him, a matching smile of complicity upon his lips. Such things are of little interest to anyone save those most intimately concerned, Gerald said, still smiling at Grey. The fiercest battles fought are those where very little lies at stake, you know. But what interests you, Lord John, if politics does not? Not lack of interest, Grey responded, holding Robert Gerald's eyes boldly with his. No, not lack of interest at all. Ignorance, rather. I have been absent from London for some time; in fact, I have quite lost . . . touch. Without intent, one hand closed upon his glass, the thumb drawing slowly upward, stroking the smooth, cool surface as though it were another's flesh. Hastily, he set the glass down, seeing as he did so the flash of blue from the sapphire ring he wore. It might have been a lighthouse beacon, he reflected wryly, warning of rough seas ahead. And yet the conversation sailed smoothly on, despite Quarry's jocular inquisitions regarding Grey's most recent posting in the wilds of Scotland and his speculations as to his brother officer's future prospects. As the former was terra prohibita and the latter terra incognita, Grey had little to say in response, and the talk moved on to other things: horses, dogs, regimental gossip, and other such comfortable masculine fare. Yet now and again, Grey felt the brown eyes rest on him, with an expression of speculation that both modesty and caution forbade him to interpret. It was with no sense of surprise, though, that upon departure from the club, he found himself alone in the vestibule with Gerald, Quarry having been detained by an acquaintance met in passing. I impose intolerably, sir, Gerald said, moving close enough to keep his low-voiced words from the ears of the servant who kept the door. I would ask your favor, though, if it be not entirely unwelcome? I am completely at your command, I do assure you, Grey said, feeling the warmth of claret in his blood succeeded by a rush of deeper heat. I wish that is, I am in some doubt regarding a circumstance of which I have become aware. Since you are so recently come to London that is, you have the advantage of perspective, which I must necessarily lack by reason of familiarity. There is no one . . . He fumbled for words, then turned eyes grown suddenly and deeply unhappy on Lord John. I can confide in no one! he said, in a sudden, passionate whisper. He gripped Lord John's arm, with surprising strength. It may be nothing, nothing at all. But I must have help. You shall have it, if it be in my power to give. Grey's fingers touched the hand that grasped his arm; Gerald's fingers were cold. Quarry's voice echoed down the corridor behind them, loud with joviality. The Change, near the Arcade, Gerald said rapidly. Tonight, just after full dark. The grip on Grey's arm was gone, and Gerald vanished, the soft fall of his hair vivid against his blue cloak. Grey's afternoon was spent in necessary errands to tailors and solicitors, then in making courtesy calls upon long-neglected acquaintance, in an effort to fill the empty hours that loomed before dark. Quarry, at loose ends, had volunteered to accompany him, and Lord John had made no demur. Bluff and jovial by temper, Quarry's conversation was limited to cards, drink, and whores. He and Grey had little in common, save the regiment. And Ardsmuir. From the Hardcover edition. From Publishers Weekly The indefatigable Gabaldon, who has made the British 18th century her own, offers a trio of novellas about Lord John Grey, whose minor role in the Outlander novels (concerning Jacobite Jamie Fraser and including *A Breath of Snow and Ashes*) has become a major fictional spinoff (*Lord John and the Brotherhood of the Blade*, etc.). The three mystery-adventure novellas of this volume span 1756 to 1758, in settings packed with dark secrets and therefore dangers for the soldier-hero with secrets of his own. The first novella finds Lord John swearing vengeance in London for a murdered government official, leading him to a deconsecrated abbey where members of the political elite indulge their basest desires. The second pits Lord John against a succubus that plagues his Prussian encampment, and combines humor with military strategy and supernatural myth. The third, most complex narrative finds Lord John investigating the cause of a cannon explosion in the English countryside that results in a fellow officer's death. Gabaldon brings an effusive joy to her fiction that proves infectious

even for readers unfamiliar with her work or the period. A foreword and introductory notes add background on the book's evolution. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.