



**ZHU WEN**

**What is love, what is garbage**

Fiction

500 pp.

Origin: China

**ABOUT THE STORY:** *What is Love and What is Garbage*, which begins and ends with the same sentence ("Xiao Ding sat at the narrow, cigarette-scarred wooden table with his head cradled on one arm, wondering whether or not he ought to scream...") follows a year in the life of protagonist Xiao Ding, a Nanjing slacker and erstwhile writer. Unable to find meaning or satisfaction in his writing, family relationships, friendships or romances, adrift in a society that offers little in the way of comfort, sympathy, justice or rewards, Xiao Ding lurches from one small crisis to the next. Although the passage of time is punctuated by various strange encounters and situations, there are no great transformations or

spiritual awakenings, no lessons learned or applied. Seasons shade into one another, and soon a year has passed. Xiao Ding and those around him are little changed: older, perhaps, but not much wiser. They seem trapped in a sort of existential stasis, destined to repeat the same mistakes over and over, subject to the whims of forces beyond their control.

**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 is 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:**

"A surprisingly well-structured novel that masterfully expresses 1990s China." *Asia Literary Review*

"Ding is typical of the Wen's protagonists. From their position at the margin of society, they are dispassionate observers of an insane and absurd society, but disinclined for radical protest." *China Review*

**FOCUS ON:**

- After the success of "I love dollars", the first novel of the acclaimed Chinese writer.
- 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 and UK.