



Three Maids for a Crown

Ella March Chase

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In the second novel from Ella March Chase, we meet sixteen-year-old Jane Grey, a quiet and obedient young lady destined to become the shortest reigning English monarch. Her beautiful middle sister Katherine Grey charms all the right people--until loyalties shift. And finally Lady Mary Grey, a dwarf with a twisted spine whose goal is simply to protect people she loves--but at a terrible cost.

In an age in which begetting sons was all that mattered and queens rose and fell on the sex of their child, these three girls with royal Tudor blood lived under the dangerous whims of parents with a passion for gambling. The stakes they would wager: their daughters' lives against rampant ambition.

Three Maids for a Crown Details

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Author : Ella March Chase

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From Reader Review *Three Maids for a Crown* for online ebook

Kim says

I approached this book a bit warily, considering I was quite underwhelmed by her previous book, *The Virgin Queen's Daughter*. I ended up being pleasantly surprised by Chase's rendition of the story of the Grey sisters.

I loved how each of the three sisters, from saintly Jane to vivacious Katherine to underestimated Mary, all grew throughout one of the most turbulent time periods of the Tudor era. The notorious Henry VIII may have been dead, but the chaos he unleashed upon England still held sway, and it rained down on all three of these young women. Jane took up a crown that was thrust upon her by ambitious parents and in-laws, Kat lost both of the men she loved as well as one of her sons, and after a lifetime of avoiding happiness, Mary gained it only to have it snatched away after a tragically brief moment in time.

I loved how Jane's anti-Catholic stance softened a little bit in her final days when she found kindness in the priest that Queen Mary sent to convince her to convert. Jane may have refused his request, but still nonetheless began to see that Catholics aren't necessarily evil, superstitious wretches. This man, her theoretical enemy in terms of theology, stayed with her when all those who *should* have been at her side had long abandoned her.

Kat was probably my least favorite of the three sisters throughout most of the book. Consistently selfish, she tended to focus only on her own troubles, even being cruel to her younger sister and arguing with Queen Elizabeth to the point of blatant stupidity. It wasn't until after she had given birth to her sons that I felt that she had begun to grow and I actually came to like her as a character. I loved that she finally looked beyond her own needs and became a devoted mother, even when she was forced to give up her eldest son.

Mary, I think, was perhaps my favorite of all three of the Grey girls. She struggled with being the ugly duckling for so long, and took refuge in being 'the practical one', as it were, and struggled against the continuous blows she suffered throughout her life. She too though found someone to love and cherish and who loved her in return.

In the end, I loved Kat and Mary's standing up up to Elizabeth by holding onto the people they loved. I don't usually care for Elizabeth being portrayed by a raging bitch, but her treatment of the two Grey girls was hardly her best moment, as Chase points out in her author's note. In those early years of her reign, before she flowered into Gloriana and defeated the Spanish Armada, she was constantly in danger, and it showed in her personality.

Overall, an excellent story about the three ladies of Tudor blood that receive scant attention in comparison to their contemporaries such as Elizabeth I, Mary I, and Mary Queen of Scots. A much better effort on Chase's part, and I loved it.

Kati Bowditch says

This was a FirstReads win!

I absolutely fell into this book when it came, dove headfirst into the story of the three sisters Grey and didn't

come up for air again until I was done. I love historical novels that come about history from a different perspective. Since not much was ever recorded of the Grey sisters thoughts and emotions surrounding the reign of Lady Jane and the years after except for pieces of letters preserved, I thought the author did a wonderful job of trying to "think" like a woman of those times and bringing them to life.

I still think that Lady Jane wasn't as innocent of what was going on as portrayed in this take on things, but her family most certainly did manipulate her into a situation that quite simply led to her demise, as well as their own. She would have been helpless to prevent her own family for using her against their own advancement and desire of control of the crown. The echoes of that action reverberated throughout her sisters life and one follows the book almost wishing, just once, that a magic wand could be waved and history rewritten in the amazing job the characters do to bring you right into how it might have felt to be thrust into situations beyond control and beyond imagining nowadays.

