



The Scholar and the Tiger: A Memoir of Famine and War in Revolutionary China

David Wen-wei Chang, Alden R. Carter

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The Scholar and the Tiger is at once a compelling family saga, thriller, social history, and spiritual journey. Written by a noted China scholar, assisted by a writer friend, the story brings to life a tumultuous period in Chinese history while providing surprising insights into China's emergence as a global power.

Wen-wei Chang was born in 1929 as famine gripped northern China, taking the lives of countless peasants, including his father. Only his iron-willed mother kept the family alive. The eldest son, Wen-po, joined the army. Eighteen years Wen-wei's senior, Wen-po fought bandits, opium smugglers, the Japanese, and Mao's Communists, becoming known as "Tiger Chang."

Meanwhile, Wen-wei—a brilliant scholar from childhood—seemed destined for a career in the age-old mandarin tradition of civil service. But civil war intervened, forcing him to evacuate his ill mother and two sisters-in-law and their children only days before the Communists reached Beijing. In Shanghai, they were reunited with Wen-po, now a leading Guomindang general who commanded the city's final defenses. Wen-wei refused evacuation to Taiwan, insisting on caring for his mother and making the best life he could under the Communists. But a day after the occupation of the city, a terrified friend told Wen-wei that Wen-po had been left behind and was hiding in the friend's apartment, putting all of their lives at risk.

What follows has all the drama of a spy novel: narrow escapes and rescues, treachery and blackmail, and a final wrenching irony that would tear Wen-wei from his family and homeland. Only after thirty years in America, with a new life as university professor David Chang, is he allowed to return to China to learn the fate of his mother and loved ones—and perhaps to heal his broken heart.

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