



Empress of the Night: A Novel of Catherine the Great

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Catherine the Great muses on her life, her relentless battle between love and power, the country she brought into the glorious new century, and the bodies left in her wake. By the end of her life, she had accomplished more than virtually any other woman in history. She built and grew the Romanov empire, amassed a vast fortune of art and land, and controlled an unruly and conniving court. Now, in a voice both indelible and intimate, she reflects on the decisions that gained her the world and brought her enemies to their knees. And before her last breath, shadowed by the bloody French Revolution, she sets up the end game for her last political maneuver, ensuring her successor and the greater glory of Russia.

Empress of the Night: A Novel of Catherine the Great Details

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Marci - Serendipitous Readings says

stupendous!! I loved this book even more than The first book The Winter Palace!! Evocative, Inviting yourself into the world of Catherine the Great of Russia - her tireless work, her life, her struggles, the court and the cast of characters will have you unable to put the book away for even a minute until it's finished. I didn't want it to end. BRAVO EVA!!

Patricia Vocat says

Well it's my own fault for reading this book so close after The Winter Palace: A Novel of Catherine the Great, but it is far too similar and some of the charm is lost due to that. So, yeah. I would advise leave enough time between reading the two books.

Amanda Lila says

I finished Empress of the Night: A Novel of Catherine the Great yesterday, but wasn't ready to rate or write a review about it, neither did I have time to do it anyway.

My copy of this book starts with a quote written to me by my grandmother: *"When I gave you your first book, I also told you something. If you want to live a happy life, you got to read lots of books. I'm glad you remember"*. Why am I writing this? Well, to show you that I'll be good to this book, despite all the flaws it had.

When I saw what it was about, I was thrilled. I love reading about strong women in history, the great ones who changed something in the world. *Yekaterina Alexeevna*, how amazing is that?! The title, the cover, the theme... Everything had my name on it.

It took me a lot of time to read this, almost a month. So I have to say that this is one of those books you have to read fast, because if you skip one day, you might need time to focus on it again.

The writing was shallow and economical. It had really short sentences, which lead to no emotions.

The plot was boring and repetitive. This certainly wasn't the way to describe a woman as great as her. The book was focused only on her lovers, while the influence she had in arts, the politics she followed didn't get much attention or got no attention at all. In my opinion, most of her greatness was ignored.

Why are we walking?

Because we have to move.

Why?

If we stop, we die.

The last few pages were interesting. There once again we get a quick look over the characters' personalities. And they made me feel sad for finishing this book that I was eager to finish.

The living always got to say the last words.

I wouldn't recommend this for the people who are looking for a book who shows the great life and politics of Catherine, but to those who want to catch only a glimpse of it.

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

Ever since I read "The Winter Palace," I had been dying to read "Empress of the Night" so I was so excited to be able to finally get it in my hot little hands. I was definitely not disappointed in this book but if you've read "The Winter Palace," "Empress of the Night" has a completely different feeling. Catherine the Great is an absolutely fascinating historical figure and she gets an amazing treatment in this book.

This book has a vastly different flavor than "The Winter Palace." This book felt much more dream-like and while the style took me a little bit to get used to (there's a lot about Catherine's feelings and in places it almost felt like stream of consciousness type writing), but it actually really works for this book. Catherine the Great is a looming figure in history and I thought the style sort of gave a nod to that. I was utterly entranced by the writing.

You certainly don't need to have read "The Winter Palace" in order to read and enjoy this book but it can't hurt. This book focuses way more on Catherine's later life. I also thought that it was really interesting that the book focused much more on Catherine's inner feelings and not much as to what was going on with her reign. You really do get an internal view of her thoughts and feelings. I did wish that the book went into a little bit more about her actual reign and the politics of the time but I did like getting to know her a little bit better through this book. Catherine is one of my favorite historical figures (she is so absolutely fascinating to me) but there has been very little historical fiction with her at the center. This book definitely fits a great void!

Faye* says

Ich habe dieses Buch gekauft, weil mir „Der Winterpalast“ von Eva Stachniak eigentlich gut gefallen hat. Leider wurde ich von dieser (nicht so wirklichen) Fortsetzung enttäuscht.

In dem Roman geht es wieder um Katharina die Große, die dieses Mal auf ihrem Sterbebett liegt und ihr Leben Revue passieren lässt. Das und der Titel „Zarin der Nacht“ hätten mir eigentlich schon zu denken geben müssen. Leider erinnert sich die Zarin vor allem an ihre aktuellen und ehemaligen Liebhaber, dazwischen gestreut sind Erinnerungsfetzen, Halluzinationen, aufgeschnappte Gesprächsfetzen einer Frau, die nach einem Schlaganfall zwischen Bewusstsein und Ohnmacht driftet. Stachniak schreibt über Belanglosigkeiten (z.B. eine halbe Seite über Fliegen, die durch zu langes Lüften in den Salon kamen und daraufhin erschlagen wurden) und in einer unzusammenhängenden Art, die auch leider kaum Politisches abdeckt, sondern sich lieber dem Liebesleben der Kaiserin und der Erwähnung diverser Körperflüssigkeiten beschränkt.

