



## The Pleasure Palace

*Kate Emerson*

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## **The Pleasure Palace** Kate Emerson

Beautiful. Seductive. Innocent. Jane Popyncourt was brought to the court as a child to be ward of the king and a companion to his daughters -- the princesses Margaret and Mary.

With no money of her own, Jane could not hope for a powerful marriage, or perhaps even marriage at all. But as she grows into a lovely young woman, she still receives flattering attention from the virile young men flocking to serve the handsome new king, Henry VIII, who has recently married Catherine of Aragon.

Then a dashing French prisoner of war, cousin to the king of France, is brought to London, and Jane finds she cannot help giving some of her heart -- and more -- to a man she can never marry. But the Tudor court is filled with dangers as well as seductions, and there are mysteries surrounding Jane's birth that have made her deadly enemies.

Can she cultivate her beauty and her amorous wiles to guide her along a perilous path and bring her at last to happiness? Basing her gripping tale on the life of the real Jane Popyncourt, gifted author Kate Emerson brings the Tudor monarchs, their family, and their courtiers to brilliant life in this vibrant new novel.

## **The Pleasure Palace Details**

Date : Published February 3rd 2009 by Pocket (first published January 22nd 2009)

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Author : Kate Emerson

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## From Reader Review The Pleasure Palace for online ebook

### Kristy says

When I bought this I was afraid of it; I was scared of what the title "The Pleasure Palace" would infer into this book. I thought it was going to be littered with erotica. I was afraid it would be all sex and no story. I also thought it was going to deal with "the tudors", as in the encore show, as in Anne Boelyn and Jane Seymour, etc....

Wrong on pretty much all accounts. There was hardly any sex in this one at all and the scenes included were very short and left much for you to fill in for yourself. This book had a good story-line and plot.

It was actually about a french girl named Jeanne, or Jane as she would be known to the English Court. Jane and her Mother fled to England in a frantic rush when she was only an 8 year old child. For reasons unknown to us or our young heroine, she is allowed to become part of the royal nursery. She is neither treated as good as family nor as poorly as a servant. She is just Jane. She is brought up in wealth and privilege, but has close to nothing to call her own. Her Mother dies, leaving her with all these questions of why they had to leave their home, or why the King has taken her in. Jane lives pretty much her whole life full of questions and the feeling of someone breathing down her neck. Our story unfolds itself to answer Janes Questions and to reveal the truth of who she is.

Not exactly a book that took my breath away, but still a lovely story. I want to read the next book in this series. I would recommend this to those of you who enjoy historical fiction, but maybe are tired of the more used story of Henry the 8th and all of his many lovers.

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### Anne says

Like The Other Boleyn Girl this book gives the reader a glimpse of life in the Tudor court from the imagined prospective of a minor figure in history. Although we know very little about Jane, we do know that she was a witness to an era that continues to fascinate people nearly five hundred years later. Henry VIII and his court changed the way governments work and the relationship between church and state.

This book gives the readers a glimpse of what it might have been like to have been both an insider and an outsider at the same time during the latter part of Henry VII and early part of Henry VIII's reigns. It also gives a view of relationships within the Tudor family and its court.

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### Elysium says

2.5 stars

After the king of France dies, Jane's mother flees to England where her twin brother lives in the court of King Henry VII. Jane is taken as a ward by Henry VII and to be raised with the royal children. She is just settling down to the new life when her uncle tells her the news of her mother's death.

As an adult Jane serves princess Mary when her life takes a turn when French prisoner comes to court with his bastard half-brother who happens to be Jane's childhood friend. Now that her friend is in England Jane sees opportunity to search answers about what happened to her mother.

When I think about this book the first word come to mind are meh and boring. Not necessarily a good thing... Author has clearly done lot of research and it shows in the book but it fails to make it any more interesting. I didn't much care for the heroine and couldn't understand many of her decisions. I was starting to nod off until about half way through it got somewhat interesting. I have to admit taking a peek and reading some scenes between Jane and Guy and it's the only thing that got me through the whole thing.

I didn't understand the reason why Jane and her mother had to leave France or why would it be such a big deal. I mean that was kinda common thing at the time. And why would it make Margaret Beaufort hate her mother so much. Shouldn't Elizabeth of York be more mad about it?

I just doesn't seem to have much to say about this and in the end all I can say is that is was okay.

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### **Elena says**

Jane Popyncourt is a name that sometimes pops up in Tudor biographies. She was a french woman who arrived at the English Court to teach french to Mary and Margaret Tudor, daughters of Henry VII. She probably had a brief affair with Henry VIII, and was also the notorious mistress of the duke de Longueville. Apart from that, little else is known about Jane, and this gives Emerson vast possibilities to develop her story.

