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Shanghai Grand: Forbidden Love, Intrigue, And Decadence In Old China



Synopsis

Taras Grescoe spins the true story of a British aristocrat, an American flapper, and a Chinese poet who found themselves trapped in an unlikely love triangle amid the decadence of Jazz Age Shanghai. On the eve of WWII, the foreign-controlled port of Shanghai was the rendezvous for the twentieth century's most outlandish adventurers, all under the watchful eye of the fabulously wealthy Sir Victor Sassoon. Emily "Mickey" Hahn was a legendary New Yorker journalist whose vivid writing played a crucial role in opening Western eyes to the realities of life in China. At the height of the Depression, Hahn arrives in Shanghai after a disappointing affair with an alcoholic Hollywood screenwriter, convinced she would never love again. After checking in to Sassoon's glamorous Cathay Hotel, Hahn is absorbed into the social swirl of the expats drawn to pre-war China, among them Ernest Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn, Harold Acton, and a colorful gangster named Morris "Two-Gun" Cohen. But when she meets Zau Sinmay, a Chinese poet from an illustrious family, she discovers the real Shanghai through his eyes: the city of rich colonials, triple agents, opium smokers, displaced Chinese peasants, and increasingly desperate White Russian and Jewish refugees—a place her innate curiosity will lead her to explore firsthand. Danger lurks on the horizon, though, as the brutal Japanese occupation destroys the seductive world of pre-war Shanghai, paving the way for Mao Tse-tung's Communists rise to power.

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Customer Reviews

"A love song to 1930s Shanghai. Taras Grescoe has fallen hard for the 'the wicked old Paris of the Orient,' its barrooms thick with gangsters and newsmen, its alleys 'scented with sweet almond broth,

opium smoke and the chemical bite of Flit insecticide'....Shanghai Grand is a headlong swoon for old Shanghai. The feeling is easy to catch." •New York Times Book Review"Filled with excellent short character sketches and keeps the reader turning the pages to find out what will happen next....Brings to life a special time and a special place." •The Wall Street Journal•A keenly observant, sometimes soulful portrait of Emily •Mickey•™ Hahn, an American writer who lived in Shanghai from 1935 to 1943, and of China•™s political and social realities during that tumultuous period in its history. . . . A wonderful book.â • •Publishers Weekly"The author deftly follows Hahn's adventures through this 'city of legend.' Grescoe exuberantly captures the glamour and intrigue of a lost world." •Kirkus Reviews•œLong before the city seemed custom-built to impress and intimidate, Shanghai was most notable for its peopleâ •a remarkable mix of refugees and adventurers, poets and fabulists, natives and outsiders. In Shanghai Grand, Taras Grescoe captures this lost world in all its richness.â • â •Peter Hessler, New York Times bestselling author of Oracle Bones•œA doomed world of glamour and decadence, a clash of cultures, a cast of larger-than-life characters â " Shanghai Grand has it all. Taras Grescoe tells a riveting tale of lost innocence and lost love, set against the backdrop of China on the brink of war and revolution. Prepare to be transported to another place and time.â • â •Dean Jobb, author of Empire of DeceptionPraise for Taras GrescoePraise for Taras Grescoe"[Straphanger] almost reads like a travelogue as the author revels in the wonders of his diverse destinations. With a smooth, accessible narrative style...captivating [and] convincing." •Kirkus Reviews"This paean to public transportation is front-loaded with statistics edifying to city dwellers...the book unfurls into studies of a dozen cities around the world.â • â •The New Yorker on Straphanger"Straphanger is a sort of love letter to mass transit...compelling and entertaining." •The Wall Street Journal

TARAS GRESCOE is an award-winning journalist and the author of several non-fiction books, which have been translated into six languages on three continents. He is a frequent contributor to The New York Times, National Geographic Traveler, and The Guardian, and has written features for Condé Nast Traveler, the Times of London, the Chicago Tribune Magazine, Afar, Salon, Gourmet, Saveur, and the New York Times Magazine.

A tour de force of Shanghai during its romantic and intriguing early/mid nineteenth century period when it became a magnet for the world's elite and a haven for the displaced from Europe. A frequent visitor to the now Peace Hotel, née Cathay, I can attest to its magnificence. Yet one would be remiss without a visit to Shanghai's iconic synagogue founded by the refugees from Nazi

persecution.

I wonder if it is still possible for adventurous expats to live so large in today's world -- anywhere?
Very entertaining -- until, of course, WWII turns the story quite dark.

Exceedingly well constructed history of Shanghai organized around the very interesting lives of three major players there in the period between the 1st and 2nd World Wars.

A wonderful exciting book

Fascinating biography and history lesson in one.

Well written and very informative.

Yes.It did.Historically and vivid.

wonderfulLove Israel

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