

## Duchess of the New Dawn

**Kim Rendfeld**

IngramSpark (Jun 16, 2026)

Softcover \$16.99 (246pp)

979-899854061-5

A noblewoman uses her wits to secure the man she loves, their child, and the future of her duchy in Kim Rendfeld's resplendent novel *Duchess of the New Dawn*.

In 740 CE, Lady Chiltrude is the only daughter of one of Francia's most powerful families. When she meets Odilo, the Duke of Bavaria, curiosity turns to passion, then love. However, Chiltrude's father, Charles, will not agree to his daughter's marrying Odilo. Chiltrude's older brothers, Karlomann and Pippin, are also against the union, which would threaten their own hereditary plans.

When Charles dies, Chiltrude's future is left in the hands of her domineering brothers. But Chiltrude and Odilo's love for each other is strong, and soon, an heir to the Duke of Bavaria is announced—Chiltrude's unborn child.

Spanning a decade, the story is a romantic adventure and a masterclass in medieval realpolitik. Told in Chiltrude's voice, the narrative limits action to what she sees and hears from her dedicated circle of maids, religious confessors, and loyal servants. The diplomatic and political machinations are explored in cerebral and illuminating terms.

A blend of historical and imagined characters are included among the internecine warfare of Francia in the 740s, where brothers war against brothers, alliances shift faster than the wind, and a noblewoman's role is to broker peace between adversarial factions. Reflecting on how the men in her orbit insist on her ability to "weave peace," Chiltrude wonders at their stupidity: They "keep ripping the threads."

In the gripping historical novel *Duchess of the New Dawn*, a woman works to protect her legacy against the violent vicissitudes of her era.

PEGGY KURKOWSKI (May / June 2026)

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