

# RIVER EAST, RIVER WEST

## READING GROUP GUIDE

1. What was your first impression of Sloan? How did your sense of her character change throughout the story?
2. How would you describe the differences in these characters' attitudes toward money?
3. Think about the title: *River East, River West*. In their praise for the novel, Xinran writes: "'River east, river west' comes from a famous Chinese saying, which suggests that the world or people's destiny are always in constant change, and there is no fixed path of rise, fall, honour, or disgrace." What is the meaning of the title as it relates to these characters and their stories? In this novel, whose worldviews change, and why?
4. The novel alternates points of view, between Alva and Lu Fang. How would following only one of these perspectives impact the way this story could be told? Why did Rey Lescure opt to choose to include both of these different point of view characters? Which impacted you more, and why?
5. Themes of home and family are deeply embedded in the novel. How did you think about these as you read? How would you define "home" and "family" for these characters? How would they define it for themselves?
6. How would you describe Rey Lescure's prose style? What are the distinct elements of Alva and Lu Fang's chapters?
7. Think about the moment with Gao Xiaofan on the ledge. What was the significance of this tragedy for Alva? Was it a turning point—how?
8. Discuss Lu Fang's relationship with Sloan. How did it evolve throughout the course of the novel? When were you most rooting for both characters?
9. How does the novel upend popular notions of the east-to-west immigrant narrative?
10. Which of these characters seems to have grown the most by the end of the book? Point to specific passages from different chapters to illustrate where, and how.