



Very Like a Queen

Martin Lake

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The King's favor was her sanctuary—until his desire turned dangerous.

Alice Petherton is well practiced at using her beauty and wits to survive in the Court of King Henry VIII. As the King's favorite, she enjoys his protection, but after seeing the downfall of three of his wives, she's determined to avoid the same fate. Alice must walk a fine line between mistress and wife.

She finds a powerful protector in Thomas Cromwell, and Alice has every reason to believe that she will continue to enjoy a life of wealth and comfort at Court...until she puts everything at risk by falling in love with a Frenchman, Nicholas Bourbon.

When Cromwell is executed, Alice loses her only ally and flees to France. There she hopes to live in peace with Nicholas. But Alice is lured into a perilous game of treason, and peace doesn't last long. Will Alice get back the life and love she's fought for? Or will she lose herself to the whims of a capricious monarch?

Very Like a Queen Details

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From Reader Review Very Like a Queen for online ebook

Anna Christine Asztalos says

Good read

This is a very easy read. It keeps you interested from the beginning. Loved this one. Had trouble putting it down.

Katherine says

Okay but drawn out

An okay story that was very drawn out and a slow read for me. I am disappointed in learning this was a sequel and book 2. The back story would have been useful and made the reminiscent parts and the history of relationships more understandable. Although you can read this alone, the previous book probably would help make some parts more clear.

Patti says

Maybe my hopes were too high. I really love historical fiction and I was excited to see that one of Amazon's new publishing imprints was handling historical fiction, hopefully putting a bit of a bright spot in all of the error-riddled self-published dreck that dominates the genre in the Kindle bookstore. It was a deep disappointment to encounter a book with an actual editor that was no better than a self-pubber's maiden voyage.

Very Like A Queen could not decide if it wanted to be a serious historical fiction or a light historical romance and ended up being a strange hybrid of the two. First person narrative is always difficult in a period piece, and I don't think this author is experienced enough to tackle it. He chose a relatively modern voice, losing all the historical flavor that attracts me to the genre, and on top of that disappointment he's not particularly good at sounding like a woman. A third person objective narrator would have gone down a little bit easier. Not billing Alice as a poet would have been better still, as the voice he uses for Alice's reminiscences are as prosaic as they come. Where are the lush scenic details, the attention to the wardrobe, the raptures about the banquets? The narrative is mundane and event-driven. There is no song and not a hint of soul in it.

While Martin Lake thanks an editor in his acknowledgements I see little evidence that one looked over the manuscript. I realize that NetGalley offered me an uncorrected proof and changes might be made prior to the book's publication, but as I was approved for this galley just a week before publication I doubt there's time for all of the corrections to be made. Articles and prepositions are frequently omitted from sentences, and one paragraph towards the end of the book is succeeded by a nearly identical one with just a few words changed. There are numerous spelling errors.

The plot was rather engaging but not so much as to overcome all of the flaws of this book. I really couldn't

recommend it to any of my book club friends. A couple of my friends who enjoy light romances might not mind the problems and might appreciate the book more than I could.

Lauren says

An interesting, although fictional, account of life at King Henry VIII's court through the eyes of his mistress.

Cynthia Russo says

Different point of view

Enjoyed the adventure and loads of history to learn about. A very different perspective to tell the story of King Henry and about his wives.

booksthrubifocals says

I've read a few books recently regarding the Tudor era in England, and this one also emphasizes the very real dangers of court life. With a king like Henry the 8th on the throne, women especially, seem unable to remain long in his favor. Alice Pemberton, a fictional mistress had better luck than most of his wives, though how fortunate is it to capture the attention of an irascible tyrant, grown more irritable due to chronic pain and increasingly difficult to sexually satisfy due to his supurating wound and enormous size? Though the duty become onerous, to fail would mean the loss of her life. Alice, close to her twentieth birthday discovers her one true love with all the associated complications and conflicts. She is in greater peril, no matter her choice. Will she manage to "keep her head, when so many around her are losing theirs"? With "friends in high places", Alice maintains the delicate dance of life with Henry, both in favor and disfavor. Although this adventurous tale seemed a bit longer than need be at times, I 'm glad I persisted for the ending which I did not suspect until the final chapters. In my opinion, a little more editorial red ink would make this an "easier" read, rather than a novel that I set aside on occasion to read others. I think this story is best left to adults, though I commend the author for not over indulging in explicitly graphic sexual scenes, but neither did he hesitate to allude to the sometimes less than pleasant aspects of life for a young woman, chosen by her king to fulfill the role of extramarital companion. Though educational, a detailed depiction of Henry's erratic choices, thoroughly inclusive recourse of his faithful and conniving companions, and well developed characterization, the book is a bit too earthy in tone for me. I am likely to pass on any sequel. I did find it interesting how well a male author provided a realistic voice through Alice, despite her very pragmatic outlook on life. My thanks to Lake Union Publishing and Netgalley for the opportunity to read an apparently well researched and informative, historical tale, in exchange for an open and honest assessment.

