



# The Sultan's Harem

By Colin Falconer

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## The Sultan's Harem By Colin Falconer

From the author of the critically acclaimed **When We Were Gods** comes a dramatic, unforgettable novel of cruelty and passion set in the great Harem of the Ottoman empire.

In Constantinople there is only one ruler: Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, Lord of Lords of this World, Possessor of Men's Necks, Allah's Deputy, absolute ruler of the mighty Ottoman Empire. And at the heart of his palace is the Sultan's vast Harem, the domain of hundreds of scented, pampered women—some wives, some concubines, some merely slaves. Among them is Gulbehar, the Sultan's submissive favorite and mother of his heir; Julia, the daughter of an Italian lord, kidnapped when she attempted to flee Venice with her lover; and Hürrem, a Tartar girl from the Russian steppes, sold into slavery.

All three women are beautiful, but Hürrem is the most dangerous—ruthless in her desire to rule the Harem and, ultimately, Suleyman himself. Endlessly manipulative and clever, she carefully arranges the downfall of her rivals and endears herself to the Sultan, which places her at the center of the Empire's power. It is his obsession with Hürrem—not his enemies—that costs Suleyman his allies, his sons, and finally his dynasty.

Bestselling author Colin Falconer offers an irresistible glimpse into a world of intrigue, sensuality, and violence, where an empire can be controlled not by the might of its ruler, but by the women hidden behind the Harem walls.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Lengthy, involved and meandering, this epic soap opera by veteran historical novelist Falconer (*Feathered Serpent*, etc.) is set in the court of the 16th-century Turkish sultan Süleyman and its harem of 300 beautiful women. Süleyman favors Gülbehar, who has borne him a son, but Hürrem, a ruthless red-haired Russian, schemes to be next in line, seducing the sultan with her wiles: thus begins an epic catfight. For nearly four decades (1522–1559), Hürrem conspires mercilessly against her enemies, employing lies, blackmail and poison. One of her victims is Julia, a captive Venetian girl, whose own unlikely story (she once loved the man who is now the eunuch in charge of the harem) plays out in counterpoint to Hürrem's. As Hürrem becomes bolder, Süleyman falls under her malevolent spell, until his ability to rule is questioned. Although filled with meticulous detail about the customs and role of the harem, the book pays little attention to the greater historical events of the era. Loaded with court and harem intrigue, it is short on action and long on bedroom conspiracies, which lose their juicy appeal long before the drawn-out conclusion.

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From [Booklist](#)

Falconer, author of *Feathered Serpent* (2002) and *When We Were Gods* (2000), stirs up a potent brew of splendor and misery in this page-turner set during the reign of sixteenth-century Ottoman sultan Suleyman I, called "the Magnificent" in the West. As seen here, Suleyman is a competent ruler with a fatal flaw: an obsession for Hurrem, his favorite concubine. Embittered by slavery, a "living death," Hurrem will stop at nothing, even the murder of her own sons, in her drive for power and revenge. Caught up in the intrigue are other characters, both historical and fictional: Gulbehar, the mother of Suleyman's heir; Ibrahim, Suleyman's trusted Grand Vizier; Julia, a Venetian who is taken captive by pirates and winds up as one of Suleyman's 300 harem girls; and Abbas, the eunuch in charge of the harem, who loved Julia in his youth and paid a terrible price. Plot twists, an exotic setting, and vivid details compensate for some wooden dialogue. This peek behind the walls of the seraglio will seduce lovers of large-scale historical fiction. *Mary Ellen Quinn*  
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Review

"A page-turner . . . This peek behind the walls of the seraglio will seduce lovers of large-scale historical fiction." —*Booklist*

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

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