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Green Island: A novel

Shawna Yang Ryan

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Green Island: A novel Shawna Yang Ryan
“Shawna Yang Ryan’s propulsive storytelling carries us through a bloody time in Taiwanese history, its implications still reverberating today. The story is haunted by questions about whether Taiwan is a part of China or its own country, what the costs are of standing up for one’s beliefs and by the choices made by one father and his daughter. *Green Island* is a tough, unsentimental and moving novel that is a memorial not only to the heroes, but also to the survivors.” —Viet Thanh Nguyen, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Sympathizer*

A stunning story of love, betrayal, and family, set against the backdrop of a changing Taiwan over the course of the twentieth century.

February 28, 1947: Trapped inside the family home amid an uprising that has rocked Taipei, Dr. Tsai delivers his youngest daughter, the unnamed narrator of *Green Island*, just after midnight as the city is plunged into martial law. In the following weeks, as the Chinese Nationalists act to crush the opposition, Dr. Tsai becomes one of the many thousands of people dragged away from their families and thrown into prison. His return, after more than a decade, is marked by alienation from his loved ones and paranoia among his community—conflicts that loom over the growing bond he forms with his youngest daughter. Years later, this troubled past follows her to the United States, where, as a mother and a wife, she too is forced to decide between what is right and what might save her family—the same choice she witnessed her father make many years before.

As the novel sweeps across six decades and two continents, the life of the narrator shadows the course of Taiwan’s history from the end of Japanese colonial rule to the decades under martial law and, finally, to Taiwan’s transformation into a democracy. But, above all, *Green Island* is a lush and lyrical story of a family and a nation grappling with the nuances of complicity and survival, raising the question: how far would you be willing to go for the ones you love?

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