



Tiger Pelt

Annabelle Kim

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Longlist Center for Fiction First Novel Prize 2017.

Named to Kirkus Reviews' Best Books of 2015.

Bronze Medal Independent Publisher Book Awards 2017.

Finalist NIEA Literary Fiction 2017.

Gold Medal Fiction Historical Literature Global Ebook Awards 2017.

Gold Medal Fiction Multicultural Literature Global Ebook Awards 2017.

Gripping, suspenseful, and unflinching, *Tiger Pelt* is a story of rebirth from the rubble of a savage time and a ravaged place: Korea during the Japanese occupation followed by the Korean War. A farm boy embarks on a quest that propels him on an odyssey spanning the Korean peninsula and crossing the Pacific. In a parallel life, a beautiful young girl is kidnapped and forced to work as a comfort woman for the Japanese military. During a raging monsoon, the two souls will collide in a near-death encounter that will alter the course of their lives.

Tiger Pelt Details

Date : Published by Leaf~Land (first published January 9th 2017)

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Author : Annabelle Kim

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Cultural, Asia

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From Reader Review Tiger Pelt for online ebook

Brian says

I took this from the “read now” section of NetGalley. I want to apologize to the author and publisher now, before I get started with this review. I don’t fit the market for this book. I have nothing against the skill, but this didn’t match well with my preferences. I’ll do my best to give an honest review, which leads to compliments as well as an explanation.

This writer has a high level of ability. She writes with the uniqueness of Stephen King in style, and writes eloquent, beautiful and poetic prose. If I rated this book on skill alone, I would give it five plus stars.

However, I couldn’t finish this book. I’m not the right guy. I have to admit, I’m a sensitive reader also. Yes, I like Stephen King, but I draw the line at Clive Barker. I’ve read some shocking stuff by King, like in “Apt Pupil,” when the former Nazi war-criminal coaxes a cat to him, then grabs it and throws it alive in an oven. I’m an animal lover, and I hated reading this, but I could handle it, because King didn’t go into deep detail about the suffering cat.

This book has no entertaining value. I mean NO INSULT by that at all. I mean this book reads like one that will stay alive for generations, because it reads more as a protest and an outcry, like those who hold signs at rallies with descriptive pictures on them.

One of the best movies, in terms of literary quality, I’ve ever seen: Pulp Fiction. But I hated it. It made me sick. It didn’t match well with me, because the shock and intensity overwhelmed me. I got physically sick when that freak in the gun-store took them down to torture them and the creepy guy in the black leather popped out of the box.

I’m saying this book has great quality, and I can see how it won an award, but it makes me depressed, and made me physically sick. I mean no insult. I guess I represent a part of the market this book has no appeal to. The descriptions of innocent teenage girls being raped by Japanese soldiers did it for me. It made me sick, and angry at them for past sins, and the past must be forgiven and forgotten.

I stopped reading at twenty-eight per cent.

Susan Gruskin says

Reading Tiger Pelt gave me an entirely new perspective on a time in history that I really did not know much about. It took me less than three days to read this book and had I not been at work, I probably would have finished it in one sitting. This book captivated me; mainly because I was so fascinated by the main male character. I saw this book in my head as I was reading it, and that, to me, is when I know I've latched onto something special. Ms. Kim was able to create characters that really came alive and you could see and feel and relate to their journey. I wasn't sure what to expect when I picked this book up and I am so glad that I decided to do so. I am looking forward to Ms. Kim's second work!

Ashley says

I won this book as a Goodreads Giveaway.

Kim's Tiger Belt, is a honest, unsettling odyssey into Korea during the Japanese occupation. Impressive historical fiction indeed!

Jule says

I received a copy of this book via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

"Tiger Pelt" is an epic saga of two Koreans as they live through the Japanese rule over their country, the Korean civil war, and eventually emigration to America. Been there, read that? No, not quite, believe me. Annabelle Kim does a wonderful job of writing gut-wrenchingly realistic scenarios and describing the hard conditions under which the Koreans lived. At times, the narrative was a bit repetitive, but that served to drive home the impact of the suffering. Racism, illness, poverty, war, child prostitution (attention, trigger warning for rape!), familial abuse, etc, even the diaspora of living in the United States are portrayed wonderfully sensitive, emotionally charged - and always serve to make the characters stronger. Through the switches in the pov, a larger portion of the issue could be covered, and the surprise non-stereotypical ending was the cherry on top. Overall, this is a wonderful book about hope in the darkest of times. It also makes you want to read up on Korean history, because it opens a window into this country of which we know probably very little. Definitely worth reading!

