



This Burns My Heart

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In this compelling love story set in postwar Korea in the 1960s, an unhappily married woman struggles to give her daughter a good life and to find love in a society caught between ancient tradition and change.

Beautiful and ambitious, Soo-Ja Choi attempts to find happiness in a land where wives have no rights and mothers own nothing, where love remains elusive, and the only way to survive is to live the lessons of Confucian tradition: perseverance, strength, loyalty, and grace. Charting her way through an ill-advised marriage, Soo-Ja must navigate the intrigue and dangers of living with her conniving in-laws, all the while longing for her true love of the past, the elusive Doctor Yul. And when he enters her life again, Soo-Ja is confronted with a final chance at happiness, but must make a mother's ultimate choice.

Epic and intimate, Park's debut offering—based on his own mother's story—is a snapshot of a nation rising from a poor, rural country into a major world power in the aftermath of a devastating war. *This Burns My Heart* evokes a strong sense of place and era reminiscent of Sarah Waters, and the richly drawn characters and exploration of women's changing roles brings to mind Lisa See.

This Burns My Heart Details

Date : Published July 12th 2011 by Simon & Schuster (first published June 14th 2011)

ISBN :

Author : Samuel Park

Format : Kindle Edition 322 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Romance, Cultural, Asia

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From Reader Review This Burns My Heart for online ebook

Mary (BookHounds) says

Soo-Ja comes from a wealthy and traditional family in post-war South Korea and has her heart set on becoming a diplomat. She applies and is accepted by the school, but her father tells her that no self-respecting family would ever consent to allow a daughter to move to Seoul and disgrace her family, thus crushing her dreams. She is now 22 and finishing school and is soon named an old maid when a suitor, Min, follows her and quickly proposes. She also meets another man, Yul, a medical student, to whom she is instantly attracted but feels he cannot move her to Seoul and follow her diplomatic dreams. She marries Min on the pretext that he is from a wealthy family and can take to Seoul where she can control him and follow her dreams. Things unravel on Soo-Ja's wedding night when Min confesses that he lied to her in order to get her to marry him. There is no money, he is a loser and she is destined to live a traditional life while her heart breaks. Soo-Ja shows incredible strength which only seems to grow as she is abused by her in laws, where they trick her family out of money, force her to do back breaking work and almost break her spirit.

She suddenly wakes up when she runs into Yul and his wife at her hotel business and a small spark is rekindled between the two of them. I was cheering for Soo-Ja through much of the story and I felt so emotionally connected to her that I was sad when the story ended. Of course, I disliked Min, but overall, the tradition that controlled these characters made me understand his actions a bit better and made him a bit more sympathetic. The relationship between Yul and Soo-Ja also made you root for them to reconnect. Yul's wife Eun-Mee quickly becomes a match for Min in the low integrity department when she stays one step ahead of Soo-Ja and ruins Soo-Ja chances for financial prosperity by borrowing money from a friend that Soo-Ja had planned on asking. You need to read the story to find out how it ends.

This story of reconnection and true love is a wonderful debut and I would love to read more from this author. It reminded me of when I first read Lisa See's work and how she combined history with incredibly believable characters and a storyline that was truly plausible.

Thomas says

After the war in South Korea ends, Soo-Ja Choi makes the worst mistake of her life: marrying a timid, foolish suitor instead of the caring, earnest medical student she really loves. Though Soo-Ja has a rebellious heart, a dedicated passion for adventure, and a burning desire to pursue diplomacy, all of that subsides when her cruel new family and lukewarm marriage force her into submission. Now Soo-Ja must create a better life for herself and her daughter, lest she make the same mistakes from her past.

I enjoyed the themes of longing and regret imbedded within *This Burns My Heart*. Samuel Park writes with an aching precision about the pain that accompanies wrong decisions, the bittersweet sorrow that pervades our lives, even in our joyful moments. He also crafts a headstrong and winsome protagonist with Soo-Ja, who keeps the story compelling and meaningful. Park's prose shines when he discusses the intricate details of certain side characters, as well as the broader implications people's behaviors have for the rest of human nature, as evidenced by this quote:

"Father-in-law felt no guilt for sacrificing his son, nor - her second hope - any gratitude toward him. She wondered if he wrestled with those demons in his own, in the dark, until she figured that was wishful thinking

on her part. Regret and pangs of conscience are feelings we assign to others to make the world seem a little more fair, to even things out a little and provide consolation. In reality, those who do wrong to us never think about us as much as we think about them, and that is the ultimate irony: their deeds live inside us, festering, while they live out in the world, plucking peaches off trees, biting juicily into them, their minds on things lovely and sweet."

