



The Year of the Rat: A Historical Fiction Novel

Lucille Bellucci

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Preface

So many said Mao Tse-tung would not change the China they had always known. It was only a civil war; business would resume, China would absorb this alteration in its government to fit and continue to be as good to its taipans as before. Later, the phrase “How the Far East was lost” would resound in the halls of the United States State Department, and in endless articles on the phenomenon, for good or ill, that the revolution had wrought.

Synopsis

Too soon after the second Big war and occupation by the Japanese army, Shanghai in 1948 faces occupation by Mao Tse-tung’s army. The affluent foreigners believe business will continue as before: hasn’t it always, after every conflict? But the Russians, the stateless ones who fled the Bolsheviks, believe the Communists will kill them.

For Maria Conti and her family, the executioner wears a different countenance. They could die of starvation. Their only income is the little she earns from her share of a saloon catering to American and British servicemen. When they leave China, the business will go with them. The Contis get no rents from their tenants. Nor can Mr. Conti sell, for in these uncertain times no one will buy. Maria’s little sister, Nola, helps her father manufacture ersatz liquor in their dining room. Her mother, Ming Chu, knows her family’s Italian citizenship is useless; the Contis are trapped.

On April 20th, 1949, the Communists shell the British frigate HMS Amethyst on the Yangtze River. The Woosung forts are in flames. Maria’s lover, American Army Captain Thaddeus Huell, must evacuate with his unit before he can get the Contis out. Love, a killing, survival—these are Maria’s story.

About the Author

Lucille Bellucci grew up in Shanghai, China, with an Italian-Dutch-Indonesian father and Chinese mother.

She has lived in Italy and Brazil. Her other novels are Journey from Shanghai, Stone of Heaven, The Snake Woman of Ipanema, and A Rare Passion. Her story collections are Pastiche: Stories and Such and Farrago: More Stories. She has collected nine first-place awards for her stories and essays and a nomination to the Pushcart Prize. She resides in Oakland, California.

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