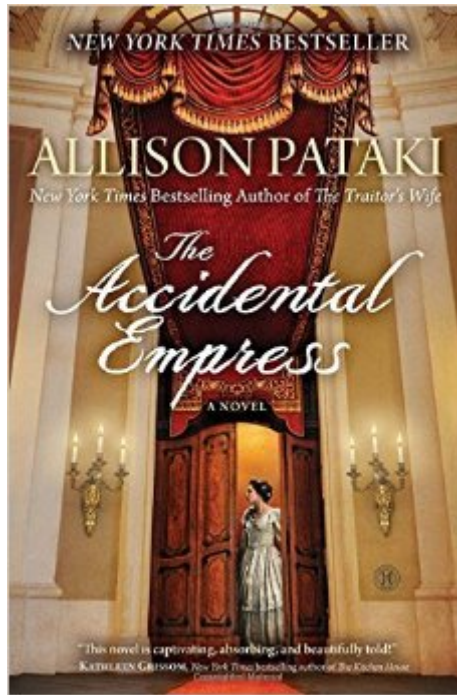


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The Accidental Empress: A Novel



Synopsis

The Accidental Empress is the fascinating and foundational story of this little-known, yet highly significant empress—a must read for anyone interested in the sequel *Sisi*. A *New York Times* bestseller, *The Accidental Empress* is the love story of Sisi—the Austro-Hungarian Empress and wife of Emperor Franz Joseph is “captivating, absorbing, and beautifully told” (Kathleen Grissom). The year is 1853, and the Habsburgs are Europe’s most powerful ruling family. With his empire stretching from Austria to Russia, from Germany to Italy, Emperor Franz Joseph is young, rich, and ready to marry. Fifteen-year-old Elisabeth, Sisi—Duchess of Bavaria, travels to the Habsburg Court with her older sister, who is betrothed to the young emperor. But shortly after her arrival at court, Sisi finds herself in an unexpected dilemma: she has inadvertently fallen for and won the heart of her sister’s groom. Franz Joseph reneges on his earlier proposal and declares his intention to marry Sisi instead. Thrust onto the throne of Europe’s most treacherous imperial court, Sisi upsets political and familial loyalties in her quest to win, and keep, the love of her emperor, her people, and of the world. With Pataki’s rich period detail and cast of complex, bewitching characters, *The Accidental Empress* offers “another absolutely compelling story” (Mary Higgins Clark) with this glimpse into one of history’s most intriguing royal families, shedding new light on the glittering Hapsburg Empire and its most mesmerizing, most beloved “Fairy Queen.”

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Allison Pataki has written another gem in *The Accidental Empress*. Her first novel,

• was greeted with accolades for a new and refreshing writer of historical fiction. Ms. Pataki clearly does not take her foot of the gas or hit the Sophomore Jinx. This book was a pure joy to read. Pataki takes the reader across the Atlantic from her first novel, which takes place in Revolutionary America. The Accidental Empress takes place in 19th Century Europe and again is written through the mind of a young and wonderfully rich and complex female character, Sisi, who marries the very desirable Emperor Franz Joseph. Reading historical fiction through young women is a refreshing way to see history unfold and is also a terrific way to tell a story with more intrigue than one might imagine in a novel that is a very manageable and fun read. Pataki's writing even seemed to improve in her second novel. Her ability to place the reader into Sisi's world 19th Century Europe was even better than her first effort with Peggy Shippen, Benedict Arnold's wife in 18th Century America. And few would argue with her first effort. It is pleasant (and rare) to see a writer progress after a successful debut rather than just rush out something to sell off of a previous success. Allison Pataki is establishing herself as a terrific, and now consistent, author and writer of historical fiction. This book was an absolute pleasure to read. I find myself already waiting to hear what her next idea is. Get a copy and enjoy!!

I could not have been happier hunkered down during a blizzard due to my fascination with The Accidental Empress. Allison Pataki had me at a good old fashioned love triangle, 1800's couture and a tyrannical mother-in-law. This book brings the reader in, immersing them in the time period and Empress Sisi's life. I found myself transfixed with Sisi: wishing for her happy ending while judging her harshly. This inner conflict made me think about the book, even when I was not reading. It was spellbinding. Pataki's use of language is simply beautiful, weaving in quotes from Shakespeare and Goethe, bringing depth to the already enchanting book. Historical fiction can sometimes read like a newspaper or a textbook, but The Accidental Empress and The Traitor's Wife are fascinating stories built within the structure of history. I can only hope that Allison Pataki finds more historical figures with fascinating stories to add to her repertoire of books.

I read The Traitor's Wife and enjoyed it so I was looking forward to reading Allison's second book, The Accidental Empress. I wasn't disappointed. It follows the least likely of two Bavarian Duchesses who are related to Franz of the House of Hapsburg in Austria. Franz is looking for a wife and his mother has chosen Helene the older sister to be his wife. Helene's younger sister, Elisabeth, and her mother accompany Helene to Austria. Elisabeth goes to be her older sister's assistant but instead catches the eye of Franz. The story follows the Bavarian wild child, Elisabeth, as she

transforms from a child more comfortable in the woods to a young woman who assumes the role of Empress. Ms Pataki has done the research to draw you into the story so you can envision 1800s Austria and watch the story unfold. There are mysteries, forbidden love, as a kingdom undergoes transition. I highly recommend it. My bookclub is reading *The Traitor's Wife* and I will recommend *The Accidental Empress* as well. Even if you don't know much about this period in history, it's a fun read.

Empress Elizabeth is such a fascinating, real life character, maybe it is impossible to do her justice in the pages of a book. Then again, I have read some fabulous historic novels, so I think it IS possible. Unfortunately that is not the case here. While many of the facts about her life are right, I think her fundamental personality and imagined thoughts are off base. Also, her influence on politics and the future of the monarchy in Austria are barely touched on -- more an afterthought than anything else. To stop her life story in 1867 when the rest of her life was equally fascinating felt like only getting half a book. One good thing is that I started to research her life, and this book prompted me to do so. After reading as much as I could about her, I came to the conclusion that this book, which mostly reads like a romance is only a light preview of the complex woman it is based upon.

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