



Tiananmen

Tim Glogan

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'TIANANMEN' – A SHORT SYNOPSIS

'Tiananmen' is a novel that follows the relationship between two young people in China, up to and beyond the Tiananmen Square Massacre in June 1989.

Scott Northfield is an Englishman working at Lanzhou Airport in the Gobi Desert area of China for aircraft manufacturer, Anglo Air, in support of a fleet of civil jets that have just been sold to China. He is a fluent speaker of Mandarin and it is his job to interpret for the flight trainers and maintenance engineers and generally ensure that the Chinese and British work effectively together. He falls for Mei Hua, an enticing air stewardess who also happens to be the daughter of the airport director and engaged to a powerful local lawyer.

Scott is young and brash, and his instincts tell him to go after whatever he wants, but he understands China and knows that the great cultural and political divide between China and Britain means that he must tread carefully.

Mei Hua at first seems to be the innocent little 'beautiful flower' that is actually the meaning of her name, but as the story develops, new complex facets of her character come to light, as we see that she is scheming, ambitious and perverse although her love for Scott is never in question.

The story is told in the first person mainly through Scott's eyes, but the reader also gets the chance to see developments through the eyes of Mei Hua as she is the real 'spirit of China'.

The book charts how very difficult it is for a foreigner and a Chinese truly to enjoy a loving relationship because of the cultural and political constraints and the fact that, certainly in the 1980s, 'Big Brother' was nearly always watching, and ready to clamp down with his 'Iron Fist'.

It is not until the two protagonists succeed in escaping from the claustrophobic conditions of Lanzhou to the relative liberty of Beijing that they finally succeed in consummating their relationship. But, unfortunately for them, this event coincides with the birth of the Democracy Movement in China.

They take advantage of the fact that 'Big Brother' is now concerned with more important matters, to enjoy each other to the full, but as the strength of the Democracy Movement grows, so does Mei Hua, and poor simple Scott finds it difficult to keep up with her. As conditions in Tiananmen Square become more anarchic, so does Scott and Mei Hua's relationship, with Mei Hua being the one to taste forbidden fruit, much to Scott's bewilderment.

On June 4th, the night that the 28th Army goes to clear the Square in a bloody tank-led attack, the strained relationship between Mei Hua and Scott finally snaps. They are separated then unable to find each other again in the ensuing chaos - that is until a chance encounter at Shanghai Airport eight years later, which opens the way for a possible sequel.....

The book is in a way a classic historical romance dealing with 'star-crossed' lovers trying to swim against

racial, political and cultural taboos, set against tumultuous historical events that the author actually lived through, having really been Scott in the 1980s, and having actually experienced in person the events leading up to the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

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