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Brandy Purdy

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From carefree young woman to disillusioned bride, the dazzling lady who would become mother and grandmother to two of history's most infamous queens, has a fascinating story all her own. . .

At sixteen, Elizabeth Howard envisions a glorious life for herself as lady-in-waiting to the future queen, Catherine of Aragon. But when she is forced to marry Thomas Boleyn, a wealthy commoner, Elizabeth is left to stagnate in the countryside while her detested husband pursues his ambitions. There, she raises golden girl Mary, moody George, and ugly duckling Anne—while staving off boredom with a string of admirers. Until Henry VIII takes the throne. . .

When Thomas finally brings his highborn wife to London, Elizabeth indulges in lavish diversions and dalliances—and catches the lusty king's eye. But those who enjoy Henry's fickle favor must also guard against his wrath. For while her husband's machinations bring Elizabeth and her children to the pinnacle of power, the distance to the scaffold is but a short one—and the Boleyn family's fortune may be turning. . .

The Boleyn Bride Details

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From Reader Review The Boleyn Bride for online ebook

Latte says

NOTE: A copy of this book was provided by NetGalley for an honest review.

Why do we find the Tudor era to be so fascinating? Particularly the stories revolving around Nan Bullen, who history remembers as Anne Boleyn? Anne of the thousand days. While this story is told through the eyes of Elizabeth Howard, Anne's mother, it is, to me, a story of Anne Boleyn.

Elizabeth is a member of the powerful (in that era) Howard family. At sixteen, she is married to her brother's friend, Thomas Bullen, a man whose family was of a merchant background, but had pulled himself into the ranks of the nobility in Henry VII's time. In trying to rise above his family's low beginnings, he plays with the spelling of the family name, finally settling on Boleyn.

Neither Elizabeth or Thomas are sympathetic characters. In that era of arranged marriages amongst the nobles, it was rare that affection might be found between spouses. This was particularly true between the high born, cosseted daughter of the powerful Duke of Norfolk and the son of a tradesman she was matched with.

In this telling of Anne's story, neither of her parents are "good" parents. Elizabeth is neglectful. Thomas uses his children to advance his own agenda. This was the man who sat on a jury convicting his own children (Anne and her brother George) to death. Elizabeth lives much in her own world, bisecting rarely into her children's lives until they are adults. Anne's story is well known. It's very likely that this fictionalized Elizabeth was very like the actual woman - lady in waiting to a Queen, mother to a Queen consort, grandmother to yet another Queen. She is a self-centered woman, who doesn't find an interest in her children until they are too old to be interested in being mothered.

Where I felt this story fell short was that I learned nothing new about the era or about the Boleyn family that hadn't already been told elsewhere. There was very little like-able about Elizabeth. It's difficult to have a main character so entwined in the story of as well known a personage as Anne Boleyn. Elizabeth really gets lost in the background, even in being the main character. Whether it's a matter of too much detail or too little detail, Goldilocks would tell you this just doesn't hit the spot.

The Just-About-Cocky Ms M says

Once in a while, I'll read some Tudor schlock just to remind myself why I can't stand this overwritten, overwrought, overdone era of history. Once or twice an author does a credible job, but the rest reminds me of fanfic produced in a fevered haste by a room full of pre-teens.

This is bad on every conceivable level: a thoroughly unlikable main character--Elizabeth Boleyn, Anne's Mommy Dearest--who probably should have been drowned at birth; dialogue so wooden and artificial that it is painful to read; and some of the worst writing I've ever encountered--sentences the size of paragraphs, clumsy and improbable metaphors, violently purple prose, and so forth.

I cannot imagine even the most devoted and desperate Tudor fan wading through this morass.

And I can say that at least I've found someone who writes worse Tudor crap than Gortner.

Renaë says

I only persisted in reading this because it fills a gap in my Tudor history reading--the perspective of Anne Boleyn's mother.

Otherwise, it was ghastly. I could not muster ANY liking for her--she was horrendously written: spoiled, shallow, whiny, insincere...just awful.

Couple that with Purdy's historical inaccuracies and horrible writing.

Just no.

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

I would give this no stars if I could.

