



The Queen's Governess

Karen Harper

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A fresh and intriguing historical novel told in the voice of Queen Elizabeth I's governess.

Katherine Ashley, the daughter of a poor country squire, happily secures an education and a place for herself in a noble household. But when Thomas Cromwell, a henchman for King Henry VIII, brings her to the royal court as a spy, Kat enters into a thrilling new world of the Tudor monarchs.

Freed from a life of espionage by Cromwell's downfall, Kat eventually befriends Anne Boleyn. As a dying favor to the doomed queen, Kat becomes governess and surrogate-mother to the young Elizabeth Tudor. Together they suffer bitter exile, assassination attempts, and imprisonment, barely escaping with their lives. But they do, and when Elizabeth is crowned, Kat continues to serve her, faithfully guarding all the queen's secrets (including Elizabeth's affair with the dashing Robert Dudley) . . . and ultimately emerging as the lifelong confidante and true mother-figure to Queen Elizabeth.

The Queen's Governess Details

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Author : Karen Harper

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From Reader Review The Queen's Governess for online ebook

Iset says

I was quite intrigued by *The Queen's Governess* initially. Harper creates an interesting background for Kat Ashley, and I was interested to see how she would get from these fictional beginnings to the position history tells us she later held. Through her interactions with Cromwell, an intriguing hidden world of secret agents and spies is hinted at, as is the sharp mind of Cromwell himself, and I definitely wanted to know more. Unfortunately, Harper's Cromwell is not Mantel's Cromwell, and that entire plot line is killed in its tracks when Cromwell is. Kat gets shipped off first to Anne Boleyn and then Elizabeth and develops a fierce devotion to them both, for reasons which are never shown. Look, to believe that a character has a fierce devotion to another character, I need to be shown why this is, and how it grows, maybe show some scenes of the characters being close or some insight into Kat's thoughts. It's more believable with Elizabeth, since Kat spends a lot of time with her as a child in the story, but with Anne she's just a lady in waiting, and whilst she's trusted with a couple of secrets Anne doesn't seem to be particularly close to her.

Uncomfortably, *The Queen's Governess* also drags up all the old Tudor myths again! Anne Boleyn having a sixth finger, Jane Parker being a snoop, Jane Parker and George Boleyn having an unhappy marriage, George Boleyn being homosexual... I am becoming really annoyed with the number of novels that are either poorly researched or insist upon dragging up disproven or baseless scandals for the sake of "spicing up" the story. It doesn't make the story any better, it makes the novel come off as cheap, lurid, and nasty.

Also, where was the editor? "Queen Mary" is talked about before she becomes queen, "Prince Philip" is talked about after he's become King of Spain, and then there's these:

p. 250: "*She'd had to share it with the befuddled, elderly Anne of Cleves, who evidently thought the cheers for Mary's heir were all for her and waved broadly, her hand often flailing before Elizabeth's face.*"

This scene describes Mary Tudor's coronation procession in 1553 CE. Anne of Cleves was not elderly at the time, but only 38 years old and in fact only six months older than Mary herself! Anne also kept her wits about her right up until her early death in 1557.

p. 298: "*Your royal sister... has sadly departed this life, and left to you the Tudor throne and the realm of England, Scotland, and Ireland*"

Um... Scotland? No, the Tudor realm did not include Scotland. I think Mary Queen of Scots would have something to say about that. These basic errors should have been caught in editing.

I don't know what to say about this book really. It has intriguing hints, and it's decently written in places, but it's kind of mediocre and Harper didn't make me really care for Kat Ashley's character. Added to that the old round of Tudor scandal and the poor editing, and it just doesn't make the grade for me.

5 out of 10

Rio (Lynne) says

I always enjoy historical fiction with a fresh perspective. Katherine (Kat) Ashley has always been in the background, so I like how Karen Harper brings her to the forefront. She starts with her as a poor girl that Thomas Cromwell brings in as a spy. Then we see how she becomes Elizabeth's Governess and how their relationship withstands the good and bad. I enjoyed the part about Ann Boleyn's locket ring (with picture of mother and daughter inside.) The ring does exist, but no one really seems to know the truth behind it, so I enjoyed that added perspective.