*The Pleasure Palace* is heavy on the fluffy side: its attention is primarily on Jane and does not waste much time on important historical events. However, it is also historically accurate: its strongest point is, in fact, its rich, detailed and accurate setting. Emerson fully explores what it meant being a courtier at the English Court: descriptions of the masques, tournaments and festivities are meticulous and engrossing. I have read many Tudors novels, but most of them tend to focus mostly on the characters' relationships and present only a vague setting. Emerson's novel, instead, truly succeeds in bringing the Tudor Court to life.

Another remarkable, original characteristic of the book is that it features, even if as secondary characters, historical figures who are usually not much used in historical fiction: for example Henry VIII's companions and friends, and also fascinating women like Princess Mary, Bessie Blount and Catherine Gordon.

What the novel sadly lacks is a strong and absorbing plot. The story follows Jane's life, and mostly revolves around her love stories and the mystery surrounding her family (Jane and her mother had to flee from France when she was a child, and her mother died shortly after arriving in England). However, nothing much happens in the whole book: the mystery is easily guessable, and it is so lightly featured in the story that it was difficult to become involved in it. In fact, Jane starts to wonder about her mother's secrets only after she meets again with a childhood friend, many years after she fled from France. I found highly unbelievable that she had not thought about her mother for such a long time. Even after she decides to discover the truth, her investigation is slow, difficult and not at all satisfactory.

As for Jane's relationships with men, I liked how Emerson explained the rumours about her affair with Henry VIII, and I was pleasantly surprised that she did not idealize her affair with the duke of Longueville. As for her relationship with Guy, (view spoiler)

In the end, *The Pleasure Palace* is worth a try because of its beautiful setting and of its focus on less known historical figures, but I would not recommend it if you like a plot with many twists and turns. I am not sure if I will continue with the series: after all, this book was an enjoyable experience, but I am not really intrigued by the next books' premises.

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### **Tanzanite says**

Actually, 2.5 stars (average). Overall, a light fluffy read with an interesting storyline that failed to live up to its potential. Few facts are known about the real Jane Popyncourt, giving the author quite a bit of creative latitude which she fails to take advantage of. The big mystery as to why Jane and her mother left France was weak and not very interesting. Since the author admits to making it up, it really could have been so much more spectacular.

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### **Haley says**

(4.5) I was REALLY reluctant to not give this 5 stars, but I'm trying to not be such a softie on the ratings. The flow stalled occasionally and it's a bit of a slow start but it is most definitely worth the read if you fit into my recommended to section.

I've read a fair amount of Tudor history novels, and also check out that section in Barnes and Noble/Borders, and I've got say, this is probably the most original premise, the most original heroine, I've read or heard of concerning the genre.

Jane Popyncourt was a real person, but one who not much was recorded about- perfect for a novelist, up to interpretation yet with more boundaries than any old fictional character. There are many unknowns in the record kept of her- why was she, out of all the eligible fluent French girls, chosen to tutor Margaret, Mary, and Henry Tudor when she had no exceptional status? Why did King Louis XII forbid his betrothed, Mary, to take her with her, saying she should be "burnt"? Why did she receive 100 pounds from Henry VIII to leave for France?

All these questions are answered in stunning, luxurious prose.

Would reccomend to fans of historical-fiction or tudor history, fans of Alison Weir or Philippa Gregory.

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### **Kathy Davie says**

The first in the historical fiction series, *Secrets of the Tudor Court*, *Pleasure Palace* takes place through the eyes of Jeanne/Jane Popyncourt from age 8 through 26 in the last 11 years of Henry VII and the first 7 years of Henry VIII.

Jane has a particularly up close and personal view of the court as she immediately is assigned to the Royal Nursery to speak French with the young Tudors, primarily the Princesses Margaret and Mary forming a part of Mary's court when Margaret marries James IV of Scotland.

I very much enjoyed reading this story as Emerson does a very nice job of incorporating English history and conveying the lifestyle of the Tudors and their court. I don't really *see* the point of the story except to show

off Emerson's historical knowledge. Yes, there's a mystery as to why Jane and her mother were treated as they were but it's more of a mention than any real concern.

Emerson also writes of the tension of living at the whim of princes and the machinations of greedy courtiers but fails to make the reader feel any danger to anyone let alone Jane. The story itself is a flat line from day to day. The only reaction one has when Jane decides to take the duc de Longueville as a lover is "what, is she stupid?"

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### **Beverly Diehl says**

3.5 stars. I love Tudor history, real or fictionalized, so I was sure I would love this book. Instead I liked it, a lot. The main character, Jane Popyncourt, was a real historical figure at the Tudor courts of Henry VII and Henry VIII, and not a whole lot is known about her.