Henry had a new love now. A fair and fragile lady who was everything my daughter wasn't and never would be—soothing, still waters, a placid blue gazing pool, instead of turbulent, cascading, rapid waters, crashing waves, and strong currents; clear blue skies instead of darkness, thunder, torrential, cascading rain, and flashes of diamond-bright lightning.

I read so much bad YA fiction with terrible writing that I had completely forgotten how ferociously atrocious adult books can be.

The writing in this book is criminally bad. Appalling. I wonder how the fuck this book even got through an editor, or whether it has actually been skimmed by an editor at all. As readers, we often complain about purple prose, **the prose in this book isn't so much purple as it is a violent, putrescent, vomit-inducing shade of fuchsia.**

The main character is a bitch, a raging, narcissistic harpy of the highest order. Her pee should be bottled in Swarovski decanters and sold within the Hermès boutique in Paris. Her shit smells like the kiss of early morning dewdrops upon the buds of all the lavenders of Grasse in springtime.

This book is set in English Tudor era, it is the story of Elizabeth Boleyn, THE Anne Boleyn's mother. You might be fooled into thinking this is historical fiction, the compelling story of the mother of one of England's most memorable queens.

You'd be wrong. **This book is roughly the equivalent of a Tudor *Toddlers and Tiaras*.**

For those who are unfamiliar with US reality shows, *Toddlers and Tiaras* is a reality show about kids who participate in child pageants. More accurately, it's a portrait of parental failure. **These pageant moms aren't...motherly so much as they are horrible bitchy, shallow harpies vicariously reliving their youth and casting their failed hope and dreams onto their daughters.**

In a sentence, that is the personality of the main character of this book.

The Writing : The writing is abominable; I have rarely encountered writing so fantastically bad in my life. It took me about 15 minutes to read the motherfucking prologue because I had to go back and read some sentence roughly 5 times because I didn't (and still don't!) know what the fuck the sentence was trying to convey. I present you the example of **one sentence** within this book. Please tell me what the fuck this sentence is trying to say.

I would sit for hours and contemplate the graves where my lost children slept, resting in the protective, embracing shadow of a tall white marble cross, mounted on a little hillock, rising like a miracle, a resurrection, out of a dense mass of sweet white woodruff, planted all around with a small orchard of apple, cherry, plum, peach, pear, fig, and quince trees, my husband's prized "Paradise Apples," from which our cook baked his favorite pies and made quince jelly.

This is from the first page of the book. It did not bode well for the rest of the story.

You will find many like this within this novel. Many sentences are roughly the length of a long, pointless, meandering paragraph. Why have a simple sentence when you can have sentences within sentences. Why walk from point A to point B when you can take a long meander to point C and F, and sit and smell the roses along the way. **Who the FUCK edited this book?**

And just for shits and giggles, here's another sentence. **Let me clarify that this wall of text is ONE SENTENCE.**

Doubtlessly when I die—and I think it shall be soon, as the poet Wyatt, who loved my daughter, so aptly said, "These bloody days have broken my heart," and already I cough up blood—Thomas, my venerable and esteemed husband (Read those words with bitter, biting gall like a scorpion's sting or a serpent's deep-piercing fangs!), will send in the gardeners to restore order and beauty, the stately perfect precision of pruned boxwood hedges and intricate knot gardens like embroidery brought to life, all the expensive elegance he thinks befits him as every year takes him further and further away from his London shopkeeper origins.

One Gesture: 20 Words

...I used to taunt him, adopting a haughty yet exaggeratedly, and, I hoped, maddeningly casual tone.

How to Annihilate an Imagery

Welcome to my private Hell. Pass through the portal, the old sagging, groaning gate, twined with stinging nettle, not quaint, picturesque ivy; walk in amidst the thorns, thistles, and grasping blackberry brambles; chance the poison, if you dare, when a prick or a graze, a carelessly plucked leaf or nibbled berry, even a beautiful yellow flower, could be your own death knell; and gaze your fill upon the ugly, foul, festering fury that is the raging, bitter as gall and green wormwood, black and red soul of Elizabeth Boleyn, Countess of Wiltshire.

