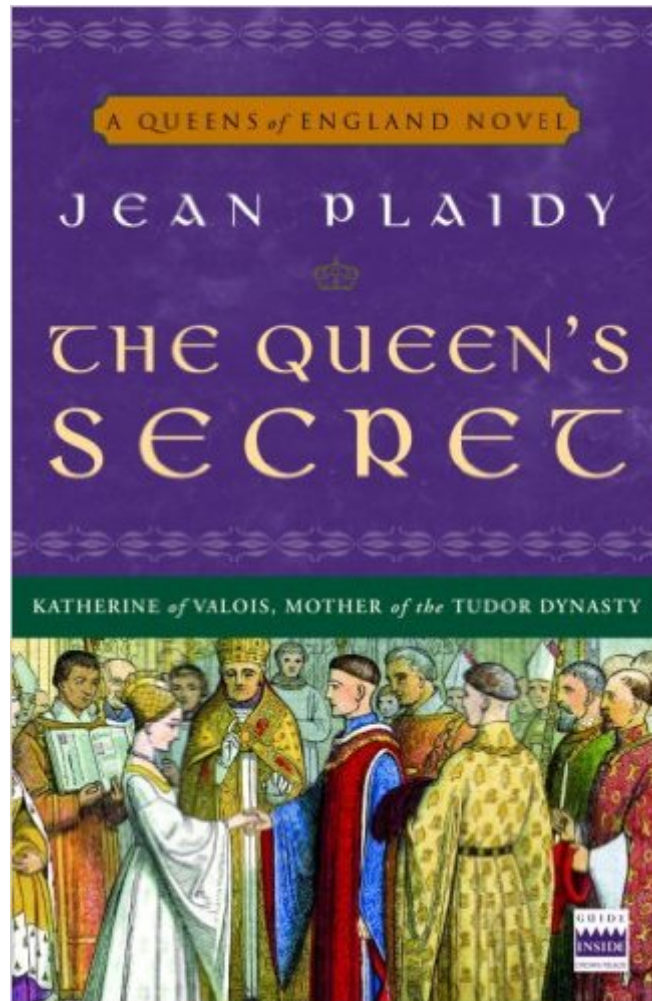


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The Queen's Secret: A Novel (A Queens Of England Novel)



Synopsis

Katherine of Valois was born a princess, the daughter of King Charles VI of France. But by the time Katherine was old enough to know him, her father had come to be called "Charles the Mad," given to unpredictable fits of insanity. The young princess lived a secluded life, awaiting her father's sane moments and suffering through the mad ones, as her mother took up with her uncle and their futures became more and more uncertain. Katherine's fortunes appeared to be changing when, at nineteen, she was married to King Henry V of England. Within two years, she gave birth to an heir but her happiness was fleeting. Soon after the birth of her son, she lost her husband to an illness. With Joan of Arc inciting the French to overthrow English rule, Katherine's loyalty to her adopted homeland of England became a matter of intense suspicion. Katherine had brought her dowry and borne her heir; what use was she to England? It was decreed that she would live out her remaining years alone, far from the seat of power. But no one, not even Katherine herself, could have anticipated that she would fall in love with and secretly marry one of her guardians, Owen Tudor or that a generation later, their grandson would become the first king of the great Tudor dynasty.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the seventh book in the Queens of England series by the author, a masterful storyteller, who is also known as Victoria Holt to her fans. It is a well written novel of historical fiction that tells the little known story of Katherine of Valois. She was a French Princess, daughter of King Charles VI,

