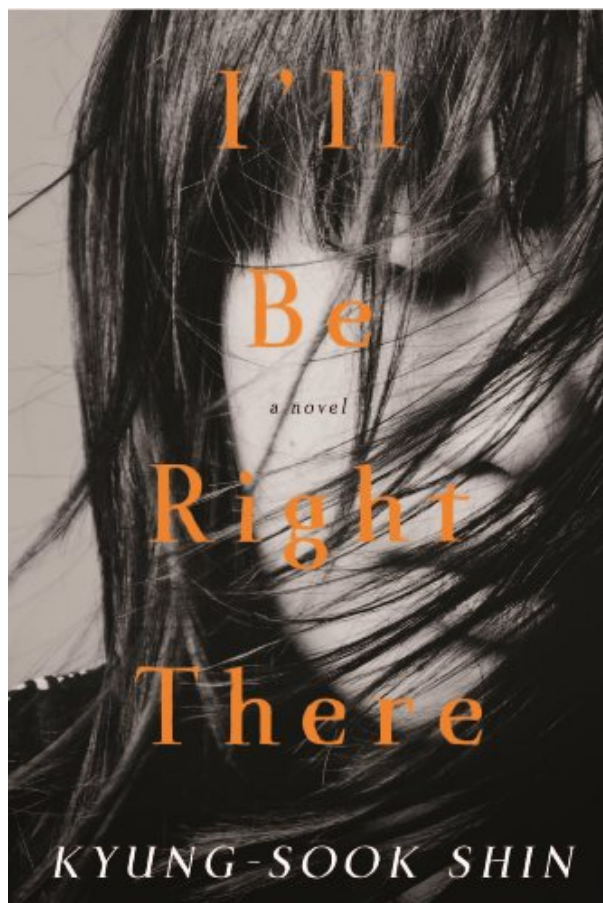
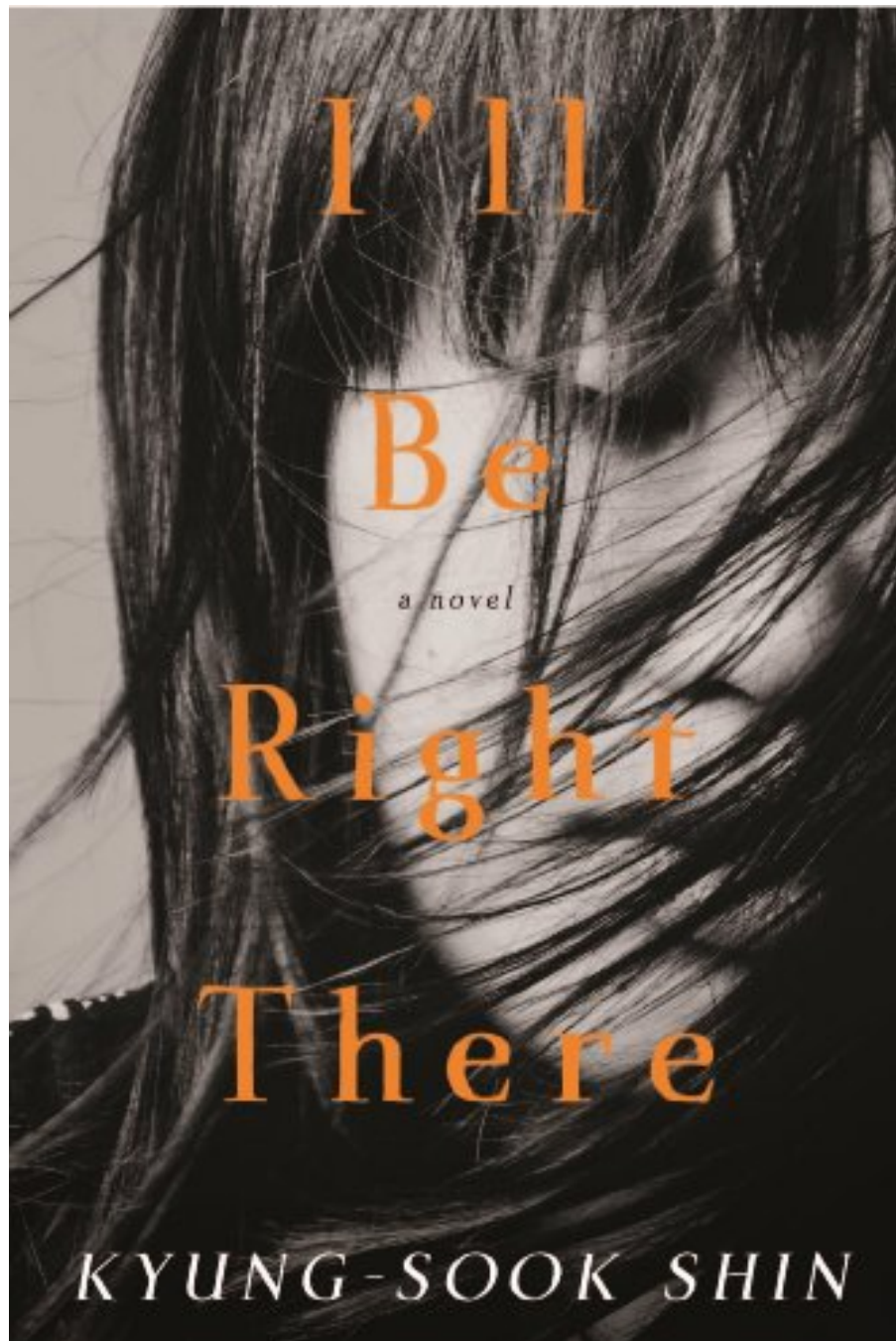


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How friendship, European literature, and a charismatic professor defy war, oppression, and the absurd

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Yoon's formative experiences, which highlight both the fragility and force of personal connection in an era of absolute uncertainty, become immediately palpable. Shin makes the foreign and esoteric utterly familiar: her use of European literature as an interpreter of emotion and experience bridges any gaps between East and West. Love, friendship, and solitude are the same everywhere, as this book makes poignantly clear.

