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Katherine Of Aragon, The True Queen: A Novel (Six Tudor Queens)



Synopsis

Bestselling author and acclaimed historian Alison Weir takes on what no fiction writer has done before: creating a dramatic six-book series in which each novel covers one of King Henry VIII's wives. In this captivating opening volume, Weir brings to life the tumultuous tale of Katherine of Aragon, Henry's first, devoted, and true queen. A princess of Spain, Catalina is only sixteen years old when she sets foot on the shores of England. The youngest daughter of the powerful monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, Catalina is a coveted prize for a royal marriage and Arthur, Prince of Wales, and heir to the English throne, has won her hand. But tragedy strikes and Catalina, now Princess Katherine, is betrothed to the future Henry VIII. She must wait for his coming-of-age, an ordeal that tests her resolve, casts doubt on her trusted confidantes, and turns her into a virtual prisoner. Katherine's patience is rewarded when she becomes Queen of England. The affection between Katherine and Henry is genuine, but forces beyond her control threaten to rend her marriage, and indeed the nation, apart. Henry has fallen under the spell of Katherine's maid of honor, Anne Boleyn. Now Katherine must be prepared to fight, to the end if God wills it, for her faith, her legitimacy, and her heart.

Praise for Katherine of Aragon, The True Queen

As always, Weir demonstrates a keen eye for crafting dramatic scenes of beautiful, accurate detail, instilling in the reader's mind's eye a definite you-are-there sense. . . . If this greatly impressive inaugural installment is any indication, Tudor lovers have much to look forward to. • "Booklist (starred review) • Vividly detailed . . . Weir brings considerable expertise to her fictional retelling of the life of Katherine of Aragon. . . . [The author] portrays her sympathetically as both credulous and steely. • "Kirkus Reviews • The novel provides a fascinating glimpse into the personal life of Queen Katherine behind the intricate and vicious political intrigues of the Tudor court. . . . Meticulous research, combined with Alison Weir's empathy for her subject, makes this an illuminating and engaging portrait of the true queen. • "Historical Novels Review • [Weir's] fresh approach to Henry's first wife [is] a wonderful place to start for those unfamiliar with Katherine's story. Weir's portrayal is far from that of a weak, victimized woman, but one of a courageous, strong, devoted queen fighting for her life and rights. An easy, quick read to begin the series. • "RT Book Reviews • In this first novel of the Six Tudor Queens series, Alison Weir dazzlingly brings Katherine of Aragon to life. Based on extensive new research, it is a portrayal that shatters the many myths about Henry VIII's long-suffering first wife. Far from being the one-dimensional victim of history, she emerges as a charismatic, indomitable, and courageous heroine whose story never fails to enthrall. • "Tracy Borman, author of Thomas Cromwell • Yet again, Alison Weir has managed to intertwine profound historical knowledge

with huge emotional intelligence, to compose a work that throws light on an endlessly fascinating figure. But her real gift in all of this is making it feel so fresh and alive.” Charles Spencer, author of Killers of the King

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was excited to see that Alison Weir is planning a series of six books, one for each of the unfortunate wives of Henry VIII, with this first installment, logically enough, being on Katherine of Aragon, the first wife. Katherine has typically been trivialized by fiction writers, especially so for television and movie scripts. She's usually portrayed as a middle-aged, unattractive and unwanted woman who simply won't take a hint and just go away. (And, I might add, she's always shown as an olive-skinned brunette, not with her pale complexion and red-blond hair.) Offhand, I know of no screen portrayal that shows the true story, beginning with a young, beautiful, intelligent and sincere woman who was considered quite a prize for the English crown. Her mother was none other than the great ruler (in her own right), Isabella of Castile, and Catherine learned much from her. In this book we finally see everything from Katherine's viewpoint. We see her as a beautiful woman, met with great ceremony on her arrival in England. We see her sad marriage to her sickly first child-husband and her uncertain years after his death, where her father-in-law, Henry VII, treats her as a chess pawn. Then, she is rescued by the new king, Henry VIII, who passionately loves and adores her and treats her with great respect for many years, even making her regent in his absence. Then, after political situations outside of her control adversely affect her influence and

after multiple pregnancies have ruined her youth and figure, her hero coldly and cruelly betrays and abandons her like an old pair of shoes that have outgrown their usefulness. The pain and insult she suffered, while firmly maintaining her position as good wife, mother and queen, are carefully shown here in the novel.

A novel told from the perspective of Katherine of Aragon, stretching from those first heady days when she arrived in England as the bride-to-be of Arthur, first-born son of King Henry VII, to her last painful and ignominious hours she spent as the discarded, yet defiant, wife of King Henry VIII. I must say, the book started off rather slow for me: once the drama of Katherine's marriage to Arthur had passed and she and Henry were married, most of the time was spent wrapped up in Katherine's wedded bliss, which seemed a bit too . . . blissful for a woman, especially a high-ranking woman, of this period. For instance, the first time Henry is unfaithful, Katherine is shocked and hurt by his behavior. Really? Should she be? After all, it's not like love or even affection between royal spouses was the norm, despite the appearance Henry gave of being as in love with Katherine as she was with him. Aristocratic and royal marriages were made for alliances, for power, not for love; adultery, on the man's part, was the accepted norm. So it seemed strange for Katherine, the daughter of Isabella of Aragon, to exist in a cloud of naivety and meekness. But then things start to pick up once the King's Secret Matter, which soon becomes the King's Great Matter, gets exposed and the hurly-burly with Anne Boleyn begins. Then we see the fire of Katherine of Aragon spark to life as she fights for her husband, her marriage, her title, her daughter, and her entire life and future. This is not an unbiased book, nor should it be. This is a highly personal tale, told completely from one woman's perspective. Such a singular perspective doesn't allow for an unbiased telling.

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