A wonderful read, would most certainly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys that period of time.

Beatrix says

This book is just wonderful. It broke my heart so many times while reading it. Three Maids for a Crown is not just a historical novel, it has so many emotions in it, it touched me and made me feel so much for the Grey sisters.

It's so beautifully written too. I liked the style, it's very fitting. Very often in historical novels, authors are so occupied with events that they leave their characters undeveloped. But here E. M. Chase brought to life these historical figures. Even with three different point of views you can feel the difference between the sisters. Each of them had a unique personality. Never before in a historical novel I could relate so much, I felt like I knew Jane, Katherine and Mary, I sympathized with their misfortune, sorrows, betrayals and grief.

There's something very poetic when in historical novels there's a message, a theme that can pass on us. Something universal, about human destiny, only set some centuries ago. That is why I enjoy reading historical fiction, that is why it is my favorite genre – to find that message, that something... Because we don't read historical novels simply to learn about the past, but to learn about ourselves too.

~Tudor dynasty is very interesting to me and I enjoy finding and reading books about them. Of all Tudor monarchs Lady Jane Grey is the one I knew least about, so I'm happy that with this book I learned little more of her.

Hilary says

Many Brits may vaguely remember Lady Jane Grey: she was Queen for 9 days in the 16th century (after the death of Henry VIII and before the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth) and beheaded at the tender age of 16, but that's about it for the most part. Those who studied history may remember some of the turmoil of that time, the religious tension and strife, the political weathervane of some families desperate to either stay in power or stay alive.

I studied history but didn't remember that Jane had sisters. This is their story, the story of the three Grey sisters whose Tudor blood drew them into the battle for the crown of England, and in these ages the sisters live, speak, hope and love. Old history becomes real tragic loss as we feel with them the love, trust, fear and betrayal.

Was there no one in our world who would stand loyal? To a child? To a queen? To a wife? A religion? A cause? Was everyone like grass blades in the wind, blown this way, then another? Willing to sell themselves for royal favor, personal gain, or merely to hold on to wealth, position, their lives?

Technically none of this is "spoilers", because it's historical fact, but if your history is rusty then don't click! (view spoiler)

Emily Blake says

First off, I am required to inform you that I won this in a Goodread's Giveaway. That will not affect my review.

This is actually a pretty good book. I'm a huge fan of Queen Elizabeth. I like adore her. So to have Ella March Chase write her as really a really mean person, that was very interesting for me. I think Ella March Chase had a great story line, and wrote it well. What really drives me crazy in historical fiction from this era is that back then they spoke a lot more eloquently than we do now, and I just don't understand why authors use words like "don't" and "can't" and "haven't" in their book. There was not a single word like that in this book. And I know that that is kind of a random thing to say, but it makes it realistic when authors try to write how people *really* would speak back then. (view spoiler)

Orsolya says

You may be familiar with the “Nine Days Queen”, Jane Grey; but how much do you know about the lives of her sisters, Katherine and Mary? Ella March Chase explores these doomed sisters in her historical fiction novel, *Three Maids for a Crown*.

Initially, I was slightly worried by Chase's novel due to some historical fiction fluff and inaccuracies on the early pages. For instance, one of the characters in the novel is Bess of Hardwick; whom is placed as a lady-in-waiting to Frances Brandon. The storyline in *Three Maids for a Crown* begins in 1553 and the Grey sisters are already addressing her as “Bess of Hardwick” by title. However, Hardwick Hall wasn't built until 1590-1597 so she was not deemed by this title yet. Plus, she DID marry her second husband (William Cavendish) in 1547 at the Grey Family home but never before had I heard her mentioned as a lady-in-waiting. Granted, I may be wrong. Despite this preliminary trepidation, the pace of the story is strong with an enticing ratio of intrigue and fact, although sometimes too predictable.

