



The Moon in the Palace (The Empress of Bright Moon Duology)

By Weina Dai Randel

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Nominated for "Best Historical Fiction" by Goodreads Choice Awards 2016

Nominated for "Best First Historical" by RT Book Reviews Reviewers Choice Award 2016

A RITA Awards finalist

Recommended by Texas Library Association's 2017 Lariat Reading List

"I absolutely loved The Moon in the Palace... A rare and beautiful treasure." -- Elizabeth Chadwick, NYT bestselling author

"Randel's gorgeous debut novel seductively pulls back the curtain to reveal the heartbreaking world of...China." -- Stephanie Dray, NYT bestselling Author of America's First Daughter

There is no easy path for a woman aspiring to power

A concubine at the palace learns quickly that there are many ways to capture the Emperor's attention. Many paint their faces white and style their hair attractively, hoping to lure in the One Above All with their beauty. Some present him with fantastic gifts, such as jade pendants and scrolls of calligraphy, while others rely on their knowledge of seduction to draw his interest. But young Mei knows nothing of these womanly arts, yet she will give the Emperor a gift he can never forget.

Mei's intelligence and curiosity, the same traits that make her an outcast among the other concubines, impress the Emperor. But just as she is in a position to seduce the most powerful man in China, divided loyalties split the palace in two, culminating in a perilous battle that Mei can only hope to survive.

In the breakthrough first volume in the Empress of Bright Moon duology, Weina Dai Randel paints a vibrant portrait of ancient China?where love, ambition, and loyalty can spell life or death?and the woman who came to rule it all.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

The first of a duology based on the life of China's Empress Wu (624–705). Mei is her doting father's favorite, until his sudden death forces her family out of their luxurious life to live with uncaring relatives. Summoned to serve the emperor at 13, she wants to appeal on behalf of her family but is quickly thrust into a world of palace intrigue and treachery. Despite being trained in *The Art of War*, Mei is unprepared to chart this complex world. Her successful navigation owes much to good mentoring and being in the right place at the right time. The mutual attraction she has for the emperor's eighth son, their clandestine relationship, and Mei's conflicting desires to follow her heart or save her family further complicate matters. Randel excels at the twists, turns, machinations, and alliances of the palace ladies and greater political forces, creating a page-turning volume as Mei learns to navigate the harshness of both worlds. A compelling look at the outside forces and inner determination that shape the protagonist to become a formidable force in her own right, painting a very different portrait of a woman than we saw in Shan Sa's *Empress* or unflattering depictions in the histories written by her political detractors. Luckily, readers will not have to wait to see the rest of Mei's story, as *The Empress of Bright Moon* is already available. VERDICT Full of politics and intrigue, this is a fascinating must-read for fans of historical fiction and romance.—Jennifer Rothschild, Arlington Public Library, Arlington VA

Review

Goodreads Best Historical Fiction of 2016 semi-finalist

"This eloquent first novel follows the life of a young girl during China's Tang dynasty (618–907). When Mei is five years old, a monk foretells that her destiny is to be both the mother of emperors and an emperor in her own right. Aspiring to have his daughter brought to the palace, Mei's father educates her in poetry, history, mathematics, calligraphy, and even Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. All seems lost after his sudden death, but fate will not be ignored. Thirteen-year-old Mei is chosen as one of the 15 Selects to serve in the Inner Court. She will need to draw on all she learned from her father to survive the machinations of the imperial court and to earn favor with the emperor. Mei finds herself in danger, both from other women and her involvement with a boy named Pheasant. This is the first book in a duology recounting the life of Empress Wu (624–705), China's only ruling female emperor. VERDICT This story of a woman who made her own destiny and has been often vilified is a must for historical fiction fans, especially those fascinated by China's glorious past."

-- *Library Journal*, STARRED Review

"Like fragile yet strong silk threads, Randel's beautifully composed debut ensnares readers in the dynamic story of the young girl who would become Empress of the Bright Moon. Randel's novel is an impressive tale of lethal court intrigue that is seductive and alluring. It is a story of one woman's rise to power, but also of the relationships between the women of the palace. Readers will be transported by the colorful, fairy-tale-like story."—*RT Book Reviews*, *Top Pick*, 4-1/2 stars

"The intrigue and machinations of the imperial court come to life under her hand, a vast and dangerous engine with each piece moving for its own reasons." – *Shelf Awareness*, Starred Review for *The Moon in the Palace*

"A very successful and transporting novel that beautifully captures the sounds, smells and social mores of 7th-century China." -- *Historical Novels Review*, Editor's Choice

