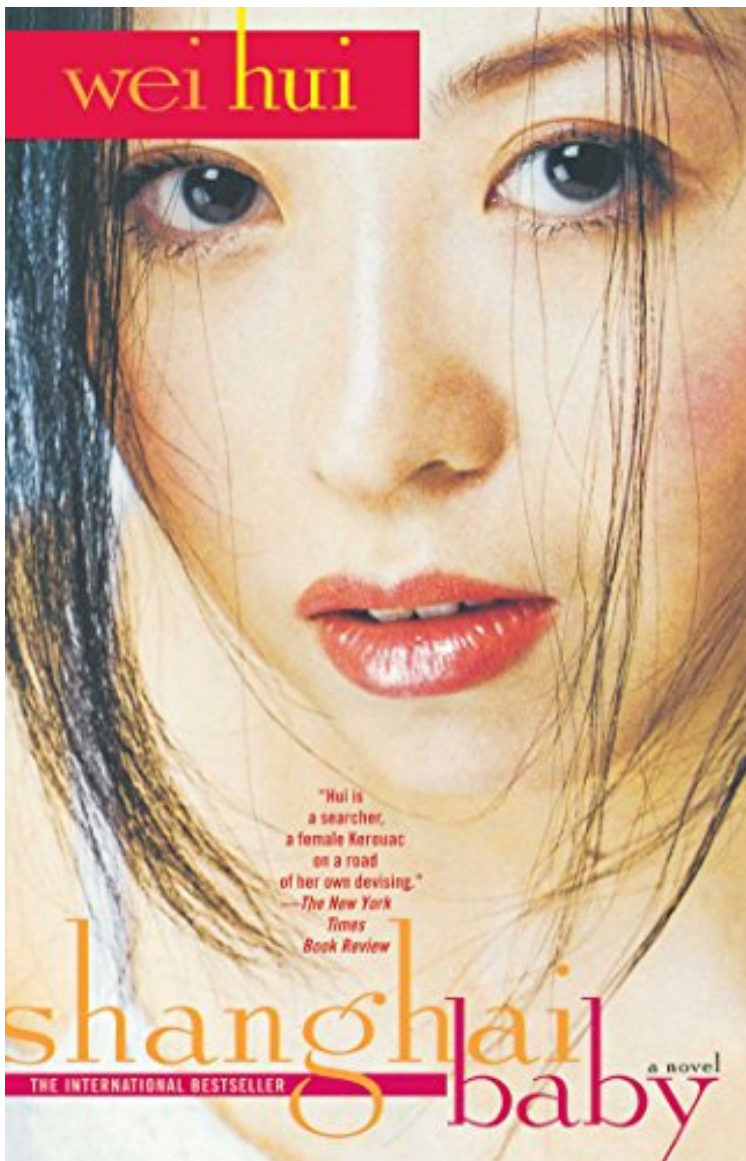


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Shanghai Baby (English Edition)



Par Wei Hui
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Par Wei Hui : Shanghai Baby (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shanghai Baby (English Edition):

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe gap that divides those of us born in the 1970s and the older generation has never been so wide. Dark and edgy, deliciously naughty, an intoxicating cocktail of sex and the search for love, Shanghai Baby has already risen to cult status in mainland China. The risque contents of the breakthrough novel by hip new author Wei Hui have so alarmed Beijing authorities that thousands of copies have been confiscated and burned. As explicit as Henry Miller's Tropic of Cancer, as shocking as Trainspotting, this story of a beautiful writer and her erotically charged affairs jumps, howls, and hits the ground running as it depicts the new generation rising in the East. Set in the centuries-old port city of Shanghai, the novel follows the days, and nights, of the irrepressibly carnal Coco, who waits tables in a caf when she meets her first

lover, a sensitive Chinese artist. Defying her parents, Coco moves in with her boyfriend and enters a frenzied, orgasmic world of drugs and hedonism. But, helpless to stop her gentle lover's descent into addiction, Coco becomes attracted to a boisterous Westerner, a rich German businessman with a penchant for S/M and seduction. Now, with an entourage of friends ranging from a streetwise madame to a rebellious filmmaker, Coco's forays into the territory of love and lust cross the borders between two cultures -- awakening her guilt and fears of discovery, yet stimulating her emerging sexual self. Searing a blistering image into the reader's imagination, Shanghai Baby provides an alternative travelogue into the back streets of a city and the hard-core escapades of today's liberated youth. Wei Hui's provocative portrayal of men, women, and cultural transition is an astonishing and brave exposure of the unacknowledged new China, breaking through official rhetoric to show the inroads of the West and a people determined to burst free.

