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Arts & Entertainment Section



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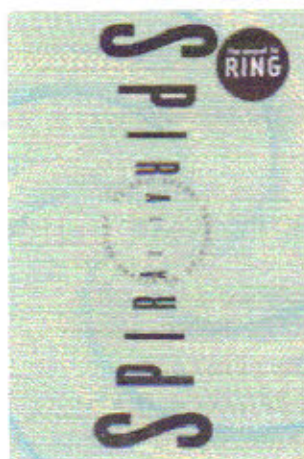
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[Pedo-profiting: The Selling of Cambodian Babies](#)
By Robin McDowell and Gene Johnson, Mar 19, 2004

New and Notable Books

By Terry Hong, Special to AsianWeek, May 28, 2004



SPIRAL

By Koji Suzuki,
translated by Glynne Walley (Vertical, Inc.)

Get ready to turn on all the lights, crawl into bed and *not* get any sleep because the sequel to *Ring* (you know, mysterious videotape that kills in a week if you watch it) is going to keep you up all night, even after you read the last page. This one starts with corpses - and a medical examiner who stumbles on a trail of victims who all have similar signs of a dormant virus in their dead bodies. But nothing is as it seems - and no duh, you can't trust anyone. Just watch the hair on your arms stand up as you get deeper and deeper into the mysterious layers and see if you can get through to morning without jumping out of your skin.

SAYONARA, GANGSTERS

By Genichiro Takahashi,
translated by Michael Emmerich (Vertical, Inc.)



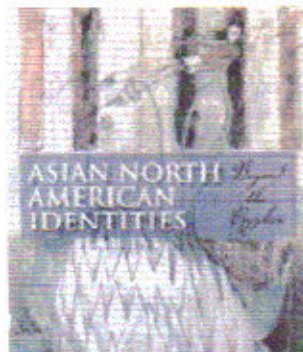
I confess I have no idea

what really happened in this wacky novel, but it was nonetheless entertaining, if only because it's so totally indescribably unpredictable. From what I gathered, there's a love story going on of some sort between a poetry teacher and an ex-gangster and they live with a cat named Henry IV whose dying wish is to have Thomas Mann read to him. And, in case you wanted to know, gangsters never die, except if you shoot them in the head. One of the zany highlights is the resurrected return of Virgil (yes, *that* Virgil of *Aeneid* fame) halfway through the book, as he wakes up one morning to find that he's metamorphosized into a refrigerator, but he can still do the existential BS with the best of them. Go figure.

THE PEARL DIVER: A NOVEL

By Jeff Talarigo (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday)

Okay, so I've been known to get on a soapbox more often than not about inauthentic voices usurping other people's identities, *i.e.* white men writing as Asian women, especially sets me off - oh, don't even get me started. BUT having said that, you *must* put this one on your summer reading lists: it's an absolute, breathtaking gem. At 19, a young Japanese pearl diver learns she has leprosy, a disease that, in 1948, will ruin her life in every way. She is sent to a leprosarium on the island of Nagashima, where she lives out her days as "Miss Fuji," a woman without a past, and equally without a future. Heartbreaking, haunting, but ultimately hopeful ... this one's a true secret treasure. By the way, there's another *Pearl Diver* coming in August - a non-murder mystery - so don't get confused. That one is mere pulp, this one's the real thing.



ASIAN NORTH AMERICAN IDENTITIES: BEYOND THE HYPHEN

Edited by Eleanor Ty and Donald D. Goellnicht (Indiana University Press)

More than three decades after 'Orientals' claimed their identities as Asian Americans in the late 1960s, the said moniker no longer encompasses this growing group of Americans whose one commonality is an ethnic heritage linked to Asia. Ty and Goellnicht begin with adding "North" to 'Asian American' in their introduction, to consciously include Asian Canadians who have been in the periphery - if recognized at all - of the original Asian American movement. That search for identity continues through nine essays that attempt to suggest other means of expression, of invention, of community as we develop and stretch in both number and diversity of experience.

