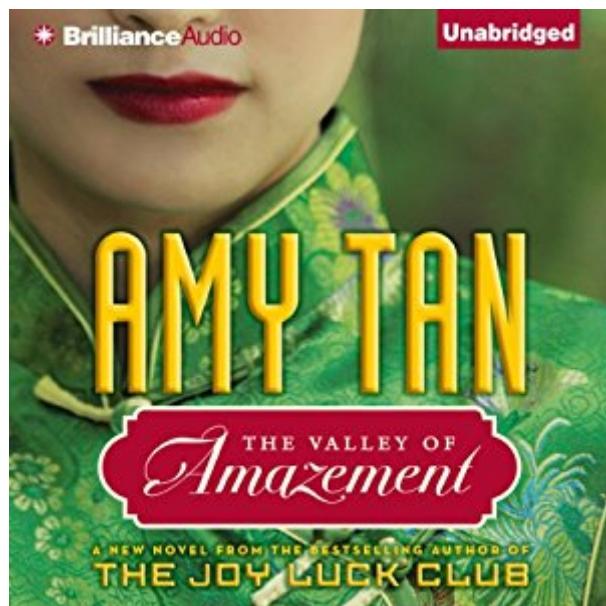


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The Valley Of Amazement



Synopsis

New York Times best-selling author of *The Joy Luck Club* Amy Tan brings us her latest novel: a sweeping, evocative epic of two women's intertwined fates and their search for identity - from the lavish parlors of Shanghai courtesans to the fog-shrouded mountains of a remote Chinese village Shanghai, 1912. Violet Minturn is the privileged daughter of the American madam of the city's most exclusive courtesan house. But when the Ching dynasty is overturned, Violet is separated from her mother in a cruel act of chicanery and forced to become a "virgin courtesan." Half-Chinese and half-American, Violet grapples with her place in the worlds of East and West - until she is able to merge her two halves, empowering her to become a shrewd courtesan who excels in the business of seduction and illusion, though she still struggles to understand who she is. Back in 1897 San Francisco, Violet's mother, Lucia, chooses a disastrous course as a sixteen-year-old, when her infatuation with a Chinese painter compels her to leave her home for Shanghai. Shocked by her lover's adherence to Chinese traditions, she is unable to change him, despite her unending American ingenuity. Fueled by betrayals, both women refuse to submit to fate and societal expectations, persisting in their quests to recover what was taken from them: respect; a secure future; and, most poignantly, love from their parents, lovers, and children. To reclaim their lives, they take separate journeys - to a backwater hamlet in China, the wealthy environs of the Hudson River Valley, and, ultimately, the unknown areas of their hearts, where they discover what remains after their many failings to love and be loved. Spanning more than forty years and two continents, *The Valley of Amazement* transports listeners from the collapse of China's last imperial dynasty to the beginning of the Republic and recaptures the lost world of old Shanghai through the inner workings of courtesan houses and the lives of the foreigners living in the International Settlement, both erased by World War II. A deeply evocative narrative of the profound connections between mothers and daughters, imbued with Tan's characteristic insight and humor, *The Valley of Amazement* conjures a story of inherited trauma, desire and deception, and the power and obstinacy of love.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I too am an Amy Tan fan and I too am very disappointed by this tediously long book. As I trudged through it, I kept wondering if Ms Tan had begun it before she hit her stride as a writer. It is romance novel, with all of the swooning and silly rescues and ill fated silliness of that genre. I wanted to smack Violet frequently, especially when she lost Little Flora and then hardly bothered to mention her lost child again. When things seemed to finally be winding up with Violet climbing that mysterious mountain (which, sorry to say, seemed like an incredibly contrived device that I never could quite understand), the blasted book didn't end but started a whole new episode of the boring Lucia and her love nest in the turret and her over wrought reaction to the painting of that other contrived device, The Valley of Amazement. I am so sorry that I disliked this endless book so much and that I finally gave up about the time Lucia was traveling to Shanghai. I simply couldn't read any more and I suggest you skip this one altogether and hope for something better next time from this usually wonderful author.

I very much liked this book, especially seeing the difference in cultures. This author has a talent for projecting you inside the characters hearts, sometimes with a soft nudge and sometimes with a sharp stab. I learned a great deal about how cultural differences can push feelings down very different paths.

So happy that I finally gave in and bought this book! May Tan is an excellent story teller. I could not put this book down until I finished it. I wish there was a sequel to this book. I'd love to know what happened to Little Flora, Violet, Loyalty, Golden Gourd, and Lulu Minturn .

Although this was a very good book, at times I was so frustrated that every situation they found themselves in seemed to end in misery. But in the end it all turned out and that is always the way to end a book; all the loose ends tied up and every miserable occurrence atoned for.

Wonderful writer! I didn't care for the "details" of a courtesans life, but this is a story about mother daughter relationship and how it seems to repeat itself as time goes on. It was a compelling read and I know she worked very hard to complete it.

In this book, Amy Tan returns to the theme of Mother-Daughter Relationships. The story takes place in San Francisco and Shanghai and documents the struggles and triumphs of two generations of Chinese-American mothers and daughters during the early 1900's.. Amy Tan's powerful descriptive skills make it possible for the reader to clearly visualize the Shanghai setting, the physical appearance of the characters, the clothing worn by the Consorts who worked and lived in high-end Shanghai Pleasure Palaces for men, and the physical interiors of the houses in which they lived and worked. The reader also receives a clear picture of the heartbreak mothers and daughters endure when separation occurs and the importance of true and loyal friends during the very difficult times of life. This is a story of triumph over terrible adversity, a reminder of the everlasting bond that exists between Mothers and Daughters, and a tribute to the determination of women who find the strength and the will to outwit those who have inflicted hardship on them to eventually find the good life they so richly deserve. You will not want to put this one down.

This was not one of her best efforts in my opinion. I understand that she did lots of research on the subject of courtesans and it shows up well in her story. But there were too many implausible decisions made by these women which lead to their downfalls that just did not fit with any reasonable person's likely actions. For instance, they kept talking about getting Violet's birth certificate, but never went to look for it. Why in the world the mother would send Fairweather to get it, never made sense to me. She speaks Chinese, she's the mother, she knows all the information involved, her business was down - for what reason would she send him? These people were hardened to life's cruelties and wisely careful with protecting their jewelry etc., but then simply handed it over to someone who wasn't even going travel with them? It would have cost next to nothing to hire a bodyguard to travel with them. Just didn't seem to add up. And these elements were too key to the moving of the story to then make it a believable story for me.

I've enjoyed all of Amy Tan's writing. Such real characters! Such descriptive settings! I went to China in the middle of reading this book, and I tried to imagine what it was like in the days before and during the war, especially as I walked along the Bund. Tan's writing put me right there in the

world of courtesan houses and the segregated American community, knowing the secrets of that which is no longer as it was.

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