Three Maids for a Crown is voiced by each of the three Grey sisters with the strongest voice given to the youngest Mary (generally known as humpback or dwarf); while the voices of Jane and Katherine strengthened later-on. Mary successfully carries the novel with emotion, depth, and an unmistakable connection to the reader. Jane's sections were somewhat flat, but I actually liked her on the back burner and

allowing Mary and Katherine to have the spotlight.

Another positive factor is the chronological setting of the story, as it begins in the middle of the drama of the Grey sisters with the double wedding of Jane to Guildford Dudley and Katherine to Henry Herbert. Thus, instant suspense ensues which captures the reader to the topic regardless of whether you are an expert on the Grey sisters or new to the subject. Surprisingly (in a good way), the novel assembles more momentum and strength as the story progresses. It turned into quite the page-turner. While not a complex story, the reader still itches to know what will happen next.

Sadly, several cataclysmic events (the moment Jane found out she was queen, when Jane had to make the decision to dispatch troops against Mary Tudor, her preparations for her execution, etc); were somewhat glossed over and could have deemed more insight into her underlying emotions and purpose. Although it was implied that they were religious causes, this was hardly explored. In fact, the entire story felt slightly constrained like Chase was on a word count restriction.

An odd moment? One of the chapters began in summer 1558 as Katherine was 17 but the subsequent chapter began with Katherine being, “nearly 18 years old” in the “spring of 1558”. Hmm? Another factoid that avid Tudor readers will notice as an error: the novel mentions Chapuys as the Imperial Ambassador and his being fond of Katherine... in 1559. Yet, Chapuys retired from court in 1545 and died in 1556. These aren’t major issues or detrimental to the story but I don’t understand if Chase merely gave up fact-checking at this point to truly thought it was actuality. I found this to be bothersome.

A positive story point was the portrayal of Elizabeth I. Chase went beyond the typical pedestal ideal of Elizabeth generally perceived. Chase instead described Elizabeth as scheming, vain, and hypocritical. On a personal note, I also enjoyed that the controversy over Amy Robsart’s death was mentioned (wife of Robert Dudley); because this is a story I have always been fascinated by.

Three Maids for a Crown is fresh, vibrant, and moving throughout; although, the last chapter was too fluffy and “happily ever after” which didn’t fit with the story. Overall, it is a rather interesting and appealing (but simple) historical fiction novel. Also, make sure to read the afterword for some juicy tidbits.

Vanessa says

I can't believe I'm saying this but I have decided to quit this book after 200 pages. I loved, loved, LOVED Ella March Chase's first novel "The Virgin Queen's Daughter" and was really looking forward to her second book. I mean, I had "Three Maids for a Crown" pre-ordered months ago!!!

I found it hard to connect to the story or the characters right from the start. The story of Jane Grey and her sisters is an interesting one - and one that can make for a great book as proved by Alison Weir a few years ago with her novel "Innocent Traitor".

Unfortunately, "Three Maids for a Crown" was just really, really boring. The style of writing itself wasn't bad, but the author chose to tell the story in a dry, uninteresting way. My mind kept wandering off and I constantly had to re-read paragraphs because I couldn't concentrate on the story (never a good sign!).

I also found the constantly changing narratives (Jane, Mary, Katherine) very confusing at first - I kept

thinking "Wait, who's telling the story right now?" and going back to the beginning of chapters to check - although that got better after a while.

Still, as much as I wanted to love this book - I just didn't. Hopefully her next book will be better again ...

Melanie Coombes says

This is a really good read, whether you are a fan of historical fiction or not. I had heard of the story of Lady Jane Grey, but I never knew she had two sisters, Kat and Mary. The three sisters were all threats to the throne due to their royal blood and the scheming plans of their parents to place them on the throne.

What I really liked was that it was told from the three perspectives of each sister. Sections were labeled with their name, location and their age at the time. It was pretty amazing to know that the events in the story really took place. Jane, Kat and Mary all had tragedy and sorrow in their life just because of their royal blood and the feelings of unrest from the people over the Queen Mary and later, the Queen Elizabeth. So for most of the sister's lives, prominent figures wanted them to rule over the other queens.

