



## ★ **Descendant of the Crane**

**Joan He**

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Joan He's *Descendant of the Crane* is a riveting, complex story set in a Chinese-inspired fantasy world full of magic, intrigue, and mystery.

Hesina's first task as the new queen of Yan is to discover who poisoned her father. She starts by seeking out a sooth to provide guidance—an act of treason, as all sooths were outlawed when the Eleven, a group of rebel heroes, overthrew the last emperor three centuries ago.

With Akira, a brilliant thief whose help she enlists, Hesina discovers dangerous truths and finds herself embroiled in the politics of a corrupt court. She is forced to choose between the law, the truth about her father's death, and the welfare of her people.

The characters are complex and alive. Hesina does not believe she is a good ruler, but she sacrifices her own happiness to do the right thing. Akira has a violent, tragic past to overcome; he, too, always seeks to do what is right. Hesina's siblings, including her biological brother, twins her father brought to the palace as young children, and a half-sibling her father had with his concubine, have intimate and often difficult relationships, each pursuing their own agendas while supporting, and sometimes undermining, each other's efforts.

The world building is impressive, too. Yan's history is key to the story, and it is seamlessly incorporated via fables, laws, customs, and beliefs, with elements like descriptions of food and clothing adding texture. The Book of Tenets, which was created by the Eleven to guide the people of Yan, is the central element around which the entire world and its inhabitants are built.

*Descendant of the Crane* is a compelling, immersive book. Young adults will find a story and a world that is a joy to explore in this highly original mystery.

CATHERINE THURESON (May/June 2019)

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