



A Love Most Dangerous

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Alice Petherton is a young maid of honour at the court of Henry VIII. When the philandering Sir Richard Rich attempts to seduce her she is forced to take action to defend herself. Yet she knows she cannot thwart such a powerful man for long. Unless, of course, she finds a protector more powerful than Rich.

Alice befriends the King by reading verse with him but soon finds that his interest in her extends somewhat further. He celebrates the birth of his son Edward by taking her to his bed. Queen Jane dies soon after giving birth and in his distress and grief Henry dismisses Alice. He cannot resist her charms for long, however, and Alice soon returns as his favourite. She is happy with this role, with the finery and flattery, with accommodating the fiery passion of the King. Her only concern is to avoid the danger of becoming his next wife.

Her wit and intelligence allows Alice to lightly negotiate the snares and dangers of Henry's court. But all too soon she makes a rash misjudgement and is dismissed by the furious King. She suffers a terrifying fall from favour which drives her from the palace to the squalid streets of London and worse.

A Love Most Dangerous Details

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From Reader Review A Love Most Dangerous for online ebook

Elaine Jeremiah says

This was a well written and well researched novel, bringing to life the Tudor court of Henry VIII and the women in his life. But the novel actually centres around the narrator Alice, a young woman at the court who becomes Henry's mistress.

The story is exciting and gripping; as a reader I rooted for Alice all the way. She is a highly sympathetic character. We follow her turbulent tale through the capriciousness of Henry's court and the murky underworld of the poverty-riven London town where she goes through severe hardships and has to fight for her survival.

I would recommend this historical novel to anyone who enjoys a good story. It doesn't disappoint.

Dee says

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies..." (George R.R. Martin) and Alice's life is a life really worth reading. This is a fabulous book, and a great story. I love the way we get to know Alice through her thoughts, and through the little vignettes about her life that appear in the early part of her tale. "I used to think that snowflakes were fairies when I saw them as a child. Good fairies, white and kind yet strong enough to protect me should I have need."

The descriptions throughout the book create beautiful, and often mouth-watering, pictures. The scenes portraying the feasts and foods of the day leave one wanting to be sitting at the table enjoying the repast with them. "... a glistening swan, roasted and embellished with fruit and sweetmeats. ... stuffed inside it would be an aviary of birds: goose, chicken, partridge, pheasant, woodcock, snipe, pigeon, heron, capon and song-birds."

This tale talks to me on so many levels. Mr Lake captures the essence of this young woman perfectly. We meet her emerging into womanhood, still innocent enough to recall her childhood dreams; 'I used to spend hours staring into the fire as a child. I thought the flames were little creatures ... once I began to read, I populated the fire with more exotic creatures, dragons, phoenix and salamander. I made up stories concerning them. ... I was always a Princess and the brightest flame was always the Prince. ... always, he would defeat my tormentors and carry me away on his white horse.' I remember such dreams from my own childhood, and although those days are long gone passages like this transport me right back there.

The story transports us to another world as we follow Alice on her incredible journey from innocent dreams, and her protected and privileged life, through a living hell when she falls from grace and meets reality head on. I was shocked, horrified and heartbroken all at once but I love the emotion it evoked as I read it. The tragic loss of innocence, the fear, the anger, and the dread of what would happen next. The stench of the streets filled my nostrils, and I trembled at the treatment meted out to so many, particularly women, of the day.

The characters that inhabit Alice's world enchant, enrage and engage. I loved and hated them in turn, but I

believed them all and their descriptions again evoke fantastic pictures;

“The man entered the room, placing his feet down carefully as if fearful of stepping in the wrong place. He was in his forties by the look of him, clean shaven and with curling hair, his face long and with a chin like a shovel. His nose was also long and seemed to be designed to sniff ahead of him, compensating, perhaps for his little eyes which were small and crossed and seemed to be insufficient for their purpose. He was tall and thin with skinny legs which did not look as though they would readily bear his weight. He had the look of a heron. 'This is Nicholas Frost, ' ...”.