However, nothing really stood out to me after reading *This Burns My Heart*. The plot felt predictable and trite at times, and the events of Soo-Ja's life almost progressed in an unfortunate pattern. Her relationships with Yul and Min had some awkward phases of development, and certain events in the story occurred at all-too-convenient times. I would have appreciated just a bit more power from Park's prose to elevate the novel as a whole, that extra spark that would have transformed a simmer into a flame.

Overall, an alright book I would recommend to those intrigued by its synopsis, or those who want to try a book that pertains to Asian culture. Not my favorite story about featuring an Asian protagonist, though I am curious about what Park writes next.

Kathryn says

I won this book through a First Reads giveaway, but never received it. I think the premise of the book sounds terrific though and still plan to read it at first opportunity!

Heather Park says

This Burns My Heart is the story of Soo-Ja, a woman in post-war Korea who is having to forgo the life she desires to fit in with the customs and culture of her country. After a hasty marriage, Soo-Ja is soon trapped in a life of virtual servitude to her in-laws. As her life turns out vastly different to what she had imagined when younger, she continues to run into a man who she had quickly fallen in love with right before she got married. In Yul, she sees a life that could have been, full of love and comfort. Soo-Ja must decide whether to pine after that which she wishes she had or make the best of what she does have.

I absolutely loved this book! There was such beauty and grace to Soo-Ja. Never did she wallow in misery, even while wondering how her life would have been different if she had married someone else. She understood that her life was made by her choices. Soo-Ja had wonderful perspective on everything. I also really enjoyed the aspects of Soo-Ja's wants versus tradition. In a culture steeped in tradition, Soo-Ja knew there were certain expectations made of her. Although they did not make her life easy, she did the best she could to satisfy those traditions and make her own life as she saw fit. She was a beautiful example of adapting and making the best of all situations.

The writing was outstanding. Everything flows so well, and you get a real sense of who all the characters are. I was so moved by this book. This is the kind of book that makes you feel so many things, but in the end I was incredibly uplifted. I am recommending this book, it has been my favorite book so far this year, and I am sure it will be on many "best of" lists to come

Alex says

It was as the title suggested.

My heart burned from reading its pages, taking in one scorching blow after another.

This book is unbelievably abusive; it does to you what you would never wish upon anyone, not even your worst, and most despicable enemy. It throws in your way heart-felt anguish, frustration, and sorrow. And the author has a serious case of sadistic tendencies in approaching his readers. He does not spare you a moment of peace. Nor does he allow room for breaths as he holds your head below the murky, dark waters he calls his plot.

I have never come across a book so emotionally powerful, where it inspired in me rage and impulses to punch holes in the living room wall.

I'm not sure how to even respond to the ending yet, even though I have finished the book an hour ago.

I hate this book for making my days depressing and stirring up such negative emotions (mainly, irritation and frustration).

But I can appreciate the author's craft in delivering piercing and haunting emotions from his words, through his narrative, and his flawed and imperfect characters.

Jen says

Simply exceptional. It's on the treasured "books-that-are-as-delightful-as-chocolate" list -- the kind that you savor every bite of and are sad, but entirely fulfilled when it's done. Characters, passages, and the imperfect translations between Korean and English -- the words with meanings and values that are too rich and culturally-situated to be explained by language alone -- will linger in your mind as pleasant after-thoughts. And just like my favorite chocolate, I devoured it in one sitting.

Marjorie Kehe says

Korean literature is on the rise! The book I really meant to read was "Please Look After Mom" but I picked this one up instead and really enjoyed it. The emotional dilemma at the heart of the novel (what if you really loved one guy but married another?) is familiar but the setting (South Korea) is not. This story, set in the post World War II, makes an interesting contrast to Lisa See's "Dreams of Joy," set in China at the same time. Apparently while the Chinese were starving to death during the Great Leap Forward, the Koreans were fiercely embracing capitalism and having to learn to deal with the loss of their traditional ways. Although the author is a man, this is a woman's story and again, it makes an interesting contrast to the story told by Lisa See.

