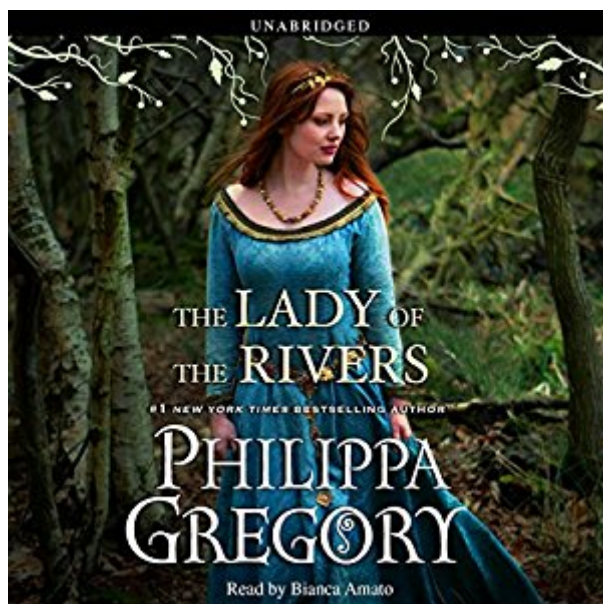


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The Lady Of The Rivers



Synopsis

Passion. Danger. Witchcraft.... The Lady of the Rivers is number-one New York Times best-selling author Philippa Gregory's remarkable story of Jacquetta, Duchess of Bedford, a woman who navigated a treacherous path through the battle lines in the Wars of the Roses. Descended from Melusina, the river goddess, Jacquetta always has had the gift of second sight. As a child visiting her uncle, she met his prisoner, Joan of Arc, and saw her own power reflected in the young woman accused of witchcraft. They share the mystery of the tarot card of the wheel of fortune before Joan is taken to a horrific death at the hands of the English rulers of France. Jacquetta understands the danger for a woman who dares to dream. Jacquetta is married to the Duke of Bedford, English regent of France, and he introduces her to a mysterious world of learning and alchemy. Her only friend in the great household is the duke's squire, Richard Woodville, who is at her side when the duke's death leaves her a wealthy young widow. The two become lovers and marry in secret, returning to England to serve at the court of the young King Henry VI, where Jacquetta becomes a close and loyal friend to his new queen. The Woodvilles soon achieve a place at the very heart of the Lancaster court, though Jacquetta can sense the growing threat from the people of England and the danger of royal rivals. Not even their courage and loyalty can keep the House of Lancaster on the throne. Henry the king slides into a mysterious sleep; Margaret the queen turns to untrustworthy favorites for help; and Richard, Duke of York, threatens to overturn the whole kingdom for his rival dynasty. Jacquetta fights for her king, her queen, and for her daughter, Elizabeth, for whom Jacquetta can sense an extraordinary and unexpected future: a change of fortune, the throne of England, and the white rose of York. A sweeping, powerful story rich in passion and legend and drawing on years of research, The Lady of the Rivers tells the story of the real-life mother of the white queen.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Summary: The Lady of the Rivers is the third book in the Cousin's War series spanning the time period near the War of the Roses. Even though it's the third book in the series, chronologically it's the first. The story is the life of Jacquetta of Luxembourg from near the time of her first marriage to the Duke of Bedford and ends near where The White Queen (the novel about her daughter, Elizabeth Woodville) begins. I like historical fiction. I also generally like Gregory's novels (though she's also had more than her fair share of absolute bombs as well). She's kind of a guilty pleasure for me. I know that her novels are not groundbreaking works of fiction that will be discussed in literary circles for generations to come. It's "candy fiction". It tastes good, but you know there is no nutritional value. This is especially true with The Cousin's War series, where she takes many more liberties with actual historical events than she does in the Tudor novels. Granted, the Tudor family, and Anne Boleyn (obviously from The Other Boleyn Girl, her best work to date) especially, are much better documented in historical documents. So, some of this can be explained away by simply a lack of records from these times and characters. However, the fact still remains that these books are entertainment only, and not a "history reference". There are things I enjoyed about this novel. It held my interest well enough. I liked the inclusion of alchemy and mysticism which added an interesting angle, even if it did make the already factually flawed novel even more unbelievable. I liked Margaret of Anjou! She was really the only character that I thought was truly dynamic.

With a nod given to Philippa Gregory for her contribution (The Other Boleyn Girl) in bringing the genre of historical fiction back from the dead, I'm afraid I simply can't recommend her latest book, The Lady of the Rivers. I'm not going to nit-pick historical details because it is indeed a work of fiction and Gregory has the right to make up whatever she thinks will make a rollicking good story. Unfortunately, accuracy aside, The Lady of the Rivers is not a rollicking good story. As you likely know by now, the story focuses on Jacquetta Rivers, the famously beautiful Duchess and mother of Elizabeth Woodville, the "commoner" who would eventually become the wife of England's Edward IV. Long neglected by historical novelists, Jacquetta was a good choice for a heroine. Unfortunately, Gregory falls far short in the execution of the novel. It's hard to summon interest in Jacquetta in this

book. She's surrounded by all the mythological/witchy/fish legend stuff of Gregory's earlier books in this series (you know, the Melusina, from which Jacquetta's line was allegedly descended), but that's about the sum total of anything interesting about her. She makes forays into alchemy and foreseeing the future, but neither is very convincing. Perhaps the biggest problem I had with this novel was the dialog. I understand that this particular time period during the Wars of the Roses in England, was extremely convoluted. It's difficult to keep track of all the different families and people who played a part. Gregory chose to solve this problem via dialog. Therefore, every time a character refers to another character, they do so using their full name, title, and relationship. Now before you start thinking that this might be helpful, allow me to share how it reads.

The novel LADY OF THE RIVERS really should have been the first book in the series to THE COUSIN'S WAR. It is the third book and tells about Elizabeth Woodville's mother French born Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Countess Rivers. (1415/1416-30 May 1472. She married Richard Woodville 1st Earl of Rivers. The novel was excellent and was well researched. It was full of history and at times I had to back track. The book was filled with facts about The Hundred Years War known to everyone as The War Of The Roses. The main characters in the book are: Jacquetta Woodville Countess Rivers- Married to Richard Woodville and Lady in waiting to Queen Margaret of Anjou Richard Woodville- Jacquetta's husband and 1st Earl Rivers Henry VI - King of England Margaret of Anjou- Queen of England Edmund of Tudor- 1st Earl of Richmond John Beaufort- Duke of Somerset Richard Duke of York- The King's Cousin and Edward of York's father Jacquetta was French and loyal to the side of Lancaster the red rose. She was the eldest daughter of Peter 1 of Luxembourg, Count of Saint-Pol. She was briefly married to the Duke of Bedford brother to King Henry V. Her daughter Elizabeth Woodville married Edward IV of The House of York. Jacquetta had 14 children. She stood trial on charges of witchcraft for which she was exonerated. She claimed her ancestry from the river goddess Melusina. Melusina is mentioned in this novel as well as in The White Queen. The Woodville's claim their ancestry from this goddess. The novel starts in 1430 at the Castle of Beaufort, near Arras France at the trial of Joan of Arc. Jacquetta is a young girl with her great-aunt Lady Jehanne. Jacquetta even visits Joan in prison. Joan is accused of witchcraft and Jacquetta watches her burn!

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