I came to feel I knew these people well, and I knew who to fear, who to trust and who to love. I found myself holding my breath as I turned the pages. I was sad when I got to the last page, but I know this is a book I will read again. It's a book that deserves more than one reading. Alice's world is complicated, convoluted and quite terrifying, but so intriguing and such a pleasure to inhabit from a safe distance.

My favourite line in the book was too hard to choose, it took me some time to whittle it down to just two - ;
“... my head, like Anne's, may well have fallen from my shoulders and rolled, pitter-patter, across the timbers of the stage.”

“Not even the great god Janus was as two faced as the nobles of the Kingdom on that day.”

Congratulations on a wonderful, and page turning, book.

Paul Bennett says

Having read and enjoyed Martin's series on The Lost King I was more than happy when he asked me to take on A Love Most Dangerous. This despite the fact that most of the historical fiction I read involves the clash of arms and armies. This one is quite different from my usual fare not only from the standpoint of action but also from the time and place. I have never paid much attention to the court of Henry VIII other than the bits I learned in history. In fact my knowledge of him has always been compromised by Herman and the Hermits. In this telling of the life of a Maid of Honor in the court of Henry VIII I was drawn in like a moth to a flame. The story is of Alice Petherton and how she becomes the King's favorite.

The book is well researched and this shows in the exquisite detail the author uses time and time again to bring to life not only life in the court but life in London....e.g. his description of the Thames and one particular street, Offal Pudding Lane...yikes, makes me wonder how they coped in that environment. The plot centers mainly on Alice and her rise and subsequent fall from grace and shows how frail life could be under the rule of a man like Henry VIII.

It is a tense, exciting, page turning experience as you follow Alice, a woman with the ability to beguile every man she meets and how she learns to deal with that. I highly recommend this and gladly give it 5 stars.

P.S. for those of you too young to remember 1965, Herman's Hermits did a song called “I'm Henry the VIII, I am”.

Piwi Mama says

This engrossing novel centers on a year in the life of seventeen-year-old Alice Pemberton, one of Queen Jane Seymour's ladies. King Henry the VIII is now married to his third wife, having divorced his first and

beheaded his second. Knowing full well the danger she faces, the young maid becomes the King's mistress in order to gain protection from unwanted attention in the court.

The story is a chilling reminder of the limited power and choices women had throughout history. On the flip side, it is also proof of the strength and courage that women can summon.

Mr Lake has clearly researched the era and the characters involved in the turbulent times of the reign of Henry VIII. The chapters are short but flow well from one event to the next. The author did very well describing the sweet excesses of court life and the filth and poverty ridden London we are transported to later in the novel.

Overall I enjoyed *A Love Most Dangerous*. The only thing that jarred me a little were certain scenes where the characters use modern expressions that I would not have expected people in this era to use.

I would recommend this book to fans of a good historical novel. It was an entertaining read perfect for the beach or a lazy weekend.

Disclosure / Disclaimer: I received this ebook, free of charge, from Lake Union Publishing via Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review

Eva says

To start it off: There were some minor things I didn't like.

Why make Alice have dreams about Queen Anne Boleyn and not follow through with it? Why have Sissy kiss Alice in the middle of the night and not follow through with it? What about Alice feeling guilt for her attraction to women because of this being the middle ages? It seems like these things were just tacked on to add a little 'scandal'.

The protagonist herself can be quite unlikeable at times, especially in the way she treats Lucy Burton. Yet on the other hand, I like that she's not a perfectly polished loveable little lady. She's only seventeen. She is rash and makes mistakes.

What I did like was probably the whole rest of the book. It had just the right amount of description of landscape, clothing and food to make it believable, but not boring. It had some clever and witty dialogues. And I had a blast working with it! Everything kind of worked for itself. Can't wait to see what the German version turns out like.

All in all, it was a solid and enjoyable read. I might look into more books of this author.

David Cook says

A very intimate thought-provoking story set during the court of Henry VIII. Martin has created a world where I feel at home in, know of and understand (in some respect) the machinations of court politics. This is almost like a Tudor House of Cards with Cromwell as Francis Underwood and Henry VIII as the president (only because I've been glued to it).

