



At the Mercy of the Queen

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A sweeping tale of sexual seduction and intrigue at the court of Henry VIII, *At the Mercy of the Queen* is a rich and dramatic debut historical about Madge Shelton, cousin and lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn.

At the innocent age of fifteen, Lady Margaret Shelton arrives at the court of Henry VIII and quickly becomes the confidante of her cousin, Queen Anne Boleyn. But she soon finds herself drawn into the perilous web of Anne's ambition.

Desperate to hold onto the king's waning affection, Anne schemes to have him take her guileless young cousin as mistress, ensuring her husband's new paramour will owe her loyalty to the queen. But Margaret has fallen deeply in love with a handsome young courtier. She is faced with a terrible dilemma: give herself to the king and betray the love of her life or refuse to become his mistress and jeopardize the life of the her cousin, Queen Anne.

At the Mercy of the Queen Details

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From Reader Review At the Mercy of the Queen for online ebook

Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says

Read This Review & More Like It On My Blog!

"I wish I'd liked this more" were my first thoughts upon finishing, and being incredibly disappointed by, this Tudor-era historical fiction. For all its attempts to do something new within the uber-popular Tudor-prevalent historical fiction genre, this is a totally **unmemorable** effort. Perhaps "I wish this had just been better" would be closer to the mark with how I feel regarding this novel. The dialogue, the characters, the historical anachronisms -- all were just too much to handle or were just **handled wrong**. This is the story of Madge Shelton narrating the final three years of her cousin Anne Boleyn's reign as Queen of England - an intriguing and fresh approach for such a popular time and people. The anticipation of reading from a usually ignored/unknown perspective (historians aren't even sure if Margaret Shelton was one person or an amalgam of two Tudor-era courtiers named Mary and Margaret Shelton) had me eager to get my hands on this, but the actual narration and novel itself had me itching for the final page long before I hit the halfway mark.

Madge is brought to Henry VIII's Court at the young age of 15. Madge, unlike her contemporary peers and compatriots, doesn't like the decadent Court of Henry and Anne or its frivolities. I can understand why the author chose to portray Madge so uniquely among her time and place: it's easier to root for Madge before she becomes entwined in the conspiracies and gossip of the court. Her innocence is distinct and causes Madge to have a bit of notoriety attached to her name. My problem was that I just, well, didn't buy into the earlier naivete of her character. For one thing: Madge was the daughter of Anne Shelton (née Anne Boleyn), which made her the Queen's first cousin - a position to be used for much power and influence by using many courtiers/controlling access to the Queen/etc. I simply didn't buy that anyone from the grasping, upward-climbing Boleyns could be that innocent at Court, especially once under the direct ~~nefarious~~ influence of Thomas Boleyn, Lord of Wiltshire and the Queen's father.

Madge herself is a decent sort of main character, my issues with her incongruent shyness/mousiness aside. She's a bit too wide-eyed and innocent to exist in such a time, but I had no major issues with her as a character. I do find her role as Anne's confidant to stretch believability: in the worst danger of her life, the Queen is going to confess her sex life to a teenaged cousin not known intimately to her before her precarious situation? It strains credulity that Anne and Madge would be so close when Anne was beset from all sides by Seymours, Dudleys, Catholics and their hidden eyes. I also had issues with the handling of the romance with Madge's "true love" at Court. A completely fictional character is created (Arthur Brandon, supposed bastard son of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk) in order to have an additional (compelling?) plotline of forbidden love... which doesn't really work OR do much to advance the plot. Not only is their romance totally unbelievable for the times, the two don't have much spark or chemistry between them, nor a solid foundation for their "love". They see each other once, he falls in love, she resists till she just can't fight it anymore! - it's as instalove as historical fiction gets. I also have to wonder just why Madge's historical husband(s) weren't used (Sir Anthony Heveningham, or her latter husband Philip Appleyard, Esq.) and one was invented for her in this book. It was just weird, and seemed like messing with facts for nothing but kicks.

So far, reading along, you're thinking: *"This doesn't sound too bad; there's definitely a dearth of reasons why this is rated so low. What's with this chick?"* Well, here's the stuff that really irked me during my two-day read.

