



Between Two Queens

Kate Emerson

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THE SECRETS OF THE TUDOR COURT SERIES IS "RICH AND LUSHLY DETAILED, TEEMING WITH PASSION AND INTRIGUE," SAID *ROMANTIC TIMES*. NOW TALENTED KATE EMERSON CONTINUES A SAGA AS DRAMATIC AND SEDUCTIVE AS THE COURT ITSELF.

Pretty, flirtatious, and ambitious. Nan Bassett hopes that an appointment at the court of King Henry VIII will bring her a grand marriage. But soon after she becomes a maid of honor to Queen Jane, the queen dies in childbirth. As the court plunges into mourning, Nan sets her sights on the greatest match in the land...for the king has noticed *her*. After all, it wouldn't be the first time King Henry has chosen to wed a maid of honor. And in newly Protestant England, where plots to restore the old religion abound, Nan may be the only one who can reassure a suspicious king of her family's loyalty. But the favor of a king can be dangerous and chancy, not just for Nan, but for her family as well...and passionate Nan is guarding a secret, one that could put her future -- and her life -- in grave jeopardy should anyone discover the truth.

Based on the life of the real Anne Bassett and her family, and drawing extensively from letters and diaries of the time, *Between Two Queens* is an enthralling picture of the dangers and delights of England's most passionate era.

Between Two Queens Details

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From Reader Review Between Two Queens for online ebook

Dottie says

"Between Two Queens" is based on the real person Anne Bassett. It's set during one of the most interesting times of King Henry VIII's reign. Treason plots and executions abound!

When Nan (Anne) first comes to the court of King Henry, she's in competition with her sister for a position as one of the maids of honor for Queen Jane. Her time as companion is short when the queen tragically dies of childbirth. But it is the eye of the King that Nan has attained, and therefore she's well provided for.

The stepdaughter of Arthur Plantagenet, Nan is at the hub of conspiracy. It is up to her to keep the king in her grasp and save her family from the execution block!

Barbara says

This was a fun, quick read. Books about the Tudors, especially Henry VIII, are one of my "guilty pleasures." This one was a fun page-turner, but although Kate Emerson is undoubtedly an expert (and a scholar) of this time period, the problem I find with all (or most) Tudor novels is that many of the characters are portrayed very differently in each novel. The character of Henry VIII remains VERY consistent in all the novels and non-fiction books I've read about him, but the characters and personalities of his six wives, his three children, and some of the main people at court, seem to vary depending on the author.

One EXCELLENT thing that Kate Emerson did in this book (and I imagine she has done in her other Tudor novels) is that she gave her readers a very thorough "who's who" in the back of the book, letting her readers know the "real" story behind all the characters in the novel. And she tells her readers which characters are based on her own imagination, in addition to which parts of the story are based on her own imagination. It would be fantastic if all authors of historical fiction would share this information as thoroughly as Ms. Emerson did.

Stacey says

A fictional account of the life of Anne Basset, who was a real person and a maid of honor to Henry VIII's 3rd through 6th wives and may have had a brief affair with him. Surviving documents show he had some degree of fondness for her. It's a pretty good story. I enjoyed it for the most part. But Anne is a professional courtier and as such makes decisions that are not always the kindest. There are times when it is hard to feel much sympathy for her though overall I found her an interesting character.

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

As with the other books in Kate Emerson's Tudor series, I found this hard to read. I enjoyed the historical

details, but the heroine was, again, spoilt and petulant. She made a difficult narrator, and I found it hard to sympathize with her when all she does is whine all the time.

Kimberly says

I thought this was a well written book. It was interesting and the author tried to stay as close to the facts as possible, which was hard to do since so many documents no longer survive. What she did make up kept the story moving along.

Ellen says

fun books , easy read. Gotta love historical fiction.

Marie says

In Kate Emerson's second installment in the Secrets of The Tudor Court series, Emerson brings to life the character she imagines as Nan Bassett. Called 'Nan' by her friends, there is not a lot known about Anne Bassett, this mistress of Henry VIII, except that he had courted her briefly. How far that went is unknown, but Henry seemed to be fond of her. The author takes this a bit further, and has Nan in the midst of Tudor court intrigues, as a maid of honor to Jane Seymour, albeit quite briefly due to Queen Jane's death; and then as a maid of honor to Anne of Cleves, and eventually to Queen Mary Tudor.

But we are treated to more than just the coquettish ways of the courtiers: the author cleverly inserts facts of the times such as habits and foods, and the politics of the factions within the court as well. The writing style is adept at inserting these facts without turning it into a history lesson, and those readers who would truly like to learn more about the customs and traditions of Tudor England will appreciate the references the author relays. Along with the many details offered, there is a wide cast of characters within the novel, from Nan's large family to the courtiers and the movers and shakers of the time. The author supplies a genealogical chart, and an informative Who's Who section as well.

