



## The Last Time I Saw Mother (U)

By Arlene J. Chai

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### The Last Time I Saw Mother (U) By Arlene J. Chai

'Arlene Chai comes to popular fiction like a fresh breeze. She brings with her an exotic personal background and a tradition of storytelling which, blended with a real ability to write, gives her first novel a maturity and sophistication which will add greatly to your appreciation of this truly exciting writer. You will love this book.' - BRYCE COURtenay 'A remarkable first novel!' - AMY TAN

Between the generations, there are always secrets - relationships kept hidden, past events obscured, true feelings not spoken. But sometimes the truth must be told...Caridad is a wife and mother, a native of the Philippines living in Australia. Out of the blue, Caridad's mother summons her home to reveal a secret that has been weighing heavily upon her for years. So begins Caridad's journey of discovery as she is given the gift of her past.

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## **The Last Time I Saw Mother (U) By Arlene J. Chai Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Called back home from Australia to the Philippines by an enigmatic letter from her mother, Caridad begins an emotional journey of self-discovery. The truth emerges in first person accounts by the women involved--Caridad, her mother Thelma, her aunt Emma, and her cousin, Ligaya--and presents a tale of personal tragedy and social devastation during the wartime Japanese occupation, and then during the post-war invasion of American troops billeted at the huge naval bases, which brought the seediest of western culture to the people of Manila.

#### From Publishers Weekly

The central story in this interesting but uneven debut novel by Filipina author Chai concerns a woman who discovers the truth about her parentage. Caridad, a Filipino woman living in Sydney, Australia, with her teenage daughter, discovers on a trip home to Manila that her elderly mother, Thelma, is actually her aunt?and that her vivacious aunt Emma is her mother. Using multiple, shifting first-person perspectives, these three women, as well as Caridad's beautiful, bitter cousin, Ligaya, relate the long story of why this secret adoption took place. The voices of the four women are virtually identical, however, and sometimes lapse into cliched musings about life and love. More compelling is the seamlessly interwoven background Chai provides: 50 years of history in the Philippines?from the WWII Japanese invasion and its vividly recounted brutalities through the battle for liberation (in which systematic American bombing caused more damage than three years of Japanese occupation) to the Marcoses' 20-year rule and the subsequent People's Power revolution. Fascinating side lights illuminate the subtleties of race relations among native Filipinos and the other ethnic strands in the island's social fabric: "the Spaniards they feared and envied; the Chinese they hated and envied." Chai's prose is devoid of stylistic flourish and the narrative is often repetitious and digressive. When she tells of life in the evacuation camps or in war-decimated Manila, however, the descriptions are sensual and palpably detailed. Thus the truth about Caridad's past pales against Chai's evocation of her country's travails. \$250,000 ad/promo; Literary Guild alternate.

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#### From Library Journal

Caridad, a Filipino woman with an 18-year-old daughter, is called home from Australia to Manila by her aging mother and told that she was adopted as an infant. She learns that her real mother is her aunt Emma and that her cousins are really her sisters. Long-buried memories of early confusion resurface as Caridad's relatives help piece together the puzzle of her past. This absorbing first novel relates the lives of four women in one Filipino family against a tumultuous historical backdrop ranging from World War II through the fall of the Marcos regime. For the American reader, it offers informative glimpses into the extent and mixed effects of the U.S. involvement in the Philippines. Highly recommended for all fiction collections.?Sheila M. Riley, Smithsonian Inst. Libs., Washington, D.C.

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### Users Review

#### From reader reviews:

##### Allen Ellis:

The book The Last Time I Saw Mother (U) gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You need

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**Michael Green:**

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