Catharine says

I saw this book advertised on GoodReads. It sparked my interest because it was a story about Korea, and I have a Korean daughter-in-law. Samuel Park, the author, did an excellent job. I believe this is his first full-length novel and I was impressed. I especially appreciated that the heroine had a strong moral character. I have understood from my daughter-in-law that the way Park depicted the women in the novel was very accurate. The woman who married the eldest son (at least back in the 1960s, but I think this still goes on today) had to move in with her in-laws and take care of the family and the home. My daughter-in-law says that there are problems today, because now women are working outside of the home, but there are many tasks that men think are too menial and should be performed by women. She also said that if she had married a Korean man and lived with his family (as she lived with ours for a few months), she would have been required to do all the cooking and cleaning for us; this in the year 2010.

The synopsis that Goodreads gives about the story isn't entirely accurate. It indicates that the girl, Soo-Ja, enters an arranged marriage for the sake of her family, but she actually chooses who she's going to marry, then for the sake of her family, goes ahead with the marriage even when given an alternate and probably better, choice.

The only thing I didn't like about this book was the sub-plot. I found it just a little hard to believe that she could fall in love with Yul when she had only been with him twice, and both times, briefly. I'd say more, but then I'd have to add a spoiler notice.

One of the themes of the book is "choices." If Soo-Ja would have chosen differently, how would her life had played out. I loved that she realized that without all her sacrifices and suffering and sorrow, she wouldn't be the strong woman that she was.

Brandy says

****Spoiler Alert Warning****

I couldn't put this book down and finished in a day; I kept wanting more and needed to know what happened next. This *Burns My Heart* features a strong female character that I instantly felt a connection to. No matter what crossed Soo-Ja's path she was determined to let nothing stop her. After I found out that Min tricked Soo-Ja into marrying him I felt anger and sympathy for him. Such heartache and disappointment for one man to go through at such a young age to help his family and feel accomplished. Throughout the story I couldn't help comparing life in America to life in Korea; the story gets you thinking about how different other cultures are and the sacrifices they go through for their family and themselves. If Soo-Ja wasn't the woman she is, strong willed & determined, I don't think she would have survived.

I felt so many emotions while reading: anger, pity, sadness, happiness, and finally joy and relief at the end. Anger towards Min for being a coward, pity for him because he was so weak, and sad because he too had to live a life distant with love because he knew Soo-Ja never loved him. At times I thought Hanna was ungrateful, she never understood the sacrifices Soo-Ja made for her; she could have easily walked away from a broken marriage and a hard life to be with Yul but, the love of her child superseded all of that. Then I remembered Hanna was just a child and at the end she finally did grow up. My heart broke for Soo-Ja, what

a life she had to live for so many reasons.

I was so happy that things worked out well in the end. Min could live life in America as he wished taking care of his parents and fulfilling his duties as the oldest child. Soo-Ja finally got what she longed for, a future with Yul. It goes to show that things really do happen for a reason and good things come to those who wait. An amazing story of courage, bravery, and sacrifice; I loved every minute of it!

Gayle says

It was difficult for me to fathom that this book was written by a man. The protagonist is female, but Samuel Park is as successful with this as Wally Lamb, and it works.

A young Korean woman is promised to a teenaged boy and both families approve of the marriage. She falls in love with someone else, but turns her back on love for the sake of the honor of the family

She becomes nothing but a maid to her husband's family. Her entire life is spent in service to her husband, her child, and his family, never knowing that she had been deceived by her father.

Over the years she runs into her true love several times and the flame still burns though she is faithful to a certain degree.

True love will win out, but the greatest show of love, in my opinion, came from an unexpected source.

I gave this book five stars.

L_manning says

This *Burns My Heart* is the story of Soo-Ja, a woman in post-war Korea who is having to forgo the life she desires to fit in with the customs and culture of her country. After a hasty marriage, Soo-Ja is soon trapped in a life of virtual servitude to her in-laws. As her life turns out vastly different to what she had imagined when younger, she continues to run into a man who she had quickly fallen in love with right before she got married. In Yul, she sees a life that could have been, full of love and comfort. Soo-Ja must decide whether to pine after that which she wishes she had or make the best of what she does have.

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The writing was outstanding. Everything flows so well, and you get a real sense of who all the characters are. I was so moved by this book. This is the kind of book that makes you feel so many things, but in the end I was incredibly uplifted. I am recommending this book as highly as I possibly can. It has been my favorite book so far this year, and I am sure it will be on many "best of" lists to come.

Galley provided by publisher for review.

