



# Missee Lee: The Swallows and Amazons in the China Seas (Godine Storyteller)

*Arthur Ransome*

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The original cast of the famed Swallows and Amazons series is sailing under the stars and the command of Captain Flint in the South China Sea when Gibbet, their pet monkey, grabs the captain's cigar and drops it in the fuel tank. In minutes, the ship is ablaze (and doomed), and our seven luckless protagonists are adrift in two small boats. They make their way to land, only to find themselves the captives of one of the last remaining pirates operating off the China Coast. But Missee Lee, as it turns out, is no ordinary pirate; her father had sent her off to Cambridge University to prepare her for a life as a teacher. But when her father takes ill and dies, she finds herself struggling to hold together the Three Island Confederation (Tiger, Turtle, and Dragon) he had created, and to be recognized as his legitimate heir and ruler of the Island Kingdom.

Ransome is, as always, the consummate storyteller. Here he takes the reader not only on the usual sailing adventures and cliff-hanging escapades, but also into Chinese culture. (It's no accident that, like so many of Ransome's protagonists, Missee Lee is a woman, or that her Latin is almost as refined as her sailing skills.) It is also no wonder that The Observer called this, the tenth book in the series, "his best yet . . . a book to buy, to read, and to read again, not once but many times." The Guardian put it "in a class by itself." For Ransome, unlike so many writers of his and our generation, was particular in writing about things he knew and had studied first-hand, whether it was a foreign culture, a classical language, a cryptographic code, or the finer points of seamanship.

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