



The Thorn of Lion City: A Memoir

Lucy Lum

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Lucy Lum was the third of seven children, born in Singapore in 1933 into a Chinese immigrant family ruled with an iron hand by Popo, her fearsome and superstitious grandmother. Popo is a firm believer in the old ways, in stomach-churning herbalist remedies, in the dubious fortune-telling of mystics, and in mischievous little girls like Lucy knowing their place. She is forever dispensing her own wicked brand of justice, much to the despair of her adopted family.

This is Singapore in the 1940s, a former British colony now living under the specter of the invading Japanese—the hungry worms crawling down from the north, as Lucy knows them—and fear floods the streets. Lucy's father, a kind-hearted and talented linguist, finds himself being used by the occupiers as a translator, and brings back terrifying stories of his merciless employers, which he confides to his daughter under the heavy teak table they use as a make-shift air raid shelter in the bedroom.

With a fresh and powerful voice, *The Thorn of Lion City* breaks the long silence of the Singaporean Chinese. Heartbreaking and ultimately triumphant, it speaks of the softly-spoken, redemptive love between a father and daughter.

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