

Writing PRISONER OF THE CROWN was an interesting foray into history for me. See, this book is the first in a trilogy that's a spinoff from the world established in my Twelve Kingdoms and Uncharted Realms series. The Empire of Dasnaria, where PRISONER takes place, is a foreign – and aggressive – realm encountered by the people of the Twelve Kingdoms. And Dasnaria is a *very* different culture where women do not have the same rights and freedoms that they do in the twelve.

Part of that came from wanting a foil to my assertive and powerful High Queen of the Twelve Kingdoms, and the other part came from me being aware of the political and cultural situation in our modern world. I wanted to better understand how women can be happy raised in a culture where they're kept "under wraps" in one way or another, where men decide their lives and provide escorts everywhere. Dasnaria became that place in my fictional world.

With PRISONER, I got to write that story from the inside, through the character of Imperial Princess Jenna, born in the seraglio of the Imperial Palace of Dasnaria. She's spent her entire life there, surrounded by women and given a carefully crafted education. So, while I knew the societal rules of Dasnaria from my people of the Twelve Kingdoms learning about them, Jenna was my first opportunity to be in the head of a woman who grew up inside that culture, who knows those rules as immutable.

This proved to be a challenge, because the cloistered world of the seraglio is all Jenna knows to begin with. It's not until she leaves the seraglio to be married that she begins to seriously question whether she could have another life. At first, she utterly believes that men are smarter and stronger, that only through her husband and sons – and manipulating her daughters the same way she's been groomed – can she gain any power. She takes at face value that women must learn to pleasure men, and she'll offer her body with complete obedience and submissive grace to her husband, no matter what he demands of her. She even nurtures a romantic ideal that if she's beautiful and perfect, then she will have a happy marriage.

We all know how that kind of thinking works out.

This story is not a romance. The beastly husband doesn't turn out to be a wonderful man beneath. This is entirely Jenna's story, and how she discovers that how she's been raised and what she's been taught is only one lens on the world.

And that there's more out there beyond the Empire of Dasnaria.