



# The Lotus Palace

*Jeannie Lin*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

# The Lotus Palace

*Jeannie Lin*

**The Lotus Palace** Jeannie Lin

**It is a time of celebration in the Pingkang Li, where imperial scholars and bureaucrats mingle with beautiful courtesans. At the center is the Lotus Palace, home of the most exquisite courtesans in China...**

Maidservant Yue-ying is not one of those beauties. Street-smart and practical, she's content to live in the shadow of her infamous mistress—until she meets the aristocratic playboy Bai Huang.

Bai Huang lives in a privileged world Yue-ying can barely imagine, yet alone share, but as they are thrown together in an attempt to solve a deadly mystery, they both start to dream of a different life. Yet Bai Huang's position means that all she could ever be to him is his concubine—will she sacrifice her pride to follow her heart?

## The Lotus Palace Details

Date : Published August 27th 2013 by Harlequin HQN (first published August 13th 2013)

ISBN : 9780373777730

Author : Jeannie Lin

Format : Mass Market Paperback 378 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical, Historical Fiction, Historical Romance, Mystery, Cultural, China, Fiction, Adult

 [Download The Lotus Palace ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Lotus Palace ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Lotus Palace Jeannie Lin**

---

## From Reader Review The Lotus Palace for online ebook

**new\_user** says

**Read any romances about secretive courtesans and dashing, young lords during golden-age China lately?** Then read Jeannie Lin's *Pinkang Li Mysteries*. *The Lotus Palace* isn't simply a romance, it's a Romance, an epic that embroils six characters- no, an entire district. While we read 99% of the narrative through the hero and heroine's perspectives, Lin captures the throb and glitter of the capital's pleasure quarter, as well as the poetry, the intelligent, subtle women. Lin evokes the beauty of protocols and art(ifice) and filters them through a modern grasp of class and sex without Orientalism, slowing pace, breaking the fourth wall, or sacrificing evocative, spare prose (e.g. "Mingyu drew the entire world around her like stars circling the Earth. If she was upset, then no one else was allowed their happiness.") Her characters speak for her.

Yue-ying will stand as one of my favorite characters. Strong precisely because she chooses to see the world, eyes uncovered, in all its cruelty- and remains standing, believes herself, a maidservant, deserving of -and pursues- happiness, though moments of doubt ensure she stays human. Contrast her with wealthy love interest Bai Huang, earnest, charming, and unwitting of his privilege.

I've never seen a romance engage privilege so directly and deftly. Yue-ying cannot lecture or rail at Huang, above her station, so she comments only occasionally, casual and profound, on the differences between them, leaving Huang to snatch at these pearls of wisdom because he has no other key to the inscrutable, private Yue-ying who draws him and whom he convinces to help him solve a murder. He must reorder his views and approach as each pearl offers a glimpse into Yue-ying. To understand her, he must understand her world.

To some extent.

*Palace* repeatedly questions whether aristocrat Bai Huang can understand or love a servant. Bai Huang, himself enlightened by disillusionment and ridden by demons, also demonstrates repeatedly a willingness to learn and adjust, so that Yue-ying, theoretically at the mercy of many in society, including him, need never feel threatened or powerless. (He doesn't save her. Yue-ying's free. In fact, I wondered if marriage would be less free for her, given that Huang and his family would have rights over her then.) Lin excels at conveying these power differentials, drawing parallels between lord-servant and husband-wife dynamics most clearly when Huang reprimands Yue-ying for talking back to him and criticizing him. Many may yet relate to this dynamic or the sanctions against discussing certain subjects between the sexes.

I loved Lin's deep characterizations, her insight, and humor. I know I made this sound like srs bsns, but much of *Palace* is poignant and sweet. However, Lin's respect for -and realism with- conflicts of class and sex caused me to believe her more than I would a historical romance that ignores these questions. You know, all those governess-Earl romances. Lin borrows familiar tropes, rich/poor and a *Scarlet Pimpernel* disguise, reshapes them like a Potato Head, injects fascinating themes, freedom vs. dependency, sisterhood, etc., and dresses them with all the romance and glamor of a Tang Dynasty China film. I am totally reading the sequel *The Jade Temptress* and whatever else she writes! And now for funzies and as a tribute to those films, let's dreamcast who would play charming Bai Huang and hero #2, broody Constable Wu Kaifeng! **Pics (clean, of course!) in spoiler: (view spoiler)**

---

**Aoi** says

There are reasons why Jeannie Lin makes my most-awaited-books list time and time again. The unusual timeline (Tang dynasty China!) aside, she constantly reinvents her settings, plots and characters making each of her books a new discovery. Here, we foray once more into the imperial capital of Changan, into the pleasure district of Pingkang Li.

One of the highlights of the Tang Dynasty series is the sheer amount of intricate historical detail interwoven in the stories. I was completely fascinated by Li Bai Shen's world in *My Fair Concubine*- the world of glamour, sophistry and romance, hiding a complex web of politics, crime and illegal activities. Ms. Lin's style of writing immersed me into this strange and fascinating world- the vivid descriptions of the opulent teahouses, open air pavilions and richly coloured garments. The language is elegant and flowing- imbibing the restraint of the formal setting, yet conveying romance and sensuousness when due.

Yue-ying is the servant to one of the illustrious beauties of Pingkang Li, the courtesan Mingyu. Due to her mistress' fame, she is a central observer of all the political machinations and soliciting of favours that take place beneath the veneer of entertainment. Quietly going about her duties, she blends into the background and dutifully serves Mingyu. Her life is thrown out of gear when the Bai Huang, the handsome and affable fool of Pingkang Li sets his attentions on her.

Bai Huang is the privileged son of a prominent noble family- infamous for his wastrel ways. The 'flower prince' of Pingkang Li, he is known for his spendthrift ways and drinking his way around the pleasure district. Yueying is discomfited when he tries to woo her; because she doesn't for once believe he is as he seems. Things get further complicated when a murder takes place and Yue-ying is forced to co-operate with him to protect the ones she loves.

Both the lead characters are multilayered, and that works well to support the elaborate plotline. Yue-ying, though having had a harsh life, is direct, practical and resourceful. Although self-conscious about her 'marred' face and her lack of education within the company she keeps, she takes it in stride. Her independent and no-nonsense outlook is a wonderful foil against Huang's often naïve outlook in the pairing that crosses societal backgrounds and vastly different upbringings.

(view spoiler)

I absolutely devoured this one. It also set up things nicely for the next novel- the unbending and intimidating Constable Wu Kaifeng, yet those fleeting moments when he lets that façade slip- the chemistry is going to be off-the-charts!

---

## Anita says

The first time I read a Jeannie Lin book, it brought back memories of when I used to watch historical Chinese television series all the time. While I still watch the occasional Chinese historical, I don't marathon them like I used to. Reading *The Lotus Palace*, I find that that feeling is still there--of course, the television series are a bit more chaste, while this book has a few steamy sex scenes, but that's still the feel.

And of course, because of this, it might make me a bit biased towards this book, with it's historical Tang Dynasty setting, the beautiful descriptions of clothing, the streets, the vendors, the residences... and a lovely sweet romance that makes your heart ache. Because these are those same elements (once again, minus the sex) that had made my love for Chinese historical, Chinese *wuxia* series grow with every viewing.

*The Lotus Palace* may be a mystery, but it is definitely first, and foremost, a romance. And with that in

mind, it's easy to appreciate the silly interactions between Yue-ying and Bai Huang as the two of them amateurishly investigate the death of a famous courtesan. I'm not entirely certain I would actually describe their interactions, or even their entire relationship as sweet, really. Between Yue-ying and Bai Huang, their love story hinges more on the young, first love variety, where everything is over-dramatic and angst-ridden and almost dream-like.

I'm not even entirely sure I cared much for their romance, really. They certainly made a cute pair of friends, that's for sure. But Bai Huang came off a bit too naive and idealistic for my liking.

And this is where I find I really liked the characters--yeah, I know I contradict myself.

Neither Bai Huang nor Yue-ying are your typical romance novel hero or heroine. Bai Huang is a flamboyant, flirtatious scholar, who spends his days and nights making light of everything. Yue-ying is a hardened girl, a maidservant who used to slave away in a low-end brothel as a prostitute, simply trying to survive each day of her life, trapped in a world where she has no freedoms or choices as a woman. By fortune, she is taken in by the most famous courtesan of the Pingkang Li, Mingyu, and now works as her maidservant, never having to service men with her body as long as she stays with Mingyu.

It's a typical Cinderella romance between our couple where, of all the beautifully adorned and decorated women in the Pingkang Li, Bai Huang happens to notice the quiet maidservant, who all but tries to make herself blend into the wall at all times, whose face is marred by a red birthmark cover one cheek from eye to chin, and becomes intrigued enough by her to pursue her.

*The Lotus Palace* isn't an entirely memorable experience. The romance has it's moments, of course, where it strays from the typical tropes. For instance, I like that Yue-ying doesn't fall for Bai Huang immediately, and reacts in the appropriate fashion, slapping him when he tries to kiss her. I like that Bai Huang's charms don't really work on Yue-ying, and in fact only serve to make her more annoyed with him. I like that Yue-ying is always trying to be practical about whatever chemistry is brewing between herself and Bai Huang--tell him that he needs to back off, that they are from different worlds, that his interest in her can only cause trouble for the both of them.

But I also like that Bai Huang is so persistent, knowing that this is a girl he needs to work for in order to court; that she obviously won't just melt in his arms just because he's good-looking, or powerful, or pushes her for more. However, on the other hand, I also love how flawed he is, and it takes him nearly half the book to realize how naive he is about real life, and it takes Yue-ying's harsh words to make him start looking at things in a more practical sense.

I like that the first sex scene wasn't mind-blowing, and in fact, even touches upon the hardships of Yue-ying's past, which is what makes that first sex with Bai Huang kind of depressing. I like how it takes the two of them some time to work up to a more intimate relationship, and even after sleeping together, they still have to work on their relationship--sex doesn't fix everything, obviously.

What I wish could have been touched upon more, however, was the base mystery that brings our couple together as an investigative team. It wasn't like the mystery was forgotten, because it was very much in the foreground of the book, brought up again and again as Yue-ying and Bai Huang continue to search for answers. But for some strange reason, when thinking about my reading experience, I have to admit, I'm not entirely sure I recall a whole lot about the murder mystery that was really all that intriguing.

It was a fairly standard murder mystery; I had my thoughts on the events that took place surrounding both murders. But that's about it.

Anyway...

I enjoyed *The Lotus Palace* a lot. In fact, I practically devoured it, because it was so beautifully written and easy to follow. Of course, as I'd already admitted, I have my biases.

\*\*\*

## Halloween Bingo

This book could also count for:

**Murder Most Foul:** A murder takes place, and our main characters are out to solve it!

**Amateur Sleuth:** Yue-ying is a maidservant, and Bai Huang is a scholar.

**Romantic Suspense**

**Terrifying Women**

---

## D.G. says

As soon as I learned **The Lotus Palace** was a historical romance/mystery set in Ancient China, with actual Chinese people as main characters, I knew I HAD to read it. When you have read as much historical romance as I have, you don't find many new things. Even with the known trope - rich playboy falls for servant girl - I found the culture and setting so different that half the time I didn't know how characters would react to things. It made for a fascinating read.

The Pingkang Li is the City's pleasure quarter, full of beautiful, educated, sophisticated courtesans who compose poetry, act as hostesses in events and generally trade wits with scholars. It wasn't clear to me if selling their bodies was part of the bargain, but it seemed they had the liberty of choosing their own lovers. Yue-ying, our heroine, is the servant of a famous courtesan in the Lotus Palace. She's practical, hard working, tough and has a port-wine stain that mars her face. Bai Huang, the hero, is a rich, charming, extremely attractive, good for nothing scholar who has been "courting" Yue-ying's mistress for a while. But everything is not as it seems with Bai Huang - he's been exaggerating his reputation as a fool to spy for his father, who's a powerful government official. For a while, he's been noticing Yue-ying because she feels real to him as compared to the illusions of the Pingkang Li.

Yue-ying's past was horrific. I won't go into details because I don't want to give spoilers but although she doesn't dwell in the past, it's clear that it damaged her deeply. Bai Huang, for his part, hasn't had as charmed a life as you would expect, but it's mostly of his own doing. When he meets Yue-ying, he's desperately trying to redeem himself in the eyes of his father, who he disappointed terribly.

It takes a long time for Yue-ying to give in to the advances of Bai Huang. Practical creature that she is, she suspects his motives and it's not taken by his pretty face. She can't believe that a man like him - who could have any woman he wanted - would be interested in her, with her marked face, her situation in life and her past. But Huang crumbles her defenses slowly, with his love and persistence. Their relationship is not only about the physical but it's about trust and understanding. I was very touched when Huang acknowledged:

*He had never trusted anyone else with the worst parts of himself.*

The mystery was just somewhat disjointed with clues all over the place. Half the time I thought they were

chasing red herrings and I didn't even recognize the murderer when he was unveiled. Definitely not the stronger part of the story.

I was fascinated by the cultural aspects of the book. I know next to nothing about Ancient China so I loved the descriptions of places, clothes, customs, etc. It amazed me how concerned people were with each other's privacy, to the point that they wouldn't share important thoughts or feelings because "you don't talk about those things." I was surprised by the way the final hurdle between Bai Huang and Yue-ying was overcome and it was only possible due to the differences in culture.

I'm definitely reading the next book – Constable Wu and Mingyu sound like a very intriguing couple. If you are looking for a different read, this book will definitely be for you!

---

## Ariadna says

### What I liked

- Yue-ying FTW

She's a likeable and feisty character. As the novel progresses, we get to find out the events that shaped her personality and she ends up being 1000% more sympathetic. I liked her practical nature. Like, even after she fell in love, she didn't have a sudden personality change.

Even better for her as well as the rest of the characters, there was a lot more to what she presented to the world. You know, kinda like people do in real life?

- Amaze worldbuilding

In a world that's filled with Victorian and Regency romances set in the Western world, the fact that this book was set in 847 AD China made it a must-read for me. You could tell that Lin did a lot of research because the story is immersive without making a big deal out of it.

- A+ writing

The style is so beautiful that it kept me reading even when I lost some interest in a few aspects of the story. Also worth noting: for a book that's almost 400-pages long, *there are 0 typos.* #AHEM

### What I didn't like

- The last 35% of the book

As the characters began to solve the mystery, the plot slowed down a lot. It almost felt like I was reading the events in real time. The two main story lines (the romance and the mystery) entered a kind of holding pattern right around Chapter 19 or so. To me, the author could've tightened the pace by cutting a good 20-40 pages.

- Romance meh (sorry, Yue-ying and Lord Bai.)

It started with a lot of sweet and snappy banter that balanced out the potential angst about being a star-crossed couple. I was most deffo eating the looks and the flirting up with a spoon. THEN, once the romance was established, rather than go down the predictable route, it took a sharp left. I really liked that it played with the expectations of the genre.

UNFORTUNATELY, the romance made both of them (but mostly Lord Bai) a little bland.

Even worse is that I never got why Lord Bai fell so hard for Yue-ying. In a way, it was like Lin was trying to convince herself as well as the reader that Lord Bai loved Yue-ying for ~reasons~ and simply left it at that. I never got the oomph of emotion. That said, it's not like I hated them as a couple so there's that. :-/

- The mystery (sure, whatever)

This was another instance where I thought a million and one reasons for the crimes and who the suspects would be. TBH, the reason for the crime was horrific, but the resolution to the crimes was a flat one.

**TL;DR:** A historical romance in a time period we rarely get to see. Good female characters and a romance that's charged up for, like, 60-70% of the story. Even though I became less enamored of the story as it approached the end, I do think it's worth checking out (maybe borrow it from the library if you can't spend the coin.)

What's more, I'm deffo reading the second book in the duology (though, I'm not rushing to do that just yet.)

---

## Ben Pim says

????????????????.. ???  
??  
??  
???????????????? ???? ?????? ?????? ?????????????????????????????  
??(?????????????)

---

## Dina says

I read romance books for the HEA and I've been known for trashing a book for a less than satisfying ending, but I have to say that the HEA in this particular romance felt "wrong" to me. Not that Bai Huang and Yue-ying didn't deserve it. I loved them and they certainly deserved to live happily ever after, but...

I don't know how to explain it, I just know that I'd be giving this book a higher rating - and let's not forget that I gave it 4 stars! - if the HEA was nowhere in sight. I'd be sobbing like a ninny, but I'd be loving every minute of it. Go figure. ;)

*Note 1: Note: I received this eARC from Harlequin via NetGalley. That had **no** influence on my review/rating.*

Note 2: AAR Best 2013 Historical Romance Not Set in the U.K.

---

## La Mala 🖐️ says

Súper recomendado! Lo empecé de tarde y no me fui a dormir hasta que no lo terminé (~~creo que en esas horas mi hijo me estuvo llamando o llorando ... o algo ... pero no estoy segura ...~~).

Para los que quieren leer un romance histórico de calidad con un misterio aceptable (nada del aburrido : chica tiene acosador/chicabusca chico que la proteja , que es más o menos la fórmula que siempre me encuentro en los romances con suspenso) , sin estereotipos y con muchos diálogos hermosos .

---

## Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

*"I've heard my face described as flawed, ruined, unfortunate. A bad omen. People avert their gazes and move away from me as if it's a disease they might catch. But after being separated for so many years, my sister was only able to find me because my face was so recognizable. The red-faced whore." A tear slid down her cheek, but she ignored it. "I don't wish to be owned ever again."*

I just have a lot of feelings right now. Tears may have been shed during the reading of this book.

Jeannie Lin is one of the best HR authors today. She is not only a compelling, wonderful writer, but she delves into an era that has long been neglected in Western Fiction. Her historical Chinese romances have become among my favorites of any I've read in the past few years. I loved her older HR series, and this newer series just shows how much she has grown as a writer.

I have to admit, I abandoned this book at first. It didn't catch me upon the first glimpse. But all books take a certain time, a certain mood, and the past week, sick of abandoning books, I returned to this one. I resumed. I couldn't stop.

The setting is beautiful, mysterious...dare I say it? Exotic. It takes place within the Pingkang Li, a district of courtesans. These are not merely prostitutes. There is a difference between a prostitute and a courtesan. It has to do with intelligence, allure. The ability to hold a man's attraction long after he's had his screw.

Our heroine is not one of those courtesans. She is scarred, physically and mentally. **Yue-Ying** is ugly. At least, that's how she views herself. She was born with a disfiguring red mark that renders her unloveable, unwanted. She and her sister, the spectacularly beautiful **Ming-Yu** were sold as children to slave traders.

Ming-Yu became a courtesan. Yue-Ying was forced into prostitution. They somehow found each other again, and you can scarcely find a more complex sisterly relationship than the one within this book.

The Pingkang Li is filled with men of all sorts from high-ranking politicians to wastrels. Bai Huang is somewhere between the two. In Japanese language, one would call him a *ronin*, as in, **one who has failed his exams and is completely fucked**. Bai Huang is from a wealthy, noble family. He has to pass his exams in order to become a public official. So far, he is shit out of luck. He is a handsome, wealthy playboy. A fop, if you will. Of course, he's not what he appears. Do we ever read books for one-dimensional heroes?

What transpires in this book? A mystery. A murder. The rediscovering of one's self.

Yue-Ying, a lowly servant. A former prostitute. Will she and the nobleman Bai Huang be able to find love, despite their differences?

Love for another is one thing; self-love, self-realization, is harder to achieve by far. The thing I loved most about this book is the fact that Yue-Ying grows into herself. She does not allow herself to be defined by her lover and his status. She can say no, even when it hurts.

I feel like the overwhelming lesson of this book is: above all, do not settle for anything less than what you deserve.

*She leaned toward him and only then would he face her. She had never seen him look the way he did at that moment. Drained of life. He had no more fight in him.*

*"One last kiss," he said quietly.*

*"And then I'll go. No farewells. Let this be our last memory of each other."*

*"Am I the illusion now, Yue-ying?"*

*She didn't answer. Instead she kissed him, softly, as she had the first time. He accepted it without moving, as he had the first time. And then she stood to go, just as she had promised.*

---

## **Ana says**

Just when I think I'm too jaded for romance novels, I find this book and I meet Yue-ying.

---

## **MAP says**

WHAT? A romance/mystery/historical fiction novel NOT set in Regency England? WHAT IS THIS SORCERY? IS THIS EVEN LEGAL?

Needless to say, I was thrilled.

---

## **Mrs Giggles says**

The Lotus Palace is one of the more upscale houses of pleasure in Pinkang li, the red light district of Changan. It's 847 AD, and our heroine Yue-ying is the maidservant of the popular courtesan Mingyu. She shouldn't attract attention, but somehow, Lord Bai Huang decides that she's clever and feisty. When someone starts killing the courtesans in the district, and Lord Bai starts poking his nose into the matter, Yue-ying finds herself swept up in the mess.

That's basically the plot of Jeannie Lin's official single title debut with HQN - her last few books were with the Harlequin Historical line - and, I'm not sure whether this heralds a change in direction, but this one has a mystery subplot that puts the romance to the backseat considerably. I personally find the mystery pretty dry and uninteresting, so I find The Lotus Palace too easy to put down.

The romance isn't much of a diversion. I don't see why Bai Huang should be attracted to Yue-ying, I'm just told that he finds her refreshing, clever, et cetera. This is a romance that started with the author going "I tell you, it's like this!" and I keep waiting to be shown that this is the case. Eventually, Yue-ying talks about her sad past and her looks that made life hard for her, but Bai Huang's reaction is basically, "Aw, that's so sad, but it only reinforces why I think you are awesome. You are so strong, on top of being awesome!"

Because he is of the upper class and, therefore, unable to just marry Yue-ying without facing some repercussions to his social standing, I need to see why he's so much into her. I can't, so there's a problem right there. Also, the author wraps the story up a bit too neatly after having the main characters, especially Yue-ying, mope and whine a lot about the issues between them. The obstacles standing between the hero and the heroine ring true, so the author casually sweeping aside these issues in the end and having the characters achieve a happy ending without even a small taint of social repercussion trivialize these obstacles and make the characters seem like big babies all this while foer moping so melodramatically about them.

Simply put, The Lotus Palace is a readable book, but I find it rather boring compared to the author's previous books.

---

### **K.J. Charles says**

A wildly enjoyable romance that doesn't soft soap the issues. A dissolute young man with massive self-esteem issues and a gambling problem falls for a former prostitute, sold into the trade as a child and now a courtesan's servant. All that plus class/cultural issues that firmly tell them both to know their place, and into which the hero buys without really noticing for a long time. This is a meaty romance with a lot to get over, but it really works, and the way the two work together and learn is a joy. I didn't find the mystery element quite so satisfying, but it's probably better it wasn't more to the forefront: the MCs needed the space. Beautifully written with a vivid, tangible setting.

---

### **Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says**

[Instagram](#) || [Twitter](#) || [Facebook](#) || [Amazon](#) || [Pinterest](#)

Jeannie Lin's works always reminded me of the Chinese wuxia films, only with happier endings. They share the same themes of danger, forbidden love, class differences, soulful men, and strong heroines. Except, you know, with Jeannie Lin's books, you're 99.9% sure that your new favorite hero and heroine aren't going to die at the end of the story - and that is a big sell, trust me.

Recently, I read SILK, SWORDS, AND SURRENDER, which is a collection of her short stories. It was pretty good, but the quality of the stories was uneven, and I felt like the shortness of length contributed to that. I'd also read the second book in her *Pingkang Li* series, JADE TEMPTRESS, and while I wasn't really a fan, I did really enjoy the lavish settings and elegant writing. When THE LOTUS PALACE went on sale for \$1.99, it seemed like a no-brainer: surely this time, I thought, the book would hit the mark.

Yue-ying was sold into servitude by her own greedy parents, and rescued from a brothel to work as a servant for the elegant concubine, Mingyu. Mingyu is one of four renowned beauties in the pleasure quarter, and men fawn over her just to catch her eye for a few moments. Nobody notices Yue-ying, who, with her port-wine birthmark that covers half of her face, tends to put people - especially those expecting beauty - at unease. With Mingyu she can fade into the background and that's exactly how Yue-ying and Mingyu prefer it.

Until Lord Bai comes along.

Bai Huang is the son of a nobleman and a struggling scholar. He gambles and flirts outrageously, but it's Yue-ying he kisses in a darkened corridor, and Yue-ying he pursues, even while courting Mingyu for convention's sake. Yue-ying finds herself reluctantly attracted to him as well, but intimacy is difficult for her because of her terrible childhood/adolescence, and she has resolved that, after wresting back the freedom her parents were so quick to put a price on, she will belong to no one.

On top of this Forbidden Romance Sundae® is a Glistening Murder-Cherry™. One of those aforementioned beauties, Huilan, is found murdered. And later, by the river, a man is found murdered - and an expensive hair ornament is found at the scene of the crime. Yue-ying suspects that Mingyu might be involved; but if she's innocent, it might be worse - she might be the next victim.

I really enjoyed how this book navigated the difficulties of dating outside of one's social class. This is often something that is glossed over in historical romances, even though it would have been incredibly scandalous at the time. Jeannie Lin tries to portray the conflicts and the difficulties that would arise from such a scenario - to the point where I was unsure how a 100% satisfactory ending would fit; to be blunt, it didn't. That ending was tacked on as purely fan service. Deus-ex-oh-good-we-can-wed-now.

I also felt that this book was much too long, and the angst between Bai Huang and Yue-ying quickly became tedious. About 100 pages could have been shaved off this book and I think it would have been all the better for it. That said, it was wonderful to read something new, historical romance-wise. I love regency romances as much as anyone, but they're definitely oversaturating the historical romance market - them, and brawny Anglo-Saxon warriors in medieval smutfests (P.S. can we have a book festival called Smutfest? Or maybe Smutcon?). I really want to read Ms. Lin's Tang Dynasty series, as the summaries of those books seem more in line with what I would enjoy (drama, drama, and also more drama). I think, however, that I am done with this one.

2.5 to 3 stars

---

## Emily says

Yue-ying lived life the way she was expected to, as a servant she does not take for granted what her Courtesan employer has done for her. Yue-ying makes a habit of studying the patrons who are trying to win her Courtesan's favors, she pays attention to all of her surroundings in order to have knowledge in case it is ever needed.

When Bai Huang, a privileged playboy begins to pay Yue-ying attention, she quickly puts him in his place, after all they both have their stations in life and there are lines you do not cross. However, Bai doesn't see it that way, he finds Yue-ying's direct manner refreshing and when a murder of one of the Courtesan's leads to an investigation, Bai joins forces with Yue-ying. Although Yue-ying plans to keep Bai at a comfortable distance, her heart becomes involved and when Bai offers to have her become his concubine, Yue-ying is torn on wanting a life with Bai and doing what is right for Bai.

Majestic, mysterious, and sensual story. I thought this was written with a richness that flows throughout the story. Yue-ying is a captivating heroine, she is not educated in one sense, but her intellect in observation is remarkable. Bai is initially a poofed up playboy who gets what he wants, but when Yue-ying calls him on it, his humility brings him back down to earth. There are layers to this story that magnify everything that happens between Yue-ying and Bai. High praise for Jeannie Lin and her ability to pen such a beautiful story.

---