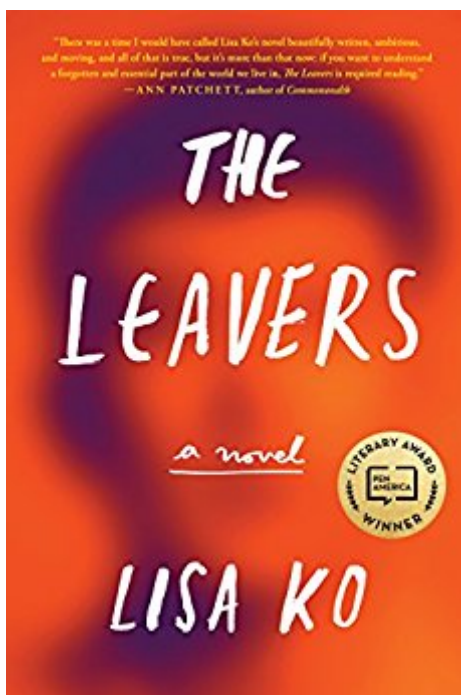


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The Leavers: A Novel



Synopsis

“There was a time I would have called Lisa Ko’s novel beautifully written, ambitious, and moving, and all of that is true, but it’s more than that now: if you want to understand a forgotten and essential part of the world we live in, *The Leavers* is required reading.” —Ann Patchett, author of *Commonwealth*

Lisa Ko’s powerful debut, *The Leavers*, is the winner of the 2016 PEN/Bellwether Prize for Fiction, awarded by Barbara Kingsolver for a novel that addresses issues of social justice. One morning, Deming Guo’s mother, Polly, an undocumented Chinese immigrant, goes to her job at a nail salon and never comes home. No one can find any trace of her. With his mother gone, eleven-year-old Deming is left mystified and bereft. Eventually adopted by a pair of well-meaning white professors, Deming is moved from the Bronx to a small town upstate and renamed Daniel Wilkinson. But far from all he’s ever known, Daniel struggles to reconcile his adoptive parents’ desire that he assimilate with his memories of his mother and the community he left behind. Told from the perspective of both Daniel as he grows into a directionless young man and Polly, Ko’s novel gives us one of fiction’s most singular mothers. Loving and selfish, determined and frightened, Polly is forced to make one heartwrenching choice after another. Set in New York and China, *The Leavers* is a vivid examination of borders and belonging. It’s a moving story of how a boy comes into his own when everything he loves is taken away, and how a mother learns to live with the mistakes of the past.

Lisa Ko’s fiction has appeared in *Best American Short Stories* 2016, *Apogee Journal*, *Narrative*, *Copper Nickel*, the *Asian Pacific American Journal*, and elsewhere. She has been awarded fellowships and residencies from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the MacDowell Colony, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Writers OMI at Ledig House, the Jerome Foundation, and Blue Mountain Center, among others. She was born in New York City, where she now lives. Visit her at lisa-ko.com.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Great book. Only reservation for me is the way the story jumped from one character to another, and also from one era to another, which I felt disrupted the flow of the story in general. A lot of illuminating insight into both the adoption process, and how difficult it can be for immigrants from a vastly different culture to assimilate in the U.S.

A good read!

After reading a review which sung the praises of the author and this book, I dived in, but it just never grabbed me like I hoped it would. A fair read at best.

This book personalized the undocumented mass of Chinese people that live around me in Flushing. It put a face and a story to the people I see on a daily basis. I was deeply moved by their struggles and the reasons they are here at the risk of their lives. I have more empathy and respect for their tenaciousness to succeed and belong to this culture and their own. I would like to thank Lisa Ko for having the courage to write such wonderful and moving story.

I really liked this book. Told through the eyes of both Deming and his birth mother gave it interesting depth. I was sorry to see it end.

Really enjoyed this story of an immigrant mother and her son and the trials that separate them. Gritty without being over-dramatic. Good story of relationships in the context of a world I knew almost nothing about - Chinese immigrants in NYC.

An unusual and compelling story about culture, identity and belonging. Longing for a parent who is absent is a universal affliction.

Engaging story and characters. Interesting perspective on international adoption and on immigration.

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