

NIGHT ANGELS by Weina Dai Randel

Published by Lake Union Publishing

My latest book recommendation is '*Night Angels*' by Weina Dai Randel. Set in 1939, during the occupation of Vienna by the Nazis, it is a tense and thought-provoking novel about a cruel regime bent on destroying the entire Jewish population ... and one man's determined attempt to stop them.

MY REVIEW

Grace is the American-born wife of Dr Ho Fengshan, the Consul General of China, currently based at the Chinese consulate in Vienna. As a diplomat's wife, Grace is expected to accompany her husband to social gatherings and official functions. However, although being half Chinese herself, she can speak neither Chinese nor German. Coupled with the fact she is also shy, she therefore finds the fulfilment of these societal obligations both difficult and challenging.

Fluent himself in German, Fengshan is keen for his wife to learn the language too. However, despite his attempts to introduce Grace to several tutors, she successfully manages to avoid them all until, running out of excuses, she eventually agrees to meet Lola Schnitzler, a young Viennese Jewish woman with whom she strikes up a close friendship.

Unfortunately, with Austria now in the grip of the Third Reich, their friendship is a problem for Fengshan. Even though the Führer's policies had strained relations between China and Germany, Fengshan's superior had ordered him to maintain a functional diplomatic tie to the new regime – which meant avoiding contact with all Jews. With no other friends in Vienna, Grace refuses to abandon Lola, causing Fengshan to re-evaluate his loyalty. Torn between his duty to China, his love for his wife, and the growing injustice towards the Jews, Fengshan finally makes a decision that could put all their lives in danger.

Having read the blurb, I was not sure at first whether I was going to enjoy this novel. However, I was glad I decided to depart from my usual preference for crime thrillers and take a chance, as '*Night Angels*' proved to be not only enjoyable but totally engrossing.

Set against a backdrop of Hitler's growing hostility towards the Jewish population, the author has combined the heroic actions of the real Dr Ho Fengshan with the fictional story of two women, from

very different backgrounds, whose forbidden friendship eventually destroys both their lives. This combination of both fact and fiction makes for both an exciting and moving read.

THE AUTHOR

Weina Dai Randel is the award-winning author of four novels: *'Night Angels'*, *'The Last Rose of Shanghai'*, *'The Moon in the Palace'* and *'The Empress of Bright Moon'*, a historical duology about Wu Zetian. Weina is the winner of the RWA RITA® Award, a National Jewish Book Awards finalist, and a two-time *Goodreads* Choice Award for Best Historical Fiction nominee. Weina is also the recipient of the Mass Cultural Council's art grant in 2023. Her books have been translated into thirteen languages.

Born in China, Weina came to the United States at twenty-four, when she switched to English and began to speak, write and dream in her second language. She holds an MA in English from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas and has worked as the subject-matter expert for Southern New Hampshire University's MFA programme, as well as an adjunct professor. Interviews with Weina have appeared on WFAA's *Good Morning Texas* and in such publications as *World Literature Today*, *Texas Jewish Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Huffington Post*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *RT Book Reviews*. After living in Texas for years, Weina now resides in Massachusetts with her loving husband, two children, and a family of chipmunks in the backyard.

'Night Angels' is published by Lake Union Publishing and is available in ebook, audio book and paperback format from Amazon.