Soscha says

A novel of Korea from the Japanese occupation of 1942-43 through the civil war to 1985, Tiger Pelt traces the lives of two children of peasant farmers, Kim Young Nam and Lee Hana, who in adulthood end up seeking a better life in the United States. Kim Young Nam grasps what opportunity he can, first with the American troops and then in a quest for higher education in the Korean Christian church. He has an lifelong affinity for academia but must struggle to gain access to proper schooling before making a return in triumph to Seoul. Lee Hana, as a woman without means, has much less opportunity and her story is far more harrowing, as she seeks not a better life but merely to survive. In the end, with all loose ends tied, you feel much less sense of triumph for her because she has so little agency.

Annabelle Kim does a fine job putting you in the story with all the good and bad emotions the narrative triggers. I learned a lot of new things about the modern history of Korea, and the things I did know were fully brought to life. One gets a sense of Kim Young Nam and Lee Hana as living, breathing people who would be hard to penetrate were they real human beings instead of characters on the page. The only thing I might find fault with is Kim's non-Korean characters, namely Kim Young Nam's G.I. friend and Lee Hana's later American soldier husband, who compared to her Korean characters seem less authentic in their voices.

It seems Tiger Pelt has been in the can for a while now and has already won pre-publication accolades. I can only hope Tiger Pelt will find wide release very soon—it's a great book.

Jean says

A gripping, soulful story that is at once heartbreakingly and heartwarming. The author masterfully weaves together the main characters' lives to make a very powerful story. A lesson in holding on to your dream in the face of overwhelming hardships and obstacles. I highly recommend this beautiful book!

Patrick Fay says

I loved the book and was drawn more and more deeply into the lives of the characters with every page. I really appreciated seeing the stories of the horrors of the Japanese occupation and the Korean civil war through the eyes of individuals. I had previously known about all of this only through drier histories so this was the first time I felt the severity and scale of it all on a visceral, emotional level.

The inside view into Korean culture and thought was an added bonus.

Laura says

Annabelle Kim's "Tiger Pelt" is extraordinary. Since reading this novel, I've continued to think about it every day for weeks. The compelling and interweaving stories, the vivid imagery, the strength of the characters in incredibly painful circumstances: all of these elements continue to live on inside the reader, bringing continued insights and explorations. This novel is a beautiful illustration of the many ways even the most intense suffering can be deeply meaningful, often in unexpected ways. I'm so grateful to have read this book and am already looking forward to reading it again.

Liz says

This is not an easy book to read. Dealing with the Japanese occupation of Korea and up through the Korean War and beyond, it dwells on all the horrors of those times. Kim Young Nam is a young boy during the occupation. Starving, he watches the dissolution of his family. Lee Hana is just twelve when she is forced into life as a comfort woman for the Japanese army. How sick that this group was called the Women's Voluntary Service Corp. The book hits you hard, dealing with starvation, disease, slavery, beatings, rape, suicide and murder. Hope is a long ago forgotten commodity. Death is the only relief.

Even after the war ends, things don't improve. Lee Hana doesn't find any mercy or comfort. In Kim Young Nam's chapters, women don't come off well. They are consistently portrayed as screaming harpies.

Books like Tiger Pelt provide a real service. I admit to knowing about comfort women, but not the trials that Korea endured during the occupation. And certainly nothing of the years between the wars and very little about the Korean War. This one does a great job in being much more than a history lesson. It is well written and draws you in. You want to learn how everything is going to turn out and whether there can be such a

thing as a happy ending for these two.

My thanks to netgalley and Leaf-Land LLC for an advance copy of this book.

Jeffrey Keeten says

"In the middle of the night, you hear a goddamn bugle. Then a bunch of commie chinks come swarming over the mountain like an exploded nest of fire ants. I'm not ashamed to say it. The sight of a million chinks coming at you with one purpose in mind, to kill you, is enough to make any man shit his pants. Every time a flare goes up, you see more of them crawling over the crest of the hill. They're covering the earth like a goddamn plague of Egypt. You shoot till your ammunition is all gone, which don't take long. You can see a bunch of them scattered dead all over the place. But more and more chinks just keep on coming and coming. There's a freaking endless supply of little killer chinks coming at you with their goddamn rice pots strapped to their backs just running right over the dead ones. When your ammo's gone, and you've thrown out your last grenade, all you can do is to dig into your foxhole. You just dig and pray, dig and pray."