Since Nan spent time in Calais, then still an English possession, we are also privy to the unrest in Calais. Nan's stepfather, to whom the author portrays as being close to Nan, was Lord Lisle, Deputy of Calais, otherwise known as Arthur Plantagenet. He was the illegitimate son of Edward IV, and Henry VIII's uncle. Lord Lisle becomes implicated in a treasonous plot, along with some of the family members, while Nan needs to find ways to help her family without implicating herself in the process. Thomas Cromwell figures heavily here as well, as Cromwell dislikes Lord Lisle and believes he is incompetent in Calais. When Lord Lisle was arrested in 1540, the letters that were seized during this arrest were preserved, which in turn did historians a great service.

Nan's mother is also featured, who was Honor Grenville, and in her second marriage to Lord Lisle had found herself in a higher standing than she had enjoyed with her previous husband; whom she had her children by. Emerson doesn't go into great detail regarding the personal lives of the many siblings of Nan; they are seen more in the background and perhaps as a bit less than supporting characters. Their mentions are more along the lines of who and when they are going to marry.

Nan would like to have an advantageous marriage herself, and this is the characteristic that we are heavily introduced to in the beginning of Emerson's novel, which did not endear me to her right away. But, as the novel progressed, Nan's better side began to show through as if she had matured as we read on, and she was more careful than I expected her to be. Such as when the author takes liberties and invents an affair with one of her father's men, Ned Corbett, and they have a child together. It was an intriguing storyline that could have ended badly as far as plot and predictability, but the storyline was played out well which was surprising. The author inserted this fictitious affair into the story, but it created an interesting plot and served the story well.

The novel weaves its way through the everyday court life, with comings and goings as we learn more about how life was during the period. There are not a lot of dramatics, but as a reader I came to also hope for Nan's ultimate goal of securing a stable future for herself. She wisely conducted herself when she was with the king and did not flaunt whatever relationship she and others perceived her to have with him. When Catherine Howard comes into the picture, Nan doesn't fight for a place as Henry's mistress, as we would expect her to do, and I found this refreshing. It seems that Nan did ultimately but briefly achieve a sense of happiness, but her life also could be seen as one that was full of hardship and sacrifice.

I was intrigued by the way that Emerson portrayed Catherine Howard, which was more as shrewd young woman rather than the naive twit that we are used to. I enjoyed the name dropping the author deftly employed as I enjoy trying to place who was where, when and why; although those newer to the time period may find the multitude of names confusing and unwarranted. Emerson seems to take great care to provide her readers with a full sense of the Tudor times, with all of the main characters present.

The use of the title *Between Two Queens* made me think... as the book was not necessarily about two queens. But the fact that Nan was 'stuck' between two queens could be cause for discussion. Nan's only source of income and status was as a maid of honor, and she was briefly one for Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Mary Tudor. Much of the focus is within the time period that Henry was looking for a wife, and Henry was without one when Jane had died after childbirth. There was a time when Christina of Milan was purported to be the Queen, but she would not have him. Anne of Cleves was next, and luckily survived the marital state. Catherine Howard, a fellow maid of honor with Nan, was selected as the next Queen. One wonders if Nan had a shrewd uncle, like Catherine had in the Duke of Norfolk, if Nan could have been advanced further. But Nan's family had clung to the 'old ways' and the Catholic religion, although tried to stay low during the Reformation and Henry's reign. They did not succeed fully in that endeavor, as Nan's mother and stepfather were implicated and held in the Botolph plot, thus further tainting Nan's own reputation.

The author Kate Emerson mentions that she relied heavily on the six volume edition of *The Lisle Letters* compiled by Muriel St. Clare Byrne, which comprises of multiple family members' letters and correspondence primarily between the years of 1533 -1540. Emerson astutely derives facts from these letters and reconstructs Nan Bassett's life surrounding the facts within these letters. As a work of fiction, readers need to be aware that most of what is in this story regarding Nan is what the author imagines "could be true", but I still enjoyed this story on a Mistress Anne Bassett, for whom will always be within a shroud of mystery, as with many historic figures of Tudor times are. Those who wish for drama akin to Philippa Gregory's *The Other Boleyn Girl* may be disappointed, however. As a Tudor junkie myself, I enjoyed the education within the story and the writing style of Kate Emerson made this a pleasurable read for me. Instead of focusing on the life of royalty or kings and queens, this is an endearing work of fiction about a female struggling to maintain a safe existence within the many intrigues of the Tudor Courts.

For those wanting to know, Kate Emerson's previous *Secrets of The Tudor Court: Pleasure Palace* is

pertaining to a different family altogether. These two novels are stand alone, although I did enjoy the first one as well (see my review). Kate Emerson also created an inspired guest post during the first Historical Fiction Bloggers Round Table Event, and you can read that here at The Burton Review. Kate Emerson is a pseudonym for Kathy Lynn Emerson, and she also writes mysteries and non-fiction works. She has also created a very interesting website devoted to Tudor women.

