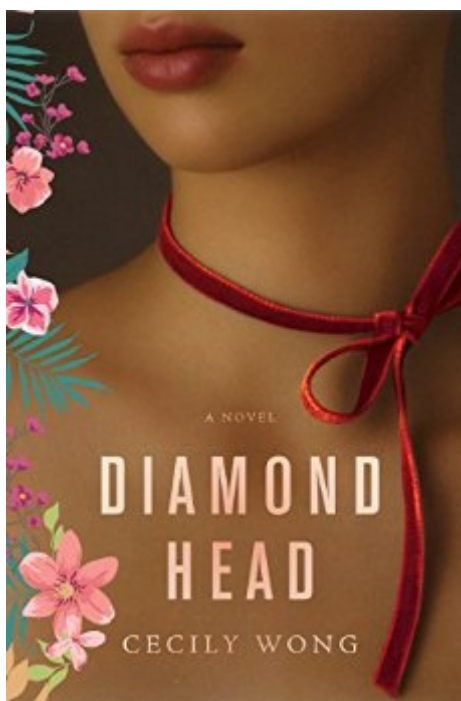


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Diamond Head: A Novel



Synopsis

A sweeping debut spanning from China to Hawaii that follows four generations of a wealthy shipping family whose rise and decline is riddled with secrets and tragic love—a young, powerful new voice in fiction. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Frank Leong, a fabulously wealthy shipping industrialist, moves his family from China to the island of Oahu. But something ancient follows the Leongs to Hawaii, haunting them. The parable of the red string of fate, the cord that binds one intended beloved to her perfect match, also punishes for mistakes in love, passing a destructive knot down the family line. When Frank Leong is murdered, his family is thrown into a perilous downward spiral. Left to rebuild in their patriarch's shadow, the surviving members of the Leong family try their hand at a new, ordinary life, vowing to bury their gilded past. Still, the island continues to whisper—fragmented pieces of truth and chatter, until a letter arrives two decades later, carrying a confession that shatters the family even further. Now the Leong's survival rests with young Theresa, Frank Leong's only grandchild, eighteen and pregnant, the heir apparent to her ancestors' punishing knots. Told through the eyes of the Leong's secret-keeping daughters and wives and spanning The Boxer Rebellion to Pearl Harbor to 1960s Hawaii, *Diamond Head* is a breathtakingly powerful tale of tragic love, shocking lies, poignant compromise, aching loss, heroic acts of sacrifice and, miraculous hope.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Cecily Wong Talks With Ann Hood Ann Hood is the author of *The Red Thread*, *The Knitting Circle*, and *Somewhere Off the Coast of Maine*, among other books. Ann Hood (AH): One of the things that I was drawn to immediately in *Diamond Head* was the use of voice. Not only do I write in multiple points of view, but my favorite novels are usually written that way too. Each character in your novel is sharing his/her own story, and as you continue reading, it's revealed how those voices, those individual threads, are woven together. And while they complement each other so well in the storytelling, each voice is very distinct. What was it like working with this cast of very different characters? Cecily Wong (CW): The diverse cast of voices proved to be as helpful as it was challenging! I began by giving every character in *Diamond Head* a voice—which made for a very noisy start but helped me to understand who needed to speak. When I had settled on the four characters who narrate the novel now, I dove fully into them, one by one, trying to embody each voice before moving on to the next. There were full weeks where I thought I was living in 1900s China or 1940s Hawaii. I had to convince myself in order to be convincing, which made for some pretty wacky weeks, but it was also one of the most rewarding parts of the process. In getting to know my characters so well, the way they fit together almost revealed itself. It's like meeting your best friend's mother for the first time; there's a lot of information that comes with knowing the kin of a person. AH: As you and I discussed at the Brooklyn Book Festival, we share an interest in the Chinese idea of the red string or red thread of fate. In fact, I wrote a novel called *The Red Thread* that uses that idea as its theme. In other interviews you've brought up the "red string of fate" and how that inspired so much of this multi-generational story. What was it about this myth in particular that captivated your interest? CW: I find that myths and curses have a way of being either fantastically hopeful or unreasonably punitive. Life is a combination of what we inherit and what we make for ourselves. Certainly there are outside factors—blessings and misfortunes passed generationally—but we are ultimately responsible for our own choices and the manifestations of these choices. I think the red string illustrates this logic brilliantly, both emotionally and visually. Imagine everyone in the world attached to their fate by a red thread; there is a clear path to happiness, but so many ways to tangle it along the way. AH: I have a special place in my heart for first novels, especially ones as wonderful as yours. The publication and reception of my own first novel, *Somewhere Off the Coast of Maine*, remains one of the high points in my life. What have you learned as a writer in the crafting

and publishing of your first novel? CW: Be patient, be open-minded, be kind! Publishing is a slow process. I've learned to see this fact as a good thing. Writing is gradual, laborious work and to rush a book out the door the minute it's finished undermines the craft. The real pleasure should always be in the writing. Fiction is a long game and I'm learning to keep my sense of urgency to the page, away from the publishing process. I also like to remind myself to keep an open mind, to be adaptable enough to embrace all outcomes. And to be nice! My editor says "nice is the new thing" and it's true. Nice goes a long way.

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