My uncle was drafted for Korea. What he remembers of Korea or what he chooses to tell about his time over there is about mud, frostbite, and blood. He told me about shooting at hoards of Chinese "soldiers" until he ran out of ammo or his gun barrel overheated and melted, becoming useless. So when I read this passage, it put me right back into my uncle's living room with a glass of ice tea, dripping condensation on my fingers as I listened to him tell stories about the craziness of war... excuse me, policing action.

One story that he told me was about capturing some Chinese "soldiers." They had no shoes, and their clothes were rags, so the Americans outfitted them with combat boots, clothes, and jackets. As the truck hauling them away moved down the road, the American soldiers watched as clothes and boots came flying out of the truck. The Chinese refused to wear the clothes, believing the Americans had poisoned/infected them.

That was the Korean War, but this story starts during WW2 in occupied Japan.

What many people may not realize is that the Japanese invaded Korea during WW2. Long before the Korean War conflict began, conditions in Korea were horrible. The Japanese were using a large percentage of the population as slave labor. They *"died like flies, and, like flies, they were not counted."* Young Korean girls were conscripted to be comfort women for the Japanese army. They led short, brutal, violent lives. The girls were expected to work 15 hours a day with a new "customer," better described as the next rapist, every twenty minutes during peak times. No time for hygiene, no time for even wearing pants.

It boggles the mind that anyone could survive these conditions. These were beaten, stabbed, and abused by the Japanese soldiers in ways that would be considered inhuman. Lee Hana survived these conditions. Her chances were stacked against her; many girls committed suicide or gave up and slowly slipped away. She was also only 12 years old but big for her age and, fortunately, never lost her looks, or she would have been reassigned to the physical labor detail and would have perished quickly under those demands.

Not that dying didn't seem like the best option.

She survived only because a soldier reached out a hand when she was mired in her deepest despair. Sometimes all it takes is one person telling us that our life is worth living. When she finally met up with her mother and told her of her trials and tribulations, her mother said: **"You should have killed yourself."**

Anger? Yes, anger. Sadness? Yes, sadness. I wanted to slap her mom so hard that she woke up in a different century, but the truth of the matter is that her mom's response was a result of decades of cultural conditioning and brainwashing. All of us who don't want to be dictated to by old rules, old beliefs, and old prejudices must fight our way through them and think about why we believe what we believe.

Truth is so elusive.

Lee Hana's story was twisted and twined with the story of Kim Young Nam. He was an ambitious farm boy who wanted nothing more than to educate himself and be successful. His family, like most every family in Korea, was torn apart by both wars. His studies were interrupted as one superpower after the other made Korea their sandbox for war. **"When whales fight, shrimps' backs are broken."** After the Japanese leave Korea, Kim Young Nam is salivating over books left in a farmhouse near his own home. His father finds his desires misplaced. **"Foolish boy. Can you eat a book? Can you wear a book?"**

To those who don't read, books have no value, even today. Maybe this is even more evident today because there is no excuse like illiteracy to stand in the way of someone being able to read. Everyone should be in the middle of a book every day for the rest of their lives. I can guarantee, people like Kim Young Nam never quit reading and never stopped valuing their ability to read. Through the wars, he made himself useful. He learned how to survive in the midst of chaos. The Korean War destabilized thousands, if not millions, of people. The fighting went back and forth as China and the United States fought a political war over the corpses of the Korean civilian population.

Fate brought Lee Hana and Kim Young Nam together at a critical point. They didn't meet again until fate insured they intersected many thousands of miles away in America.

This is a novel.

It is a novel about life.

Novels are about real life.

My life is a novel I'm still writing.

Don't tell me that Lee Hana and Kim Young Nam don't exist. They do exist. They are buried in graveyards that stretch from Korea to the United States. If you start this novel, you will have to finish because the story is about resilience, about luck, about terror, about impossible conditions, but it is ultimately about triumph. Do their lives turn out the way the expected them to? No. Our stories are fluid, and the tracks we lay for our future are torn up and laid down again in a new direction, time and time again. Our prime directive is to stay alive, persevere, and never, ever give up on ourselves. Inspiration isn't about throwing the pass that wins the Super Bowl or scoring a deal that makes you rich, but reading about two people who find a way to survive a war that is turning the rivers red, redefining the landscape of a nation, and leaving tears on the cheeks of every mother.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Jen says

In Japanese occupied Korea, a disturbing story takes place. As in any war, cultural norms are pushed aside and new ways of life become the standard. Families are torn apart to support the new regime and starvation becomes the collateral damage to those not in the army.