1. The dialogue

Stilted, awkward and unrealistic, the dialogue weighed down the narrative, the flow, the pacing, everything of *At the Mercy of the Queen*. It was just bad; the rest of the novel flowed rather well but the speech was just off-putting. I have to give the author props for "trying" to make the characters' speech authentic for 16th century English, but major demerits for how heavily it was employed. There's a fine line between a touch of authenticity and "Ye Olde Towne" clichés. Far too many "dost thou"s and an egregious amount of "Think you this" had me playing Yoda from Star Wars every time a character had a question. I also found how the characters spoke to one another to be either too obvious or too transparent. "If I don't do what the King wants I shall be in danger with no allies and then I shall have to marry dreadful, oily Henry Norris!" is pretty much how Madge expresses herself. It comes off totally false - it's an obvious way to clue the reader into the perils of action/nonaction within the Tudor Court. Characters' feelings are relayed by their speech, not by any action or "showing". At times, it's just irritating because no one talks like that, at other times it can be a bit condescending, as if the author doesn't think the readers intelligent enough to suss out the repercussion or who is who. Though the author falls short of Philippa Gregory standards, it can feel a bit irritating to be constantly reminded of things I already know or have figured out already.

2. Word anachronisms

This ties in with my above complaint about dialogue, but it bothered me enough to merit its own shiny numeral. I'm a history major obsessed with 15/16/17th century England (and Europe), so I know many of the things I find bothersome and obvious won't be noticed by and large. Some might think me pedantic for not being able to just gloss over them and enjoy the other aspects of reading. But part in parcel of my love for historical fiction is the feel of history that is created by a good one - a feel easily ruined by missteps like in this one. Errors I caught? "Zounds" - a medieval curse formed from shortening "God's wounds", but one that didn't come into the language until **1592** not **1536**. "Pimp" is also used in the novel, as in "Anne pimped out her cousin Madge to Henry VIII" - again a word first used in **1607**, not **1536**.

3. Historical inaccuracies

Along with diction and speech, actual historical fact goes a long way to establishing credibility within a historical fiction. For the most part, Barnhill does a good job with chronology, actual events and such for the duration of the book. Some parts, however, were just dead wrong. For one, the book implies that Sir Thomas Wyatt died/was executed in **1537** in the wake and as part of Anne's downfall - ignoring the actual fact that Wyatt was imprisoned, released and died in **1542** peacefully as a free, innocent man. Another error is the at-

least-twice offering to "take tea" during this time mentioned in the book. Tea wasn't introduced into England until the mid-1600's - a full *120 years after* Anne Boleyn's death. Thus Madge's offers of tea to settle Anne are just laughable. Lastly, Anne mentions the famous song "Greensleeves" as being written for her by King Henry VIII. This is just a myth - though a popular and prevalent one - and a little ~~Googling~~ research would've made that apparent to the author.

4. The title "*At the Mercy of the Queen*"

I think this title is just "off" - much as I found "*The Winter Palace: a Novel of Catherine the Great*" to be a misnomer for the contents within. The title "At the MERCY of the Queen" implies a power and influence that Anne just doesn't have in the last 3 years of her reign (aka the exact time the novel takes place during.) "Spy of the Queen" , "Envoy of the Queen" , "Sheltered Innocent Cousin of the Queen" or something along those lines would be much more indicative of the tone and events of the novel. For it is not Anne but Henry who sets the tone of everyone's actions within the novel - any power Anne accrued by his years-long pursuit has long waned before the beginning of the novel. Henry is the center of things in England, and *Anne* is at **his** mercy and whim long before her head is cleaved from her body. The only possible example of Madge being at Anne's discretion is when she is "pimped" out to service King Henry. However, had Anne said no to the scheme and been against the plan and had Henry desired Madge on his own (as is obvious and fact), the conclusion would've been same: Henry would've got his way and Madge would've been in his bed.

For all those gripes, *At the Mercy of the Queen* definitely - and easily - gets the fear and tension of this time down pat. Life, uncertainty and fear were the daily staples of life within Great Harry's Court, especially as he aged and was further disappointed. I wish Henry had more of a presence within the book - both him and his actions are usually removed from the forefront, with the focus of the novel on Anne and Madge reacting to whatever happened. If Madge had been more dynamic or Henry more involved, this might have been a more entertaining read. As it is, this is at times bland, at times frustrating and wholly unmemorable for fans of the genre. Anne Boleyn's story has been told much more intricately, much more historically correct and much more fun to read. Last word on this one: **pass**.