Suzanne Reed says

I was so sorry to reach the last page!

I believe I have read all of Mr. Lake's novels, but these two about Alice shine above them all! First off, it is

truly great to read a book set in the Tudor era, or really anything medieval, where every girl isn't named Katherine, Elizabeth, or Mary, and every man Henry, George, Thomas, or John! I applaud Mr. Lake's imagination and ingenuity in using Alice, Sissy, Lily, Ned. Creative names.

The further adventure of Alice and her friends in this second book go from London to Paris, and from one king's trouble to another. Poor Alice. Sometimes I wanted to shake her and tell her to grow up, but I have to remember she lived in a time of a mad, terror filled, lust-filled, greedy king who wanted what he wanted and death to those who opposed. Henry VIII was very much like he is portrayed in this book. A fat, insensitive, scheming, old sick man who liked to mentally torture people.

Mr. Lake's way in writing makes you really feel you are there in the scene. I have never been to England or France (more the pity) yet he describes the castles and palaces in great detail with the high turrets, arrow-slit windows. And when he has Alice walk along a lake, you can almost hear the birds singing, the ducks and geese making their noises at each other. Mr. Lake truly has a artistic way of writing.

I was glad to see that Alice made it through all the horrors heaped on her. I am sorry her story ended. May she rest in peace in the pages of historical fiction.

And yes I would recommend to anyone who loves/hates the Tudor era, both books.

Paul Bennett says

Oh my, as they say...review coming

I was privileged to get an advance copy of this, the sequel to *A Love Most Dangerous*. I have enjoyed reading many of the author's books but to me his best work thus far has been the two on the life of Alice Petherton, the marvelously created favorite mistress of King Henry VIII of England. In the world of coincidences, a Facebook group that I belong to posed the question of which fictional character you have read comes most to life for you? I read a lot of historical fiction and have met many great fictional characters, Fronto from SJA Turney's *Marius Mules* series, Blaise de Garsenc from *A Song for Arbonne* by Guy Gavriel Kay, etc and I now include Alice. Martin Lake's portrayal of a woman caught in the machinations of Henry's court and who survives that tortuous road is brilliantly done; so much so that for me she lives and breathes in my mind even after I finished the book. That is not to say his other characters are second class, on the contrary, his Henry, Thomas Cromwell and the others make this book a very special read. I had 5 stars in mind after the first couple of chapters and that thought never wavered throughout. I am hoping that Martin Lake has room in his pen and/or keyboard for more of her story.

Sissy Lu {Book Savvy Reviews} says

I was entirely intrigued by the description of the book and its very idea. I feel highly ashamed to admit that I've never actually read anything related to the Tudors nor have I watched anything in relation to it. I am not ignorant of history, though, I have read up on the history of important figures and who doesn't know Henry VIII? We begin with Alice Petherton

We begin with Alice Petherton, favored Mistress of Henry VIII and it is no secret. She has witnessed many horrors, but also finds herself favoring the King, love may be a strong word but she does care for him in a

way and in that she has his confidence, too.

Thomas Cromwell is an important friend, one who also has the utmost confidence of the King and a few other characters as well.

Alice is a bit of a spoiled brat and I think she comes to learn this, too. She believes herself cunning enough to try and outwit or soothe the beastly King when he's put off, so much so that everyone beckons her when he's in these moods. Alice has prowess, but I felt the execution in the characters as well as the story telling left it a bit stunted.

I will say that about the entire book, I felt like there were many moments that were stunted, Alice's love for Nicholas Bourbon, the summary makes one think that there is actually more of a love affair than there actually is in the book. It's very muted and that is just as well with me if it were meant to be that way, but the summary seems to promise more and more I certainly didn't get from that.

