

THE DUCKS IN THE LAGOON

湖上的鴨子都到哪裡去了

When an idealistic teaching intern takes it upon himself to provide better opportunities for his special needs students, his efforts are met reproach rather than praise, leading to a clash with a corrupt system willing to sacrifice the innocent to protect its interests.

One semester shy of graduation, unforeseen circumstances force teaching intern Ho Po-Ssu to move to a new school to complete his internship. The new private high school is unusual – even during winter break a team of student volunteers stand guard at the front gates, and inside, all students are required to address the school’s founder and former principal as “Master”.

Moved by the struggles of a handful of special needs students, Ho Po-Ssu organizes them into an odd-jobs crew, hoping to better integrate them into campus life. His charges include Fa-Ko, who struggles with even the most basic tasks; Hui, an unapologetic class-cutter; Hsiang, who, despite his challenges, still dreams of getting top marks; and Ning who refuses to don a school uniform.

Not only are Ho Po-Ssu’s well-intentioned efforts dismissed, when a scandal rocks the school, the administration sets up Ho Po-Ssu to take the fall. Consumed with outrage, he watches helplessly as the circumstances that ended his first internship once again unfold before his eyes. Yet, far more disturbing is the way innocent students are sacrificed in the power struggle that follows.

Author Chu Yuhsun’s writing is marked by tight pacing and quicksilver prose. Chapters are interspersed with remembered dreams, providing an absurd foil to the unimaginable circumstances of Ho Po-Ssu’s waking life. Themes of integrity, outrage, injustice, and the dangers of unchecked authority pulse through the novel, as the dark tendrils of a



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corrupt system threaten to smother youthful innocence and idealism.

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Chu Yuhsun's writing has been recognized with numerous awards including the Lin Rung-San Foundation Prize and the National Student Literature Prize. He has received funding from National Culture and Arts Foundation, and is a member of the Keng Hsin Youth Literary Association. His published works include short story collections *Incorrect Delivery* and *Visions in Chalk*, a collection of essays *Novels They Dare Not Teach in Schools*, and novel *The Shadow*. In addition to writing, he is deeply interested in culture, education, and current affairs.