I also was glad to see the Author's Note at the end of the book where the author gave us a follow-up on how things ended. She also wrote that she only changed the story in one section and how the majority of the book was taken from historical facts with character embellishment.

I would definitely recommend this book. I won this as part of the Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

Beatrice says

Tiem, kam patika Filipas Gregorijas grāmatas, domāju, patiks arī šī, ne tikai Tjēdoru valdīšanas laika, bet arī skaisto aprakstu, notikumu, cilvēku raksturu atainojuma dēļ. Ēoti patika, kā tika aprakstīti katra varoņa raksturs - stiprums un vājības puses. Urī, neviens netika pataisīti par svēto! Reāli cilvēki - katrs ar savām vājībām. Pēc izlasīšanas uzņemas tās melnholisks noskaņojums, jo ja tie padomā, tad tagad cilvēkiem dzīvot ir daudz vieglāk, var gan iet savu ceļu, gan sekot "pasaules uzspiestajiem standartiem". Kā parasti apbrīnoju tie laika sievietes, kas uzdrīkstējās būt tādās, kādas viņas ir, kaut arī tas nemaz nebija viegli. Protams, vienmēr žēl, ka cilvēka individuālitate un vēlmes netiek ņemtas vērā, jo citi visu zina labāk. Pavadīju dažas skaistas stundas pilnīgi atslēdzoties no darba, neizdarītajiem darbiem mājās un visa cita.

Read It Forward says

So many RIFers loved The Virgin Queen's Daughter, and with good reason! Ella March Chase is brilliant at digging up that little-known historical nugget and building a page-turning novel around it, full of richly-realized characters. Fans of the Tudors will love this book.

Stacie (MagicOfBooks) says

I got this book from the Goodreads free book giveaways, and I was so excited to get this particular book because the Tudor era is a favorite subject of mine and the story of Lady Jane Grey is a story that I'm not entirely familiar with since her life has never been fully delved into in literature.

The book overall was fantastic! I already knew a lot about Henry VIII and Mary Tudor and Elizabeth Tudor, so it was nice to get the events in between their reigns filled in (though poor Edward is neglected in this book as he always is in any book about the Tudors and they always go straight into Mary's reign).

Ella March Chase does an amazing job of giving each of the three sisters (Jane, Kat, and Mary) individual personalities. Jane is very reserved, Kat is self-centered, and Mary is always looking out for both her older sisters and feels herself the freak of the family because of her hunched back. All three girls change by the end of the book into the type of women they want to be, rather than others (especially men) telling them who they ought to be.

An element of the book that I was surprised by was the fact that Chase had Jane Grey's death occur pretty much right at the halfway point of the novel. I knew Jane was to die, but I figured like all books (like Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard), that Jane's death wouldn't occur until near the end. So I was basically like, "so what is going to happen now?" But once I was finished with the book, I really appreciated Chase's use of plotting Jane's death at the halfway point because her death figured heavily with the plots of Kat and Mary who still remained shaken and horrified by her death, and both who felt resentment to Mary Tudor and then Elizabeth who both felt threatened by the two remaining Grey sisters because of everything that had happened to Jane since she did become queen for a few days. Jane's death is paramount in shaping Kat and Mary into the women they become later.

So overall, if you're a fan of Tudor related fiction, I think you'd enjoy this, especially if you want to read something new that has nothing to do with Anne Boleyn or Katherine Howard or Elizabeth Tudor who have been vastly overused in the last several years. The story of the Grey sisters is a breath of fresh air.

Christy English says

This is a beautiful, well-written novel. Lyrical prose telling the stories of the three Grey sisters. Not just the doomed Lady Jane, but her sisters Kat and Mary as well. A wonderful book.

chucklethescot says

This was an excellent Tudor novel, telling the story of the three Grey sisters—Jane, Kat and Mary, covering the reign of Edward, Mary and Elizabeth Tudor. The book has also been published under the title 'The Nine Day Queen' by the same author. I know that because I bought BOTH thinking they were different novels (totally different covers and blurbs!) and wasn't very happy when I found out.

