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June **1** 2011

Pullinger, Kate. The Mistress of Nothing

Sally considers herself fortunate. As a lady?s maid to Lady Duff Gordon, she has come up the ranks from being an orphan without skills to having a secure job of some prestige. When Lady Duff Gordon becomes ill with a lung disease, her doctor suggests she relocate to the warm, dry climate of Egypt. Sally can scarcely believe her luck in being asked to go along to care for her lady. Sally craves adventure and having spent her precious free time at the British Museum studying the Egyptian culture, she knows what a wonderful opportunity is ahead.

The somewhat unorthodox and gregarious Lady Duff Gordon decides that Luxor is the place where she will settle and sets about renting the finest home in the city and hiring household help. Because there are few English speakers in the area or traveling through, Lady Duff Gordon begins to treat Sally as a friend rather than a servant, giving her freedom that Sally had never imagined and which ultimately causes Sally to forget the real nature of her situation in life. Sally settles in quickly, learns Arabic, and begins a friendship with an Egyptian man that soon turns into a love affair.

Sally has a rude awakening when she discovers that the lady she has served so faithfully quickly turns on her when provoked and she discovers just how little she means to Lady Duff Gordon when she needs her the most. This novel is based on a true story, gathered from the letters of Lucie, Lady Duff Gordon. Fans of historical fiction and book groups will find enjoyable reading in Pullinger?s debut.

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