I loved plunging into that era, and the details are rich and evocative. But it felt like it (the book) didn't quite know what it wanted to be. There was romance, but that wasn't the main thread; what I found did not work for me was the thread where Jane is in danger because of some secret in her past - and was her mother murdered over it? In a normal thriller, things happen bang-bang-bang, the characters go to the place to find the clue in a matter of days, if not hours. The tension seeps out when the character goes to the place months, or years later, and then for the next clue, several years later. I still liked the book, and it was clearly very deeply researched, and has a satisfying ending, but the thriller angle didn't work for me.

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### **Orsolya says**

I read this book relatively recently (okay, within the past year) and can't remember much about it aside from the name of the main character and that I looked her up on the internet after reading the book. That says something, right? I do remember liking it but obviously not a standout novel. Please note: I actually have a strikingly good memory.

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### **Annie says**

This Tudor England, historical/fiction novel was one of the better ones I've read, but if I could give all writers looking to write one of these a piece of advice from the reader: Make them shorter! For heaven's sake! We don't need to cover someone's entire life to get the idea of what's going on! "The Pleasure Palace" (by the way, the name is no good. Everyone thought I was reading a Harlequin Romance Novel!) is better than a lot of other one's I read, but it spanned nearly 30 years! At some point, stop talking...

Anyway...

I really did enjoy this book! The characters were vivid and I actually learned a lot! They weren't joking when they said that Kate Emerson is an expert on all things Tudor England - she really does! Little tidbits here and there were really fun and the attention to court etiquette and speech were very well done and flowed very well. Better than most, but still not the enthralling novel I'm looking for.

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## **Jori Richardson says**

From beginning to end, this was a fluffy book that made for painful reading.

It is the story of Jane Popyncourt, who flees 1500's France to England with her mother at a young age. There, she does her best to blend into the royal court of King Henry VIII.

I was bored by the hollow characters here, especially Jane herself. Her thoughts seemed so wooden and scripted.

The writing was abrupt and hurried through, certain things struck me as a bit too unrealistic, and there were a few plot points that were never really tied up.

The basis of the story, which has Jane's mother fleeing her country, is never fully explained.

For a few chapters, Jane spends a great deal of pages coming up with an involved, elaborate plan to get the king alone in order to speak with him privately. However, this never made much sense to me because Jane seems to have a good relationship with the king, and sees him as often as she wishes. Surely she could simply ask to speak to him privately, or lower her voice? But no. Instead, she hatches a scheme to pretend-seduce the king, culminating in his being in his bedroom with her and about to undress her (is that alone enough?). At this moment, Jane tells him that actually, there will be no sex. In fact, quite the opposite - she wants him to do a favor for her. Considering the fact that Henry VIII was known for being so lusty and prone to tantrums (not to mention being a man), I found it very suspicious that he accepts this bewildering changing of the tides with little more than a twinge of disappointment. And to make everything even worse, Jane's secret request isn't even secretive. It wouldn't have mattered if she had asked the King in public after all. The whole thing was ridiculous.

The above paragraph is simply one example of writing that often made no sense. A smaller thing would be that Jane recognizes her brother immediately after not seeing him since she was 9 (I cannot remember how old she was at the time, but most likely around 20), and doesn't even make that big of a deal of their reunion. Jane is always being described as innocent and good and child-like, though she does take a lover, which would almost certainly have lost her these titles in her day and age. The King himself calls her "child" when she is in her 30's, and not as a pet name. Um...

I was annoyed at Jane constantly referring to her romantic interest, Guy, as if it was the first time the reader was hearing of him. Hundreds of pages after we first meet Guy, she is still saying "I saw his brother, Guy..." or "I say a young man named Guy Dunois walking by..." Alright, we know who he is now!

I cannot think of anything I enjoyed about this poorly written book.

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## **Heather says**

Author Kate Emerson has picked the Tudor Court during Henry the VIII's reign as the setting for her novel "Secrets of the Tudor Court: The Pleasure Palace." I absolutely adore historical fiction (former "Dear America" junkie here) so the premise for this book was quite appealing. However, this book is an example of the good idea that's needs better execution (perhaps on the guillotine, non?).

For starters, Emerson could have tried harder not to give away the love interest of her main gal Jane Popyncourt on page 2 of the book. As soon as I read about the young girl's love for her friend (including the

poetic description of the color of his eyes -- can you guess who it is?) it became obvious that he would be Jane's happily ever after.

Further features of the book that irked me were Emerson's repetitive recaps. Jane would experience something (for example, the flight from France with her mother), and then later in the book describe it to the reader as if the reader hadn't been through said experience WITH Jane earlier in the novel. It made the book read as if it were written for a young adult audience suffering from ADHD.