AND FOR THE KIDDIES ...

Just in time to get kids interested in summer reading, a whole new crop of children's titles debut - and these are just the ones that got included!

YI-MIN AND THE ELEPHANTS: A TALE OF ANCIENT CHINA

*By Caroline Heaton, illustrated by Tim Vyrer
(Frances Lincoln)*

Yi-Min, the youngest, tiniest daughter of the Chinese Emperor goes in search of prized white elephants with her father. In spite of her size - or lack thereof - she is able to save the gentle beasts from certain harm.

THE MAGICAL MONKEY KING: MISCHIEF IN HEAVEN

*By Ji-li Jiang, illustrated by Youshan Tang
(Shen's Books)*

The Monkey King, one of the most popular figures in Chinese folklore, returns to entertain young children with his boastful, talented, ingenious, entertaining adventures. "Today, I am introducing our wonderful Monkey King to you. But this book contains only the first of many Monkey King tales. If you fall in love with him, I will tell you more stories about him, I promise,"

writes Jiang in her preface - indeed, the collection is sure to leave children asking for more.

THE STORY OF RED RUBBER BALL

By Constance Levy, illustrated by Hiroe Nakata (Harcourt)

A lonely red rubber ball is passed over by many, but finally finds a true friend. Delightful, fun pictures for the youngest readers.



DINAH! A CAT ADVENTURE

By Kae Nishimura (Clarion Books)

A delightful tale - both comical and bittersweet - of a little cat who grows big, who falls out a window and gets lost. Outside in the big scary

world, she is able to find her own identity, and only then is she finally reunited with her worried family.

FORTUNE COOKIE FORTUNES

By Grace Lin (Alfred A. Knopf)

As a family finishes a Chinese meal with the expected fortune cookies, the youngest daughter doubts that the fortunes will come true. But the next day ... well, seeing is believing. Lin's style is so playfully distinctive that my young daughter picked up the book and said, "Oh look, Mommy - this book is by the same writer who did *The Ugly Vegetables*." Smart kid, that one.

SING-ALONG SONG

By JoAnn Early Macken, illustrated by LeUyen Pham (Viking/Penguin)

All the many sounds in a little boy's happy life

are caught in rhythmic sing-along songs. But the real draw - no pun intended - here is the utter joy captured in the little boy's face in Pham's celebratory illustrations.

DIARY OF A PRINCESS: A TALE FROM MARCO POLO'S TRAVELS

By Heather Maisner, illustrated by Sheila Moxley (Frances Lincoln)

A fictional diary that the young Princess Kokachin might have written in the late-13th century, when she traveled from the court of the Mongol leader Kublai Khan in her native China to marry the widowed Khan of Persia. Amazingly, she is escorted by none other than the legendary Marco Polo, who served as an ambassador in Kublai Khan's court, and becomes a surrogate father figure to Kokachin on their two-year journey.



MUSIC FOR ALICE

By Allen Say (Walter Lorraine Books/Houghton Mifflin)

Based on the true story of Alice Sumida, a

Japanese American woman who, with her husband Mark, established the country's largest gladiola flower bulb farm. Forced from their home post-9066 that sanctioned the removal of 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent into concentration camps for the duration of World War II, Alice and her husband follow their adventurous streak and choose to farm a field of stones in an Oregon desert rather than be interned. Say's unforgettable, haunting pictures capture the Sumidas' new life where, in spite of the harshness, they are able to make flowers grow where only barrenness once existed.

THE LOST HORSE: A CHINESE FOLKTALE

By Ed Young (Voyager Books/Harcourt)

An adaptation in English by a mega-award

winning author/illustrator about a Chinese man who owns a magnificent horse, only to lose it, then have it return with a mare by its side. As the story unfolds, one learns that first impressions are not always correct, because what appears to be good is not always, and what seems to be bad can also be good.

New and Notable Books is published once a month.

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