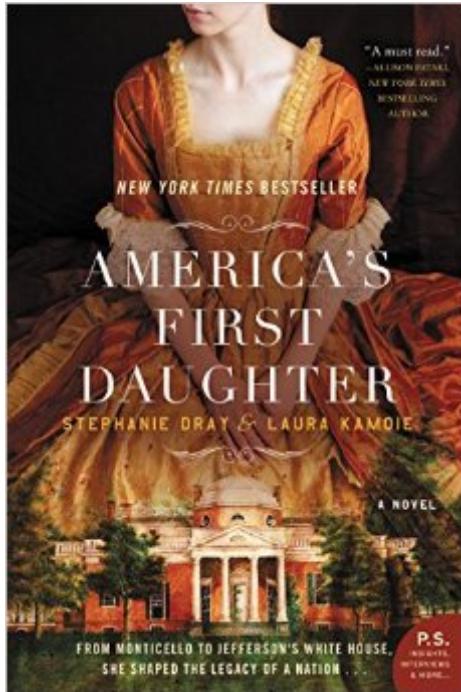


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America's First Daughter: A Novel



Synopsis

THE NEW YORK TIMES® & USA TODAY® BESTSELLERIn a compelling, richly researched novel that draws from thousands of letters and original sources, bestselling authors Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie tell the fascinating, untold story of Thomas Jefferson's eldest daughter, Martha "Patsy" Jefferson Randolph--a woman who kept the secrets of our most enigmatic founding father and shaped an American legacy. From her earliest days, Patsy Jefferson knows that though her father loves his family dearly, his devotion to his country runs deeper still. As Thomas Jefferson's oldest daughter, she becomes his helpmate, protector, and constant companion in the wake of her mother's death, traveling with him when he becomes American minister to France. It is in Paris, at the glittering court and among the first tumultuous days of revolution, that fifteen-year-old Patsy learns about her father's troubling liaison with Sally Hemings, a slave girl her own age. Meanwhile, Patsy has fallen in love--with her father's protégé William Short, a staunch abolitionist and ambitious diplomat. Torn between love, principles, and the bonds of family, Patsy questions whether she can choose a life as William's wife and still be a devoted daughter. Her choice will follow her in the years to come, to Virginia farmland, Monticello, and even the White House. And as scandal, tragedy, and poverty threaten her family, Patsy must decide how much she will sacrifice to protect her father's reputation, in the process defining not just his political legacy, but that of the nation he founded.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Authors of America's First Daughter Talk with C. W. Gortner C. W. Gortner (CWG):

Congratulations on America's First Daughter! I thoroughly enjoyed this book! How did you decide to write Martha Patsy; Jefferson Randolph's story? Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie (SD and LK): Thanks so much! It started over burgers at a writing conference, when we discovered a mutual love of American history and wondered what Jefferson was like as a father, not just a founding father. At the time, Laura was a history professor by day and romance author by night, whereas Stephanie split her writing time between romances and historicals. We got the crazy brainchild to combine our experiences in a book about Jefferson's eldest daughter, and raced back to the hotel room to research. Frankly, we had no idea that it would take five years, three agents, eighteen thousand letters and a road trip to get this book out. But we did know that we had stumbled upon a great untold American story. CWG: I am fascinated to know more about your collaborative process. The voice that jumps from the page felt united and seamless. What was co-writing like? SD and LK: Having never worked together before, we were taking an enormous leap of faith. We have vastly different working styles. But we had a few things going for us, especially profound mutual respect. We shared a vision for the story, and neither of us had an ego about who wrote what. Therefore, we could freely revise what the other person drafted, making it so that both of us had worked on most scenes. We didn't often disagree, but when we did, we would explain our positions and ultimately come up with a third solution superior to what we'd come up with on our own. We were almost always able to build upon one another's ideas in a way that was a pure joy. CWG: What was your greatest resource while researching this novel? And did anything surprise you during that process? SD and LK: Jefferson's letters, as edited by his family for posterity, were indispensable. We were able to take dialogue directly from the letters; we were also able to glean changes in the man. In Patsy's early childhood, her father was suffering from tremendous suicidal grief, all while coming to terms with his new life as a single parent in an 18th-century world where fathers did little parenting. The controlling and sometimes emotionally unavailable Jefferson of Patsy's youth is a different father than the one he grew to be: warm, generous, and very respectful of his daughter's intelligence and talents. That was a big surprise for us! CWG: This book is about one woman, and yet the scope and the sheer amount of history Patsy witnessed was enormous. Was it difficult to choose what to include and what to leave out? SD and LK: Because Patsy's life story is really inseparable from her father's, we struggled with what to keep and what to omit. There wasn't enough room for all the important people whom Patsy knew or for all Jefferson's political battles and accomplishments. That meant formative experiences—including surviving an earthquake—ended up on the chopping block. We came to call her the Forrest Gump of

Revolutionary history because she saw everything and knew everybody, so we tried to let drama guide us, especially in the second half of the novel. If someone died, dueled, or got arrested for murder, we kept it. Otherwise. . . CWG: What will we see from you next? SD and LK: So glad you asked! For us, writing fiction together—sharing the research, hashing out the historical interpretations, choosing a cohesive point of view—has been a challenging but rewarding experience. We loved it so much that we decided to do it again with our forthcoming *My Dear Hamilton*. It's about Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, the wife of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton. It's currently set for 2018.

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