This book was fascinating and intriguing. The book is written from the changing POVs of the three sisters. I don't usually like this as a plot device but because the sisters are so different in personality, the switching POV works perfectly to tell their stories.

The story starts with the double wedding. Jane is the quiet, studious girl who wants to be left to her studies and her fanatical Protestant views. She despises the man that has been chosen for her husband, son of the scheming Duke who plots them to become King and Queen after Edward's death. Kat is the flighty, vain girl who is in love with her rich and handsome young husband-to-be and is worried that Jane's tantrums will ruin the joint wedding. Mary struggles to be accepted by a family and society who are uncomfortable with her

deformity, and she forms a friendship with Mary Tudor who knows exactly what it means to be an outsider. Mary is also very good at hiding and spying to find out what her father and the Duke are plotting.

The book tells the story of the power struggle between The Duke's forces proclaiming Jane to be the Queen chosen by Edward on his deathbed, and the rightful heir Mary Tudor as stated in the will of Henry VIII, supported by the common people. Having the views of the three sisters as Jane was overthrown and imprisoned by Queen Mary was quite exciting to read. There was a lot about the plotting of the Duke, and a very interesting sub-plot where Mary discovers the plot to have Mary Tudor arrested and sends her a warning to flee to safety, unaware that this will lead to Jane being deposed and arrested. The guilt that both Mary's carry forward from what happens to Jane puts Queen Mary in a whole new light. I felt sorry for her character in this book-forced to kill Jane or lose her final chance to be happy with her Spanish husband, forced to break her promise to the Grey sisters that Jane would be spared. It was quite sad in places.

Naturally, the plot focuses on Kat and Mary after their sister is executed. Both are given places at Court by Queen Mary, but all three fear the plots surrounding Elizabeth Tudor which could put them all in grave danger. We see the decline of Mary's health and her husband's infidelity against the backdrop of Wyatt's rebellion and upheaval in the Grey family. Queen Mary wants to name Kat as her heir which fills Mary with fear for her sister if Elizabeth has to fight for her rightful throne.

On the death of Queen Mary, Elizabeth takes the throne and wastes no time in gaining her revenge on the Grey family for the plots against the Tudor sisters. Kat and Mary both find love at Court but as Elizabeth cannot marry her love Robert Dudley, she refuses to let other women in her service find a man and children to make them happy. Queen Elizabeth is a scary and nasty woman in this book, and the atmosphere at Court must have been horrible as everyone tried to stay on the right side of the vain woman with the bad temper! Kat and Mary choose to defy their Queen and marry in secret but there are terrible consequences for them.

The book is exciting with lots of Tudor intrigue, tension, scary and sad parts. I liked this different version of the reign of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth doing a role reversal to show Mary as the misunderstood woman and Elizabeth as the tyrant. She darn well scared me and I was safe in my room!!! My favourite of the sisters was Mary-she was smart, witty and resourceful and had a lot to put up with in her life, most of which was unhappy. I really wept for her as she finally finds a good man only for the evil Queen to spoil it for her.

I recommend this book to Tudor fans as it has everything you could want-drama, plotting, death, forbidden romance and great characters.

Sheila says

To begin with, I'm required to let everyone know that I received this book for free in a giveaway from the publisher. That being said, it still would not affect my review.

This is the story of the three Grey sisters, Jane, Katherine, and Mary, princesses of the royal Tudor family. Their great-uncle was Henry VIII, their cousins Queen Mary Tudor and Queen Elizabeth I, their mother Frances Grey daughter of Henry VIII's younger sister Mary, Queen of France. The story opens with a prologue set in 1574; then backtracks to open the story in 1553, with the narrative shifting from sister to

sister for their differing viewpoints. At the beginning of the story the girls are aged: Jane 15, Katherine 12, and Mary 8. The story goes from there, telling of their parents' plotting and ambitions and how they used their daughters as political pawns to gain the throne of England. Lady Jane, as most people realize, was Queen of England for 9 days; many months later, she was beheaded by Queen Mary Tudor. The story weaves together historical events along with what the author believes would be the girls' perceptions. The life of these three girls was tragic, with Katherine and Mary and those they loved, suffering at the hands of Elizabeth I.

