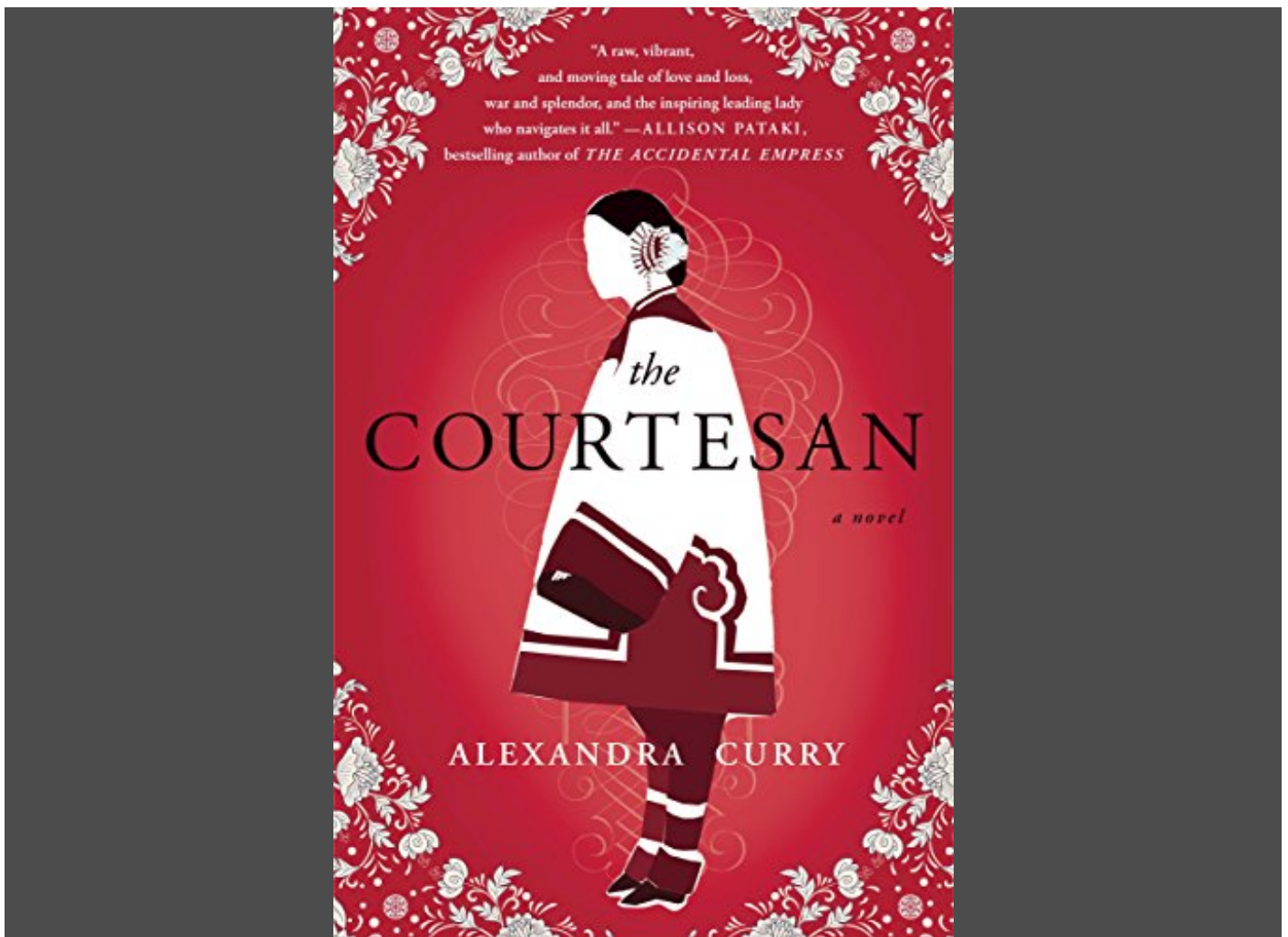


PDF | The Courtesan: A Novel

by Alexandra Curry



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A timeless novel inspired by the legendary real-life Chinese courtesan Sai Jinhua—an extraordinary woman who bridged two worlds in the twilight decades of the Qing dynasty, a tumultuous era of East meets West.

The year is 1881. Seven-year-old Jinhua is left an orphan, alone and unprotected after her mandarin father's summary execution for the crime of speaking the truth. For seven silver coins, she is sold to a brothel-keeper and subjected to the worst of human nature.

When an elegant but troubled scholar takes Jinhua as his concubine, she enters the close world of his jealous first wife. Yet it is Jinhua who accompanies him—as emissary to the foreign devil nations of Prussia, Austria-Hungary, and Russia—on an exotic journey to Vienna. As he struggles to play his part in China's early, blundering diplomatic engagement with the Western world, Jinhua's eyes and heart are opened to the irresistible possibilities of a place that is mesmerizing and strange, where she will struggle against the constraints of tradition and her husband's authority and seek to find "Great Love."

Sai Jinhua is an altered woman when she returns to a changed and changing China, where a dangerous clash of cultures pits East against West. As the Boxer Rebellion brews and finally breaks, Jinhua's Western sympathies will threaten not only her own survival but the survival of those who are most dear to her.

An authentic and beautifully written portrait of China's relationship with the West, the story of the incredible Sai Jinhua, told the way it might have been, is not to be forgotten.



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