



Red China Blues

Jan Wong

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Jan Wong, a Canadian of Chinese descent, went to China as a starry-eyed Maoist in 1972 at the height of the Cultural Revolution. A true believer--and one of only two Westerners permitted to enroll at Beijing University--her education included wielding a pneumatic drill at the Number One Machine Tool Factory. In the name of the Revolution, she renounced rock and roll, hauled pig manure in the paddy fields, and turned in a fellow student who sought her help in getting to the United States. She also met and married the only American draft dodger from the Vietnam War to seek asylum in China.

Red China Blues begins as Wong's startling--and ironic--memoir of her rocky six-year romance with Maoism that began to sour as she became aware of the harsh realities of Chinese communism and led to her eventual repatriation to the West. Returning to China in the late eighties as a journalist, she covered both the brutal Tiananmen Square crackdown and the tumultuous era of capitalist reforms under Deng Xiaoping. In a wry, absorbing, and often surreal narrative, she relates the horrors that led to her disillusionment with the "worker's paradise." And through the stories of the people--an un-happy young woman who was sold into marriage, China's most famous dissident, a doctor who lengthens penises--Wong creates an extraordinary portrait of the world's most populous nation. In setting out to show readers in the Western world what life is like in China, and why we should care, Wong reacquaints herself with the old friends--and enemies--of her radical past, and comes to terms with the legacies of her ancestral homeland.

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