How To Maim a Metaphor

My future was decided, like a black velvet curtain being drawn over the bright sun.

How to Crush a Contrast:

blood and snow, passion and purity, fire and ice, hell and heaven, sinner and saint, conquest and surrender, whore and virgin, the red dazzle of rubies and the nacreous lustrous shimmer of pearls, innocence born from a bloody womb, the blood is the life, the cold white marble of death—a tomb effigy; red roses for the blood of martyrs.

How to Demolish Dialogue:

Anne cried, “Even dull, dirty ditch water can, under the right circumstances, cool and refresh a parched and thirsty throat or hot, flushed face!”

Meet Elizabeth: She is beautiful.

I was born beautiful, with hair black as ebony, skin white as snow, eyes bewitching and dark, lips as luscious, red, and sweet as the ripest cherries.

And as you can see, Elizabeth is more than a little full of herself. She feels the need to constantly remind us of her extreme beauty. She deserves everything good and wonderful in life because she is beautiful.

I deserved better than better; I deserved the best! How could life be so cruel and unkind to me when I was so beautiful?

Elizabeth is disappointed in her daughter Anne (the future Queen Anne). **Elizabeth contemplates killing her daughter at birth because she is so ugly.**

... it occurred to me that it really would be better, for all our sakes, if she were to die, as so many children did, in infancy. I just could not believe that something so ugly could have come out of someone so beautiful.

Because it is just criminal for a beautiful mother to have such an ugly baby.

I get it. Beauty is power. I understand the power that beauty holds, especially when you are a Tudor woman, when you are pretty much powerless on your own. Women did not hold positions of power. They rarely hold property. I understand that beauty is a weapon. But there is a difference between wielding beauty as a tool and pure shallowness. Elizabeth is shallow, she only thinks of things in terms of looks, she rarely THINKS. She is completely, utterly brainless. She does not plot, she does not scheme like other noblewomen did. Her only job is to spite her power-hungry husband by sleeping her way through the Tudor court. **Elizabeth's dreams are tied between her legs and in her tits and the lovers she can entice.** She is so utterly obsessed with her beauty. My beauty. My beauty. My beauty. Remember that phrase, it is oft-repeated throughout this book. This book is about Elizabeth and nobody else. She is so fucking full of it.

But it was only my face as perfect as I saw it in my mirror each day. He had captured every line, every nuance, flawlessly. He had actually done justice to my beauty!

Elizabeth is a neglectful mother. She rarely acknowledges her children until they are fully grown. When her adult daughter, Mary, comes to her with a crisis, instead of comforting her...

Did I comfort, love, hold, and kiss her, and assure her that I, her mother, would love her no matter what? No. I did none of those things. I changed into a fresh nightgown, massaged a little rose-scented cream into my face to keep my skin supple and soft, blew out the candle, went to bed, and slept soundly.

Yeah, there's the fucking mother of the year for you.

She's pretty when she cries.

What a strange and frightful sight I must have presented, this frenzied and crazed, weeping and wailing woman—my behavior at such a startling and sharp variance to my appearance, the epitome of courtly elegance and gracefully aging beauty arrayed in silver-braided black satin embroidered with fanciful swirls of silver acanthus leaves; ropes of pearls and a diamond collar to artfully conceal the sagging skin of my throat; diamonds on my fingers and at my breast; and a pearl-bordered black gable hood (before the veil caught, and it fell away and my silver-streaked black hair tumbled down to catch on and be torn out by the grasping thorns).

Pedophile Alert!: I think sexuality is healthy, I love lust.

But man, it's just fucking wrong for a 16-year old to be lusting about giving a 10-year old future King Henry VIII a blow job.

I imagined myself kneeling at his feet with my hair unbound and flowing over my naked breasts. Maybe he will take me over his knee and spank me, I thought. I sincerely hope so!

Did I mention Henry is 10? HE IS 10!!!!

Though only ten, Prince Henry had such a way about him.

That's just nasty, bitch.

The Other Characters: Caricatures. Laughable cartoon caricatures. Everyone is an exaggerated version of themselves. The wicked are sniveling, parsimonious villains, the good are "whey-faced," and so simple they might as well be born mentally challenged.