Extrait Chapter One: encounter with my lover
Well, there's a wide wide world of noble causes
And lovely landscapes to discover
But all I really want to do right now
Is find another lover!--Joni Mitchell
My name is Nikki but my friends all call me Coco after Coco Chanel, a French lady who lived to be almost ninety. She's my idol, after Henry Miller. Every morning when I open my eyes I wonder what I can do to make myself famous. It's become my ambition, almost my *raison d'être*, to burst upon the city like fireworks. This has a lot to do with the fact that I live in Shanghai. A mystical fog envelops the city, mixed with continual rumors and an air of superiority, a hangover from the time of the *shili yangchang*, the foreign concessions. This hint of smugness affects me: I both love it and hate it. Anyway, I'm just twenty-five, and a year ago I published a collection of short stories that didn't make any money but got me attention. (Male readers sent me letters enclosing erotic photos.) Three months ago I left my job as a magazine journalist, and now I'm a bare-legged, miniskirted waitress at a joint called the Green Stalk Caf. There was a tall, handsome young man, a regular at the Green Stalk, who would stay for hours drinking coffee and reading his book. I liked to watch his changes of expression, his every move. He seemed to know I was watching him, but he never said a word. Until, that is, the day he gave me a note that said "I love you," along with his name and address. Born in the Year of the Rabbit, and a year younger than me, this man enchanted me. It's hard to put a finger on what made him so good looking in my eyes, but it had something to do with his air of world-weariness and his thirst for love. On the surface we're two utterly different types. I'm full of energy and ambition and see the world as a ripe fruit just waiting to be eaten. He is introspective and romantic, and for him life is a cake laced with arsenic -- every bite poisons him a little more. But our differences only increased our mutual attraction, like the inseparable north and south magnetic poles. We rapidly fell in love. Not long after we met, he told me a family secret. His mother was living in a small town in Spain, with a local man, running a Chinese restaurant. It seems you can make a lot of money in Spain by selling lobster and wonton. His father had died young, suddenly, out there, less than a month after going to Spain to visit his mother. The death certificate said "myocardial infarction," and his ashes were flown home in a McDonnell Douglas jet. Tian Tian still remembered that sunny day, and how his tiny grandmother, his father's mother, cried, tears streaming down her wrinkled face like water dripping off a wet rag. "Grandmother was convinced it was murder. My dad didn't have any history of heart disease; she said my mother killed him. That she had another man over there, and they plotted it together." Staring at me with a strange look in his eyes, Tian Tian said, "Can you believe it? I still can't work it out. Maybe Grandmother was right. But whatever -- Mother sends me a lot of money every year to live on." He watched me in silence. His strange story grabbed me immediately, because I'm drawn to tragedy and intrigue. When I was studying Chinese at Fudan University in Shanghai, I'd wanted to become a writer of really exciting thrillers: evil omen, conspiracy, dagger, lust, poison, madness, and moonlight were all words that sprang readily to my mind. Looking tenderly into his fragile, beautiful face, I understood the root of Tian Tian's sadness. "Death's shadow only fades little by little as time passes. There will never be more than a thin glass barrier between your present and the wreckage of your past," I told him. His eyes grew wet, and he clenched his hands tightly. "But I've found you and decided to put my faith in you," he said. "Don't stay with me just out of curiosity, but don't leave me straightaway." I moved into Tian Tian's place, a big three-bedroom apartment on the western outskirts of the city. He had decorated the living room simply and comfortably, with a sectional fabric sofa from Ikea along one wall and a Strauss piano. Above the piano hung his self-portrait, in which his head looked as if he'd just surfaced from a pool. To be honest, I didn't much like the area. Almost all the roads were full of potholes and were lined on both sides with cramped, shabby houses, peeling billboards, and reeking piles of rubbish. There was a public phone box that leaked like the Titanic whenever it rained. Looking out of the window, I couldn't see a single green tree or smartly dressed person or a clear patch of sky. It was not a place where I was able to see the

future. Tian Tian always said that the future is a trap set right in the middle of your brain. For a while after his father died, Tian Tian lost the power of speech. Then he dropped out of high school in his first year. His lonely childhood had already turned him into a nihilist. His aversion to the outside world meant he spent half his life in bed: reading, watching videos, smoking, musing on the pros and cons of life versus death, the spirit versus flesh, calling premium phone lines, playing computer games, and sleeping. The rest of the time he painted, walked with me, ate, shopped, browsed in book and record shops, sat in cafes, or went to the bank. When he needed money, he would go to the post office and send letters in beautiful blue envelopes to his mother. He seldom visited his grandmother. He had moved out of her house when it became a nightmare. She had sunk into a permanent state of delirium, fixated on that "murder" in Spain. Her heart was broken, her face ravaged and her spirit gone, but she wouldn't die. She still lives in a western-style house in the city now, fuming with anger, cursing her destiny and her daughter-in-law.