I read this book in just over three days, as I started it right before I went to bed the first night. It is a compelling story and very well written. It appears that the author has done her research well, and I enjoyed it. Toward the end, I really could not put it down for long, as I wanted to know how it would end for Katherine and Mary, as I really didn't know that much about Katherine and nothing about Mary when I started reading. I was saddened, but not disappointed. I can recommend this book without any reservations.

I have been interested in the Tudors decades before it was fashionable to do so, that being with the advent of The Tudors on HBO (a show that is gorgeous to watch but a bit of a disaster as far as facts are concerned). I remember watching the BBC's The Six Wives of Henry VIII on Masterpiece Theatre in the late 1970's. I was hooked. I've read a lot about various family members and still find it interesting to do so. I've been to Hampton Court Palace, Windsor Castle, and London among other places and am disappointed when other authors don't fully utilize different locations the way they should be in telling the full story of the Tudors. That being said, I think the characterizations and locations in this book were believable.

One note about the characterizations of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth: it was interesting to see Queen Mary portrayed as being so kind and thoughtful and Queen Elizabeth as being SO awful. The author describes Elizabeth as vengeful and vain; I would add another "v": vile.

One thing I would add: I believe there is a typo at the top of page 279, line 1. It reads "William" Herbert and I think it should read "Henry" Herbert.

All in all an enjoyable read!

Lolly's Library says

Though Chase has taken some liberties with historical record (which she acknowledges in an author's note at the rear of the book), unless you're familiar with this period of Tudor history, the changes go unnoticed in her deftly plotted and compelling narrative.

I have always been fascinated by Lady Jane Grey--young, innocent, a defenseless pawn used grievously by her parents and the Duke of Northumberland, yet, despite that, a surprisingly resolute and determined young woman--but have always overlooked her sisters. Despite knowing that they existed, beyond that, there was never much mention of them in the history books I read; I don't know if that's due to a lack of information or a lack of interest on the part of the authors, but as a result, they've remained ciphers. **Three Maids for a Crown** changes that: Chase has not only given Jane a voice, but brought to life her sisters, the lively and beautiful Katherine and the loyal, perspicacious little hunchbacked Mary. In this way, not only is Jane's, ultimately tragic, navigation through the treacherous waters of Tudor politics illuminated, her sisters' lives, fraught with just as much danger and intrigue, have been brought out of the shadows of history where they've languished for too long. Though a fictional portrayal, Chase's book is still a worthy introduction to these two

ladies and perhaps her interpretation of their lives will serve to drum up more interest in them; for my part, I would truly love to know more about the real Katherine and Mary Grey.

