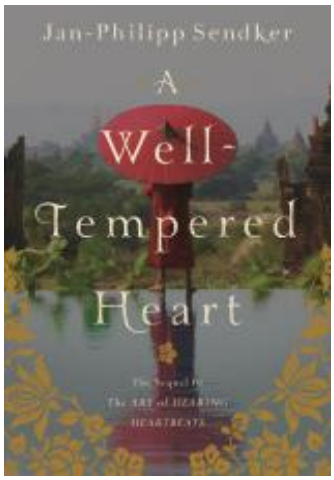
A Well-Tempered Heart

by Jan-Philipp Sendker



About the Book

Almost ten years have passed since Julia Win came back from Burma, her father?s native country. Though she is a successful Manhattan lawyer, her private life is at a crossroads; her boyfriend recently left her, she has suffered a miscarriage, and she is, despite her wealth, unhappy with her professional life. Julia is lost and exhausted.

One day, in the middle of an important business meeting, she hears a stranger?s voice in her head that causes her to leave the office without explanation. In the following days, her crisis only deepens. Not only does the female voice refuse to disappear, but it starts to ask questions Julia has been trying to avoid. Why do you live alone? To whom do you feel close? What do you want in life?

Interwoven with Julia?s story is that of a Burmese woman named Nu Nu who finds her world turned upside down when Burma goes to war and calls on her two young sons to be child soldiers. This spirited sequel, like THE ART OF HEARING HEARTBEARTS, explores the most inspiring and passionate terrain: the human heart.

Discussion Guide

1. In the beginning of the novel, the voice in Julia?s head asks her, ?Why do you live alone? To whom do you feel close? What do you want in life??. How do Julia?s answers to these questions develop throughout the story? What do these answers signal to us about her evolution as a character?

2. What role does Burma play in this novel? How does its landscape, history and ethos provide fertile ground to tease out both Julia and Nu Nu?s journeys?

3. Why is it Nu Nu?s voice that enters Julia?s consciousness? How are their stories interwoven, and how does Nu Nu?s tale of love and loss both relate to and differ from Julia?s?

4. Nu Nu wonders whether people come into the world with an allotment of good fortune that they can enjoy during their lives, and whether they ought to be more sparing with their intimacy?or is everything that happens mere caprice and chance? How do you think this book answers those questions?

5. After Nu Nu has her first child, her feelings for her husband change. Why do you think this is, and what does the book say about the mutability of relationships?

6. If THE ART OF HEARING HEARTBEATS was Julia?s quest to find out who her father was, what is it she?s setting out to uncover in this sequel A WELL-TEMPERED HEART?

7. What role do signs play in the lives of Julia, Nu Nu & Thar Thar? How do these omens help them to make sense of the mystery and purpose of their lives?

8. Nu Nu asks, ?Can a troubled spirit transform into a serene one? A sorrowful spirit into a joyful one?? What do you think this book says about the possibility of changing the direction of one?s life?

9. Julia gradually learns about the horrors that Thar Thar had to endure as a young man. How is Thar Thar able to overcome his trauma? What does he draw upon for strength?

10. After she hears his story, Julia feels a connection with Thar Thar unlike any other she has known. Why do you think this is? What accounts for their connection despite their many differences?

11. Why does Thar Thar decide to sever the potential relationship with Julia?

12. At the end of the book, Julia decides not to return to her life in New York. What do you think ultimately informs this decision? How has her time in Burma changed her?

Author Bio

Jan-Philipp Sendker, born in Hamburg in 1960, was the American correspondent for Stern from 1990 to 1995, and its Asian correspondent from 1995 to 1999. In 2000 he published CRACKS IN THE WALL, a nonfiction book about China. THE ART OF HEARING HEARTBEATS, his first novel, is an international bestseller. He lives in Berlin with his family.

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