Felice says

This *Burns My Heart* was written by first time novelist Samuel Park. The story begins just after the end of the Korean War in South Korea. Soo-Ja is the daughter of a factory worker. She knows that tradition dictates that she will be a wife but she is smart and ambitious. Soo-Ja longs to go to school and join the Foreign Service. She is in love with a rebellious, medical student named Yul but is unwilling to go against the wishes of her family or the formalities of her culture and marry for love. Instead she marries Min. Soo-Ja is sure that she can rely on Min's promise to move to Seoul after the wedding. The move will keep her out of the role of servant in her in-laws home and offer her the opportunity to pursue her dream. Of course Min has lied, is too weak to leave his Father and so Soo-Ja is trapped in a loveless marriage and at the tender mercies of her in-laws.

Korea in the mid 1950's is on the path toward the future. Ancient cultural moirés are starting to lose some of their hold. Park very convincingly recreates the culture and attitudes of the times. His Korea is a hard place to live. The old guard is crumbling, the country is divided, they have been through two devastating wars in 15 years, the economy is in shambles and being able to recognize a friend from an enemy is as all important as it is difficult. Over time through necessity, effort and bad luck Park makes Soo-Ja confront these changes. Park's confident manipulation of Soo-Ja through her youthful assurance to the trials of adulthood and middle age alongside those of South Korea are believable and persuasive.

This *Burns My Heart* is exceptional novel set in a country I am eager to learn more about. In this book Samuel Park tells us the story of one woman's life in an emerging nation through unrequited love, loyalty, personal sacrifice, loss, motherhood and ambition. Those are not unique elements. We have all read many novels that cover the same ideas but how often have you read a novel that you cannot imagine being set anywhere else other than where the author has placed it? A novel whose main character experiences all those timeworn historical fiction troubles and yet whose voice is still distinctive and fresh?

Noah says

By turns melodramatic and mildly interesting (as most Korean dramas are wont to be), I was hoping the material would rise above the familiar and predictable trappings that the book descended into. Stereotypical elements like the overbearing in-laws and dramatic "twists" fall right into the readers lap. There is no subtlety to the plot. There are, in some passages, elegantly written pieces, but this comes and goes. The clumsy way in which Korean cultural words, foods, and nuances are overly explained (I'm sure this was an editorial decision to appeal to a broader audience) irked me more and more as the book wore on. Consistent characterization seems to be a strength, but then a character will do something so completely out of turn that I can only shake my head afterward.

I had really high hopes for this, being the son of a Korean immigrant as well (and as someone who had a parent that lived through the Korean War and its bomb-shelled aftermath), but it let me down, sadly.

Whitney Jacoby says

I have to say how much I enjoyed *This Burns My Heart*. There is nothing better than getting swept away and lost in a book. Park's writing is absolutely beautiful and he really brings to life Soo-Ja's struggle. I found myself almost in tears at Soo-Ja's hardships, as though they were happening to me. Park also does a wonderful job of bringing to life 1960s Korea—I felt as though I had been transported to another time and place. I read *THIS BURNS MY HEART* over the course of two days, but between readings and even after finishing the book, I found myself thinking about and rooting for Soo-Ja as though she were a real person in my life.

This is an inspiring, heartbreaking story of love and perseverance that will stay with me for a long time.

Jaime Boler says

It Will Burn Your Heart, Too

By

Jaime

Some of my favorite literary characters are Elinor Dashwood (*Sense and Sensibility*), Pi Patel (*Life of Pi*), Katniss Everdeen (*The Hunger Games*), and Annie Fang (*The Family Fang*). Now, I can add another character to the list: Soo-Ja Choi, the heroine of Samuel Park's debut novel *This Burns My Heart*. Employing such themes as tradition, love, and sacrifice, Park captivated and transported me to a different time and place. I never wanted to return from the vivid world of his creation.

South Korea in the early 1960s is a country slowly recovering from the ravages of war. Tradition is of utmost importance. Soo-Ja, a young woman, yearns to become a diplomat, even though her father forbids it.

Marriage to a man she can bend to her will is the answer, Soo-Ja thinks. If she marries Min, then she can fulfill her dream. The two become engaged after a brief courtship. Before their marriage, she meets a young, handsome medical student named Yul. Sparks fly. She must sense that she and Yul could experience a deeper love, a love that would overpower her ambition, and this scares Soo-Ja. Even if she wanted to run away with Yul, she cannot do it; she has already given her word.

Out of obligation, then, Soo-Ja marries Min. She soon learns that she does not really know the man she married. Min was never captivated by her beauty or wit, he did not enjoy spending time with her, and he indulged her talk of going to Seoul. He tricked her, seeking her out only at the urging of his own father. Familial ties and tradition win out over Soo-Ja's dreams. Her marriage is something she will have to endure. Later, Soo-Ja stays with Min because of their daughter, Hana. Over and over again, though, Yul turns up in her life. He is always a looming shadow even when he is not present in her life. The best parts of the novel are the soulful, yearning-filled scenes between Soo-Ja and Yul. Will she ever leave Min for Yul? That is a question you must find out yourself.

