



World and Town (Vintage Contemporaries)

Gish Jen

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From the much-loved author of *Who's Irish?* and *The Love Wife*, a world-sized novel set in a small New England town.

Hattie Kong—the spirited offspring of a descendant of Confucius and an American missionary to China—has, in her fiftieth year of living in the United States, lost both her husband and her best friend to cancer. It is an utterly devastating loss, of course, and also heartbreakingly absurd: a little, she thinks, “like having twins. She got to book the same church with the same pianist for both funerals and did think she should have gotten some sort of twofer from the crematorium.”

But now, two years later, it is time for Hattie to start over. She moves to the town of Riverlake, where she is soon joined by an immigrant Cambodian family on the run from their inner-city troubles, as well as—quite unexpectedly—by a just-retired neuroscientist ex-lover named Carter Hatch. All of them are, like Hattie, looking for a new start in a town that might once have represented the rock-solid base of American life but that is itself challenged, in 2001, by cell-phone towers and chain stores, struggling family farms and fundamentalist Christians.

What Hattie makes of this situation is at the center of a novel that asks deep and absorbing questions about religion, home, America, what neighbors are, what love is, and, in the largest sense, what “worlds” we make of the world.

Moving, humorous, compassionate, and expansive, *World and Town* is as rich in character as it is brilliantly evocative of its time and place. This is a truly masterful novel—enthraling, essential, and satisfying.

From the Hardcover edition.

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