Alice is a great protagonist and you feel empathy towards her all the way through her trials and tribulations. It's a very easy to read story and reminds me of Hilary Mantel's Cromwell series, but the two styles are

different - however there are historical accuracies and intrigue to keep the page turning because of Martin's easy style -almost if every page is woven into a giant tapestry of rich characters and dialogue.

A fantastic Tudor story and for once Henry is seen as very human, with his insecurities, image to behold, ire, power, God, love, revenge, hate, spite and brutality.

Just the thing I like reading about.

Rachel Swords says

As an avid reader of Tudor historical fiction, I'm willing to try anything and everything. At this point, I'm starting to think there should be a sub-genre to this genre: Maid of Honor/Lady in Waiting books. Seriously, there are more than enough titles to make such happen. And all of them follow, or follow most of, the following plot points:

- 1)main character is either a woman who really existed at Henry VIII's court or someone completely made up for the sake of fiction/original character development
- 2)said maid has usually served two of Henry's queens, if not more. Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour currently seem to be the most popular.
- 3)said maid magically catches the eye of Henry in between mistresses/queens.
- 4)Henry is immediately infatuated with said maid, and inevitably the maid starts to wonder if she will follow in Anne and Jane's footsteps of becoming queen.
- 5)maid wrestles with the thought of being queen.
- 6)plot circumstances make her reject the idea/she plots back and forth about it/Henry drops her for any number of reasons.
- 7)another man, usually a completely made up character, is at court as well and saves her from her woeful situation (this point is optional.)

But yeah...6 out of 7 of these points are what make up "A Love Most Dangerous." And Alice Petherton marks a new low in Mary Sues appearing in Tudor fiction. EVERY man is drawn to her, including Thomas Cromwell, who goes so far as to kiss and sniff her. I am not making this up.

Alice, naturally, also has her enemies, primarily two fellow ladies who come straight from the "Mean Girls" textbook. It's a wonder more eyerolls and an occasional "oh my gawd" don't fall from their lips.

Also! The "Love" mentioned in the title is rather one-sided. Alice is pretty sure she DOESN'T love Henry, she just goes along with it because she knows she has no choice. Yet she gets compared to Anne Boleyn and her fascinating charisma. Dead. Serious. Here.

Let's see, what else? There are lions, and Henry just happens to keep some of Anne's clothing nearby for Alice to wear (I'm pretty sure this is where the book jumped the shark for me- history is pretty specific in how Henry did his best to wipe all traces of Anne off the face of the earth, so why in God's name would he keep her clothes near? This is not Rebecca and Maxim de Winter, people!), and Henry gets turned on by the idea of lesbians, and Alice hints at Anne Boleyn being bisexual by recalling a kiss given to her by her former mistress (the book's first real WTF?! moment for me), and whorehouses, and anal sex, and despite all that a

happy ending for Alice where she is guaranteed a future as Henry's favorite. Given what history tells us, one has to wonder what that will be like once Anne of Cleves and Catherine Howard come along. Maybe this will be told in a sequel? I really kind of hope not.

chucklesthescot says

This was one of the poorest Tudor novels that I've picked up and I'm only glad that I didn't pay anything for it or I'd have felt pretty mad. You can tell it was written by a man with all the sexual references right at the start of the book, giving you a huge hint what this book was going to be based around.

Actually I don't really regard this as much of a Tudor novel. This was more about the varying sexual fantasies of men about women in general ie BDSM, rape and lesbianism, with the Tudor Court thrown in the background. On page two of the book we had our female MC thinking lustfully about how much she had wanted to be bedded by Anne Boleyn when she was alive. Within a couple of pages, Richard Rich is trying to rape and force bondage and whipping on Alice who attacks him and escapes. She then decides that the only way to protect herself from his rage is to seduce the King, who will keep Rich in line. She makes her move as Queen Jane is giving birth to the new Prince.

Alice and the plot is not believable in any way. Henry set Anne aside for several reasons, one of which being she refused to be a quiet and undemanding wife, getting Henry into tempers. That is why he chose the mild and meek Jane as his next love. So Alice coming along to seduce him, behaving like Anne Boleyn in arguing with the King and being all feisty and annoying, would NOT have appealed to him at that stage. Alice knows that Rich is interested in her, she finds him scary and repulsive, so she flirts with him in front of everyone for some insane reason and then wanders the castle alone, without knowing where he is. Yeah that is sensible. I seriously hope the author didn't do that to paint a picture of her deserving what she got.