The beloved (to me, at least) Anne Boleyn completely lacks any sort of complexity, **Anne Boleyn is reduced to a hair-tossing cocktease.**

"I would rather remain barren than give birth to a bastard, even a royal one!" she said heatedly, tossing a black wave of hair back over her shoulder.

Anne is childish, throwing tantrums.

Anne stamped her foot and tossed her black head, slinging her long hair like a whip.

Anne is overdramatic, a flighty-headed bitch.

Anne stood straight before him, with only the banquet table between them, and, hands on hips, defiantly tossed back her braids, thrust her chin high, and proudly pronounced one emphatic word: "Beg!"

This is hardly the kind of behavior I find credible.

Fuck this book. This is truly one of the worst books, not to mention the absolute worst and most inaccurate Historical novels I have ever read in my life.

Bry Jensen says

This review and many more can be found at [Romancing The Laser Pistol](#)

The events surrounding King Henry VIII's "Great Matter" have been rehashed and retold so many times, and is so well loved by historical fiction fans everywhere that it feels as if any author with a penchant for history could sell a book on this subject and have it do rather well. However, with the *Boleyn Bride*, Brandy Purdy has shrewdly revived the well reiterated tale by placing the narrative with an extremely overlooked and oft-forgotten historical figure: Elizabeth Howard. Wife of Thomas Boleyn, mother to Anne, long serving lady in waiting to Catherine of Aragon, faded former interest of the King, Elizabeth is the perfect candidate for a refreshing perspective.

In the *Boleyn Bride*, Purdy's writing style is very much reminiscent of Phillipa Gregory, almost uncannily so. However, Purdy's writing is free from the incredibly glaring author-held biases that always taint Gregory's work for me. Certainly, there are strong images and attitudes towards significant historical figures constructed within this book, but it is evident these biases come from Elizabeth and her feelings, rather than from a writer who simply cannot remove personal lens from her material. Indeed, Elizabeth's vitriolic hatred for her husband and those who brought death to her children is constructed with sincerity.

The construction of Elizabeth is interesting, for as the actions and choices and thoughts of her life are unfurled she is not a likable individual - yet she is the one presenting her life to the reader in such a critical, jaded fashion. Does it make a character more or less likable for them to acknowledge their own avaricious, selfish, promiscuous and unbecoming behaviour? Do we condemn Elizabeth's character for her candidness about her dalliances, her lack of maternal instinct, her hatred and her snobbery? I feel not. I enjoyed her all the same!

My largest complaint about this book is its repetitiveness. I very quickly lost count of the overused phrase, "Bullen - I mean Boleyn!", which, while admittedly made a strong point of Elizabeth's ire for her husband, grew tiresome. I also found the predictability of Elizabeth's visitation to her star-crossed and oddly unfitting doll maker lover after every major event too repetitive, particularly as it added nothing to the story. Her lover, Remi, scarce had personality or insight to provide, so these visits simply became an unproductive motif.

Overall, an enjoyable read and refreshing retelling of a story heard many times, great skill as a writer, but could have benefited from less redundancy.

Samantha says

The Boleyn Bride is the story of Anne Boleyn as told through the eyes of her mother, Elizabeth Boleyn. Initially, this seemed like an interesting point of view as I could not recall ever hearing much about the mother of this doomed queen. In the tradition of Philippa Gregory and Jean Plaidy, the author manages to make this heroine(?) vain, insipid, and completely unlikable.

If you are a fan of Gregory, you will probably enjoy this book. It is the same sort of fluffy historical fiction with repetitive prose that is written by PG. The story of Henry VIII's Great Matter is successfully made boring and bland, something that must have been challenging.

Though I enjoyed seeing Anne, George, and Mary Boleyn through their mother's eyes, she was so self-absorbed and shallow that the reader hears much more about her long line of lovers than her famous children. She admits only after her children are lost to her that she failed as a mother and has lived a pointless life.

This book's most redeeming quality was the descriptions of scenery and clothing. I had no problem picturing English nobility dripping with jewels as they danced and flirted. It just wasn't enough to make up for things like sexual fantasies about 10 year old boys.

