



December 6: A Novel

By Smith, Martin Cruz

Simon & Schuster, Riverside, New Jersey, U.S.A., 2002. Hard Cover. Book Condition: New. Dust Jacket Condition: New. Smith's new thriller is set in Tokyo in the last days of 1941, just before the bombing of Pearl Harbor; its central character, the American Harry Niles, grew up in Japan, where his missionary parents were preaching the Word. Harry isn't very holy, however: he owns a night club called the Happy Paris, dabbles in assorted short cons, and spends much of his time with various mistresses, including the possibly murderous Michiko, the jukebox girl at the Happy Paris. As the rumors of war heat up, Harry finds that he is the victim of his own equivocal identity: Americans worry that he has become too Japanese, and the Japanese suspect him of being a spy. Smith's plot is more than slightly reminiscent of "Casablanca," and the spectre of the Second World War seems, at this distance, almost quaint, but the characters are so well drawn and the local color so colorful that these quibbles hardly interfere with the novel's pleasures.

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