Park has a gift for language, and his use of beautiful prose will leave you breathless. His rich and memorable characters lingered on in my mind long after I finished the novel. In fact, I loved this novel so much that I sought out Park for an interview. He accepted. The following is used with his permission.

JB: What was it like growing up Korean in Brazil?

SP: Hi Jaime, just wanted to start by saying what a delight it is to be featured in your blog. I hope I can do justice to the wonderful questions you came up with. So, to answer the first question, growing up Korean in Brazil was really fun—there were a lot of other Asian students in my middle school, so I never really felt that

“different.” There’s a surprisingly large Asian population in South America!

JB: When did you first know you wanted to be an author?

SP: When I was eight years old—as soon as I could read, I wanted to write. I’d watch American movies from the 50s every afternoon and then I’d write my “little novels” in my notebooks—which were just my kid versions of those fantasy and adventure stories.

JB: I see you are a Jane Austen fan. I read that after I finished the novel, and I suddenly saw Soo-Ja as a Korean Dashwood sister. How has Austen influenced your writing?

SP: Soo-Ja is very much like Elinor in that she’s too principled to try to steal Edward back from Lucy Steele. And just because she doesn’t say it out loud, doesn’t mean her heart isn’t in terrific pain. I suppose my intense love for Austen has influenced my writing in the sense that it very much shaped my awareness of the different and complex ways we can love—in Soo-Ja and Elinor’s case, silently, honorably, but not at all less passionately and intensely as Marianne. I also have a lot of admiration for Lizzie Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*. She’s really strong and bold, but prone to making mistakes and has one particularly big flaw—her prejudice; Soo-Ja too is held back by an enormous blind spot early on in her love life.

JB: You say this is your mother’s story. How so?

SP: It is and it isn’t. It was inspired by her experience as a woman living in a Confucian-dominated society as that society moved from very traditional to more modern. But the novel is a work of fiction, with made up characters and situations.

JB: Do you have a favorite character in the book? If so, who and why?

SP: You know, I actually **love** Eun-Mee, the villain. She was unbelievably fun to write, because she says all these outrageous things. To continue the Austen analogy, Eun-Mee is a mixture of Darcy’s haughty aunt Lady Catherine deBourgh and Lizzie’s frivolous sister Lydia. Villains are fun to write because often times, they drive the story, and can be very charming.

JB: Did you, like Hana, dream of coming to the United States?

SP: I did! I think the United States attracts dreamers, and Hana is definitely a dreamer.

JB: Is any character based on you? If so, which character? Did you find it difficult to write for that particular character?

SP: None of the characters are directly based on me, but I’ve felt or am able to imagine feeling everything that the characters feel. Emotion-wise, the characters take after me—I went through an emotional journey with them, and tried to make their emotions as truthful as possible by thinking of times that I was in a similar situation, or feeling the same way about someone.

JB: I have to tell you that my favorite scene in the book is the drawing scene with Yul and Soo-Ja. It was so beautiful that I read and re-read it. Do you have a favorite part? If so, please do tell us about it!

SP: I’m so glad you liked that scene! It’s a pivotal scene in the book, and I rewrote it many, many times. The first time, they weren’t even drawing! But early on, I realized that these two people would never vocalize their feelings—they had to use their gestures to express their love. Neither Soo-Ja nor Yul are allowed to say what they feel, because it goes against their customs. But they’re in absolute sync—in spirit and mind—and their drawing together allows you to see that.

JB: Do you have a favorite line from the book? If so, will you share it with us?

SP: The first line is my favorite line: “You tricked me.” How do you make a life with someone who deceived you? And yet, so many of us do, or have to.

JB: Some themes that stood out for me while reading the book were family obligations versus true love and communal needs versus those of the individual. What do you want readers to take from *This Burns My Heart*?

SP: I guess I want people to consider what it means to live a life of duty, where you can’t just undo a mistake. That’s the way it was for women of that generation, women who could not get divorces—you were stuck, but you made the best of it. I hope I show in my novel what it’s actually like to be in that kind of situation. Maybe that’s the question I want readers to take away: “Would you turn away true love if it came knocking a second (and possibly last) time?”

JB: I noticed the importance of both saving “face” and losing “face” in your novel. Can you tell us more about that concept?

