

<<The White Queen 白女王>>

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内容概要

'Gregory has again given the past the kiss of life' --Daily Express, 7 August 2009 'This fast-paced and incident-packed read vividly recreates the deperate times of the Wars Of The Roses; all murder and strategy, passion, betrayal, castles and long, sweeping dresses. Of [Elizabeth] Woodville herself, Gregory makes a fascinating heroine; strong, ambitious, vengeful, beautiful and tinged with more than a hint of witchcraft. Popular history at its best.'

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作者简介

Philippa Gregory is the author of several New York Times bestselling novels, including *The Other Boleyn Girl*, *The Queen's Fool*, *The Virgin's Lover*, *The Constant Princess*, *The Boleyn Inheritance*, *The Other Queen*, and now *The Cousins' War* books which include *The White Queen* and *The Red Queen*. She lives in England.

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章节摘录

In the darkness of the forest the young knight could hear the splashing of the fountain long before he could see the glimmer of moonlight reflected on the still surface. He was about to step forward, longing to dip his head, drink in the coolness, when he caught his breath at the sight of something dark, moving deep in the water. There was a greenish shadow in the sunken bowl of the fountain, something like a great fish, something like a drowned body. Then it moved and stood upright and he saw, frighteningly naked: a bathing woman. Her skin as she rose up, water coursing down her flanks, was even paler than the white marble bowl, her wet hair dark as a shadow. She is Melusina, the water goddess, and she is found in hidden springs and waterfalls in any forest in Christendom, even in those as far away as Greece. She bathes in the Moorish fountains too. They know her by another name in the northern countries, where the lakes are glazed with ice and it crackles when she rises. A man may love her if he keeps her secret and lets her alone when she wants to bathe, and she may love him in return until he breaks his word, as men always do, and she sweeps him into the deeps, with her fishy tail, and turns his faithless blood to water. The tragedy of Melusina, whatever language tells it, whatever tune it sings, is that a man will always promise more than he can do to a woman he cannot understand.

SPRING 1464 My father is Sir Richard Woodville, Baron Rivers, an English nobleman, a landholder, and a supporter of the true Kings of England, the Lancastrian line. My mother descends from the Dukes of Burgundy and so carries the watery blood of the goddess Melusina, who founded their royal house with her entranced ducal lover, and can still be met at times of extreme trouble, crying a warning over the castle rooftops when the son and heir is dying and the family doomed. Or so they say, those who believe in such things. With this contradictory parentage of mine: solid English earth and French water goddess, one could expect anything from me: an enchantress, or an ordinary girl. There are those who will say I am both. But today, as I comb my hair with particular care and arrange it under my tallest headdress, take the hands of my two fatherless boys and lead the way to the road that goes to Northampton, I would give all that I am to be, just this once, simply irresistible. I have to attract the attention of a young man riding out to yet another battle, against an enemy that cannot be defeated. He may not even see me. He is not likely to be in the mood for beggars or flirts. I have to excite his compassion for my position, inspire his sympathy for my needs, and stay in his memory long enough for him to do something about them both. And this is a man who has beautiful women flinging themselves at him every night of the week, and a hundred claimants for every post in his gift. He is a usurper and a tyrant, my enemy and the son of my enemy, but I am far beyond loyalty to anyone but my sons and myself. My own father rode out to the battle of Towton against this man who now calls himself King of England, though he is little more than a braggart boy; and I have never seen a man as broken as my father when he came home from Towton, his sword arm bleeding through his jacket, his face white, saying that this boy is a commander such as we have never seen before, and our cause is lost, and we are all without hope while he lives. Twenty thousand men were cut down at Towton at this boy's command; no one had ever seen such death before in England. My father said it was a harvest of Lancastrians, not a battle. The rightful King Henry and his wife, Queen Margaret of Anjou, fled to Scotland, devastated by the deaths. Those of us left in England did not surrender readily. The battles went on and on to resist the false king, this boy of York. My own husband was killed commanding our cavalry, only three years ago at St. Albans. And now I am left a widow and what land and fortune I once called my own has been taken by my mother-in-law with the goodwill of the victor, the master of this boy-king, the great puppeteer who is known as the Kingmaker: Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, who made a king out of this vain boy, now only twenty-two, and will make a hell out of England for those of us who still defend the House of Lancaster. There are Yorkists in every great house in the land now, and every profitable business or place or tax is in their gift. Their boyking is on the throne, and his supporters form the new court. We, the defeated, are paupers in our own houses and strangers in our own country, our king an exile, our queen a vengeful alien plotting with our old enemy of France. We have to make terms with the tyrant of York, while praying that God turns against him and our true king sweeps south with an army for yet another battle. In the meantime, like many a woman with a husband dead and a father defeated, I have to piece my life together like a patchwork of scraps. I have to regain my fortune somehow, though it seems