It was a quick, easy read, so if you're looking for something to give your mind a break from more substantial historical fiction this could be a fun romp through a pleasure-seeking woman's life at the Tudor court.

This book was provided to me by the publisher in return for an honest review. The opinions expressed are my own.

Heather Domin says

I'm going to give this the full treatment in my blog like I've done for all of Brandy's previous books, but let me just say that I really, REALLY enjoyed this. It's a perfect ending to her Tudor series - it kind of encapsulates a little bit of each, but it's very much its own book. The voice is great, and on a persnickety note, there are way fewer italics. :p If you are a Brandy Purdy fan, you will love this. If you're not, I think you'll dig it anyway. [full disclosure: I was given an ARC by the author in exchange for a blog review.]

Kathleen Kelly says

Elizabeth Boleyn, nee Lady Elizabeth Howard, is best known as mother to Mary, Anne and George Boleyn. She married Thomas Boleyn around 1500 and was lady-in-waiting to Elizabeth of York and then to Catherine of Aragon when they were queens. She was reportedly a beautiful woman who was free with her sexual favors. Her favorite and long term lover was Remi Jouet, a doll maker that she met as a young girl.

This book takes the reader on the journey of the Boleyn's through the reign of King Henry VIII, the rise and the fall. The author did take some liberties in regards to Elizabeth due to the fact that there is so little written about her. She came from an influential family and married 'beneath' her and her husband Thomas is

portrayed as an ambitious man who will stop at nothing to attain his goals, even to the point of not defending Anne and George when they are accused of the many made up charges. Elizabeth has always had contempt for Thomas and this just added to her hatred of her husband, even to the point of not wanting to be buried near him.

This telling of the Boleyns downfall is a different spin than any I had read before. It is always a pleasant change to read about lesser known figures in history and in particular the King's Private Matter. I love Brandy Purdy's style of writing, the descriptions of castles, gardens and other detail driven topics make for a wonderful read. A pleasure to read and I always look forward to her next book!!

I received a copy for review for a blog tour and was not monetarily compensated for my review.

Kimberly says

"The Boleyn Bride" by Brandy Purdy was right up my alley when it comes to reading and reviewing. I read every book I can get my hands on that deals with Anne Boleyn or King Henry VIII! Ms. Purdy did not disappoint. Her writing style was fluid and descriptive, and it keeps the reader interested through the entire novel. I loved reading the author's perspective on what Anne Boleyn's mother, Elizabeth Howard, was like during her life. In all of the books I've read about Anne, there has been barely a mention of her mother, since very little is known about her. Even though the author definitely used some creative license as to what she was really like, it was still interesting to read about what type of person she MIGHT have been.

While I definitely enjoyed reading the book, I would have enjoyed it more if it had been more about Anne Boleyn's mother, Elizabeth Howard, and less about Anne's rise and fall. I felt like the book was mostly Elizabeth (Anne's mother) telling the story of Anne and her brother George's life, and less about what HER life was like. Occasionally she would narrate what was going on in her life, but it mostly dealt with her multitude of lovers! Also, there were a few historical inaccuracies that threw me off, but nothing more than what any other historical fiction writer throws in.

All in all I really enjoyed reading this novel. The time period this novel takes place in interests me more than any other era. Any lover of historical fiction, especially the Tudor era, will love this novel. I would definitely recommend it.

I give "The Boleyn Bride" a 4 out of 5 stars!

TAS says

Well, there's good historical fiction and then there's, umm, THE BOLEYN BRIDE. I have three main complaints:

1. An unlikeable main character, with historical inaccuracy
2. Writing style
3. Unbelievable dialog

MAIN CHARACTER: Elizabeth Boleyn (mother of Anne) is a haughty, self-centered, pleasure-seeking woman looking back on her life. She is completely unlikeable and her regrets over past actions don't ring

true. As she relates the tale of her own life, and Anne's rise and fall, she is more concerned with her own assignations than with the fate of her children. According to Purdy, she has a doll maker as a longtime lover, though I've never read a thing linking the two of them. Deduct a point for historical inaccuracy.

WRITING STYLE: At times the book reads like soft porn.