Was Henry really that easily manipulated? Was it so easy for Alice to escape her duties to stalk the King until he noticed her? Why did Rich stay away from her for so long, allowing her the chance to carry out her plot? I'd have thought a man like him would've had revenge on her instantly! Nothing about the plot made much sense and the characters were all wooden with little development.

I don't recommend this when there are so many great Tudor novels out there and I won't be reading any more by the author even if it is free!

Martin Lake says

I didn't mean to write this - I just couldn't stop Alice talking.

I'm just posting to say how much I appreciate the time people have taken to leave reviews and comments. I've found them fascinating, exciting and very informative.

So thanks to everyone - I've 'Liked' the comments to show my appreciation.

Katy Hill says

I received this book free from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I have to say that I really enjoyed reading this book. There were a few times where I started to feel that too many things were happening at once to the main character, Alice. I don't want to go into too much detail or spoilers but it came to the point where I was wondering "What else could possibly go wrong for this poor girl?"

The details in the book were really well done but it wasn't to the point where I would have to constantly go back to remember certain parts or characters. The novel was fairly easy to read, flowed smoothly and gave just the right amount of imagery--without overdoing it. It did get a little slow around the middle but it picked up quickly again. I enjoyed the writing style and how Martin Lake voiced the characters, primarily Alice. I felt like I could truly sympathize with Alice even though, at times, she did act like her seventeen year old self (for example, her treatment of Lucy--but as a girl who was once that age, I know I did it too) making her all the more realistic. I also enjoyed seeing a side of King Henry VIII that is not normally shown, his 'human' and 'childish' side. Even though he was in his 40's, he acted even more immature than Alice.

This was the first novel that I had the pleasure of reading by Mr. Lake and I will be sure to pick up another one soon. I would definitely recommend this book.

L Evans says

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

I enjoy historical fiction so I thought this would be an interesting read. I have read several other books about this time, Henry the VIII and his wives. I didn't find this anything new and out of the ordinary when compared with those other tales, but for the most part it was an enjoyable read.

There were times when I was very interested and times when I was not as interested. The middle part seemed to drag on before she was banished from the castle. We seem to meet new people that have little relevance to the story. I gained interest again after she left the castle, but stopped liking it once she met Art. There is a brutal rape scene, which as a reader I don't enjoy. Would this book have been as effective if Alice had escaped without being raped? I think so.

I'm unsure about Alice as a character. She doesn't seem to be making many decisions about her life. I know that she is put in situations that are out of her control, but she doesn't seem to have any distinct feelings about the people or the circumstances where she finds herself, she's just going along for the ride. This made it difficult for me to connect with her as a character.

Overall it was good, but I wished for more.

Sherry Chiger says

This book shows just how important a good editor and copyeditor are. Martin Lake's a fluid enough writer: The story flows, the book seems well researched, and there are definite flashes of great insight (the scene in which the protagonist Alice describes the tension of the courtiers' presentation of Christmas gifts to the king is a standout). But there's a fair amount of clunky exposition too--the info dumps of characters' physical descriptions, particularly in the beginning, for example--along with some sheerly awful turns of phrase (an "aviary of birds"; "eyes as bovine as a cow's") and plain old sloppiness ("it's" for "its"; misplaced commas) that made me grit my teeth. What's more, the latter part of the story seems rushed, as if the author was getting bored and could no longer be bothered with giving the secondary characters the same attention he had earlier. For instance, when Alice stays with the family of a child who'd been killed roughly one month prior, aside from a brief mention of the incident, the child's parents and sister seem to have quite forgotten about the poor kid. I know child mortality was quite high back then, but still!

tl; dr: Well researched, decently plotted, a good beach or train read, but it had the potential to be much more.

Helen says

Title: A Love Most Dangerous by Martin Lake

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352pp.