the gentle, but mad, King of France, and Queen Isabeau, an evil, self-absorbed libertine, who cared little for her children. After the famous battle of Agincourt in which King Henry V of England vanquished France, Katherine found herself married to this warrior king and living in England. She was to become the mother of King Henry VI of England. Shortly after their son's birth, King Henry V died a premature death. Young Queen Katherine saw their son Henry taken from her to be raised by others. Retiring to the countryside, she fell in love with a Welsh squire, Owen Tudor, who had faithfully served King Henry V, and now served Katherine as part of her household. Theirs was to be an illicit love, carried out in secret, as the alternative was to be the recipient of charges of treason. Try as they might, no amount of secrecy could prevent the vicissitudes of life from raining down upon their happiness. Political intrigue would serve to bring their illicit love to light. It would act as the catalyst for a turning point in history. What happened to Katherine and Owen would give rise in the future to the house of Tudor, one of the greatest dynasties ever to rule England. The book grounds their love story in the context of the period, which saw England as the conqueror of France. It covers that turbulent time in history that saw Joan of Arc rise from the remote French countryside to ensure the crowning of the Dauphin of France as its rightful King. It is a spellbinding account of the struggles between England and France and those who would rule these two countries. It is a book that will be enjoyed by all those with a fondness for well written, historical fiction.

There are many great love stories in the history of English royalty, but this is by far the most touching. From a wretched childhood, she is forced by her scheming mother Queen Isabeau to marry the conqueror of France. However, she grows to love her adopted country of England. When King Henry V dies, her son, Henry VI, is taken from her. But she finds true happiness with Owen Tudor, her Welsh servant, and they marry and raise a family in secret. They live in fear of discovery by those who think her children by Tudor might seek the throne. She died not knowing that her enemies' fears were justified, for she gave rise to the glorious House of Tudor, which produced Henry VIII, "Bloody" Mary, Mary Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I.

Jean Plaidy is well known for her lengthy and ambitious historical series about the queens of England, by dynasty. *The Queen's Secret* depicts the life of Katherine of Valois, daughter to the mentally unstable Charles VI of France, and queen of both England and France after her marriage to British King Henry V. Katherine has had a sheltered, somewhat impoverished upbringing, as a younger child receiving little attention from her scheming, powerful, and dissolute mother. Love of any sort has been notably absent from her young life. She thinks she has found it in Henry, and is sorely

grieved when he dies a short time after the death of their first child. She is also subject to the whims and directives of her brothers-in-law, particularly those of the jealous Gloucester. Katherine, now Queen Mother, experiences a wondrous, joyful surprise when she and Welsh soldier Owen Tudor fall in love - the real thing this time. And that is the Queen's secret, for Gloucester has pushed a bill through parliament forbidding the remarriage of the queen. Within this plot, Jean Plaidy follows Katherine, from the queen's own perspective, from childhood to almost middle age. This is a relatively quiet novel, with momentous events, such as the mission and death of Joan of Arc, described from afar. Katherine directly participates in few of the whirlwind of changes that swirl around her and determine the course of her life, so it is also a "talky" book, sometimes too repetitive as Katherine mulls over her situation. But along the way, Plaidy makes some pertinent observations about the nature of power and its influence on those who do and do not wield it, most tellingly in her portrayal of Henry's brothers and Katherine's mother. She also clarifies the numerous personal and political complications that ultimately prepare the ground for the rise of the Tudor dynasty. What *The Queen's Secret* lacks in excitement it makes up for in its well researched detail.

The Queen's Secret is about Katherine of Valois, queen to Henry V and secret wife of Owen Tudor. Katherine tells her story in the first person, beginning with her miserable, insecure childhood in France with her mentally ill father and her corrupt mother and ending with her forcible separation from the love of her life, Owen Tudor. Plaidy's depiction of Katherine's childhood and its effects on her as a woman gives her a certain psychological depth, and though Katherine is ultimately helpless to prevent her fate, she preserves a certain dignity and strength about her that keeps her in the reader's sympathies. Plaidy also is good at conveying the mixed feelings that Katherine has as a French princess married to an English king, a situation that makes her position in both countries difficult. I did find the structure here--it's one of those novels where the narrator looks back upon her life as she prepares for death--a bit limiting. Although we know from history what was to become of Owen Tudor and Katherine's children after her death, the novel leaves their stories unresolved, so there's still a sense of being left hanging when the novel ends. From what I've read after reading this novel, little is known about how the relationship of Owen Tudor and Katherine came about. I thought that Plaidy's version of it was plausible and that Katherine's willingness to risk all for love showed an appealing, and believable, reckless streak in her character. All in all, a worthy addition to your Plaidy shelf, either in this spanking new version or in one of the older ones.

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