He loved me hard and fast, rough and then exquisitely, achingly tender, and when he paused uncertainly and asked if he should withdraw without spending his seed, I grabbed his hair in two hard handfuls and yanked him back down to me and held him tight until he cried out my in ams --Elizabeth!- in a passion choked whisper. (pg. 108)

In many places, the sentences are so convoluted and/or awkwardly phrased in order to include completely unnecessary detail. Example:

As I sit upon a thorn-embraced bench that snatches like a greedy child at my already tattered black skirt and trailing mourning veils, with clinging burrs taking the place of ornamental buttons and embroidery serenely regarding my pernicious plants, sprawling in tangled, snarled, and matted masses across the graves and climbing the stone crosses and innocent fruit trees, I cannot help but marvel what a far cry it is from the neat and orderly beds of sage, fennel, mint, rosemary, thyme, basil, chamomile, dill, and rue in the walled garden behind the kitchen. (pg. 24)

I guess Purdy did a lot of research into plants and home remedies because paragraphs like the one above are everywhere. And there are way too many and equally detailed references to herbal concoctions throughout the novel.

UNBELIEVABLE DIALOG: Catharine of Aragon has a two page, one-sided dialog with Elizabeth Boleyn, in which she lays out the entire history of her 20 year marriage to Henry VIII, without a pause.

I picked this book up because I am a Tudor enthusiast and wanted to know more about Elizabeth Boleyn. But I simply didn't buy Purdy's portrayal of Elizabeth Boleyn. I cannot recommend this EVEN for the most die-hard lovers of Tudor England.

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

Scarlett O'Hara!

Sorry folks, couldn't help it. I look at this cover and my mind jumps immediately to Vivian Leigh and Max Steiner's iconic accompaniment. Probably not what the jacket artist was going for, but that's neither here nor there.

Far removed from the reconstruction of the American South, Brandy Purdy's *The Boleyn Bride* is actually a fictional chronicle of Elizabeth Howard - wife of the first Earl of Wiltshire, mother of the Marquess of Pembroke and grandmother of Queen Elizabeth I. Usually regulated to the sidelines, Purdy's latest novel turns the spotlight on Lady Boleyn, in an attempt to illuminate her oft forgotten role Henry VIII's "great matter".

Like most who read Tudor era fiction, I've seen this story a hundred times, but even so, I found the idea of

seeing it from a nontraditional point of view intensely fascinating. Historically speaking, we know very little about Anne's mother and I'd hoped Purdy's depiction would offer perspective, both on her character and that of Henry's court.

Unfortunately, Purdy's tendency to characterize Elizabeth as an outside observer left me rather underwhelmed. With rare exception she didn't feel like the lead character in this story, reading more like a Watson than a Holmes if you take my meaning. Don't get me wrong, I loved the prologue, epilogue and Elizabeth's romance with Remi Jouet, but the rest of the narrative felt much like any other novel of Anne's rise and fall.

Distanced as she is from her more illustrious relations, Elizabeth proves a fickle narrator, but her inconstant nature make her all the more difficult to understand. At times it seems Elizabeth's sole motivation is to revenge herself on Thomas, but the Boleyn patriarch spends much of the narrative absent from both her side and conscious. She claims no satisfaction in motherhood, yet is emotionally devastated at the respective fates of her children. A walking contradiction, Purdy's characterization lacked the coherency I feel necessary in a leading lady.

A light and flirtatious fiction, *The Boleyn Bride* has its moments and will certainly be appreciated by fans of Tudor era fiction, but despite the originality of Purdy's angle, I think the final product more fluff than substance.

Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says

Decent. Not bad. All I can muster up is faint praise because there's very little that is new to offer about *The Boleyn Bride*.

Andrea says

I gave up on this one after about 20% read. I slogged through the prologue – which is all the mother of Anne and George and Mary Boleyn mourning her lost children (and musing on the fun and anatomical gifts of various of HER lovers...yeah, that was odd) and obsessively nattering on about all her thorny, spiky, poisonous gardening... Yeah, this one was hella weird pretty much from the get-go. But I hung on through chapter one in case the voice or style changed at some point. Annnnnnd not so much. I quit after about 20 pages of the 16 year old Elizabeth Howard obsessing about penises and going to court so men can adore her and trying to hook up with some random artist. This dreck is terrible. End of story (for me...be smarter than me and don't even try this one).