Jaime says

Review from www.FreshFiction.com

Many know the history behind how Lady Elizabeth became the Virgin Queen. Few have dived into the lives of those who were closest to her from when she had the titles of princess, royal bastard, and thorn in Mary's side. The Queen's Governess gives us a view into the life of Katherine Chaperowne Ashley, a woman who spent most of her life at court serving some of the most famous names at the time. From her time as a spy for the ambitious Thomas Cromwell till she was named the First Lady of the Bedchamber for Queen Elizabeth, Kat Ashley saw court for what it truly was. A dangerous battle for power. This wonderful story tells readers how she survived.

Kat Ashley is a figure in history mostly known for being the mother figure for a princess who lost her mother at the age of two. She also had a couple famous stays in the infamous tower of London on the behalf of her young royal charge. This wonderful novel lets the reader see what life was like for a servant at court and the battles they had to fight for simple goals like marrying for love and not being labeled a traitor to the crown. During Kat Ashley's many years at court, life was even more turbulent due to the lack of stability of the royal crown. Mistress Ashley witnessed Anne Boleyn rise to power and watched her fall just as quickly. Her main mission in life was to make sure Anne's daughter did not come to the same fate as her head strong mother.

As a historical fiction novel, The Queen's Governess does a wonderful job of giving the reader facts known about this extraordinary woman's life while keeping you engaged in the story when Karen Harper must use fiction to fill the gaps. As a history buff, one of the things that I love the most are the author notes where Ms. Harper explains why she chose to take the story in a certain direction when history was not clear on Kat Ashley's background. She gives the reader all scholastic theories on subjects such as Kat's parentage and the spelling of her married name and explains why she used the information she gave in the story. Even though this novel is a work of fiction, I love the fact that Harper used actual events when available to give the reader a sense of who Kat was in real life. The parts of the story where fiction had to be used due to lack of historical fact or personal conversations, I feel Harper did a wonderful job writing the fictional element to flow perfectly with known fact. It is harder and harder to find novels written about historical figures that are true to the story of the person's actual life. After reading A Queen's Governess, I will eagerly look for other titles written by Karen Harper.

Stephanie Tracy says

This was an excellent book about Elizabeth Tudor's governess, Katherine Ashley, who stayed with Elizabeth for over thirty years as her faithful caretaker and honorary mother. This novel illustrates the time Kat spent serving Elizabeth's mother, Queen Anne Boleyn, and how her relationship with Anne made Kat feel especially close to Elizabeth, who dealt with so many hardships in her life. It is also a beautiful love story - showing the courtship and marriage between Katherine and John Ashley, a horse master at court. Overall, I really loved how Karen Harper formed all of her characters, though some of them were extremely unlikable - such as Thomas Seymour (no surprise), and at times, Robert Dudley (which is my only complaint!). It was a very heartfelt story, which actually brought me close to tears a few times, especially when Kat would think back to her time with Anne Boleyn. This was a novel of love, devotion and kindness in Tudor times - which was a bit of a breath of fresh air. A lovely story that I highly recommend!

Carole Rae says

I've heard of Kat and her special role with Elizabeth and Anne, but I admit I know very little of the governess who helped raise one of the world's most famous queens.

At first, I was not sure how I liked the format. The author decided to make it seem like Kat was writing a novel of her past. I grew to like it and it worked, but I did not like the random add-ins in the middle of paragraphs. It ruined the pace of the book I felt. I get that they were for further explanations or little snippets of future events.

I like Kat a lot. She was a such a strong character even in her weak moments. She felt so real and if she was half of what the author presented, I can see how she influenced and helped strengthen a strong woman. Anne Boleyn would've been proud of who helped raise her daughter. I am glad Kat got her HEA. I was worried she was going to be all alone in a loveless marriage. She deserved to be loved.

This was really good. I liked how the characters were presented and I liked how the stories were shown. There were time skips for sure, but I felt it was important. I do wish there had been more time spent during Mary's reign. It did seem a little short for how scary that time period it was.

In the end, I'll give this 4 stars. Really good and I recommend it if you like historical fictions.

Juliew. says

Katherine Ashley was a long time supporter, favorite and governess of Elizabeth I and also as this book portrays her an educated and interesting woman. From Elizabeth I's earliest days to her escape from smallpox in 1560, Katherine acted as servant, teacher, friend and ultimately, substitute mother to the young queen to be. Here, Katherine first comes to the attentions of Cromwell and is placed in the household of Queen Anne Boleyn as a spy. As Katherine watches Anne's reign come to its tragic end she is sworn to serve her three year old daughter. What follows is an account of Elizabeth's struggle to attain the throne from Katherine's

viewpoint. A fun, quick read.

