



Red Azalea

By Anchee Min

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A revelatory and disturbing portrait of China, this is Anchee Min's celebrated memoir of growing up in the last years of Mao's China. As a child, Min was asked to publicly humiliate a teacher; at seventeen, she was sent to work at a labor collective. Forbidden to speak, dress, read, write, or love as she pleased, she found a lifeline in a secret love affair with another woman. Miraculously selected for the film version of one of Madame Mao's political operas, Min's life changed overnight. Then Chairman Mao suddenly died, taking with him an entire world. This national bestseller and *New York Times* Notable Book is exceptional for its candor, its poignancy, its courage, and for its prose which *Newsweek* calls "as delicate and evocative as a traditional Chinese brush painting."

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

This is an honest and frightening memoir of growing up in Communist China during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. Min describes a systematically deprived Shanghai childhood (the family was forced into successively meaner quarters); school days spent as a member of the Red Guard, spouting the words of Chairman Mao and being forced to publicly betray her favorite teacher; and later teen years on a work farm in order to become a peasant because peasants were the only true vanguard of the revolution. The farm years, with their backbreaking workdays and heartbreaking, lonely nights, exemplify the grinding insanity of the Cultural Revolution, the terror and dehumanization it inflicted on ordinary Chinese. Eventually, Min was tapped by the party to be in the propaganda film *Red Azalea*, during the making of which she suffered more humiliation and political subterfuge. What is so extraordinary is that Min managed to keep a tight hold on her spirit. Her autobiography is not just a coming-of-age story or history lesson; it is a tale of inner strength and courage that transcends time and place. *Mary Ellen Sullivan*

From Kirkus Reviews

Fascinating memoir of a young Chinese girl during the collapse of the Maoist regime. As a schoolgirl, Min distinguishes herself as a young communist--and a high point of her career as head of the Little Red Guard comes when she is persuaded to denounce her beloved teacher as a reactionary, thus ruining the woman's career and possibly placing her life in jeopardy. As a reward for this revolutionary act, Min is sent to Red Fire Farm near the China Sea to work as a peasant on the collective. Trying to cultivate the salty soil, preyed upon by leeches, toiling constantly in near starvation with her fellow ``soldiers," Min experiences firsthand the reasons why thousands died in these communes. Forbidden any contact with the opposite sex, Min falls in love with her female squad leader, Yan, and the two have a passionate affair shadowed by the constant threat of discovery and possible execution. Min then has the opportunity to escape the farm and compete for the starring role in comrade Jiang Ching's movie of Madam Mao's latest opera, *Red Azalea*. She attracts the interest of a man identified only as ``The Supervisor," a cultural advisor to Madam Mao, who makes Min the star, at the same time embarking on an affair with her. Min still loves Yan but finally comes to accept that circumstances must always divide them. Production of *Red Azalea* is curtailed by Mao's death, forcing the Supervisor to go into hiding to save his life. Min works menially in the movie studio for several more years, falling ill with TB, until an actress with whom she worked, who emigrated to America, urges her to emigrate too. The slight awkwardness of her English does not obscure the beauty of Min's poetic, distinctively Chinese diction. A haunting and quietly dramatic coming-of-age story with a cultural cataclysm as its backdrop. -- *Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

"[An] extraordinary story. . . . This memoir of sexual freedom is [both] a powerful political as well as literary statement."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"The book sings. It is a small masterpiece. . . [No one] has written more honestly and poignantly than Anchee Min about the desert of solitude and human alienation at the center of the Chinese Communist revolution." —*Vogue*

"Gripping. . . . reads like raw testimony. . . epic drama, and. . . poetic incantation. . . . It was passion and despair that made [Min] fearless; it was fearlessness that made her a writer."

—*The New York Times*

"Stunning. . . . Min's is a distinct and moving voice speaking out of a cauldron of history."

—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"Brave and heartbreaking."

—*The Miami Herald*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Keiko Whitchurch:

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also work as a life style. This reading habit give you lot of advantages. The advantages you got of course the knowledge the actual information inside the book which improve your knowledge and information. The details you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want drive more knowledge just go with education books but if you want truly feel happy read one together with theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The particular Red Azalea is kind of reserve which is giving the reader unpredictable experience.

Mary Blackwell:

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