Ty Barnett says

I read the first book of Kate Emerson and I really enjoyed reading it. My daughter bought the series of books from Kate Emerson, Secrets of The Tudor Court. I am glad she is writing about some of the people who played a same part in the lives in the Tudor Court. Kate Emerson brought the books more alive for me. She goes into details of how each character had to dress or how a room or castle looked in those days.

Maegan Mariee says

This was such a tough one for me to really get into. It has one of those characters that are just so full of themselves and the plot was something that I could skip over without blinking an eye. Thankfully there was some character development, but so far this isn't quite the best in the series.

Renaee says

Not as strong an entry in this series as Book 1, but not too bad. 3 1/2 stars.

Deb says

An easy read but the excerpts of historical correspondence at the beginning of each chapter was like a spoiler.

Michelle Cristiani says

This was relatively hard for me to get through. I couldn't put my finger on a consistent character for Nan. She was in one moment deceptive, and another painfully honest. In one moment ambitious, and in another, resistant to change. I was happy to learn some of the historical background to an interesting character of Elizabethan times, but the embellishment could have been tighter.

Natasa says

It is a quick read and interesting as it deals more with details from a lady-in-waiting's perspective and it

detailed all the ambitions of different women at court. My biggest problem was the main character, Nan Bassett. She didn't seem so much "strong and independent," rather self-absorbed and immature instead. I couldn't bring myself to like her much, which made it difficult to finish the book.

Jeanne (love2cook) says

This is about Anne Bassett and her hopes to be at the court of King Henry VIII so as to get a marriage to a wealthy titled nobleman. She becomes a maid of honor to Queen Jane, but the Queen dies in childbirth. Anne then sets her sights on the highest match possible, the King. But she soon has thoughts that changes her mind, for the King can be dangerous and chancy, for not only herself but for her family, too. So she steers the King in other directions to find his Queen. The life of being a maid to the Queen and the goings on in the royal household back in the day. This paints a vivid picture of the dangers and delights of England when Henry VIII was King. An interesting read!

Lauren says

Between Two Queens loosely tells the story of Anne "Nan" Basset, who arrives at the court of King Henry VIII at the age of 16 with the hopes of serving as maid of honor to his third queen, Jane Seymour, and of catching a wealthy titled husband in the process. Nan and her sister Catherine compete for the position of maid of honor and the King selects Nan because she is very beautiful. Nan's position of Maid of Honor to Queen Jane doesn't last long, as the Queen famously dies shortly after giving birth to her son, the future King Edward VI. Because King Henry VIII is attracted to Nan, Nan is ultimately extended a position to return to court as maid of honor for his fourth queen. In the meantime, Nan finds herself in some trouble and chooses to continue on her path of attracting a wealthy husband with a title rather than a possibly happy and contented life as the wife of a common man without wealth. The novel follows Nan's trials and tribulations as maid of honor to Anne of Cleves and then to the ill-fated Catherine Howard with brief mention of her time in the service of Katheryn Parr.

In my mind, I kept comparing this novel to Phillipa Gregory's *The Boleyn Inheritance*, as it covers much of the same period of Henry VIII's life. This novel is definitely superior, as it is less repetitive while also getting the point across about Henry's degeneration from a handsome King into a cruel and nasty fat old man with an oozing, pussy leg. Also interesting, this novel takes the point of view of a courtier and paints a clear picture of Henry's despotism and the odd dynamic by which the ambitious needed to ingratiate themselves to the King in order to advance financially and socially while also risking at any moment making a comment or acting in a way that could displease the King and cost them their heads. Nan herself becomes dependant on her position as a courtier, as Henry imprisons her family for treason (this is historical fact, and not a spoiler IMO), leaving her with few prospects and no way of attracting a noble, wealthy husband without somehow staying at court in an attempt to somehow prod Henry into freeing them. *Between Two Queens* is much more subtle than *The Boleyn Inheritance* in portraying the terror that courtiers must have felt at this period in Henry's life, but is very effective in conveying the undercurrent of fear that surely must have influenced behavior, thoughts, and actions of the nobility.

This novel, while good in many ways, was not amazing. To me, it was a 3.5 star novel. In the first half of the novel, in particular, Nan is portrayed as extremely self-centered and unlikeable. The author also gives Nan a "secret" which seems rather unrealistic - and I tend to be uncomfortable with character assassinations of real

people when they are not grounded in fact. Later on in the novel, I think Nan becomes more sympathetic as she seems to lose much of her conceit and pride when she loses her social status/position due to her family's troubles with treason. The first half of the novel was very fluffy, but the second half of the novel was substantially better as a study of court life. I was much less interested in the author's invention of the skeleton's in Nan's closet compared to Nan's observations of the Queens whom she served, of Henry and his courtiers, and of a country run by a despotic, megalomaniac King.

** Reviewed for Amazon Vine **