Alycia says

At the Mercy of the Queen gives an interesting perspective of Anne Boleyn through her cousin, Madge Shelton. Madge is pretty innocent and arrives at court for the first time and becomes a companion and confidant to her cousin, Anne. We first are introduced to Anne while she is pregnant with Elizabeth. I did not really connect with any of the characters. I did like Charles Brandon's illegitimate son, but soon found the story tedious and never picking up.

This is a book I could not get into and did not finish. My rating is based on part of the book I did read. I only recommend this one to historical fiction fans that like lighter, fluffier stories or fans who must read every thing Tudor based.

*This ARC was provided to me through NetGalley.

Rio (Lynne) says

Simply boring. I was hoping Madge's story would bring something new and refreshing to this tale we already know, but sadly it flopped. Margaret was bland, living through the Tudor clichés. The author claims to be a descendant to Madge, so I expected more. Not a romance with a non-existent son of Charles Brandon (if he has a son named Arthur, I can't find any record of him.) Nothing new, simply another author jumping on The Tudor ride. Oh and the "coz" thing, simply annoying.

Nancy Bilyeau says

Absorbing historical fiction that looks at the marriage of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII through the eyes of Anne's innocent cousin, Margaret Shelton. This novel pulls off the very challenging task of depicting Anne Boleyn as a real person with great allure and a strong personality but not a caricature of a femme fatale or an innocent victim. Margaret gets caught up in the rivalries and intrigues of a dangerous court. She is not sophisticated and rapidly gets in over her head. She is a sympathetic character while being true to the 16th century. I especially liked the details of the fashion, food, ceremonies and medical treatments. The depiction of a midwife birthing the Princess Elizabeth was excellent. This book is a treat for Tudor lovers and anyone who likes historical fiction.

chucklethescot says

Madge Shelton, cousin to Queen Anne Boleyn is chosen to serve her at Court. Shy and socially awkward, her only friends are her nurse Cate, a staunch supporter of Queen Katherine and Princess Mary, and the Court poet Thomas Wyatt. She is annoyed by the constant appearance of Arthur Brandon, bastard son of the Duke of Suffolk, but finds him useful when she fends off the unwelcome attentions of Sir Henry Norris, who is determined to marry her, and has the approval of the King. Anne promises to help Madge escape the betrothal when she delivers the King a son. Anne however soon discovers that Jane Seymour is eager to take her husband and crown, and has to ask Madge to help tempt him away from her rival.

Madge is infuriating in the beginning of the book, acting like a childish brat every time Arthur tried to be friendly. I don't understand why she had an issue with him, especially as he helped to keep her safe from the slimeball that is Henry Norris. She is unfit for Court, having had no training in how to behave or serve Anne correctly, and what either man first saw in her is a mystery! I liked snide Cate, although her outbursts about Nan Bullen in the middle of Court could have got them both into serious trouble. Anne Boleyn is a more sympathetic character in this book-a woman who loves her King and lives in a state of high anxiety over giving him the son he demands. She is constantly afraid of losing him to each love rival that comes along, especially the wily Jane Seymour. She is kind to Madge and wants to help her where possible.

Henry Norris is revolting in this version of the story. Madge makes it clear that she has no interest in him, which makes him more determined to have her, arranging a betrothal behind her back. He is happy to resort to rape and poor Madge has a few narrow escapes. Madge is gradually falling for Arthur but cannot be with him without the permission of the King, who is supporting Henry Norris. Anne is no fan of Norris but can do

nothing until she secures her place with the birth of a Prince, so when she delivers Elizabeth, Madge is in as much despair as Anne is. Jane Seymour is a very unpleasant and spiteful woman, rebuffing any attempts from Madge to be friends, and is the great seducer, determined to take Henry from Anne. It is obvious that the author prefers Anne to Jane, and I liked the way the characters were portrayed.

As Anne gets desperate to keep Jane away from Henry, she asks Madge to seduce the King as a temporary distraction, and if the King's attentions settle on Anne again through this plot, Anne will find a way to let Madge marry Arthur. Arthur is horrified by the plan but agrees to stand by Madge no matter what, in the hope that they can be together. Having the fictional romance of the couple running alongside Anne's gradual fall from grace was interesting, and the second half of the book was much better than the start.

