



## ZHU WEN I love dollars

Fiction Short Stories  
250 pp.  
Origin: China

**ABOUT THE CONTENTS:** *I Love Dollars* consists of six longer stories of life in China in the 1990s, a time when the transition from the absolute government-dictated and controlled Maoist economy of the 1960s and 70s accelerated rapidly towards a much freer market-driven economy. The first-person narrator is not someone who has embraced capitalism and entrepreneurship. Instead, Zhu's stories present how this changing world looks and feels for the individual. His protagonist tends to be both aimless and rootless, but that feeling extends far more generally and beyond him. The protagonist's ties to women, for example, tend to be very loose, but others, too, only have the loosest ties to even family. Money is an obsession in many of the

stories too, especially the almost magical dollar, and the narrators often go into considerable detail about costs and what they spend (and what they get for it) and what people want from them. In *I Love Dollars* there's little interest in romantic love: women (and access to sex and fondling) are a consumer item, they can be bought to grope for the price of a box seat cinema ticket. Many transactions resemble extortion more than an exchange of goods and services for cash in this world, too. Zhu's protagonists are also hardly high-rollers or just even budding capitalists, and are almost always very short of money; a major problem they all have is that, while some see the appeal of the dollar, this is still a world with too much arbitrariness (and the protagonists have too little capitalist drive) for them to literally work their way into some better position.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Zhu Wen used to work as an engineer up to 1994, when on publication of his short story "I love dollars" he was welcomed as one of the most important and discussed figures in contemporary Chinese literature. He's the author of a novel and several short story and poetry collections, and has been published in China's most prestigious literary magazines. He has also directed four films, including *Seafood*, which won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2001 Venice Film Festival, and *South of the clouds*, awarded at the 2004 Berlin Film Festival.

### PRESS REVIEWS:

"Great satire - think of Swift or Kurt Vonnegut - has frequently been outlandishly comic on the surface while barely managing to disguise the despair at human stupidity and viciousness that lies underneath. These six stories are very much in this tradition, except that the comedy is so manic that you need to be nudged now and again before you're aware of the serious indignation at China's newfound commercialism that's also part of the author's world-view." *Taipei Times*  
"An absorbing portrait of the go-go years in China." *London Review of Books*

### FOCUS ON:

- The book has already been published in Great Britain and in the USA and is to be translated into French and German.
- A writer who is a central figure in new Chinese literature, untied from the representation of the past (the cultural revolution, the Tien-an-Men riot) as well as from any juvenile, American-loving approach.
- Rights sold for publication in USA, UK, France, Germany, India