

# **Monkey King**

Patricia Chao

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*Monkey King* tells the story of a young Chinese-American woman whose mental breakdown and sojourn in a hospital for rehabilitation sets her firmly on the path of memory. For 28-year-old Sally Wang has come to a dead stop in her life, and it is through her recollections of her childhood -- and the stories of her extended Chinese family -- that she manages to find the strength to pull herself back to the land of the living.

As we enter Sally's world, we meet a colorful array of characters: her grandmother Nai Nai, the aristocratic matriarch of the family; her parents, who are both marked by their immigrant experience; auntie Mabel and Uncle Richard, who love her like the daughter they never had; and Marty, Sally's beautiful sister, whose tough facade belies the frightened woman inside.

Sally's recovery takes place against a rich tapestry of culture and personality that unfolds before our eyes under the ghostly shadow of the *Monkey King*. For Sally has been living with a terrible family secret, and it is this burden that shattered her life. How she comes to terms with this betrayal and integrates her Chinese and American parts into a coherent personality are recounted with an honesty that is at once wry and refreshing. *Monkey King* is a stunning and memorable debut from a beautiful new writer.



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