

Lost in the Long March

Michael X. Wang

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Love, loss, and sacrifice are at the center of Michael X. Wang's historical novel *Lost in the Long March*.

The moment orphaned Ping sees Yong, he knows she is the one. Ping is a gunsmith who joined the Chinese Red Army to make a living. Yong, whose parents sold her to a stranger when she was a child, is a sniper and devoted to the Communist Party and its leader, Mao Zedong. Shy and awkward, Ping struggles to connect with Yong, only to witness her entering into a relationship with his best friend, Luo. In a fit of drunken jealousy, Ping manipulates Luo's rifle so that it explodes in Luo's face and kills him.

Grieving Luo's death, Yong turns to the other person who knew him, Ping, and becomes pregnant. Meanwhile, the Red Army is suffering defeats against the enemy, the Kuomintang, and is ordered to retreat. Known as the Long March, the retreat lasts for a year, filled with trials, tribulations, and death. To survive the march and to protect their son, Ping and Yong leave their child with a stranger along the way.

Later, as an elderly couple, Ping and Yong live in a large apartment with a car and a chauffeur, having advanced to the highest levels of the Communist Party. But they live alone. They were never reunited with the boy they left behind. Then they spot a homeless stranger sitting in the street.

The novel begins with the idealism and certainty of youth and ends with the sadness of old age. Ping and Yong are unable to reconcile themselves to the irreversible consequences of their actions, and their story's heartbreaking ending resonates long after the book is over.

Lost in the Long March is a story about lingering trauma and the price that's paid when ideology trumps love.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (November / December 2022)

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