Genre: historical fiction, Tudor, Henry VIII, english history,

3+/4 (-)Stars ****

Author: Martin Lake is an English author who has written several historical novels, primarily self published. It appears he writes series, his first concerned the Norman invasion of England, tThe Lost King: Resistance, Wasteland and Blood of Ironside (soon to be a fourth). Another concerns the Crusades: Outcasts. I had not read this author previously, so was unprepared for the abrupt ending, which of course signifies a sequel. Indeed, an interview states an interesting historical character, Nicholas Bourbon will participate. While I would consider these to be superficial historical fiction (there are just enough facts and interesting characters) Wikipedia is a primary reference. Modern language and behaviour are annoying (an editor would also be useful). But they are entertaining reads. Tudor fans will enjoy.

Story line:

It is 1537, Jane Seymour is Queen, but Henry's eye finds another mistress. Alice Petherton (not an historical figure, but he later discovered the Shelton mistresses around the same time period) is a Maid of Honor to the Queen's Court. She's 17, innocent but determined to control her life (never to be queen, but unrealistic for the turbulent masculine time period). I found it hard to believe that men found her so irresistible or she was seemingly unaware of this (until Cromwell points it out at the end). She is a survivor though, and became a fascinating character in the course of the year (although I am still not clear on the timeline). I would continue this series, especially at the beach.

There are several side plots, and power twists, but descriptive London locations made for interesting reading. Unexpectedly, I liked Thomas Cromwell best.

This is more of a bodice ripper with more physical assault and gratuitous sex than I expected. Hilary Mantel it is not. But not every book needs to be a history lesson. And it is Henry the VIII, with graphic detail of poverty and decadence. Tudors sell.

Read on:

He recommends reading Alison Weir, Phillipa Gregory and Ian Mortimer.

I recommend Hilary Mantel or Vanora Bennett.

Quotes:

Opening line:

To be a servant at the Court of King Henry is to live with your heart in your mouth.

She (Anne Boleyn) took me as one of her Maids of Honor and my slow approach to the furnace began.

Read as an ARC from Netgalley

Debra says

The lead character was unlikable, burdening this reader with the tedious task of finishing this book. Her actions and thoughts were all too predictable. Then later, when she undergoes unspeakable trauma, she shakes it off with a few tears. Huh? While I thoroughly enjoy a good novel set in the Tudor era, this wasn't it. The supporting characters were lackluster and flat, as were most of the descriptions in the book. The author would often choose the most inappropriate times to digress into a descriptive paragraph, misplaced and doing nothing to advance the plot or improve the novel. Beset with typos, clumsy phasing, inaccurate historical details and dialogue....I could go on and on. Suffice it to say, I didn't like it. It seems like a drugstore romance (i.e. Harlequin) or a book for adolescents, although the intimacy between characters, and especially the girl-on-girl sex(included perhaps only to sell books), precludes that option. I can't think of an appropriate audience to which I would recommend this silly book, and I am left feeling that Mr. Lake must have a plethora of friends and relatives out there to give him so many stellar reviews.

Jo Barton says

As a young maid of honour at the royal court of Henry VIII, Alice Petherton soon realises that making enemies of influential figures can have dramatic and dangerous consequences. When she rejects the amorous advances of Sir Richard Rich, one of Henry's advisors, she very quickly realises that, in order to keep him at bay, she needs a protector who is even more powerful. When she catches the eye of the king, Alice uses her feminine charms to get the protection she thinks she needs.

Some of the story was more interesting than others, as parts of it were, I felt, rather implausible. There were several historical inaccuracies, particularly around clothing items; Tudor women didn't wear blouses, which at times, irritated me. Alice was neither likeable nor endearing and I found her character rather clichéd and, if I'm honest rather, overdone. The Tudor era is written about with great passion by many historical fiction writers, and whilst I can't find fault with the author's clear interest in history, I would have liked to have felt more of an involvement with the story, but I was rather bored by Alice and even her involvement with the other characters fail to engender any enthusiasm on my part.

Overall, this is a light historical romp which could have had the potential to be better but which was let down

but some inattention to detail and a script which needed some fine tuning, particularly towards the end, when I felt like the author had given up, and so had I.

Thanks to NetGalley for my ecopy of this book.