This was a decent Tudor novel which had a slightly different view of Anne Boleyn's reign. It was nice to see Madge as the star as I liked her character in the Tudors TV series! A good choice for fans of Anne Boleyn.

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

Okay guys, now before you shake your head and say something along the lines of "Not the Tudors again," just listen. I myself have been suffering from Tudor fatigue myself and while this does not mean that I'm at the point where I will not read anymore books about Henry the VIII myself (I love it still but some of the books have been a little... well... blah). If you are feeling that way at all, let *At the Mercy of the Queen* remind you why so many of my fellow historical fiction fans fell in love with the Tudor court (myself included) in the first place! Seriously! This book has everything we loved and so much more!

At The Mercy of the Queen packs a punch with the intrigue and secretiveness of the Tudor court. There's also a great cast of characters. Madge Shelton is a little naive when she first comes to court but she very quickly catches on to what she needs to do in order to rise to the top of the court. And of course, she has a little help from the infamous Anne Boleyn, who just happens to be Madge Shelton's cousin. While Anne Boleyn has been at the focus of a great many books recently, I never get tired of reading about her. I especially like Barnhill's portrayal of her in the book. I think you really get a good sense of how meticulous Anne had to be in order to try to hold on to the throne as long as she could. You can almost see the wheels turning in her head throughout the book. I love it.

Another thing that I loved is that the author is actually related to Madge Shelton, the main character. I thought that was really, really cool. Madge herself is another great character. Madge's transformation from naive girl to a lady of the court. It was so fun following that journey!

This is definitely a book that I enjoyed savoring in order to fully enjoy the grandeur of the time. Ah, this was a great book to just get lost in!

Heather says

Wow!! I have just finished *At The Mercy of the Queen: A Novel of Anne Boleyn*. It was such a delightful book. I love how Anne Boleyn was portrayed in this book....more like the Anne I had pictured in my mind. Lady Margaret Shelton is such a wonderful character in this book. She seemed like a perfect lady in waiting for Queen Anne. She was delightful.....someone that you wanted to follow in the book...to see how things

would end. I have read a few books on Anne Boleyn and wondered whether another one would keep my interest. Well I can tell you that this book is very well written and after I read a few pages..... I knew that this was my kind of book.

Anne Clinard Barnhill has a way with words. I could just picture the scenes from Hampton Court in my mind.....which was awesome, as I have once been there myself. I almost felt like I was there, back in Tudor times!! Her book kept me entranced from start to finish, not wanting to put the book down. As well, I can't wait for another book...and look forward to hearing that her next book is ready to be launched.

Natalie Grueninger says

At the Mercy of the Queen by Anne Barnhill is the story of Anne Boleyn told through the eyes of her young cousin, Madge Shelton. Madge arrives at court as a lady-in-waiting to Queen Anne Boleyn but is unfamiliar with the machinations of the Tudor court and relies heavily on the guidance of her mistress.

Madge soon becomes one of Anne's most trusted confidantes and privy to the queen's innermost thoughts and feelings. While striving to help Anne keep the love of her king – sacrificing much in the process – she finds herself desperately trying to fend off the unwanted passes of a very sly Sir Henry Norris.

As the king's love for Anne fades, Madge's love for the Duke of Suffolk's illegitimate son, Arthur Brandon, intensifies. Although we know how the story ends for Anne and Henry, Madge and Arthur's fate is uncertain and I found myself eagerly wishing for a happy ending.

Barnhill has done a wonderful job of weaving fact and fiction and for the most part, has stuck to the facts but where history falls silent, Barnhill has employed a certain amount of artistic license. The result, in my opinion, is a fresh view of these well-worn characters and a highly engaging and absorbing story.

I turned the last page feeling like I had seen another side to Anne, a much more human side. I was also left with a desire to learn more about Barnhill's young heroine. Who was the real Madge Shelton?

At the Mercy of the Queen is a tale of love, loyalty and friendship and a must read for fans of historical fiction and romance alike.

