



Dreams of Joy: A Novel

By Lisa See

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#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

In her most powerful novel yet, acclaimed author Lisa See returns to the story of sisters Pearl and May from *Shanghai Girls*, and Pearl's strong-willed nineteen-year-old daughter, Joy. Reeling from newly uncovered family secrets, Joy runs away to Shanghai in early 1957 to find her birth father—the artist Z.G. Li, with whom both May and Pearl were once in love. Dazzled by him, and blinded by idealism and defiance, Joy throws herself into the New Society of Red China, heedless of the dangers in the Communist regime. Devastated by Joy's flight and terrified for her safety, Pearl is determined to save her daughter, no matter the personal cost. From the crowded city to remote villages, Pearl confronts old demons and almost insurmountable challenges as she follows Joy, hoping for reconciliation. Yet even as Joy's and Pearl's separate journeys converge, one of the most tragic episodes in China's history threatens their very lives.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, June 2011: See's *Dreams of Joy* picks up the story of sisters Pearl and May where *Shanghai Girls* left off: on the night in 1957 when Pearl's daughter, Joy, discovers that May is her true mother. While *Shanghai Girls* followed the sisters from their time as models in the glittering "Paris of Asia" to their escape from the Japanese invasion and their new life in Los Angeles, its sequel sends Pearl back to Shanghai twenty years later in pursuit of Joy, whose flight to China is propelled by anger, idealism, and a desire to find her true father, Z.G., an artist who may be falling out of favor with the Party. Joy goes with him deep into the countryside to the Green Dragon commune, where they take part in the energetic inception of Mao's Great Leap Forward. But their collective dream of a communist paradise is soon overshadowed by hunger as the government's bizarre agricultural mandates create a massive, relentless famine. Pearl, trapped in Shanghai as travel restrictions tighten, has little idea of the hardship Joy endures--until both women realize they must subvert a corrupt system in order to survive. The best estimates put the death toll from China's Great Leap Forward at 45 million, and See is unflinching in her portrayal of this horrific episode. In clean prose, she gives us a resounding story of human resilience, independent spirits, and the power of the love between mothers and daughters. --*Mari Malcolm*

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. See revisits *Shanghai Girls* sisters Pearl and May in this surefire story of life in Communist China. Joy, the daughter Pearl has raised as her own in L.A., learns the truth about her parentage and flees to China to seek out her father and throw herself into the Communist cause, giving See ample opportunity to explore the People's Republic from an unlikely perspective as Joy reconnects with her artist father, Z.G. Li, and the two leave sophisticated Shanghai to go to the countryside, where Z.G., whose ironic view of politics is lost on naïve Joy, has been sent to teach art to the peasants. Joy, full of political vigor, is slow to pick up on the harsh realities of communal life in late 1950s China, but the truth sinks in as Mao's drive to turn China into a major agriculture and manufacturing power backfires. Pearl, meanwhile, leaves L.A. on a perhaps perilous quest to find Joy. As always, See creates an immersive atmosphere—her rural China is far from postcard pretty—but Joy's education is a stellar example of finding new life in a familiar setup, and See's many readers will be pleased to see the continued development of Pearl and May's relationship. Looks like another hit. (May)

Review

“Astonishing . . . one of those hard-to-put-down-until-four-in-the-morning books . . . a story with characters who enter a reader's life, take up residence, and illuminate the myriad decisions and stories that make up human history.”—*Los Angeles Times*

“[Lisa] See is a gifted historical novelist. . . . The real love story, the one that's artfully shown, is between mother and daughter, and aunt and daughter, as both of the women who had a part in making Joy return [come] to her rescue. . . . [In *Dreams of Joy*,] there are no clear heroes or villains, just people who often take wrong turns to their own detriment but for the good of the story, leading to greater strength of character and more durable relationships.”—*San Francisco Chronicle*

“A heartwarming story of heroic love between a mother and daughter . . . No writer has better captured the voice and heart of Chinese culture.”—*Bookreporter.com*

“Once again, See’s research feels impeccable, and she has created an authentic, visually arresting world.”—*The Washington Post*

“Excellent . . . [Dreams of Joy] lives up to its predecessor’s magic.”—*The Dallas Morning News*

“[Lisa] See’s fans will be glad to read more about Pearl, May and Joy, and See’s recurring themes of unbreakable family bonds and strong-willed women.”—*The Oregonian*

“[See’s] prose rings like a temple bell.”—*Los Angeles* magazine

“A vivid, haunting, and often graphic portrait of a country, and a family, in crisis.”—*Booklist*

“See keeps her eyes focused on the women—their standing, their predicaments, their resourcefulness.”—*The Seattle Times*

“See’s many readers will be pleased to see the continued development of Pearl and May’s relationship. . . . [She] creates an immersive atmosphere.”—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“Riveting, meticulously researched.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Fabiola Stewart:

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Roger Lindsey:

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