Kim Young Nam, the 3rd child of 5 boys and a scholar, is drafted. Hana Lee, only 12, is recruited into a comfort home for Japanese soldiers. Their stories are told in parallel leading up to an event in which their lives become entwined.

Kim's writing is crisp, clear and delivers an impactful story. Sadness and loss with small victories resulting in hope and redemption. A stunning debut. 4*

Not sure if it was my edition, but a further editing job could have been done as I came across words missing or misspelled. Just played into the distraction factor.

Angela M says

This is a powerful and a painful snapshot of a part of Korea's history from the years of the Japanese occupation from 1943 - 1945 covering decades as it moves over time to the Korean War in the 1950's and to a more recent time in the 1980's following characters to America. It is told through two stories, one of a young boy and the other of a young girl. Their stories alternate as the reader waits and wonders how and when will they connect.

This is so very difficult to read , so very brutal especially in the first half of the book. The author pulls no punches here and the punch goes right to the gut. The starvation of families, the rape of young girls, horrific war scenes, death were just sometimes so gruesome I had to stop reading for a while . I felt as if there was no breathing room , no place to take a breath . It took me a while because it is so heavy with the hardships of war and the horrors of occupation, I had to take breaks in between and read something else . Yes, it was hard to breathe but yet I was drawn to Kim Young Nam and his loyalty to his family and his love for his younger brother and was compelled to continue reading in spite of the difficulty. I was drawn to the twelve year old Lee Hana as I followed her through the years hoping that she could somehow survive. I was compelled to know how their paths would cross and I was not disappointed in how they impacted each other's lives .

Once again in reading a work of historical fiction, even though a fairly recent history, I found it to be a profound learning experience not just of life changing events but of how in spite of such awful things endured there was something left in these characters to move forward. In spite of the everything that made me take reading breaks, I'm glad I read this.

I received an ARC of this from Independent Book Publishers Association through NetGalley

Adina says

A sweeping and dramatic tale set in an important period of Korean history.

I believe it was Cheri's review that convinced me to download this novel from Netgalley back in November. I have been meaning to read it since then but I could not find myself in the mood to tackle such a dramatic story. Be warned, this novel is painful to read although the ending provides for some release. Still, it is worth reading.

The novel plot spans over 42 years. It starts with the Japanese occupation in Korea from 1942 to 1945, continues with the Korean War in 1950 and ends in 1985 in USA and Korea. During this period we follow the twisted destinies of two Koreans, Kim Young Nam and Lee Hanna and their struggle for survival in a harsh environment. A child, Kim Young lives in a poor village together with his brothers and sister and dreams to become a scholar. His thirst for knowledge will be challenged by war, abuse and poverty. Lee Hana is stolen from her village at 12 years old and forced to work as a comfort woman for the Japanese occupation army. I thought that her tribulations were much worse than Young Nam's and I was grateful, in a way, that the focus was on the boy. I do not think my heart could sustain so much pain.

One scene will always remain in my mind. Lee Hana manages to survive the war and when she returns to her home and confesses her suffering to her mother, she receives a slap and is told that "You should have killed yourself." She hoped to find understanding and protection but she instead found scorn and hate because she brought shame to the family.

As I wrote before, it is not an easy read, the story punches you in the gut many times. Whenever I thought that life could not get any harder it usually did, especially in the first part. However, the characters felt real, I am sure there were many Koreans that shared these misfortunes. After experiencing his novel I felt grateful of the life that I have and that I was born in these times.

I received this copy from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review

Cheri says

! Now Available !

The Publication date on this has changed from 24 Nov 2016 to 9 Jan 2017 and now 13 December 2016 according to Amazon and other booksellers, but if you've been waiting for this it is now available.

Beginning with the Japanese occupation in 1942-1943 through the Korean Civil War of 1950 to the year 1985, this covers a lot of territory, geographically as well as time span and people. There are history lessons that are likely to be learned on a more intimate scale, as this focuses rather primarily on a few people and how living in those times and in that area affected their lives – fictional lives, yes, but still, most of these situations were very real.