<http://www.onthetudortrail.com>

Jenny Q says

I wanted to have some good things to say about this debut, but 250 pages in I couldn't go any further, and most of the good points I'd been noting for my review were rapidly disappearing. I was very excited to get my hands on a novel about Madge Shelton, a Boleyn cousin and brief mistress to Henry VIII. I think the Tudors are overdone, but a fresh angle on them always catches my attention. Unfortunately, this is really another novel about Anne Boleyn. There is absolutely nothing new here, and Anne and Henry are depicted in such over-dramatic fashion that they don't even seem real. Little is known about Madge (compared to her cousins), so I would think a fictional account of her life would give an author many opportunities for dramatic license, but Barnhill's Madge has zero personality and floats through life doing whatever she's told

to do. Nothing seems to phase her, nothing seems to concern her, even when she is asked to give up the handsome young man she loves to become old, fat Henry's mistress, she acquiesces easily. So there doesn't seem to be any real conflict for her. The author has a good grasp on historical detail, but it wasn't enough to lift me past some painfully cheesy dialogue, a whimpy, wispy heroine, and a slow-moving story.

Misfit says

Although the *catch* of telling Anne Boleyn's tale from a lesser known cousin who was rumored to be one of Henry's mistresses is an interesting one, the writing and historical details are not enough to hold it together and I have yielded at the halfway mark. Historical details aside, the biggest problem this book has is the writing itself. I am smart enough to pick up on the fact that Henry is King and Anne is Queen and don't need it shoved down my throat as it is here. Example (quote from ARC):

"The King, the Queen, and Lady Margaret found a private corner and the King indicated for Madge to be seated on a cushion at the Queen's feet."

I found the very heavy handed (and annoying) attempt at period dialog by making everyone speak in *Ye Olde English*, very distracting and completely pulled me out of the story itself. Zounds! is now my new catchword.

Frankly I just didn't find anything new here, just another Tudor rehash of stuff we already know from reading all those other Tudor books, and by the time I quit Anne was still crying and moaning over her lost babies and Madge the faithful cousin there to comfort her. I would have preferred a book about Madge as in Henry's mistress to begin closer to that, and then fill in the back history. Especially since we all know that back history.

Rick F. says

"A sweeping tale of sexual seduction and intrigue at the court of Henry VIII, *At the Mercy of the Queen* is a rich and dramatic debut historical about Madge Shelton, cousin and lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn."

With the many Historical fiction books written about Anne Boleyn and her times...comes another- so very original and well written!! *At the Mercy of the Queen: A Novel of Anne Boleyn* by Anne Clinard Barnhill has earned a place at the top of historical novels of the era. Anne Clinard Barnhill has created a very lively and intriguing character in Madge Shelton, a relative and lady in waiting to the Great Anne. The true skill of Anne Clinard Barnhill is in writing so fine a novel, involving so strong a presence as Anne, yet guiding the reader to view the actions through another set of eyes, those belonging to Madge Shelton. Madge is key to the novel and a superb literary achievement!

A JAMES MASON COMMUNITY BOOK CLUB MUST READ

RICK FRIEDMAN

FOUNDER

THE JAMES MASON COMMUNITY BOOK CLUB

Elizabeth says

i will give the author a plethora of credit for the historical accuracy, between actual events and the basics of the time period. beyond that, this was a horrible story. it was a good idea, writing from madge shelton's perspective, particularly as the author is a descendent. however, the plot line is the typical imagined tudor court life, the anne boleyn saga was written twenty times better by many other authors, the writing itself was choppy, and the characters are hardly anything exciting when they had been larger than life in their time period. i pride myself on the ability to read each book through to the end, whether i like it or not. for the first time ever, i couldn't bring myself to read beyond page 100 of this book. i absolutely could not make a connection to this novel, other than a vast dislike.

Marie Z. Johansen says

I was intrigued by the prospect of reading this book because it presents the oft told story of the rise and fall of Anne Boleyn from another perspective - that of her cousin and maid-of-honor, and confidant, Madge (Margaret) Shelton I wondered if there was really another angle that would be compelling enough to make for a good read.

By my 5 star rating you can tell that I found that the book really did offer a fresh, new view. Madge Shelton was in a very unique position in the Court of Henry VIII.

Arriving from from the country as a young girl, Madge was innocent of the vagaries and morals of Court life. Her nickname at Court quickly becomes "Pretty Madge" and the reader follows her story as she rebuffs the admiring courtiers and soon becomes Anne Boleyn's closest confidant and champion.

Madge becomes swept along in the story of Anne's determination to be wife of King Henry and, later of Anne's desperate attempts to fulfill her royal duty of filling the royal nursery with male heirs - as her predecessor, Katherine of Aragon had failed to do - a failure that led the Country through religious wars and the dismantling of the monasteries.

