



## False Pretenses (Contemporary Romantic Thriller Book 1)

By Catherine Coulter

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**False Pretenses (Contemporary Romantic Thriller Book 1)** By Catherine Coulter

**#1 New York Times bestselling author Catherine Coulter's first contemporary suspense novel.**

First published in 1988, *False Pretenses* is the explosive story of how one woman survives the destruction of her perfect life—and the intentions of three mysterious men...

A famous concert pianist married to a wealthy international business tycoon, Elizabeth Carleton is the envy of all until the night her husband is stabbed in the chest with an ice pick and everything falls apart.

Accused of murder, Elizabeth has little hope of being exonerated until a surprise witness appears to give her an airtight alibi. The jury finds her not guilty. The only thing is: She's never met the man who testified on her behalf.

Free and completely bewildered, Elizabeth must now cope with the financial empire her husband left behind and his family, who want to destroy her. Then three men suddenly appear in her life. Can she trust any of them? Or is one of them a murderer?

*From the Paperback edition.*

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## **Editorial Review**

### **From Publishers Weekly**

Neither Lincoln Center nor Wall Street comes across with credibility in this first hardcover novel by the author of 18 Regency and historical romances. Set against the glittering Manhattan world of corporate finance and performing arts is a shifting population of heroes and villains, white knights and charlatans. Barely acquitted of her elderly husband's ice-pick murder, pianist Elizabeth Carleton struggles to rule his financial empire, developing unusual alliances while learning firsthand about hostile takeovers. Although confronted by vicious in-laws rivaling the Borgias in their skill for blackmail and betrayal, Elizabeth thrives surrounded by attentive and attractive men. A trusted bodyguard guides her through the intricacies of acquisition politics, an acquaintance made during a European junket becomes her confidant and she is later squired by a mysterious and wealthy psychiatrist who perjured himself to assure her acquittal. Elizabeth's trials pose as a romantic mystery thriller but the book suffers from stilted dialogue and equally awkward descriptions of violent confrontations and sexual couplings. Non sequiturs concerning affirmative action and safe sex merely accessorize the dated formula, reminiscent of a TV saga.

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### **From Library Journal**

Thanks to the testimony of a mysterious stranger, concert pianist Elizabeth Carleton is found not guilty of the ice pick murder of her elderly megamillionaire husband, Timothy. Subsequently, Elizabeth battles his greedy relatives while struggling to run Timothy's business ventures. Along the way she falls in love with a "real man." At tale's end, Elizabeth has a climactic confrontation with the mysterious stranger and, at the same time, solves her husband's murder. A hardcover first novel by the author of 18 romance paperbacks, this entertaining formula tale is best suited for larger collections of light or popular reading. Its appealing cover should also encourage browsing. Ed. James B. Hemesath, Adams State Coll. Lib., Alamosa, Col.

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### **From the Back Cover**

Dear Reader:

False Pretenses was not only my first contemporary suspense novel, but was also my first hardcover, published in October 1988. It came out the following May in paperback. We've given it a stylishly menacing new cover, and I'm happy to say that the novel didn't need any rewriting, just some updating.

Meet Elizabeth Carleton, a fascinating woman who is not only a famous concert pianist, but is also married to a wealthy international business tycoon, Timothy Carleton. She is the envy of all until her perfect life falls apart literally in a heartbeat: Timothy Carleton is stabbed in the chest with an ice pick and Elizabeth is accused of his murder.

Things rapidly go from bad to worse until a surprise witness appears to give her an airtight alibi. The jury finds her not guilty.

The only thing is: She's never met the man who testified on her behalf. What does he want? There is also her late husband's family, who are out to destroy her. On top of everything else, Elizabeth is expected to take over the financial empire her husband left behind.

Then three men suddenly appear in her life. Can she trust any of them? Or is one of them a murderer?

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