

The Hand, the Eye and the Heart

Zoë Marriott

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Zhilan was assigned female at birth; despite an unusual gift for illusions, they know they will live out their life in the perfumed confines of the women's quarters. But when civil war sets the country aflame, Zhilan is the only one who can save their disabled Father from death on the battlefield.

By taking his place.

Surviving brutal army training as a male recruit – Zhi – is only the first challenge. Soon Zhi's unique talents draw them into an even more perilous fight, in the glittering court of the Land of Dragons, where love and betrayal are two sides of the same smile. The fate of an Empire rests on Zhi's shoulders. But to win, they must first decide where their loyalty, and their heart, truly belongs.

The Hand, the Eye and the Heart Details


Date : Expected publication: April 4th 2019 by Walker Books

ISBN :

Author : Zoë Marriott

Format : Paperback 448 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Lgbt, Young Adult

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From Reader Review The Hand, the Eye and the Heart for online ebook

Iris says

This book sounds AMAZING, but I also read and hated another book by this author, so I have no idea if I'll actually read this. But my gosh it sounds SO GOOD!

AniPendragon says

This is going to be my second-most anticipated book of the year, right after I Wish You All the Best. Holy shit.

Zoë Marriott says

Q: Is it true this book is a retelling of 'Mulan'?

A: It isn't a direct retelling of any one story. It is heavily inspired by several different versions of the Ballad of Mulan - including the original poem and many subsequent, ever-evolving retellings within Chinese culture such as the Chinese Opera. But the main character of The Hand, the Eye and the Heart is not Mulan. The protagonist of this book is Zhi. It's really important to me that this is clear, because Mulan is such a revered and significant figure and I'm not seeking to mess with her. So I'm not claiming to retell 'the true story of Mulan' or anything sensational like that. Zhi's journey definitely echoes Mulan's in some ways - but that is about paying homage to a legendary heroic archetype, not subverting or revising Mulan's story.

Q: Is the book set in China?

A: It's set in an imaginary place called The Land of Dragons or the Red Empire. This (again) is heavily influenced by Chinese history, especially the Tang Dynasty - but only in the same way that, say, George R. R. Martin's Westeros is influenced by England in the Middle Ages. It is not intended to be a historically accurate portrayal of China. It's a fantasy. There's magic and all kinds of made up people and places and events, as well as many people and places and events which take history as a jumping off point for fantastical extrapolation. The Big Bad, for example, is a mixture of a bandit King referred to in one version of Mulan's story (a man called Leopard Skin) and a real general who rebelled against the Emperor during the Tang Dynasty.

Q: So is the main character really trans?

A: I think of their gender identity as falling under that umbrella, and wrote them with the intention of presenting them to my readers that way - personally, I believe Zhi to be what contemporary westerners would probably call gender fluid or maybe, more broadly, non-binary. But readers are free to interpret the character's gender in any way they like (so long as they don't try to say that they're cis! Definitely not cis).

Q: Did you have sensitivity readers who were Chinese or trans?

A: I was actually lucky enough to have advice and support from several trans and non-binary people throughout the writing of the book. Once it was finished I had two trans sensitivity readers. One is a dear friend (and fellow YA writer) who kindly offered to read the first draft. The other is a very talented young poet who we found through the organisation Inclusive Minds, and he read the nearly-finished version. I tried my absolute best to act on and incorporate every comment or suggestion that both of them made. I also had really valuable help from several readers (and friends and family members of readers) of Chinese and East Asian heritage throughout the writing of the book, and a sensitivity read from another lovely friend who is not only Chinese, but also an English professor at Singapore university. She made quite a difference to the finished product too. I thank the writing gods for all these amazing folks.

Q: Is it true that you're an LGBTQA+ writer? Are you trans?

A: I identify as queer, yes. But I don't really think that writers should have to offer up a list of their marginalised identities on demand as part of discussion of their work, so even though I'm happy to talk about my queerness at other times, I'd prefer not to go into it now. I will say that the book is not #ownvoices.

Q: When exactly is the book out?

A: April 2019!

Q: When can we see the cover?

A: I don't know - but you can bet your sweet bippy I'll post it the millisecond I'm allowed to.

Q: Can we read some of it?

A: When it's copy-edited and proof-read my publisher might let me post some extracts, or maybe a free sample will go up on their website. I will ask, I promise. I'm excited to share it with you.

Q: Is this the never-ending manuscript that just keeps getting longer that you're always moaning about on Twitter?

A: Er...yes.

Q: How long is this thing anyway?

A: Currently? I mean, it's hard to really say, it's not typeset and nothing's set in stone...

Q: Just spit it out!

A: It's a bit over 100k, all right? That might come down. Or it might go up. I don't know, I'm just the writer. Anyway, it's in the same general length bracket as *Shadows on the Moon*.

Lauren James says

Zoe Marriott has mastered the art of the retelling. She combines cultural touchstones with carefully researched historical setting to create something truly special.

Cora Tea Party Princess says

Can this not just hurry up and be out already? It sounds amazing and I need it in my life.

Becky (Blogs of a Bookaholic) says

Um, having recently seen Zoe talk about this and read the first couple of pages, I have come to the realisation that I need this in my life, STAT!!

Trans Mulan style retelling/inspired by the myths and legends of Mulan? HELL YEAH.
