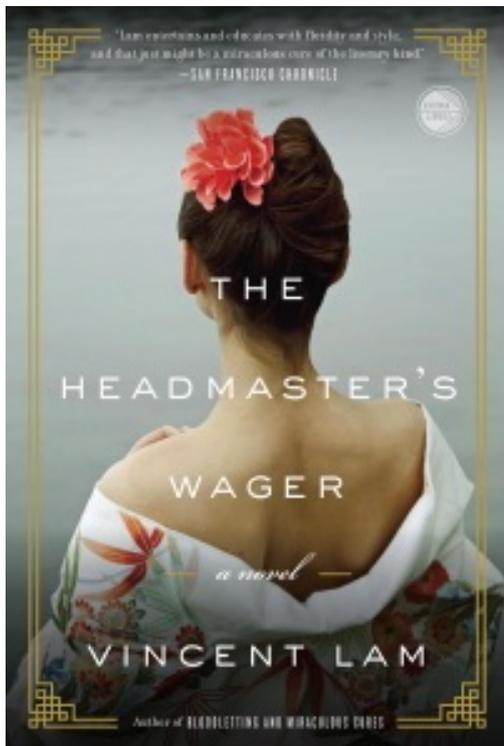


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Percival Chen is the headmaster of the most respected English academy in 1960s Saigon, and he is well accustomed to bribing a forever-changing list of government officials in order to maintain the elite status of his school. Fiercely proud of his Chinese heritage, he is quick to spot the business opportunities rife in a divided country, though he also harbors a weakness for gambling haunts and the women who frequent them. He devotedly ignores all news of the fighting that swirls around him, but when his only son gets in trouble with the Vietnamese authorities, Percival faces the limits of his connections and wealth and is forced to send him away.

In the loneliness that follows, Percival finds solace in Jacqueline, a beautiful woman of mixed French and Vietnamese heritage whom he is able to confide in. But Percival's new-found happiness is precarious, and as the complexities of war encroach further into his world, he must confront the tragedy of all he has refused to see.

Graced with intriguingly flawed but wonderfully human characters moving through a richly drawn historical landscape, *The Headmaster's Wager* is an unforgettable story of love, betrayal and sacrifice.

Praise for *The Headmaster's Wager*

"[A] sumptuously plotted first novel . . . Lam goes for the jugular, combining an operatic love story . . . with evocations of Vietnam's occupation by the Japanese and the later horrors of the Vietcong's persecution of the city of Hue. . . . His most provocative character is the shadowy Teacher Mak, Chen's longtime aide-de-camp, whose shifting masks of comrade and adversary potently embody the intricate survival tactics required of aliens afloat in a country of fractured allegiances."—***The New York Times Book Review***

"A vivid, palpable and lyrical document evoking a forgotten segment of modern Vietnamese history. An unforgettable portrait of love, betrayal and sacrifice."—***Shelf Awareness***

"A masterfully paced exploration of a world convulsed by war, wherein faith and reason no longer hold sway . . . Lam marshals his characters with humor suspense, and tenderness as the fall of Saigon looms . . . [and] depicts a world caught in an implacable cycle of violence, leavened only by the grace of a father's love."—***Publishers Weekly (starred review)***

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