"Lyrical and intriguing." -- **Bobbi Dumas, *Kirkus Reviews***

"Mei gives life to this richly detailed novel. She is adventuresome, intelligent, hardworking and a risktaker."
– **The Dallas Morning News**

"The real triumph of *The Moon in the Palace* is how Randel succeeds in showing court politics exclusively through female eyes, and how every decision and subsequent action, success, and failure are skillfully plotted like a chess match by the palace women... Magical." -- **Washington Independent Book Review of Books**

"Randel brilliantly evokes Mei's many struggles in *THE MOON IN THE PALACE*. .. The author also makes the intricacies of the imperial court easily accessible to readers new to ancient China."
– **BookReporter**

"The premise might be familiar from similar blockbusters such as *Memoirs of a Geisha*, but Randel knows how to exploit it for narrative tension... the novel explores intriguing feminist terrain."
– **South China Morning Post**

"I absolutely loved Weina Dai Randel's *The Moon in the Palace*, which is a truly immersive experience and a rare and beautiful treasure. All I want now is to read the next novel!"
-- **Elizabeth Chadwick, New York Times bestselling author of *The Summer Queen, The Winter Crown, and The Autumn Throne*.**

"An astonishing debut! Weina Dai Randel spins a silken web of lethal intrigue, transporting us into the fascinating, seductive world of ancient China, where one rebellious, astute girl embarks on a dangerous quest for power."
- **C.W. Gortner, bestselling author of *The Queen's Vow***

"It's subject, Empress Wu, was one of the most fascinating, characters in Chinese history... Randel writes with a fresh, poetic style, bringing to life a time remote from our own, yet filled with the same intrigues, power struggles, -- and love affair. For those confined to a claustrophobic existence in the palace, to offend the wrong person was to risk a horrible death. Yet strong women could bend the intrigues to their own benefit -- if they dared. This is history but also a stay-up-all-night read." - **Mingmei Yip, author of *The Nine Fold Heaven and Song of the Silk Road***

"*The Moon in the Palace* is a colorful and vibrant journey into the grandeur of the Tang Dynasty. Weina Randel weaves a captivating tale about the intrigues of the inner court through the eyes of the woman who would become the most infamous Empress in Chinese history, finding a human story of love and hope amidst bloodshed and treachery. I couldn't stop reading this exciting debut novel." - **Jeannie Lin, USA Today bestselling author of *The Lotus Palace***

"With fresh, lyrical prose and a true storyteller's flair, in her novel *The Moon in the Palace*, Weina Dai Randel brings 7th century China to vibrant life. Through the eyes of Mei, a name meaning simply "Sister," given to the middle daughter of the household of her birth, we are submerged into intrigue of the Imperial court, where wives and concubines fight for positions of power beside the emperor, and where men fight to take the emperor's throne. A story of courage and daring, in *The Moon in the Palace*, a girl without a name takes her destiny into her own hands. A shining jewel of a novel." - **Christy English, author of *The Queen's Pawn and To Be Queen***

"With elegant, modern prose and vivid details, Randel's gorgeous debut novel seductively pulls back the curtain to reveal the heartbreaking world of harem politics in Tang Dynasty China. Exploring the early years of the legendary Empress Wu when she was still a concubine struggling to survive the whims of the man who ruled her, the book's brave and clever heroine finds herself at the center of intrigue and civil war. This is a page turner that will transport you in time and place. Bravo!" - *Stephanie Dray, author of Lily of the Nile*

"Mei is a triumph of intelligence and passion, cunning and courage. Randel has provided a strong cast of supporting characters, successfully resisting stereotypes of eunuchs and concubines..." -- *Janie Chang, Author of Three Souls*

About the Author

WEINA DAI RANDEL is the author of *The Moon in the Palace* and the sequel *The Empress of Bright Moon*, historical novels of Empress Wu, the only female ruler in China. *The Moon in the Palace* was nominated for Goodreads Best Historical Fiction of 2016 and listed among 25 Favorite Books of 2016 by Washington Independent Review of Books. The two novels will soon be translated into six languages.

Weina was born in the east coast of China. She came to the United States at the age of twenty-four. After she received an M.A. in English from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas, she began to work on her novel, *The Moon in the Palace*. It took her six years to research and another four years to write and revise the novel. She has been interviewed on television, *WSJ China Real Time*, *Library Journal*, *Huffington Post*, and other publications. Find more about Weina on her website: weinarandel.com

The Moon in the Palace is her first novel.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Daniel Guy:

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