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that neither kinsman nor friend can make any headway for me. We are all known as traitors. We are forgiven but not beloved. We are all powerless. I shall have to be my own advocate, and make my own case to a boy who respects justice so little that he would dare to take an army against his own cousin: a king ordained. What can one say to such a savage that he could understand? My boys, Thomas, who is nine, and Richard, who is eight, are dressed in their best, their hair wetted and smoothed down, their faces shining from soap. I have tight hold of their hands as they stand on either side of me, for these are true boys and they draw dirt to them as if by magic. If I let them go for a second, then one will scuff his shoes and the other rip his hose, and both of them will manage to get leaves in their hair and mud on their faces, and Thomas will certainly fall in the stream. As it is, anchored by my grip, they hop from one leg to another in an agony of boredom, and straighten up only when I say, "Hush, I can hear horses." It sounds like the patter of rain at first, and then in a moment a rumble like thunder. The jingle of the harness and the flutter of the standards, the chink of the chain mail and the blowing of the horses, the sound and the smell and the roar of a hundred horses ridden hard is overwhelming and, even though I am determined to stand out and make them stop, I can't help but shrink back. What must it be to face these men riding down in battle with their lances outstretched before them, like a galloping wall of staves? How could any man face it? Thomas sees the bare blond head in the midst of all the fury and noise and shouts "Hurrah!" like the boy he is, and at the shout of his treble voice I see the man's head turn, and he sees me and the boys, and his hand snatches the reins and he bellows "Halt!" His horse stands up on its rear legs, wrenched to a standstill, and the whole cavalcade wheels and halts and swears at the sudden stop, and then abruptly everything is silent and the dust billows around us. His horse blows out, shakes its head, but the rider is like a statue on its high back. He is looking at me and I at him, and it is so quiet that I can hear a thrush in the branches of the oak above me. How it sings. My God, it sings like a ripple of glory, like joy made into sound. I have never heard a bird sing like that before, as if it were caroling happiness. I step forward, still holding my sons' hands, and I open my mouth to plead my case, but at this moment, this crucial moment, I have lost my words. I have practiced well enough. I had a little speech all prepared, but now I have nothing. And it is almost as if I need no words. I just look at him and somehow I expect him to understand everything -- my fear of the future and my hopes for these my boys, my lack of money and the irritable pity of my father, which makes living under his roof so unbearable to me, the coldness of my bed at night, and my longing for another child, my sense that my life is over. Dear God, I am only twenty-seven, my cause is defeated, my husband is dead. Am I to be one of many poor widows who will spend the rest of their days at someone else's fireside trying to be a good guest? Shall I never be kissed again? Shall I never feel joy? Not ever again? And still the bird sings as if to say that delight is easy, for those who desire it. He makes a gesture with his hand to the older man at his side, and the man barks out a command and the soldiers turn their horses off the road and go into the shade of the trees. But the king jumps down from his great horse, drops the reins, and walks towards me and my boys. I am a tall woman but he overtops me by a head; he must be far more than six feet tall. My boys crane their necks up to see him; he is a giant to them. He is blond haired, gray eyed, with a tanned, open, smiling face, rich with charm, easy with grace. This is a king as we have never seen before in England: this is a man whom the people will love on sight. And his eyes are fixed on my face as if I know a secret that he has to have, as if we have known each other forever, and I can feel my cheeks are burning but I cannot look away from him. A modest woman looks down in this world, keeps her eyes on her slippers; a supplicant bows low and stretches out a pleading hand. But I stand tall, I am aghast at myself, staring like an ignorant peasant, and find I cannot take my eyes from his, from his smiling mouth, from his gaze, which is burning on my face. "Who is this?" he asks, still looking at me. "Your Grace, this is my mother, Lady Elizabeth Grey," my son Thomas says politely, and he pulls off his cap and drops to his knee. Richard on my other side kneels too and mutters, as if he cannot be heard, "Is this the king? Really? He is the tallest man I have ever seen in my life!" I sink down into a curtsey but I cannot look away. Instead, I gaze up at him, as a woman might stare with hot eyes at a man she adores. "Rise up," he says. His voice is low, for only me to hear. "Have you come to see me?" ...