Alles in allem war das Buch zwar nicht ganz schlecht, weil ich nach wie vor finde, dass Stachniak schreiben kann, aber trotzdem leider eine (langweilige) Enttäuschung.

TienvoorNegen says

It took me forever to finish this book! I had read the Winter Palace (which I enjoyed) and expected a similar-style-follow-up about Catherine's ruling years.

The book lacked cohesion, the facts known about her life were in there, but it felt as if they were added to a harlequin novel. The main part of the story is told in hindsight, when Catherine is old and ill. (Sure, fine) The last pages (20? 30?) are the writers fantasies and ideas of what it is like to die from a stroke and the things you muse about when that happens. (Boring, tedious, and ehm.. annoying really)
Superfluous to say I wasn't impressed.

Laura liest says

2,5 Sterne

Beth says

Have you ever read a book because that particular subject fascinates you, so you enjoy reading more than what you've already read? And then, as you are reading, the book begins to become eerily familiar - like you've read it before? This is how I felt about Empress of the Night. I love historical fiction, and Catherine the Great is such an intriguing figure that I enjoy reading about her from a variety of perspectives. Sadly, this book reminded me so much of the last book I read about Catherine (Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman) that I literally had to check a couple of times to make sure that I wasn't accidentally repeating myself. The only stark difference in what I read and what I recall reading was the interjections as Catherine appears to be suffering a stroke, and that it appeared to have more to do with her lovers and less to do with her fascinating ruling.

I suppose you can make the argument that, as an historical figure, there is little left to the imagination anymore. Not being a writer, I wouldn't know whether that could ever be true. But this just felt like a rehash of so much of what I have already read.

Having said that - the story is written well and would be a good starting point for anyone not overly familiar with Catherine and her ascent to the throne. I think it would be enjoyable for them. Unfortunately for me, it was a case of deja vu that was too strong to ignore.

Toni Osborne says

A novel of Catherine the Great book 2

Based on Catherine's memoirs, this second novel seems more of a literary novel than anything else. Its approach is quite daunting and has less of a straightforward narrative than "The Winter Palace" had. Told through a series of vignettes that shift back and forth in time the princess on her death bed recalls and reflects

on the key episodes of her reign. This complex and psychologically intense novel of a woman in charge of her destiny should have been a very captivating read....but

The pussyfoot narrative left me baffled on too many occasions to have keep my attention at bay and I had a hard time focusing on what should have been an intimately captures of history's most fascinating monarch. The flashbacks lacked coherence. The narrative was very choppy on many occasions and the prose did not flow well throughout. The whole book was a mishmash of frivolous events and Catherine's boring love affairs. I was expecting to read the greatest challenges Catherine had to face and how she positioned herself. What we have is Catherine's long stream of incomprehensible babbles for too many pages.....

This said ¾ into the book I abandoned it.....

Marie says

This book left me with a strange feeling. I have to say I struggled to finish at some point... The narration was to evasive, I would have wanted more details, and the book would have gained from a first-person point of view. The moments in which Catherine is dying were too long and it was difficult to return and connect to the main story after... The series of lovers was getting frustrating toward the end, perhaps because the author didn't really "focus" on them nor on the Empress' feelings toward them. Sometimes I wasn't even sure of what was going on...

One positive note: the moments with Catherine's grandchildren (Alexandrine, Alexander...) were adorable, but I would have wanted more!

I never read The Winter Palace but I definitely not intend to read it. Sorry...

Frau G. says

2,5 Sterne

Irgendwie war das Buch weder gut noch richtig schlecht. Die ersten 100 Seiten war es noch einmal eine Wiederholung dessen, was man im ersten Roman auch schon aus Warwaras Sicht gelesen hat.

Das Mittelstück war in Ordnung, halbwegs interessant und kurzweilig zu lesen.

Aber das Ende, wenn auch klar war, was kam und kommen musste, war wirr und ich war wirklich froh, als es endlich vorbei war.

Ich weiß, es ist von der Autorin wahrscheinlich auf Grund der Umstände so gewollt, dass das Ende so durcheinander ist, aber mich hat es unglaublich gestört.

Erin says

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

What is that old admonition? If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all?

It's a wonderful rule of thumb, but I'm afraid abiding by it would compromise my integrity as I wouldn't be

able to write much of anything and as a reviewer, well, that's kind of a problem.

This being the case, perhaps I should take comfort in knowing honesty to be the best policy.