Jenna says

This and my other reviews can be found at buildabookshelf.com Thanks to Netgalley and Kensington books for the advanced copy

Upon first appearances, one may think that *The Boleyn Bride*, would perhaps be about Anne Boleyn, the former Queen of England and definitely the most popular of all the Boleyn clan. But this isn't the case.

The prologue begins shortly after the murders of Anne and George Boleyn. It is presented from the perspective of their mother, Elizabeth Boleyn. She is furious that her own husband, as well as her brother, were participating judges when the guilty verdict was thrust upon her son and daughter, resulting in their beheading.

Although she is at close proximity to death's door and barely has any energy to speak of, she sets out to her beautiful garden, where King Henry VIII once courted Anne. She wails (practically screaming) and sobs like a "madwoman" while uprooting every single living plant that was taking up residence there. This display of intense emotion is unusual for her, grieving or not, as she has always wore the facade of the dutiful Christian wife. She absolutely does not want any of its beauty exposed or living, for that matter, while her daughter is deceased.

"Every time I looked at that garden, I could see King Henry pursuing Anne like a relentless hunter stalking a deer, a fleet-footed doe with terror in her dark brown eyes..."

She also gives the reader a peak inside her torturous marriage to Thomas Boleyn (actually it was Bullen, the last name was changed for pretentious reasons). Thomas' loyalty was not to his family, but only for King Henry VIII, as his trusting and reliable courtier. It appears that Thomas manipulates every relationship he has in order to receive the good graces of the King.

Thomas and Elizabeth Boleyn are outright enemies. To say that their marriage is a sham is undoubtedly an understatement. Their unfortunate marriage was an arrangement made by Thomas himself, her father, and her brother. As time passed, neither one of them felt a speck of affinity toward the other and it seemed that appearances were all that mattered to them both, his as having the beautiful wife and healthy children and hers being her beauty.

"I kept my end of the bargain and played my role to perfection; only once did Thomas ever have cause to complain of me...when I failed to become the King's mistress."

I found it unique to read a novel that is presented as a memoir of someone so fully conscious of their narcissism and arrogance. Normally if I don't like the main character, I would chuck the book without finishing it. Impressively, Elizabeth is presented in such a way that you sometimes overlook her terrible attributes: she's a horribly indifferent and absent mother, she is a bit too promiscuous (let's face it, she's a nymphomaniac at times), and she is so sure of herself and thinks herself to be incredibly beautiful and bewitching. Even with this horrible outlook, there is still something that pulls you in and makes you want to like her. I found myself pulling for her at times and hoping that she would change her perspective, but then she would always let me down (insert 'meh' face). I still held on curiously anticipating what took her from being a detached mother dearest, to pulling weeds out at the beginning of the book while grieving for her children, one of whom she thought of murdering when they were just a wee one.

Although the book opens with the setup for the ending, the first chapter introduces a 16-year-old Elizabeth at the height of her pride and arrogance. She was incredibly abusive to her childhood caretaker, Matilda. It seemed that poor Matilda never lived a peaceful day when in the presence of Elizabeth Boleyn.

"When Matilda tried to stop me, I turned on her, snarling like a savage beast, wielding the book I held like a weapon. I smashed her nose in with 'The English Housewife' and watched as she fell back with blood spurting from her red and flattened nose. I had broken it, but I didn't care; at that moment I had more important things on my mind."

She didn't spare her abuse only for the helpers. Her very own child, Anne, probably got an equal dose, at least of the mental abuse. And this is the one she was crying over after she was beheaded.

"Anne was the ugliest baby I had ever seen in my life. Shuddering, I thrust her from me in revulsion, slapping at the hideous wailing thing and the hands that tried to foist her onto me. "Take that hideous thing away!" I screamed. She was as ugly as my mother-in-law's monkey! I would not hold her; the thought of cradling her against my breast made me want to vomit."