SP: Soo-Ja can’t really make her own choices because those choices deeply implicate her parents. For instance, she can’t get divorced. She just can’t. It’d bring enormous shame to her family. That’s a tremendous responsibility—to live not only for yourself, but also for those you love. They would lose “face,” and Soo-Ja cannot bear to cause pain to those she loves.

JB: At the beginning of *This Burns My Heart*, I saw Min as a villain. Yet, at the end of the novel, I had ceased to think of him as such. In my eyes, he was just as much a victim as Soo-Ja. He redeems himself in the end. The true villain was Min’s father. But who do you see as the “bad” guy?

SP: I’m glad you think of Min that way, since I took pains to explain why he does the things he does. Min’s father definitely comes off as the “bad” guy, but I don’t really think of him as such. I’m very forgiving and understanding of all my characters, even when they’re acting up and causing havoc in the story!

JB: Do you think, in Soo-Ja’s heart and in Yul’s, that Hana is his daughter?

SP: Oh, that’s such an intriguing question! It certainly does feel like she could be theirs, doesn’t it?

JB: It’s interesting how Soo-Ja helps Jae-Hwa escape a bad marriage; yet, she is not ready to do this herself because she does not want Min to take Hana away from her. Is Hana the only thing that keeps Soo-Ja with Min? What else keeps Soo-Ja in her loveless marriage?

SP: I guess that’s one of the mysteries of the book... But it is really ironic, isn’t it? Soo-Ja is so completely firm and sure of herself when she goes free Jae-Hwa, yet she can’t figure out how to free herself. It’s strange the bonds that keep people together, and even stranger the bonds we use on our own selves! Personally, I think her sense of honor and duty are what keep her in the marriage. In her mind, if you pick X, you have to live with the consequences of picking X. You can’t just say the next day, You know what, I think I’d like Y better so I’m gonna go with Y.

JB: Father-daughter relationships seem stronger here than mother-daughter, mother-son, or even father-son. For example, Soo-Ja and Mr. Choi have an unbreakable bond. Min is also very close to Hana. Was that deliberate?

SP: Oh, that’s a great question. I actually thought of Soo-Ja and Hana a lot as I wrote the book, but you’re absolutely right that in spite of all her sacrifices for her, ultimately Hana may like her father better. Isn’t that odd, how that happens, sometimes? I think that’s often the case in real life. We like the people who are similar to us even more so than the ones who truly love us.

JB: If Soo-Ja had gone to Seoul to become a diplomat, as was her dream, what would have happened to her then?

SP: My guess is that she probably would’ve lived for a long time in Europe or in the United States, and then returned to South Korea in her 30s. She probably loves her father too much to live apart from him out of her own volition. She also might’ve found a man who was a better match for her, in terms of her temperament and personality. Just like choosing Min had a domino effect, I feel that her being a diplomat would’ve led to very different choices and experiences.

JB: In the course of *This Burns My Heart*, the reader cannot fail to notice how much South Korea has grown. We first see a country recovering from a devastating war to a nation on the cusp of becoming a superpower. What kind of future do you see for both North and South Korea?

SP: The germs of democracy are spreading so quickly through the world—almost like a virus—it’ll have to reach North Korea eventually. As for South Korea, I see it becoming more and more socially progressive, especially in terms of opportunities for young women. I also see it as continuing to have strong ties with America, a country that has been a deep part of its history, having fought a war together.

JB: I want to congratulate you for writing some of the best prose I’ve read in years. How long did it take you to write this novel?

SP: Thank you! What’s the emoticon for cheeks blushing and writer taking a little bow? Actually, it’s very gratifying to hear that because I decided early on not to take any shortcuts. If I thought in the back of my head that a scene could be better, I would make it better. Sometimes it’s tempting to just write something and

hope that it's "good enough," and I'm very proud that I did not take that bait. I have a lot of respect for the reader's time and options—I absolutely do not take it for granted. But to answer your question, it took me about nine months to write it, and then I spent another three years or so revising it.

JB: Are there any plans for a book tour? If so, which lucky cities will you be visiting?

SP: The cities I've been to or will be visiting during my tour include Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Milwaukee, and Chicago, where I live. I would love to eventually make my way to the Pacific Northwest and the South.

JB: What's next for Samuel Park?

SP: I'm working on another novel, which is about a mother-daughter relationship, and that's all I can say for now! Thank you again for this interview—I love all the questions you asked.

Park proves himself to be a master at storytelling. This *Burns My Heart* will surely steal your heart, just as it did mine.
