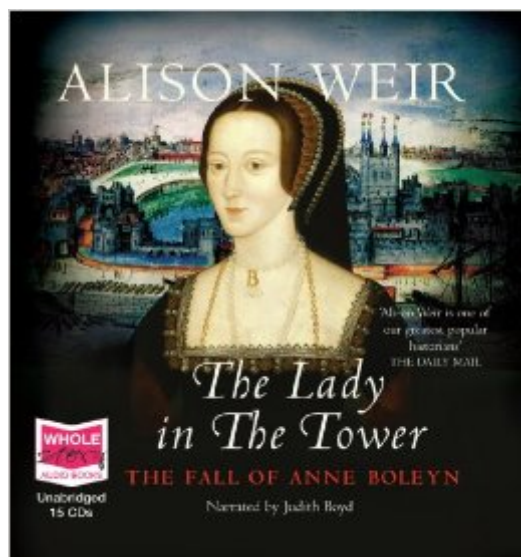


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The Lady In The Tower: The Fall Of Anne Boleyn



Synopsis

The imprisonment and execution of Queen Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife, in 1536 was unprecedented in English history and never before has there been a book devoted entirely to her fall. But here Alison Weir has reassessed the evidence and created a richly researched and detailed portrait of the last days of one of the most influential and important figures in English history. This recording is unabridged. Typically abridged audiobooks are not more than 60 per cent of the author's work and as low as 30 per cent with characters and plotlines removed.

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Customer Reviews

Alison Weir is, of course, a household name among Tudor aficionados. Although it hardly seems possible that anything new can be said about the Tudor monarchs "Lady in the Tower" is rich in details that may not be generally known. Weir discusses at length, for instance, the personalities of Anne Boleyn's supposed five lovers. Anne's brother, Rochford, may have been a homosexual, a fact that was squelched at Anne's trial. Poor Mark Smeaton, the son of a carpenter and not a gentleman, gave himself airs and resented the fact he could not enter into courtly love dalliances with the Queen. William Brereton was almost fifty, a ruthless individual and a lecher who had caused the death of at least one innocent man and who apparently considered himself above the law. Francis Weston was an attractive young man of twenty five who routinely beat the king at cards. And poor Norris, Groom of the Stool, who may have been Henry's only true friend, was nevertheless discarded. All of these men were loyal to the King and he destroyed them to get rid of Anne, destroyed them without turning a hair. There are many personality portraits of Anne's

contemporaries revealed in the book. The peculiar character of Jane Rochford, Anne's sister-in-law, who was probably the most instrumental voice in bringing Anne down, is analyzed in detail. I've always thought Henry Percy, who was prevented from marrying Anne by Cardinal Wolsey on orders of the king had staggered away from her trial, distraught with grief. He staggered away, all right, but he was terminally ill with a malady that had nothing to do with Anne, and had in fact spread rumors among the aristocracy that Anne had tried to poison Princess Mary.

Alison Weir does an incredible job of putting the reader in the scene for the last four months of Anne Boleyn's life. This is the most detailed account of the time period I have ever read. Ms. Weir examines not only the lives, but the personalities of those involved so the reader gets a better feel for their behavior. Anne Boleyn had enemies. She was too involved in the affairs of state, had too much influence over Henry to suit those who didn't share her views, and she mistreated Henry's first wife Kathryn and Kathryn's daughter. She even went so far as to try to convince Henry to have them executed. But Anne wasn't all bad. She supported the causes of help and education for the poor and she was generous to her friends and family. She was intelligent, quick-witted, and fun loving. But when Anne miscarried a male fetus in January 1536, Master Secretary Thomas Cromwell saw his chance to get rid of her. He also had to get rid of her supporters to strengthen his position at court. Ms. Weir, throughout the book, presents both sides of the story by quoting from accounts of those who supported Anne and those who hated her. In the end the outcome of the questioning of the "witnesses" and the trial itself were foregone conclusions. Anne was framed for adultery and treason along with her brother, Lord Rochford, and four other innocent men. Henry VIII, still bitter over Anne's failure to produce a male heir, and apparently already lusting after Jane Seymour, allowed himself to be convinced of Anne's guilt. Those who might have believed in her innocence or who had evidence in her favor dared not speak lest they lose their own heads. The description of Anne's execution is gripping and vivid.

"The Lady in the Tower" is dedicated to the fall of Anne Boleyn rather than being a biography of the doomed Queen's life. Alison Weir focuses on the last four months of Anne's life, January through May 1536, setting the stage for her shockingly rapid demise, as she went from being a vibrant, ambitious queen with a strained marriage to losing her title, her husband, her daughter's place in the succession, and, finally, her life in just a few weeks. The picture Weir paints of the Tudor court is sympathetic to Anne Boleyn. Her research is based mostly on primary sources, and she admits that her meticulous investigation of the events surrounding Anne's downfall led her to some conclusions

contrary to what she expressed in her previous books. Weir includes some background information on Anne's marriage, in particular how her overbearing personality and indiscreet talk did not serve her well as King Henry VIII's wife, even if these traits had endeared Anne to him as his mistress. We learn who her enemies were at court, why she was so disliked, and the state of her relationship with the King as her enemies were uniting against her. It is the author's belief that Thomas Cromwell was the impetus behind Anne's downfall, not King Henry, so she focuses on his machinations. She takes us through the trials of Anne and the five men accused of adultery and plotting regicide along with her -as much as can be known of the proceedings, as full trial transcripts are not extant. And there is a dramatic and moving account of Anne's execution. Alison Weir believes that the 21 charges against Anne Boleyn were fabricated and refutes them as best as she can with the evidence available. The author also addresses discrepancies in various accounts of Anne's demise, and she discusses competing theories.

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