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媒体关注与评论

'It would be hard to make history more entertaining, lively or engaging' Sunday Express 'Queen of the historical novel' Mail on Sunday 'Gregory brings to life the sights, smells and textures of 16th-century England'? Kate Mosse, Financial Times? 'Rollicking, page-turning stuff'? Metro 'Of Woodville herself, Gregory makes a fascinating heroine; strong, ambitious, vengeful, beautiful and tinged with more than a hint of witchcraft. Popular history at its best'??? Daily Mail 'History comes gloriously alive as widowed Elisabeth Woodville of the House of Lancaster seduces and marries Yorkist King Edward IV.? From then on conflict, betrayal and murder stalk her life as the Queen of England' Mirror 'As with The Other Boleyn Girl, Gregory's clever blend of fact and fiction is a lot racier than the average historical biography ... her tale of Elizabeth Woodville's tenacious fight for her family's position during the Wars of the Roses oozes sex appeal and suspense' Glamour magazine 'Lady Margaret Beaufort - cold, clever, calculating - will stop at nothing to put her son Henry Tudor on the throne.? Gregory is very good at describing the bitchiness of the women in this tale of dynastic rivalry' Telegraph 'Entrancing'? Telegraph 'an informative and riveting read from start to finish'? Edinburgh Evening News 'Gregory brings this period of history and another strong female character to life with the same colour and intrigue she applies to all her novels' Glasgow Evening Times 'A gripping read' South Wales Echo '...whips along with lashings of historical intrigue'? Company 'Gregory's novels are, in fact, meticulously researched pieces of historical scholarship. For each novel she immerses herself in dozens of primary and secondary sources, before transforming them into vivid fiction'? Sunday Telegraph

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编辑推荐

Book Description THE COUSINS' WARBook OnePhilippa Gregory, "the queen of royal fiction,"*presents the first of a new series set amid the deadly feuds of England known as the Wars of the Roses. Brother turns on brother to win the ultimate prize, the throne of England, in this dazzling account of the wars of the Plantagenets. They are the claimants and kings who ruled England before the Tudors, and now Philippa Gregory brings them to life through the dramatic and intimate stories of the secret players: the indomitable women, starting with Elizabeth Woodville, the White Queen. The White Queen tells the story of a woman of extraordinary beauty and ambition who, catching the eye of the newly crowned boy king, marries him in secret and ascends to royalty. While Elizabeth rises to the demands of her exalted position and fights for the success of her family, her two sons become central figures in a mystery that has confounded historians for centuries: the missing princes in the Tower of London whose fate is still unknown. From her uniquely qualified perspective, Philippa Gregory explores this most famous unsolved mystery of English history, informed by impeccable research and framed by her inimitable storytelling skills. With The White Queen, Philippa Gregory brings the artistry and intellect of a master writer and storyteller to a new era in history and begins what is sure to be another bestselling classic series from this beloved author.*USA Today

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