



Nanjing Never Cries: A Novel

Hong Zheng

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Set in the city of Nanjing during the time of the Sino-Japanese war (1937--1945), this novel tells the story of four people caught up in the violence and tumult of these years: John Winthrop and his MIT classmate, the brilliant Chinese physicist Calvin Ren (Ren Kewen); Judy, Calvin's Chinese-American wife; and the beautiful and determined young woman Chen May. John and Calvin take up positions at Nanjing's National Central University and collaborate on a top-secret project to design and build warplanes to enable the Chinese to defend themselves against Japanese bombers. Meanwhile, John enjoys his new life in Nanjing. He helps the lovely May with her English, falling a little in love with her; he shops for antiques; meets with Chiang Kai-Shek and Madame Chiang; and once attends an evening's entertainment at one of Nanjing's notorious Wine Houses. But when the Japanese invade, there is no safe place in the city. The Japanese murder, torture, and rape indiscriminately. (The invasion and occupation were described by the historian Iris Chang as "the forgotten holocaust.") May sees her own family killed; John works in a shelter for women and children; Calvin's family flees the city while Calvin, weakened by overwork, stays behind to work on the warplane project. Each tries to survive against the odds. May vows to hunt down the soldier who murders her father. When the war is over, she finds him sweeping Nanjing streets as a war prisoner. The story then ends with the force of an explosion. Vivid and disturbing, *Nanjing Never Cries* offers a compelling story of the horror of war and the power of love and friendship.

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