As Anne's desperation for a son becomes the only focus of her life she hatches a plan to lure the King into an affair with Madge's; proffering her beauty and charms as bait in order to keep the King from courting the King's current paramour, the milk faced Jane Seymour. Not long before Anne devises this plan to have Madge lure the King into an affair Madge herself has succumbed to lure of love - falling in love with a handsome, well placed Courtier named Charles Brandon who Madge initially called 'Sir Churlish'.

As the story turns towards the final downfall of Anne Boleyn Charles exhorts Madge to leave with him so that they can be married and stay away from the increasing dangers of the Court. Madge's love and commitment to Anne force her to remain with Anne until the hour. Did Madge wait too long? Did she lose the love of her life by remaining true to Queen Anne?

This book is well written and well paced. The plethora of factual historical references keeps the flavor of the time - allowing the reader 'feel' as though they can 'smell' and 'be' in the book as a participant. The fact that Ms Barnhill can take a secondary historical note and create such a riveting story from it is surely testimony

to her skill as a writer. This is her first book - and I am looking forward to more !

Colleen Turner says

Really 3.5 stars. I reviewed this book for www.luxuryreading.com.

When Margaret “Madge” Shelton’s first cousin, Anne Boleyn, marries Henry VIII, their family’s prospects begin to rise on the tide of the King’s affections. Madge is sent to court as a lady in waiting to the new queen in hopes of helping Anne keep her balance on the precarious throne until she can give the king a son and heir, at which time Anne and her family’s influence over the king will be secure. As she works to serve the queen to the best of her abilities, Madge finds herself keeping two suitors at bay: one is Henry Norris, a conceited, lecherous man who has worked his friendship with the king to become betrothed, against her wishes, to Madge; the other is Arthur Brandon, bastard son of the Duke of Suffolk, a man below her station and one the king and her family would never approve her to marry. She soon finds she cannot fight her feelings for Arthur any longer and they both long to find a way to be together.

While Madge is discovering young love, good King Henry’s affection for his queen has begun to waiver. Anne knows she must do something drastic to renew Henry’s passion for her, allowing her the time and means to have a son. When the King begins to look elsewhere to satisfy his desires, Anne asks Madge to make the ultimate sacrifice: to seduce the king and become his mistress while also working to turn him back to his wife. She also promises that, if Madge can accomplish this, she will use her influence with the King to break Madge’s betrothal to Norris, leaving her open to seek a marriage elsewhere.

Does Madge’s affection for the Queen and her wish to marry Arthur overpower the sin of adultery? And what guarantee does she have that the Queen will be able to accomplish what she says?

As Anne continues to fall out of favor with the King more is put on the line than Madge’s marriage prospects. The very lives of the Queen and everyone supporting her, including Madge and her friends, is threatened and the various factions of the court must brace themselves to see which way the King’s favor, and destruction, will turn.

Anne Clinard Barnhill, author of *At the Mercy of the Queen*, breathes new life into the much told story of Henry VIII and his second wife by presenting it from a fresh new perspective. This story is heavily pro-Anne and presents her as kind, pious and concerned for the welfare of her English subjects, even as they fail to love her. While the writing makes it effortless to immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the court, I found the relationship between Arthur and Madge hard to become invested in, especially given how the book ends. Adding him to the storyline seemed unnecessary at times and appears to be one of the main ways the author veered from true history.

That being said, I enjoyed seeing the court from a more minor character’s perspective and experiencing the quick shifts, from the glorious highs to the perilous lows, that one experienced in this court of vipers.

Caeseria says

When I first picked this up the glowing reviews made it sound very interesting. How wrong I was! I was

bored within the first few chapters and it was hard work to keep going. The characters are very one dimensional with no motivation, other than to showcase the story of Anne Boleyn. Speech has been taken word-for-word from historical documents which got old very quickly. I'm not sure the author has actually read any modern reference books on the subject; her views are very much the typical Victorian view on Henry VIII and his court.

I could probably forgive all that if the author hadn't started using fanfiction epithets like "orbs" for eyes, it was very jarring and threw me out of the story because I was laughing so hard. (For instance I didn't expect to find "Madge looked into Anne's brown-black orbs.")

I hate to put something down so hard, but really if you are going to read this, borrow it from the library and do not waste your money on it.