Saturday. Clear weather. Pleasant indoor temperature. At exactly 8:30 a.m. I wake up, and beside me, Tian Tian opens his eyes. We look at each other for a second, then begin to kiss silently. Our early morning kisses are tender, affectionate, smooth as little fishes wriggling in water. This is the compulsory start to our day -- and the sole channel of sexual expression between us. Tian Tian just couldn't handle sex. I'm not sure if it was related to the tragedy that had caused his mental problems, but I remember the first time I held him in bed. When I discovered he was impotent, I was devastated, so much so that I didn't know if I could stay with him. Ever since college I had seen sex as a basic necessity (although I've since changed my mind about this). Unable to enter me, he stared at me, speechless, his whole body in a cold sweat. It was his first time with a woman in all his twenty-four years. In the male world, being able to perform sex normally is as important as life itself, and any shortcoming causes unbearable pain. He cried, and so did I. For the rest of the night we kissed, touched, and murmured to one another. I soon came to adore his sweet kiss and gentle touch. Kissing with the tip of the tongue feels like ice cream melting. It was he who taught me that a kiss has a soul and colors all its own. He was kind, loving, and trusting as a dolphin. His temperament was what captured my wild heart. What he couldn't give me -- sharp cries or explosive pleasure, sexual pride or orgasm -- lost significance.

In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera gives a classic definition of love: "Making love with a woman and sleeping with a woman are two separate passions, not merely different but opposite. Love does not make itself felt in the desire for copulation (a desire that extends to an infinite number of women) but in the desire for shared sleep (a desire limited to one woman)." At the beginning of my time with Tian Tian, I had no idea that I would experience this for myself, until a series of events and the appearance of another man gave me the chance to understand it.

At nine o'clock we got up, and he got into the huge bathtub while I smoked my first Mild Seven cigarette. In the tiny kitchen I made corn congee, eggs, and milk. With the golden sunlight dripping outside the window like melted honey, summer mornings always seemed poetic. I felt totally relaxed, listening to the sound of water gushing in the bathroom. "Will you come to the Green Stalk Caf with me?" I asked, taking a big glass of milk into the steam-swirled bathroom. Tian Tian's eyes were closed, and he gave a long yawn, looking like a fish. "Coco, I've got an idea," he said in a low voice. "What idea?" I brought the milk right to him, but he didn't take it in his hand, just leaned forward and sipped a little. "Why don't you give up your job at the caf?" "Then what would I do?" "We've enough money not to have to work all the time. You could write your novel." It turned out he had been brewing this idea for some time, that he wanted me to write a novel that would take the literary world by storm. "There's nothing worth reading in the bookshops these days, just empty stories," he said. "Okay," I said, "but not right now. I want to work a bit longer. You sometimes meet interesting people in a caf." "Whatever," he mumbled. This was his pet phrase, meaning he had heard and taken in the comment but had no response.

We ate breakfast together, then I dressed and put on my makeup and wandered elegantly around the room until I finally found my favorite leopard-spotted handbag. Sitting on the sofa, book in hand, he glanced up as I left. "I'll call you," he said.

This is the city at rush hour: All sorts of vehicles and pedestrians, all their invisible desires and countless secrets, merge with the flow like rapids plunging through a deep gorge. The sun shines down on the street, hemmed in on both sides by skyscrapers -- the mad creations of humans -- towering between sky and earth. The petty details of daily life are like dust suspended in the air. They are a monotonous theme of our materialistic age.

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Revue de presse
Jianying Zha, author of *China Pop: How Soap Opera, Tabloids, and Bestsellers Are Transforming a Culture*
Sassy, breezy, shrewd, an impressive debut of a talented young writer. Heralding a new literary personality on the scene of the Chinese urban novel, *Shanghai Baby* is peopled with nimble-witted hedonists. In the eyes of traditional, mainstream society, they are moral degenerates and self-serving rebels. But from the point of view of the new

commercial mainstream, they are crystal bubbles moving with the tide to better display their own beauty. The New York Times This book is one of the first to portray Wei Hui's generation of urban women, born in the 1970s, as they search for moral grounding in a country of shifting values. The Times (London) A steamy Chinese novel in the Western style about life in contemporary China, condemned for exposing subjects that are completely taboo in modern Chinese literature.