I have such a hard time grasping the fact that someone would have so much disgust for their own child based mostly on her looks. As stated earlier, she went so far as wanting her dead.

"Once when Anne lay crying in her cradle and I sat beside her, contemplating her ugliness, it occurred to me that it really would be better, for all our sakes, if she were to die, as so many children did, in infancy. I just could not believe that something so ugly could have come out of someone so beautiful. I was embarrassed to have her near me and left her to the nursemaids' care whenever possible, to spare myself the pain of having others see the monstrosity I have given birth to and compare her with my other two beautiful children. I was ashamed to be Anne's mother."

With such an intense personality, it seems natural that she would fall in love with a commoner, who's personality was even keeled and somewhat shy. They would carry on a secret rendezvous that lasted a lifetime. I honestly feel, based on this novel, that it was her long time lover, Remi Jouet, that cools a little of the fire that burns inside of her (**thank goodness!**).

It's interesting to see the transformation of Elizabeth's personality along the course of her lifespan. Although she seems to always try just about any remedy to hold on to her youth and beauty, she eventually begins to accept that she will lose them both in due time. As she ages, she begins to release some of her arrogance and eventually realizes what a huge part her neglectfulness played in all of her children's lives. Unfortunately, it is her unwavering pride that won't allow her to reach out to her only surviving child, for she is too afraid of the rejection that could result in doing so. It is a relief to experience her slow change of acceptance as an unsupportive mother, but the feeling is spoiled when she ultimately lets pride hold her back from a possible relationship with Mary Boleyn. It makes me wonder if given the chance to do over with "her ugly duckling", would she actually become a better mother? I have a feeling that the answer would be 'no'.

In the end, although I was opposed to the idiosyncrasies portrayed by Elizabeth Boleyn, I had a strange affinity toward her. I will say that I am always impressed when a book can take a character with unlikeable traits and allow you to stay involved in the book in hopes that they overcome these terrible behaviors.

My only vice with this novel would be the repetitiveness of certain words and phrases. I don't know if it is just me, but I spot them easily and once they have been used more than three times (about the same thing), then it is just purely annoying. Other than that, I say this is an engaging read.

Leeanna says

This review originally appeared on my blog, Leeanna.me.

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I was drawn to **THE BOLEYN BRIDE** because while I have read many Tudor books, both fiction and non-fiction, I haven't read anything about Elizabeth Boleyn, mother to Mary, George, and Anne. So I went into this book hoping to learn about her, as well as gain an understand of who Elizabeth was.

Purdy's version of Elizabeth is not a sympathetic one. Elizabeth could aptly be described as a mean girl -- she's gorgeous, the daughter of one of the most powerful men in the land, and thinks everyone is beneath her. She expects her father will make her a good marriage, to someone with power, money, and looks. So imagine her shock when she's married off to a *merchant* and expected to be his broodmare. She flies into a rage, breaking her maid's nose.

Elizabeth never gets over her anger at being married to Thomas Boleyn. Granted, Purdy's view of him is not so nice either, and so I did feel sympathy for Elizabeth being forced to marry him and be used for nothing more than bearing his children. I also didn't mind that Elizabeth wasn't a nice woman -- she had numerous affairs and barely cared about her children until they were older and "interesting." It was refreshing to see an outspoken woman who did what she wanted, using her position and husband's absences to please herself.

My big problem with **THE BOLEYN BRIDE** was the author's style. I felt like I was a spectator, as Elizabeth recounted events as if she were writing a memoir. Also, when sentences are twenty plus words long, my eyes tend to glaze over. A few longer sentences are fine, but there were so many of them in this book. I ended up feeling that the book was double the length it actually was. Lastly ... whenever Elizabeth described her long-time lover, Remi Jouet, she called him "doughy," like newly baked bread. Um, that doesn't equate as sexy in my head.

THE BOLEYN BRIDE didn't work for me because of the author's writing style, and because after finishing, I don't feel like I really know Elizabeth at all. Once Anne comes into the picture, and Henry starts chasing after her, the book switches to their story, with a little input from Elizabeth on how she felt about her daughter marrying the king and then Anne's downfall. Basically, a standard Tudor historical fiction book.

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Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

See more of my reviews:
