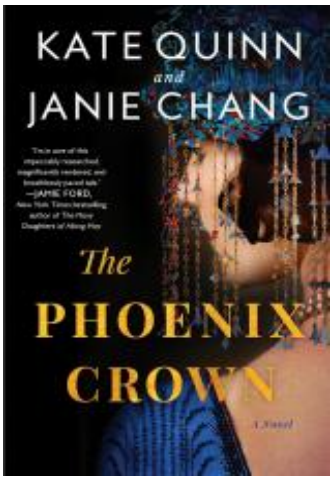
The Phoenix Crown

by Kate Quinn and Janie Chang



About the Book

From bestselling authors Kate Quinn and Janie Chang, a thrilling and unforgettable narrative about the intertwined lives of two wronged women, spanning from the chaos of the San Francisco earthquake to the glittering palaces of Versailles.

San Francisco, 1906. In a city bustling with newly minted millionaires and scheming upstarts, two very different women hope to change their fortunes: Gemma, a golden-haired, silver-voiced soprano whose career desperately needs rekindling, and Suling, a petite and resolute Chinatown embroideress who is determined to escape an arranged marriage. Their paths cross when they are drawn into the orbit of Henry Thornton, a charming railroad magnate whose extraordinary collection of Chinese antiques includes the fabled Phoenix Crown, a legendary relic of Beijing?s fallen Summer Palace.

His patronage offers Gemma and Suling the chance of a lifetime, but their lives are thrown into turmoil when a devastating earthquake rips San Francisco apart and Thornton disappears, leaving behind a mystery reaching further than anyone could have imagined...until the Phoenix Crown reappears five years later at a sumptuous Paris costume ball, drawing Gemma and Suling together in one last desperate quest for justice.

Discussion Guide

1. The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake is one of the deadliest disasters in American history. How much did you know about it going into the book? Have you read any other novels or nonfiction about the San Francisco earthquake?

2. Gemma Garland is determined to build a career while handicapped by health issues and bad luck, and resolves to be hard-nosed in protecting her own interests. What did she learn in the course of events? Did your opinion of her change?

3. Suling belonged to the first generation of American-born Chinese. In many ways, people like her faced more challenges of identity than their parents did. Discuss those challenges and compare them to what immigrants today face when settling into a new country.

4. What hints did you get that Suling was not typical of a Chinese girl of that era, and what influences in her life made those characteristics credible to you?

5. Alice Eastwood is a friend and mentor to all the other women at various points in the novel --- an independent woman with a career and a strong sense of self. What do the others learn from Alice, and what does she learn from them?

6. Did you suspect the connection between Gemma?s friend, Nelly, and Suling?s suitor, Reggie?

7. Historical fiction frequently sparks an interest in learning more from the historical record. What storylines, tidbits or trivia from this novel inspire you to go down the research rabbit hole?

Author Bio

Kate Quinn is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of historical fiction. A native of Southern California, she attended Boston University, where she earned bachelor?s and master?s degrees in classical voice. A lifelong history buff, she has written four novels in the *Empress of Rome Saga* and two books set in the Italian Renaissance before turning to the 20th century with THE ALICE NETWORK, THE HUNTRESS, THE ROSE CODE, THE DIAMOND EYE and THE BRIAR CLUB. THE ASTRAL LIBRARY is her first foray into magical realism. She and her husband now live in Maryland with their rescue dogs.

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