There were also long draws, pauses in the story and I think it could have been condensed by at least 150 pages. Altogether, it was a nice story, it was an interesting one, too, to be able to see that aspect of Henry VIII – however fictitious it may be.

The ending was quite rushed and I ended it feeling a touch dissatisfied, it was too rushed and not enough depth. That's how I fairly felt about the book, not enough character depth.

Book Savvy

Kaitlin Grubb says

Very like a Great Novel

I really enjoyed this book. I thought the history mixed with fantasy was a great combination. Simply a great read.

Mystica says

Alice is a favourite of the King, but being his mistress was living life on the edge. You never knew how or why or when the mercurial King would have a change of heart and move on. The balancing act was a difficult one because with this King getting rid of a mistress or Queen was very easy - all you had to do was accuse her of treason and his courts did the balance work.

Being in favour with Henry VIII was no walk in the park and you could never tell when his eye would move over to someone else and you were out. The life of being a mistress of Henry VIII was not just pleasing the King but also pleasing and being on good terms with his Ministers and hangers on of which there were myriad ones. No one wanted a mistress or Queen for that matter to have too much influence over a King even in small matters. Everyone remembered the influence that Anne Boleyn had over the King and the benefits that accrued to her family as a result (to the detriment of everyone else that is!).

A protector in the form of Thomas Cromwell was ideal for Alice. He stood in strong favour with the King, he was not interested in Alice as a woman but when he fell from his position Alice was thrown to the wolves.

The story gives one an insight into the position of women in the Court of Henry VIII. Those who were pretty and clever could survive, ups and downs aplenty but survive they did whereas if they were only pretty they did not. Women were pawns not just at the mercy of husbands but sadly at the hands of fathers and brothers who used them only as merchandise to gain position and property for the family.

The story of Alice was a complicated one - she was one who was determined to survive against severe odds and it was a triumph for her.

I enjoyed the wealth of historical detail and the story of Alice against the backdrop of both Katharine Howard and Anne of Cleves.

Robin Lynn says

Very Like a Queen Alice Petherton knows well what happens when you displease the King, she's seen the rise and fall of numerous people during Henry's reign, after all.

Alice is the king's current favourite, his mistress of several years. She enjoys the protection and luxuries that are provided for her, but she must be careful for she has seen the fates of Henry's first wives and her predecessors as mistress. Henry can be a doting King, but is very dangerous when crossed.

Very Like a Queen, that latest novel from Martin Lake, is a beautifully woven story of one woman's desires to live the life she desires, while being tightly confined by the whims of a tyrant. Alice loved the King, or so she believed, until she met the Frenchman Nicholas Bourbon.

When Alice's only true ally and confidant is killed on Henry's command, Alice must flee England to protect herself. But will she ever truly be safe from the long arms of Henry? Alice hopes so, as she tries to find safety under the protection of Emperor Charles of France. But she finds herself never truly safe, as she must flee France to return to England and again put herself at the capricious whims of Henry.

Very Like a Queen is rooted soundly in history, with a number of true historical figures guiding the story. Alice is an amalgam of several of Henry's mistresses, and is portrayed quite realistically. There is a great secret in Alice's past that is hinted about, but never actually revealed, which makes her even more human. I've read a number of books about the varying women in Henry's life, and this one is a little different. I feel that it's a little more human, that it plays upon the emotions and desires more than some others.

I'd certainly recommend it to others who like historical fiction, historical romance, and the general time of Henry VIII's reign. It's not a deep historical book, so it may not be great for scholars, as it's not completely historically accurate. However, for the casual Tudor fan, it was highly enjoyable.

I was provided an ARC of this book by the publisher for an honest review.

Amanda Coalwell says

I want to start off by saying I genuinely did like this book. The descriptions were beautiful, it flowed well for the most part, and I truly liked the main characters. But there were a few things that irked me, especially near the end of the story (which, by the way, was not much of an ending in the slightest).

First of all, I was so excited about Nicholas as a character, but when she gets to France it seems like all of his interest in her just magically disappears. The author seemed to try to make it feel like there was still interest, but he is noticeably absent for the rest of the story... save for Alice finally whining about missing him a few chapters from the end. He did not have any reaction to the traumatic experience that happened while he was away that Alice had to deal with. And most of all, he barely seemed to care that she was being hunted and had to return to England. This story would have benefitted from a better relationship between the characters at this point.

Secondly, things just seem to magically appear out of thin air as answers to all her woes. While I loved Alice as the protagonist (until the last quarter or so of the book), I saw a lot of situations where she got herself into a lot of trouble when it was advised otherwise, and when she had the "experience" to know how not to... and magically, thank you to the other beloved character, there was a way out that was already planned for her.

Additionally, you turn the last page expecting a proper ending in a separate chapter... maybe her returning to France and Nicholas no longer being an uncaring "lover"... or her daughter growing up and Alice realizing who the father is... but no. There is nothing. I cannot express all the hatred I have for endings with no substance.

I have read a few Tudor books in the past, and all of them painted Thomas Cromwell as a conniving, heartless individual. I was both unprepared and pleased with the fact that this book painted him in a refreshingly different manner. He was by far my favorite character.

Erin says

"Women have ever had to use subtle means to make their way into the world: their charm, their beauty, their wit, their grace. Some, such as Anne, added other qualities in order to attain their ends. Until now I had found advantage without really planning it."

Before I start this review, I would just like to say that I have never been a huge fan of Tudor England and I am still not. Now you're probably thinking, then why did you read this book? Well I thought maybe my tastes had changed and it looked like it would be a really interesting read as it was about Henry VIII. While it was interesting at times, I also found myself getting bored with it rather quickly and it took me far longer to read it, than I ever thought it would.

Alice Petheron is the King Henry's Mistress, (I didn't know this before I started reading.) she is his favorite and the only one who can change his mood from awful to okay. The people around the King love that she can do that and are always happy to see her when the king requests to see her. She also has several friends in the king's court and has a close friendship with Thomas the King's adviser who is quite fond of her. This all so starts to change though when she meets a French man named Nicholas. She falls for him and has to hide it not only from the king, but also from her greatest enemy Richard (who is a vile man and I disliked

immediately).

As this romance progresses and the king gets more distrustful of all his court she is put into a difficult situation.

But with the help of her servants she is able to stay alive and keep in mostly good favor with the king.

As time progresses in her time in the Kings Court he marries several times, and the last one we see it to a child bride who he took as a new mistress at first and was head over heels for. The only problem though was the bride did not feel the same and this ultimately ended in her demise. Throughout all of this Alice is trying to find a way to be with Nicholas without falling out of favor with the King and being killed.

Overall I did think this book was okay. I did think it could have done without going into detail on some of the deaths. I also could have done without the sex scenes. I found them unnecessary to me.

"Men, They are all like little boys really. Even Dukes and Kings."

Thank you to Netgalley and Lake Union Publishing for giving me a galley of the book in return of my honest review.

See reviews first on my blog

archdandy says

Alice Petherton is the mistress to the king. She's one of his favourites but she also has many enemies in the court who would love to see her downfall. Luckily she also has friends who help her navigate the ups and downs of court life and eventually help to save her life.

I didn't know this was a sequel when I read it and I'm a little disappointed in that. I wish I had read the first one before this one, not because you need to read it before reading this but just for my own preference of reading things in order. While reading this I wouldn't have guessed that there was a sequel, so I don't think its necessary to read them in order.

Alice's beauty is what got her into the bed of the king but her intelligence is what kept her there so long. The king enjoyed her wit and her company. I wish that her own intelligence would have played a bit more into how she ended up navigating through the court and eventually ended being saved. It seemed like Alice made all of the wrong decisions and in the end only ended up with her life because of friends at court who were looking out for her. It would have been nice to see her take a more prominent role in her safety. Instead we got her beauty getting her into all kinds of trouble with various figures throughout the story.

I felt like Alice was really wishy washy on her life as mistress to the King. At times she seemed to enjoy it and she didn't mind his company. And at other times she felt like she could never see him again and be happy with it. I get that people's feelings are fluid and they change all the time but I couldn't get a read on her about how she felt being the mistress and about the King through the whole story, even in the beginning. I don't think that someone can be the mistress of someone, especially a King and not have concrete feelings on it. It would have been nice to be shown how she felt instead of just small comments here and there from her.

Overall I did enjoy this book and I would be happy to go back and read the book previous to this one. I think the writing was solid and it kept me entertained throughout. I was always very interested in seeing how Alice was going to get out of her predicament and I did end up feeling for her during many of the plot points.

*I received a copy of this from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review