Beginning in the declining years of sickly King Edward VI's rule, the book covers his (painful and possibly prematurely hastened) death, the sham of Jane's nine days rule as Queen of England, the reign of lonely Queen Mary ("the Bloody"), to the triumphant rise of Queen Elizabeth. Through it all, Chase skillfully illustrates the dangers of those uncertain times, where loyalties could change in an hour and one's firmest supporter could suddenly become the most implacable enemy; where every gesture, every glance, every letter and whispered conversation was dissected and examined for the smallest sign of deception or betrayal; where the simplest word took on a dozen different meanings on the whim of who spoke and who heard. Because we are seeing the personages/events of the time through the eyes of the sisters Grey, we get a viewpoint of history colored by their personal biases, whether or not those biases reflect the truth. Thus we see Elizabeth, an enemy and an obstacle in the Grey and Dudley families' quest for the throne, portrayed as a wretched bastard, simpering, vain, and sanctimonious; the usurping whore born of witchcraft and lechery. Queen Mary is a sad, desperate, more sympathetic queen, a woman who is seen as broken from all the misfortunes heaped upon her, delusional in her quest to find love, defeated and spiritless, lacking the Tudor fire in her blood. While I understand why the bias existed, after a while it become rather heavy-handed; because these viewpoints are skewed, we never get to see the other side of the picture. Was Elizabeth vain, capricious, and cruel? Yes. Did she treat Katherine and Mary Grey abominably? By all accounts, most definitely. However, Elizabeth's moods and actions, especially in the early years of her reign, were almost certainly influenced by the fear she felt on what was probably a daily basis, exacerbating her already mercurial nature; she not only had to deal with uprisings and opposition from forces outside her realm, she was beset by traitorous forces within both her realm and even her court, opponents who constantly harped upon her bastard status, her female sex, her unfitness to wear the crown. As far as Mary, was she treated ill by the men in her life, from her father, King Henry VIII, who repudiated her as his true heir, to her husband, Prince Philip, who ignored her and used her and England as simply a supply depot and a bank? Hell yes. Did she go against her conscious and her deeply-held beliefs, against the spirit of her dear mother, Queen Katherine, who fought to retain Mary's right to the crown, and publicly proclaim herself to be a bastard in order to win her father's approval and affection, an act which she regretted the remainder of her life and which was the final straw in the sapping of her spirit? Sadly, yes. Yet, tired though she may have been when she finally came to the throne, pathetically eager for her cold husband's love and a child to quicken her womb, she was also her father's daughter; she discovered the throne gave her the power to redress some of those wrongs visited on her and she redressed those wrongs with a vengeance, turning hers into a reign of terror. Both of these women were far from perfect; both had their good qualities and their bad, yet because of the method of storytelling, it's easy to get the wrong idea about them. That's the point of my rant, by the way, the hope that people will recognize that firstly, this is fiction, and secondly, it's fiction told from a very personal, very biased viewpoint and not take it as gospel truth. There are two sides (if not more) to every story. As humans, we turn a blind eye to the faults of those we love and find every fault, real and imagined, in those we hate; such is the case with the Grey sisters, as Chase has written them.

The only real quibble I have with the book is, it's very romanticized. Jane is portrayed as being much softer than she truly was. Don't get me wrong, in the novel she's still prim, highly religious, serious, and scholarly. But she's also more vulnerable and more emotional. For instance, when the time comes for Jane's execution, she clings to Richard Feckenham, Abbot of Westminster, whom Queen Mary sent to offer Jane a reprieve in exchange for her conversion to Catholicism; in the novel, Jane asks the abbot to stay with her as she walks to the scaffold, her fear suddenly overwhelming her so near to the end. In reality, Jane was...well, to be frank, she was a prig. She was dogmatic, rigidly unyielding towards that which did not conform to her standards, and fervent in her belief that Catholicism was the root of all evil in the world. In her last days, she calmly accepted her fate and was even rather anticipating her release. "I am ready and glad to end my woeful days,"

she said. And although she warmed to Feckenham, who treated her with more affection than she'd ever received from her own parents, she steadfastly refused to budge from her philosophical stance and her Protestant religion. It was Feckenham who, knowing he'd failed in his attempts to save her life, asked if he might accompany her to her execution. It's a little thing, but that difference highlights how Chase portrayed Jane and how Jane actually was. As for the other sisters, even though little is known about them, it's likely that Katherine was more flighty and vain, probably with quite a bit more of her mother's personality in her than portrayed, and Mary probably wasn't quite the inscrutable little oracle she's painted to be. Granted, her hunchbacked nature shunted her to the sidelines of life, allowing her to see and hear things from her marginal position that others might not, but that still doesn't mean she was some kind of Delphic prognosticator, imbued with magnificent foresight and wisdom. However, as I've stated again and again in this review, this is a fictional account, which means that certain liberties can and will be taken.

In the end, everything I've mentioned as being quibble-worthy is tiny in comparison to the fantastic story Chase has told; her ability to weave together a tension-filled narrative and multiple character voices is enchanting. She sweeps the reader away into a world where, if you're not constantly on your toes, you're in danger of losing your head.