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24 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

You will be

By T. Edmund

I always enjoy grabbing something by someone, when I know little of either and leaping right into the book. *I'll Be Right There* did not disappoint, bore, confuse or annoy, always an added bonus.

The tale is somewhat of a controlled meander, and at times throughout I worried that I would lose interest among the woven story-lines and occasionally long chapters. Nope. Shin somehow manages to pull interest even though her tale does not contain the typical dramas authors use to make you turn the page. Even

stranger is that I usually prefer a dose of cheesy suspense to maintain my interest, but found myself buried in this book without obvious motivations.

I'll Be Right There is drenched in philosophy without being overblown, and while tragic in its own right, I would say is less tear-jerker and more thoughtfully sad. As hinted before, timelines and perspectives dance around in this novel, something which usually throws a doofus reader like myself, however I rarely ever felt like I lost my way through the book, and when I did not for long.

Shin shows a unique talent in being able to tell a story where the depth of the characters experience plays dominates the front of the novel, rather than melodramatic events. *I'll Be Right There*, while admittedly sounding like a shallow romance is anything but.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

"Nor does knowledge come with force of time."

By Amelia Gremelspacher

Myungsuh tells Jung Yoon "Let's remember his day forever". This book then is the story of her regret that she didn't say, "I'll be right there." Living in the political unrest of 1980's South Korea, Yoon's losses nonetheless less are only mirrored by the uncertainty around her. Three friends, Yoon, Myungsuh, and Miru live the regrets of love not grasped tighter or seen for the gift it had been. Each has lost deeply, one dramatically in the backlash of the Revolution.

Yoon and her friends are literate and self exploratory. This book highlights the fears of their lives being meaningless. Their struggles with grief are expressed beautifully and deftly in a way that fully engages the reader. Yoon's mother's death is highlighted in her haunting shadow of loss memory. She had been sent away by her mother who did not want Yoon to witness her painful death. Instead Yoon finds herself drawn to the cocooning and insulation of sharing losses with friends. The world's violent intrusions into their lives serve to deepen but stress the strength of their ties.

Still each friend believes that he/she has failed in "being there" in some key way. Strikingly, they had in fact given all they could give as flawed humans. The chaos of the setting serves in a bit of perversity to highlight the universality of feelings as they force their way to consciousness. The author has a gift for returning the reader to the storm of young adulthood while avoiding maudlin overstatement. This is a fine young writer living up to the promise of her first book. Her work is lovely.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

"I hope you all have someone who always makes you want to say, 'Let's remember this day forever.' "

By Mary Whipple

(4.5 stars) Set in Korea during the turbulent 1980s, a time in which Korean students demonstrated against the military dictatorship which had seized their country in a coup in 1979, *I'll Be Right There* focuses on a group of four college students in the 1980s, then brings them up to date in the present. The novel opens in the present time, as main character Jung Yoon, now in her forties, receives a phone call from someone to whom she had once been close, but with whom she has had no contact at all for eight years. Her caller reveals that Prof. Yoon (no relation to Jung Yoon), the literature professor whom she and her friends had all revered, lies dying in the hospital. Quickly involving the reader, who wants to know more about Jung Yoon and her student life, the author provides details about the professor's influence on Jung Yoon and hints at the mysterious relationship she has had with Myungsuh Yi, the man who has phoned her. Soon all the former students begins to gather at the professor's hospital bedside.

Through a flashback, Jung Yoon then describes her college life, and many American readers will be startled by some of the cultural differences – and similarities – between her life and theirs as they “live” through the

action of this novel. Family relationships and obligations, the interactions among friends, and the importance of being part of a group are all shown within the plot. Yoon, Myungsuh Yi (the male friend), Miru, his female friend (and later her sister Mirae) quickly become almost inseparable, and it is through their eyes that the reader sees what is happening politically and culturally, but also personally and emotionally.

All the students are searching for “answers,” and the professor keeps them thinking by using many different literary resources. A repeating story, which becomes symbolic, is that of Saint Christopher who was a “boatman with no boat,” who used his body to carry people across the river. After nearly dying while transporting a child during a storm, the boatman meets Jesus. The professor elucidates for the students that “Each of you is both Christopher and the child he carries on his back...Only the student who truly savors this paradox will make it safely across. Literature and art are not simply what will carry you; they are also what you must lay down your life for.” Among the many authors whose writings are quoted here are Romain Rolland, Emily Dickinson, Roland Barthes, and Rainer Maria Rilke. The sad story of Kitty Genovese in New York is also recalled here.

Though the novel is somewhat awkward at the beginning, with its many grand metaphysical statements, the complexities of the characters and their interactions soon take over, leading to a wonderfully rich and dramatic conclusion which explains some of the unusual decisions the characters make, especially regarding love. Ultimately, Yung Yoon herself “finally realized that I was not alone. Everything I saw and everything I felt belonged to [my departed friends], too...I was living their unfinished time with them,” an epiphany which gives some resolution to her own imperfect life.

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