



# Mr. Muo's Travelling Couch

By Dai Sijie

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## Mr. Muo's Travelling Couch By Dai Sijie

Following his runaway best seller, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*, Dai Sijie gives us a delightful new tale of East meets West: an adventure both wry and uplifting about a love of dreams and the dream of love, and the power of reading to sustain and inspire the spirit.

After years of studying Freud in Paris, Mr. Muo returns home to introduce the blessings of psychoanalysis to twenty-first-century China. But it is his hidden purpose—to liberate his university sweetheart, now a political prisoner—that leads him to the sadistic local magistrate, Judge Di. The price of the Communist bureaucrat's clemency? A virgin maiden. And so our middle-aged hero Muo, a Westernized romantic and sexual innocent himself, sets off on his bicycle in search of a suitable girl.

Muo's quest will take him from a Chengdu mortuary to a rural panda habitat, from an insane asylum to the haunts of the marauding Lolo people. Along the way, he will lose a tooth, his virginity, and his once unshakable faith in psychoanalytic insight. But his quixotic idealism will not waver, even as he comes to see that the chivalrous heart may have room for more than one true love.

Dai Sijie's exuberant, touching—and most unlikely—romance is a triumph of unbridled imagination, a celebration of the yearning spirit.

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## Mr. Muo's Travelling Couch By Dai Sijie Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

*Starred Review.* Wong's mellifluous, theatrical voice sets the stage for this novel of Muo, a French-trained psychoanalyst who returns to his native China in search of his lost love. Finding her imprisoned by Communist fiat, Muo discovers that the only way to free her is to bring a tyrannical local judge a virgin for his delectation. Sijie's comic-romantic quest becomes a travelogue of the new China, taking in a panoply of voices, a ceaselessly chattering orchestra playing the song of life in the proto-capitalist era. Wong chooses to perform the book as an extended series of monologues, bending and playing with each word like a separate, discretely wrapped treat. Some get whispered silkily, others intoned fitfully, others yet provided with a series of intricately nuanced voices. The book becomes an opportunity for Wong to luxuriate in the sound of Sijie's words and in his own voice. Wong makes his own performance the centerpiece of his reading, and his audacious willingness to place himself at the forefront is a gamble that pays off handsomely, providing a holistic unity that elevates this audiobook over the run of its peers.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

This comic novel encompasses huge themes—not just political repression in China, but also love, sex, the commodification of women, and the twisting, winding roads one must take to gain self-knowledge. Reviewers concur that Sijie's second novel is something of a picaresque; it meanders as it follows the hapless Mr. Mou's adventures and missteps and enters into the terrain of the absurd. What reviewers don't agree on is whether or not the novel succeeds as a whole, particularly compared to the elegant *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* (2001). IT seems Sijie hasn't escaped the second-novel scourge, but he'll charm and entertain many readers nonetheless.

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From [Booklist](#)

When we first meet Mr. Muo, he is traveling on a train to his home province in China, with \$10,000 stuffed into his pants. He has been in France for the past 11 years as an apprentice in psychoanalysis. Always somewhat different, Muo was a university student when he was thunderstruck by two things: Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* and a beautiful girl named Volcano of the Old Moon. Muo immediately recognized his vocation and earned a stipend from the French government. But he never forgot about Old Moon, even when she was imprisoned by the Chinese police as a political dissident. Now he has returned to gain her release through judiciary bribery. Unfortunately, her life is in the hands of the ruthless Judge Di, who wants, not money, but a virgin girl to sleep with. Humor derives from Muo's clumsy endeavors to lure a virgin, as he finds much has changed in modern China. A stranger in his homeland, Muo admirably continues trying to help Old Moon. But ultimately the pressing question becomes, Who will help Muo? *Jerry Eberle*

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