I came to Eva Stachniak's *Empress of the Night* with high hopes. Her first Catherine novel, *The Winter Palace*, had been an interesting enough read and I was optimistic that her follow-up would outshine its predecessor. Unfortunately, when face to face with the reality, I found my confidence grossly misplaced.

In all fairness, I think the idea of an aged Catherine, reflecting on her legacy as the final moments of her life slip unceremoniously through her fingers is an interesting and creative premise, but Stachniak's narrative is so disjointed and incoherent that wading through her character's musings quickly became a first class test of endurance. After four hundred pages I should have felt connected to Catherine, but the jumbled nature of the narrative made forming any kind of attachment absolutely impossible and severely undermined the emotional impact of the novel.

To make matters worse, I think Stachniak placed emphasis on the wrong aspect of Catherine's life. Her decision to downplay the Empress' political and public personas in favor of promoting the more amorous moments of her existence was, I felt, an exceedingly poor choice. The monotony of Catherine's steady parade of paramours left me bored and disinterested in the narrative, caring more about when I'd reach the end than how the novel would conclude.

Much of my disappointment stems from being familiar with Catherine's history prior to reading this piece as I was well aware of how much was being omitted from the story, but my real concern was Stachniak's failure to bring anything new and interesting to the table in terms of characterization and theme.

Despite my initial optimism, I can't say I'd recommend *Empress of the Night* and am not sure I will be continuing with the series.

La Talpa says

Nachdem mich „Der Winterpalast“ richtig begeistern konnte habe ich mich sehr auf diesen zweiten Teil gefreut. Ich finde dieses Buch ganz gut, aber ich hatte mir ein wenig mehr erwartet.

Im Gegensatz zum Winterpalast lesen wir hier die Geschichte um den Aufstieg und die Amtszeit Katharina der Großen aus den Augen der Zarin selbst. Leider war die Erzählstruktur doch recht durcheinander mit etlichen Zeitsprüngen, so dass ich immer mal überlegen musste an welcher geschichtlichen Stelle wir uns gerade befinden. Ansonsten hat mir der eher ruhige Erzählstil aber gefallen.

Das Katharina so einige Liebhaber hatte ist nun zwar kein Geheimnis, aber dieses Thema steht doch etwas sehr im Mittelpunkt der Erzählung und andere Punkte innerpolitisch wie außenpolitisch kommen einfach zu kurz. Dafür wiederum hat man einen guten Einblick in die Familienverhältnisse der Romanows bekommen.

Ich bin doch etwas hin- und hergerissen wie ich das Buch finde, aber mehr als 3 Sterne ist es in meinen Augen nicht wert.

Cameran says

I would like to preface this review with the statement that this book is in no way a testament to the author's talent. I read the previous book in this series, *The Winter Palace*, and was very engrossed with the author's ability to convey the rise to power of Catherine the Great through the eyes of a servant who comes to be a close friend. Because that book was so well done, I was thrilled to be granted an advanced reader's copy of the book to follow. I only wish *Empress of the Night* could have lived up to the expectations.

From what I can discern, the problem with this book stems from the way in which it is structured. The story begins with Catherine as an old woman; before long, she is incapacitated on the seat of her toilet with a crushing headache, pain, and the inability to move her body. As she contemplates what to do, she continues to reflect back on her past, beginning with when she first arrived at the Russian court as Princess Sophie to be engaged to Peter III. To hear about this time in her life was almost like a refresher course for the readers who have read *The Winter Palace*. I was interested, but I was also not; and unfortunately, that sentiment continued throughout the entirety of the book.

Catherine the Great's reign was filled to the brim with personal and political intrigue, yet this book focused way too much on her reflections about past lovers. I wanted to hear more about the politics! I also wanted the story to stop feeling so disjointed, because the view of one of her attendants with a mole on his face could automatically and randomly throw her thoughts to the past. The structure of this story did not work out, and I really cannot envision people enjoying this book. If you are interested in Catherine the Great and this author, then I would recommend you read *The Winter Palace*, which covers her arrival to the Russian court to the coup against her husband to become Empress of Russia. If you want to read a book about the politics of her reign, then I'm sure you can find one as well, and if you do find a good one then please let me know.

(I received a copy of the book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. The expected publication date is March 25, 2014.)

Samantha says

From the moment I started listening to this book, I could tell that it was something unique. It was probably a novel that I would have enjoyed more in print than as an audiobook. Listening too it, I found my mind wandering and got lost in the disjointed storytelling.

Beginning with the scene of Catherine's dying moments, *Empress of the Night* has a dreamlike quality of the empress' life flashing before her eyes. Instead of a comprehensive biography, the reader is given random snippets that stand out to Catherine as her last breaths slip away. Some scenes are told in exquisite detail, while others are never mentioned. Most of the focus is on Catherine's legendary love-life.

There is some beautiful prose in this novel, but not enough of a distinct plot to keep my interest in this format.