Jodi says

LOVE historical fiction and I love reading about Tudor England so this book was great for me! I have read a variety of books on this time period by a variety of authors and seen many movies/tv series of this time period but this was the first time I have heard from Elizabeth I's governess's point of view! What a life she lead and to such extremes! She came from seemingly humble beginnings with tragedy in her life already and then to be a "lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn and to witness her tragedy first hand. Then on to become Elizabeth's governess and in a way a mother figure to her the rest of her life. Tudor England would have been a scary time to live and Kat (the governess) definitely feared for her life a few times while working with the Tudors but in the end she seems to have been rewarded for all of her faithful, hard work!

I have heard of Anne's sixth finger mentioned in a few books so I am guessing this is true.

I have also read in a few different books about Thomas Seymour entering Elizabeth's bedroom while she was sleeping and also cutting her dress off of her in the gardens so I am guessing this is also a fact and not fiction as I thought the first time I read about it. I didn't know about him brutally raping Kat many years before he mistreated the 14 year old Elizabeth! Eek! What an awful man who probably got what he deserved when he was finally beheaded!

I loved the information at the end how the author, Karen Harper, researched Kat's life and all the contradictions she found due to spelling not being standardized, and records not being kept properly! Wherever Kat began life, she definitely led an amazing life!

Orsolya says

There are several portrayals on Kat Ashley: Elizabeth's governess. One of strength and intelligence and a dear protector of Elizabeth even in times of Thomas Seymour's blatant flirtations and one of the usual drive for power in her young charge, striving to have Elizabeth reach the top. Harper's novel finds a middle ground and allows to see the motherly love that Ashley must have felt for Elizabeth, a youth whose mom was beheaded when she was merely about 3 years old.

A smooth and cohesive story, Harper teaches you about Kat and Elizabeth's relationship while also satisfying your taste buds of the Tudor intrigue we all know and love. Quirky and strong: words that describe not only the characters within but the actual book itself.

Merry Bones says

Interesting. I didn't know much about Kat Ashley beyond that she was a favorite of Elizabeth's. As the author discusses in her notes, researching anyone in the Tudor-era can be challenging, and Kat herself is evidently quite a mystery; everything from how to spell her name to who her parents were and what year she was born in. So if the author played fast and loose with Kat's life in order to weave an interesting story, I think she can be forgiven.

I did feel, though, as if plausibility was being stretched a bit far at times, especially in the beginning, but the story grew on me as I went along, mainly because any story about the Tudors is going to suck me in. I came away from it feeling that I've read better but also read worse when it comes to historical fiction.

So far I haven't had any luck finding a full biography of Kat Ashley, beyond a few articles online. If anyone knows of one, please clue me in, I would love to read more about her. Despite any faults the novel might have, I found her to be a fascinating character. She must have been a strong woman to go through everything she did. I doubt I could have survived three months in the dreaded Fleet Prison, let alone everything else she went through. She's someone who is ever present when it comes to the Tudors in fiction and film, but usually overlooked so it was fun to read a story through her eyes.

If the link below works correctly, it will take you to a manuscript of William Cecil's state papers, which includes some mentions of Kat, as well as providing a good idea of just how challenging it can be to research Tudor sources (just trying to decipher a couple paragraphs made my head hurt, lol).

<http://books.google.co.uk/ebooks?op=a...>

Misfit says

I yield, this is just not the book for me. I can't handle all these *secrets* Kat stumbles across, let alone one more book with Jane Rochford sneaking around spying through keyholes. Ack. Others are waiting their turn at the library, it's going back.

Jae says

Although this story was well-written it had a number of americanisms which were completely out of place in a novel about Tudor England, and this irritated me a little. Also, I felt that it just lacked a little something to liven it up a bit, but having said that I did enjoy it over all. 3.5

Hannah Polley says

This is the first historical fiction book that I have read that I felt I really enjoyed and kept my interest throughout. It is told from the perspective of Elizabeth I's governess. Not someone I had ever heard of and it looks like the author just made up the early beginnings of Kat's life but a real person nonetheless.

The Tudors were a fascinating dynasty and Henry VIII with his 6 wives is a captivating story. I think it helps that Kat was alive for all 6 so you definitely go through the journey with her.

