

# THE LAST CONCUBINE BY CATT FORD



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## THE LAST CONCUBINE BY CATT FORD PDF

When Princess Lan'xiu's brother delivers her under duress into General Hui Wei's harem as a political offering, her only question is how soon her secret will be discovered. She is under no illusions: when the general discovers she is actually a he, death is his only future—though he doesn't plan to make it easy. Lan'xiu has dressed as a woman all his life, but he is no damsel in distress. He can swing a sword with the best of them.

General Hui Wei has everything a man could want: power, wealth, success on the battlefield, and a harem of concubines. At first, he regards Lan'xiu with suspicion, but he finds himself strangely drawn to her. When he discovers the beautiful young woman is actually a man, his first reaction is to draw his sword. Rather than waste such beauty, he decides to enjoy the spirited Lan'xiu's submission—and ignites a passion and desire deeper than anything he's felt with other wives. But court intrigue, political ambitions, and the general's doubts may be too much for their love to overcome.

A Timeless Dreams title: While reaction to same-sex relationships throughout time and across cultures has not always been positive, these stories celebrate M/M love in a manner that may address, minimize, or ignore historical stigma.

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Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Overly romantic but a damned good read

By Erastes

Ok, I'll say it up front that this book is schmoopy. So if you like schmoop you are absolutely guaranteed to like this.

But it's also a damned good story, with wonderful characters, a good plot and an adventure to boot. So if you don't like the over-schmoopy, which I don't, much, then you won't be disappointed with the rest of it, so give it a go.

Oh dear, I seem to have done my summing up paragraphs at the beginning. You'll want a review now. Ok. Here goes.

I hadn't read the blurb at all when Dreamspinner sent me this book for review, and it was with a couple of other gay historicals so I was about three chapters in and I thought "Where is the gay in this gay historical?" I was getting sort of annoyed about having read something that I thought was het (nothing against het, it's just that I have such limited reading time) when all became clear and boy, didn't I feel stupid.

The description of a medieval Chinese society is well done. Ford is clever, having most of the action taking place within a palace and further in, within the locked and gated women's quarters where only eunuchs, women, guards and the General himself can visit. With this device she can concentrate on the relationships within those walls, the paranoia and fear of the women and the way they interact without having to do much about the ever shifting allegiances within China itself.

I'm not sure when this is set-there's a mention of Sun Emperor Ju, and the only Ju I could find was around the 600AD time, so that would seem to work. I know absolutely nothing about the country other than from Pearl S Buck's books and the few gay historicals there are, but this reads every believably, but I assume it's AU rather than historical as I couldn't find any mention of the General either, so if that is important to you, you might want to avoid.

The characters, as I said were pretty great all round. There's a rather unfortunate Dragon Lady stereotype and perhaps I'd like to have seen more motivation for her general evilness than simple jealousy and obvious madness, but First Wife Mei Ju, Fifth Wife Bai and all the other concubines and wives we meet are individual and interesting in their own way. The deference and customs are shown gently and without tub thumping exposition and I really did fear for Lan'Xiu's life, both before her denouement and afterwards. It also shows a good blurring of genders, as Lan has been brought up one way and prefers to act and dress like that, and Ning, her eunuch - who I would really like to have seen a lot more of, because I think he may have a fascinating back story, and we were teased with it, and then it was snatched away-is referred to as the third sex, but is really not that at all, but perhaps something else. It makes you think, which is a good thing in a book.

The uber-schmoopyness comes in after Lan and Hui Wei have consummated their relationship. There's instant lust and instant love for both of them which I could easily believe from Lan, because she had been starved of physical contact and affection, but I wasn't so convinced as to why Hui became quite so besotted quite so quickly. He had one night with Lan, and then stayed away for quite some time, so it didn't seem very realistic. Plus of course he really should have questioned why he was in love with Lan when for so long he'd been heterosexual and (as far as we are told) has never fancied men, despite being surrounded by them 24 hours a day. He does question it a little, but it's brushed aside. The sex scenes are rather over-blown because of this over-romantic, lovey-doveyness, and although I could understand the use of the "mine, mine" "yours yours" claiming trope because of the nature of literal ownership of women by men at the time, I can't say I'm won over by it, however true to the time.

The parts I liked the best were the action scenes, one of which is towards the beginning and the major one towards the end. I could really see this as a Chinese action film, one of those legendary ones where everyone jumps impossible distances, hair flying in the wind and gorgeous costumes. Oh yes, and for costume buffs, the descriptions of the Chinese ladies' outfits are to die for.

So yes, to sum up again, thoroughly enjoyable and I recommend that you give it a go. I could have done without the over-lovey-dovey, but it fitted the story.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Splendid MM romance in the East!

By Niki

Catt Ford has written a fascinating and most enjoyable mm romance tale in ancient china. I could not stop reading as I have to find out what happen next to our cross dressing hero, Lan Xiu. His adventures as he struggles to fit into the life of a concubine is highly entertaining and I have to say realistic too. As an Asian who have watched quite a lot of ancient Chinese drama, I am pleased with the pretty accurate description of

the way the wives/concubines of the rich and powerful live. Their individual abode within walking distance of each other in a closely guarded compound, a prison with all the luxuries of life but no freedom. The only thing they live for is whether her lantern is the one lighted for the night. The jealousies, the competition, the pettiness, the rivalries, the sisterhood, an environment, poor Lan Xiu is thrown into. Lan Xiu is a very likable character and it is easy to understand the way he is from his background. The other character I like who is just as important in the story is Lan Xiu's faithful protector, the eunuch Ning. Their "mistress/servant" bond is a highlight of the story. Don't get me wrong. I enjoy LAN Xiu's romance with his general too as this is foremost a love story with a cinderella flavor as our cross dressing princess rises from the ashes and becomes his general's only consort. But the romance is expected whereas the bond between princess and servant is not. And when the princess/servant bond is so well weaved into the story, it certainly is a wonderful bonus in the plot. General Hui Wei is likable enough as the powerful warrior and he does paint an intriguing figure in the beginning. But this character does fade slightly in the first part of the story as the plot focuses on LAN Xiu's highly entertaining interaction with the general's wives/concubines. And when he finds himself besotted by the "princess", the general does seem to lose some of his aura. But then, this is foremost a MM romance! The secondary characters is as much the strength of the book as much as the fascinating plot and the two mains. And how could I resist such a brave crossdresser who loves his colorful gowns as much as the freedom to swing a sword, rides his horse and fights besides his lord. Very enjoyable indeed.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Hopefully not the "last"

By shacary

I was surprised, this novel turned out to be an interesting read. I learned about Chinese heirachy/ and segregation of the harems [ gilded cage? ]. The fact that the concubine turns up to be male is unique and intriguing. I loved the swordfighting, and the silky dressings.

THE intrigue and treachery inside the harem was tense albeit predictable. The sex was hot, but the romance behind it seemed a bit lacking imo. I did totally enjoy the novel tho, it was a fast read, entertaining and flowing well. I do however hope this is not the "last" of this author's writing. great stuff!

See all 15 customer reviews...

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