



The Badlands: More Stories from Midnight in Peking (A Penguin Special)

Paul French

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More tales of intrigue in Old Peking from bestselling author Paul French

Through portraits of eight residents of Peking's infamous Badlands district, Paul French brings the area and 1930s Peking vividly to life. A small warren of narrow hutongs, the Badlands sat just inside the eastern flank of the Tartar Wall, which at that time enclosed the old Imperial City of Peking. Its habitués were a mix of the good, the bad and the poor unfortunates, among them the fiery brothel madams Brana Shazker and Rosie Gerbert; the pimp Saxsen, who had no regard for the women he exploited; the young prostitutes Marie and Peggy, whose dreadful working lives drove them to madness and addiction. There was the cabaret dancer Tatiana Korovina, a White Russian girl who did not succumb to the vice of the district but instead married, had a family, and eventually left China to lead a long and happy life. There was the American Joe Knauf, who dealt violence and fear as well as drugs, and finally the enigmatic Shura Giraldi, of indeterminate sex, who was to some a charmer and to others a master criminal, but to everyone the uncrowned King of the Badlands.

Paul French first discovered the Badlands while researching his bestselling *Midnight in Peking*. As the book was published in China, Australia, America, and the UK, the families and acquaintances of the people he had written about contacted him from around the globe, adding stories and recollections to his own research. The result is this short but potent portrait of a time and place now lost to history, here vividly brought to life.



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