My final complaint regarding the novel is that I always felt like I was two steps ahead of Jane in discovering the so-called secrets of the Tudor court. As Jane expressed her shock in the discovery of her lineage, all I could think was "Duh! You're just now figuring that out?"

Overall, the novel was predictable and there wasn't really anything special about Jane. The piece of the book that I found redeemable was it's view of Henry VIII as a child and young king, before he became infamous for beheading his wives. Emerson brought a new part of his character to life that I hadn't previously considered and deepened the complexity of Henry's character. A lighthearted read with some intrigue, "Secrets of the Tudor Court" is definitely worth a look, but don't expect to be dazzled by brilliant plot twists.

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### **Angela says**

The Pleasure Palace was a fast-paced Tudor romance with dashes of mystery and a great dose of scandal that cannot be a Tudor historical without. The Pleasure Palace is a fictional account of the life of Jane Poppycourt, friend of Mary Tudor, King Henry VIII's sister. Transforming a woman with little historical evidence, Kate Emerson creates a wonderfully imagined, yet believable story behind the woman who sent letters to Mary.

Jane Poppycourt is a young girl when she and her mother move to England from France for mysterious reasons that her mother is not willing to divulge. Finding herself in a new land, forced to learn a different language and customs, not to mention fitting in with the royal children of England, Jane gains powerful connections that last when she matures as a teenager, and finally in her twenties. During her stay at the Tudor court, Jane learns of the love, scandal and passion that all possess deep in their hearts.

Honestly, The Pleasure Palace is not an extraordinary Tudor historical fiction. There is the notoriety that all novels possess, but lacks in the description department. Much of the descriptions are omitted or extremely brief, which forces the reader to imagine much of the court themselves, which is difficult for people who do not read Tudor fiction often, such as me.

There is also the ridiculousness of Jane. Jane is one of those heroines who you want to slap often for her unrealistic, not to mention pathetic decision making. It is understandable that she is human, therefore she is bound to make mistakes. However, Jane has this innocence, which takes the blame for her errors, that is impossible to find in such a setting as Tudor court. The book mentions her learning of sexual intercourse and other things that a woman is bound to already know at such an old age. It is indeed unfortunate that Jane does not.

The romantic feel of The Pleasure Palace is also lacking. There is not passion, or real passion, in fact. Scenes between Jane and her love interest are rare and few in between until the end. The whole plot, in fact, is anti-

climatic. No real exciting events are portrayed in this account of Jane Poppycourt. Love between Jane and "He Who Shall Not Be Named" seems paltry in comparison to the other ones who are supposedly obscured in favor of Jane's love, but are truly not. Those passionate relationships are so much more vivid and colorful.

The Pleasure Palace is definitely not a genius of historical fiction. The writing is well done, so I must give the author some credit, despite the dry, choppy story line.

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### **Bookish Ally says**

2.75 wavering stars.

I found a historical inaccuracy and that, in itself, would have been a huge mark against it. I love the premise of Jane Popincourt but found this book to be a fluffy piece about a woman without a lot of personal dignity. I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone but the most casual reader of historical fiction.

I am removing everything by this author from my list to read. I do not mean that as scathing. It would be a good first book for someone to read about this era. I just mean that her style is not a match for me.

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### **Misfit says**

(3.5) Emerson's first book in what I believe is going to be a series set during the Tudor period is based upon Jane Popyncourt, a member of the Tudor Court and of whom very little is known, giving the author more leeway to craft her tale. When the French King dies mysteriously Jane's mother flees to England with her daughter and seeks shelter with her twin brother at Henry VII's court. Jane is taken to Eltham to be raised with the royal children and after the mysterious death of her mother she is made a ward of Henry VII and raised in the royal household with Henry and his two sisters Margaret and Mary.

As an adult Jane serves the Princess Mary, although her life takes a bit of a turn when a highly born French prisoner of war takes an interest in her - an interest that Henry VIII encourages hoping for a state secret or two. As Jane begins to hope for happiness with the one man who loves her, her search for the answers to her mother's death and the reason for the mad flight from France spins Jane into a perilous situation with life-threatening consequences.

I greatly appreciated the time and effort the author put into her research - she especially did a great job with the details of life in the Tudor Court, the clothes, the food, the tournaments, Henry and his mistresses, etc. and the author was able to do that without making me feel like I was being clubbed over the head with the minute details. I liked the fact that the author gives you the family trees of the English and French Nobility of the period, along with a who's who in the back of the book. Jane was an enjoyable, albeit a bit too spunky and independent heroine, but in the end the big mystery fell just a tad bit flat for me. Why anyone would consider the big mystery such a threat that they would want bump people off just stretched the believability factor. A very easy breezy read - light and entertaining but one that's not likely to stick with you long after its finished.

