



How We Disappeared

Jing-Jing Lee

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A beautiful, stunningly ambitious novel set in Singapore about a woman who survived the Japanese occupation and a man who thought he had lost everything. For fans of Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko* and Georgia Hunter's *We Were the Lucky Ones*.

Singapore, 1942. As Japanese troops sweep down Malaysia and into Singapore, a village is ransacked, leaving only two survivors and one tiny child.

In a neighbouring village, seventeen-year-old Wang Di is bundled into the back of a troop carrier and shipped off to a Japanese military brothel where she is forced into sexual slavery. After sixty years of silence, what she saw and experienced there still haunts her present.

In the year 2000, twelve-year-old Kevin is determined to find out the truth – wherever it might lead – after his grandmother makes a surprising confession on her deathbed, one she never meant Kevin to hear, setting in motion a chain of events he could never have foreseen.

Weaving together two timelines and two very big secrets, this stunning debut opens a window on a little-known period of history, revealing the strength and bravery shown by numerous women in the face of terrible cruelty. A profoundly moving novel, it is based partly on the author's great-grandfather's experiences.

How We Disappeared Details

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From Reader Review How We Disappeared for online ebook

Anya says

This book is with rights compared to Min Jin Lee's "Pachinko".

It's beautiful and heart-breaking at the same time. Our main characters go through so incredibly much abuse and sorrow and never really open up to each other what happened during the war and Japanese occupation. I can recommend this to lovers of Min Jin Lee's novels or if you enjoyed the Night Tiger or the Geisha.

Rachel says

I received an ARC of this book with thanks to Oneworld Publications via NetGalley

This book is a work of art. I loved absolutely everything about it. Set in Singapore during the Japanese occupation, it tells the story of a woman who lived in abhorrent circumstances and survived. It is lightly interwoven with the story of her husband and the horrors he too experienced at the hands of the Japanese.

It isn't an easy story to read but it is so worth it. By the end my heart was broken, but my mind and soul felt so enriched. An incredibly powerful story that will stay with me for a long time.

Fiona Mitchell says

A shattering, tender and absorbing novel that centres around the unfathomable cruelty that women in Singapore endured when they were snatched by the Japanese Army and forced into sexual slavery during World War Two. It was harrowing to read of Wang Di's incarceration as a 'comfort woman' - far too benign a description for the barbarism that she and thousands of women endured across the occupied territories - yet what rings out from the book is human resilience and our capacity to love no matter how damaged we might be.

Not only do we hear from young Wang Di, age just 16 when she is ripped away from her family and locked into the tiny room of her prison, but elderly Wang Di has her own chapters too. Grieving her husband, affectionately known as the 'Old One', it transpires that neither of them, though traumatised by their experiences during the occupation, have ever shared with one another what really happened to them both. For Wang Di, this is because of the shame that attached to women who had been forced into sexual slavery; their treatment included being shunned and called traitors. Wang Di sets out to discover what the Old One experienced during the war. The third voice in the book belongs to the enchanting teenager Kevin. With his bottle-top glasses and his tape recorder, he starts to unearth a secret that his late grandmother had been keeping for decades. As Wang Di and Kevin set out on their individual quests to uncover the truth, the tension builds while we wait to find out whether their worlds will collide.

The final chapters are suffused with kindness, the power of talking, love. Indeed they are so moving that I read them through a blur of tears.

Meticulously researched, exquisitely written, with characters that will live and breathe in your hearts long after you finish the last page, How We Disappeared is a worthy testament to the women who were forced to become 'comfort women.' Not only does Jing-Jing Lee capture the horror of it all, but also the hope. I'm

reeling from its power - what an absolute triumph.

Caoilinn says

A beautifully-controlled novel that tells an utterly compelling and important story. Jing-Jing Lee's prose is crystal-clear, the narrative scope is sweeping and devastating, and the story is as deeply-felt and well-observed as it is captivating.