The only thing that falls down for me is that I have done a lot of reading around this time and the way the characters in the story speak and behave is just not reflective of the time period. Kat goes around practically telling everyone to call her 'Kat' which just would not have happened. And her behaviour with Tom Seymour also raises a huge number of eyebrows. Obviously completely unacceptable now, but at the time, due to the way Kat behaved, she should have expected nothing less.

erica says

"Anne Boleyn gave me life, but Kat Ashley gave me love."

The Queen's Governess is a novel in the voice of Kat Ashley, Elizabeth I's famous adviser, friend, and mother figure. I was so excited to read this book; anyone who loves the Tudors is familiar with Kat Ashley, but she has never had her own book. Finally, Karen Harper is giving her a voice!

This book made me appreciate just how little we know, really, about Kat Ashley. In Harper's Afterword, she mentions how difficult this book was to research. We don't know who Kat's parents were or exactly where she was from. What we do know is that Kat was incredibly well educated; she was appointed as Elizabeth's governess in 1537, when the little princess was four, and taught the future monarch astronomy, geography, history, mathematics, French, Flemish, Italian and Spanish (ref: Wikipedia). Knowledge of such diverse subjects was certainly not the norm for mid- to low-born noblewomen in the sixteenth century. Who was Kat Ashley? Where did she come from?

Harper imagines Kat Ashley as the daughter of a poor country squire whose life is forever changed when she meets Thomas Cromwell and his companions while the group is traveling on the road near her father's house. After a few brief conversations, Cromwell decides that Kat is an exceptional young woman and will serve his own cause as a spy. *A spy!* Kat is shipped, at Cromwell's command, to a distant cousin's house to serve the family. While tending to the children, Kat sits in on their lessons and acquires the vast knowledge that will allow her to serve as Elizabeth's governess later in life.

Cromwell allows Kat a few years to complete her education before calling her to court to spy on Henry VIII's love interest, Anne Boleyn. Kat quickly learns, thanks to Cromwell's inside scoop, and supplemented by palace gossip, that the plan is for Henry to divorce his wife and marry Anne, which naturally shocks Kat. She serves Anne Boleyn and grows close enough to the lady to gain her complete trust; before her execution, Anne gives Kat a piece of jewelry that has her portrait and Elizabeth's inside, with instructions to watch over her daughter and give her the jewelry when she is older.

Kat, as we all know, with complete loyalty, serves Elizabeth for the rest of her life. From Elizabeth's childhood estate at Hatfield, to imprisonment in the Tower, to Elizabeth's eventual triumph as Queen, Kat Ashley remains steadfast.

There were a few things about Kat Ashley that I wanted to know, but Harper didn't quite deliver.

Tell me more about Cromwell's spy network! The premise that Kat was an agent in Cromwell's pocket is fascinating, but Harper does not give us very much information. Kat doesn't give Cromwell very much information either. What exactly was he gaining from her? She never really comes across any intel that he doesn't already have, and this plot point ends when Cromwell dies.

Why was Kat so close to Anne Boleyn? We are told that Anne Boleyn entrusts Kat Ashley, over anyone else, to protect her daughter. However, Kat is just another one of Anne's ladies, and their interaction is very limited. When Kat first arrives at court, the two women have an exciting, whispered conversation establishing that Kat is corresponding with Cromwell and is thus to be trusted. After this, they don't have any special relationship. I want to believe that they are very close, but Harper does not give us any reason to

believe there is a special relationship between the two.

What I liked:

Kat Ashley and Elizabeth I's relationship was very believable. Harper did establish that these two women were very close and I very much enjoyed reading about the special bond Elizabeth I shared with Kat, who was very much her mother figure.

Thomas Seymour. This guy is so creepy. I loved that he and Kat had a history and how this drove Kat to fervently defend the young Elizabeth against him.

Overall, this book was an average work of historical fiction, but if you love the Tudors you will enjoy this new perspective.

Belinda says

4,25 stars - English hardcover - I have dyslexia - Thanks for the read Tilly ???

Redfox5 says

Really good retelling of Elizabeth Tudor's story as told by Kat Ashley. I've never read a story from her point of view before, which is a surprise as she was such a key part in Elizabeth's life .

I liked that Harper had made Kat against Tom Seymour and Robert Dudley. I really don't like either of them. Elizabeth had a terrible taste in men. In some other books I've read, they've had Kat encouraging Elizabeth to be with Tom and I really don't think that would have been the case.

I also loved that she told Kat and John's love story. It was very sweet. Would recommend for anyone in the depths of Tudormania.