There's a lot of that topic that never seems to go away, it doesn't get to be "old" because it continues on today in small scale and larger scale: Man's Inhumanity to Man. I wish I had kept track of the number of times I closed my kindle to pause, just thinking "Dear God." Hard to believe some of these situations ever existed. Still, the two main characters drew me in, and I wanted to see how their stories would end, or maybe more that their stories would have a happier ending.

Kim Young Nam, son of a farmer, is destined to be someone. Someday. It is his birthright. As a young boy he was drawn to the academic, finding learning to be a reward in itself. The only thing in life he holds as dear is his younger brother, Owlet.

“Outwardly, by all appearances, he was a man on the move, a sturdy figure of determination, slicing through sheets of rain at an inexorable pace. Inwardly, by his own reckoning, life was at a standstill. He was meant to be a student, not a soldier. He was meant to study, not march. “

“He had made himself into a scholar, but the draft notice had unmade him. He had worked so long and so hard to reach a place of higher learning. He had quaffed every dram of knowledge his professors served. His devotion to his books could be waylaid by no distraction until the day he met her.”

Lee Hana, a young farm girl, twelve years old when soldiers force her into a truck with other girls from her area, and thus they were drafted into the Women's Voluntary Service Corp.

“No vestige of human feeling kindled her heart. Hope was a luxury she had long forgotten. She did not hope for relief. She did not hope for anything. She was an amoeba twitching in a foul petri dish. Nothing more.”

There are some disturbing situations that occur, suffering, need, poverty, abuse, rape, war and everything associated with it. On the other side: overcoming Life's obstacles, fate, love, the kindness of strangers, the Circle of Life - not in any way like the Disney song – but how way leads on to way, and then one day you're looking back at your life. This debut novel will leave you feeling grateful.

Of note: *Tiger Pelt* was named to Kirkus Reviews Best Books.

Pub Date 24 Nov 2016

Many thanks for the ARC provided by Leaf~Land LLC Independent Book Publishers Association, NetGalley, and author Annabelle Kim

Maria Beltrami says

Siamo in Corea, negli anni dopo la guerra, e un giovane militare salva una donna che sta per essere inghiottita dai flutti di un fiume in piena. Questo è il momento che mette in contatto, apparentemente per la durata di questo episodio, in realtà intrecciandone i destini, due giovani coreani dal passato, e dal futuro, travagliati.

Dopo questo momento di incontro la storia torna indietro, e, a capitoli alternati, racconta l'infanzia tragica di entrambi, prima sotto l'occupazione giapponese, poi sotto quella comunista della Corea del Nord. Lui, figlio di una povera famiglia contadina, ha una vocazione da erudito che lo spinge a superare qualsiasi difficoltà e a sottostare a qualsiasi prova pur di tornare ai suoi amati libri, lei ha avuto l'infanzia rubata dall'essere stata rapita poco più che bambina e destinata a diventare "donna di conforto" per le truppe giapponesi.

Niente di così banale come una storia d'amore tra i due, che pure si ritroveranno negli Stati Uniti tanti anni dopo quel casuale salvataggio, ma la dimostrazione che una natura umana sorretta dalla determinazione non può essere spezzata nemmeno dagli avvenimenti più terribili e dalle circostanze più strane e svantaggiose. Ringrazio Leaf~Land LLC e Netgalley per avermi fornito una copia gratuita in cambio di una recensione onesta.

In Korea, in the years after the war, a young private saves a woman who is about to be swallowed by the waves of a flooded river. This is the time that connects, apparently for the duration of this episode, but actually twisting their fates, two young Koreans from the past and the future troubled.

After this encounter, the story goes back and in alternate chapters tells the tragic childhood of both, first under Japanese occupation, then under the communist North Korea. He, the son of a poor farmer's family, has an erudite vocation that pushes him to overcome any difficulties and undergoes any attempt to return to his beloved books, she has had her childhood stolen from having been kidnapped little more than child and destined to become a 'comfort woman' for Japanese troops.

Nothing so banal as a love story between the two, who will find themselves in the United States many years after that random rescue, but the demonstration that a human nature supported by determination can't be broken even by the most terrible events and the weird and disadvantageous circumstances.

I thank Leaf ~ Land LLC and Netgalley for giving me a free copy in exchange for an honest review.
