



FROM ST. MARTIN'S PRESS

Wunderkind PR
..... WE GROW AUTHORS

A young attorney must choose between the prestige of partnership and the American Dream that she—and her immigrant parents—have come so close to achieving in this riveting debut . . .

THE PARTNER TRACK

a novel by HELEN WAN

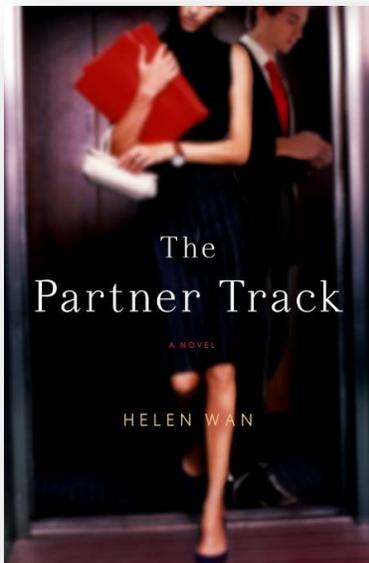
Coming from St. Martin's Press September 17th, 2013

“A wholly engrossing behind-the-scenes look at real life behind the pomp, power, and prestige of a high-powered law firm that wants to still play by a 1950s rule book.”

—Emma McLaughlin & Nicola Kraus, co-authors of *Citizen Girl* and *The Nanny Diaries*

“Behind Helen Wan’s wit and sparkling prose is a poignant and at times, painfully honest tale of loyalty, ambition and sacrifice. Funny, fragile, sometimes bold, often unsure, Ingrid Yung is one of those unforgettable heroines that you actually miss, like a dear friend, when the story’s over.”

—Ann Leary, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Good House*



In the eyes of her corporate law firm, Ingrid Yung is a “two-fer.” As a Chinese-American woman about to be ushered into the elite rank of partner, she’s the face of Parsons Valentine & Hunt LLP’s recruiting brochures—their treasured “Golden Girl.” But behind the firm’s welcoming façade lies the scotch-sipping, cigar-smoking old-boy network that shuts out lawyers like Ingrid. To compensate, Ingrid gamely plays in the softball league, schmoozes in the corporate cafeteria, and puts in the billable hours—until a horrifically offensive performance at the law firm’s annual summer outing throws the carefully constructed image way out of equilibrium.

Scrambling to do damage control, Parsons Valentine announces a new “Diversity Initiative” and commands a reluctant Ingrid to spearhead the effort, taking her priority away from the enormous deal that was to be the final step in securing partnership. For the first time, Ingrid finds herself at

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odds with her colleagues—including her handsome, golden-boy boyfriend—in a clash of class, race, and sexual politics.

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HELEN WAN is Associate General Counsel at the Time Inc. division of Time Warner Inc. Before that, she practiced corporate and media law at law firms in New York. Born in California and raised near Washington, D.C., Wan is a graduate of Amherst College and the University of Virginia School of Law. Her essays and reviews of fiction have been published in *The Washington Post* and elsewhere. She lives in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, with her husband and son.

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More praise for Helen Wan and THE PARTNER TRACK

“What a **terrific debut novel**. Ingrid Yung is a **fresh, funny, and fearless heroine**. Her razor-sharp wit and keen observations of gender, race and class politics in corporate America make *The Partner Track* an entertaining, engrossing and ultimately deeply compelling read.” –**Cristina Alger, author of *The Darlings***

“*The Partner Track* is a **marvelous story about female ambition and power, about betrayal, identity, and the conflict between self-interest and desire**. In short: all the big, human stuff. Read it.”
–**Alison Clement, author of *Twenty Questions***

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EVENTS for Helen Wan, author of THE PARTNER TRACK

Amherst College's Book Club Selection for November 2013

Time Inc. ~ Sept. 16

New York Women's Bar Association Foundation ~ Week of Sept. 16 or Sept. 23

Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund (AALDEF)

Asian American Bar Association, Northeast Fall Conference ~ Sept. 21

South Asian Bar Association of New York (SABANY) ~ Week of Sept. 30

Amherst Alumni Association of Washington DC

Weil Gotshal & Manges

King & Spalding

Arnold & Porter

Patterson Belknap ~ Oct. 17

Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz ~ Oct. 3rd

Avon ~ Oct

Dates, times, and additional reading/ speaking events for THE PARTNER TRACK tba

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Q & A with debut novelist HELEN WAN...

What's your novel about?

THE PARTNER TRACK is the story of Ingrid Yung, an ambitious young Chinese-American woman who's being groomed to become the first minority female partner at one of the country's most prestigious law firms. Though she often feels like an outsider, Ingrid has perfected the art of blending in. Then an incident at the firm's summer outing threatens to change everything, forcing her to square off against her colleagues in a workplace war of race, gender, and sexual politics.

Like Ingrid Young, you're a Chinese-American woman. You're also a full-time lawyer who started out as an associate at one of the biggest law firms in New York. How much of your story and personal experiences can be found in Ingrid Young and THE PARTNER TRACK?

My first job after law school was in fact being a corporate associate at a big law firm in Manhattan. But this book is decidedly fiction—thank goodness! I left my big firm after about a year to work in media and entertainment law, and then went in-house at a large media company. Parsons Valentine isn't modeled after any particular law firm, but is essentially an amalgam of many big white-shoe firms, banks or corporations where I or my minority friends and colleagues have worked. Our experiences at these places have been remarkably similar.

What was your biggest challenge in the actual writing of this book?

Plot. Plot, plot, plot. So many first-time authors – and I am no exception – know exactly what *themes* they want to write about. I wanted to write about the experience of a woman of color trying to succeed in a white-shoe work environment, to tell the story of what it's like to be an outsider in a work context where it's very, very important to be on the inside. But ask that same author, well, what's the *story*, precisely? What *happens*? That was the hardest part to figure out.

This novel went through so many iterations, so many drafts, over the course of a decade. Finally, one day, about four years after I'd first started writing it, my geneticist husband – trained in isolating variables from large sets of data – was reading over a scene when he pointed at a line of dialogue. “Right here. This is what the book's really about,” he said. I looked at the page and realized he was right. I completely revamped the plot from there. Just jettisoned about half my draft, which was painful. (It *is* painful to kill your darlings!) But now I had my plot. The story had been lurking there all along; what I'd needed was to locate that single loose thread. And then I just pulled.

What is the best writing advice you've ever been given?

That's easy: write the book you'd most like to read. I was not seeing any books being written about Asian American women that did not involve: (a) a soul-searching trip to China; (b) a flock of quaint-as-hell relatives; or (c) an arranged marriage. I'm not denigrating novels that happen to include these plot points; in fact I myself enjoy them. I'm just saying I wanted to be able to read a contemporary novel about a minority woman whose perspective and experience were closer to my own. Finding none, I decided to write one.

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Who do you think the audience is for *THE PARTNER TRACK*?

Well, the obvious answer is probably young professional women. But I'd also like to think the story also has resonance for any man or woman who's ever had to work at fitting in to a corporate culture, or any culture or environment that feels foreign to them, and that makes them question who they really are, what it is they really want, and what the things are that are ultimately worth striving for.

What are you working on now?

I'm at work on my second novel. It's a lot of fun to get to know a whole new set of characters. It feels kind of like starting a new school year. I'm still at the "themes" stage – I know what I want to write *about*, but am still figuring out the *story*. And I also gave birth a few months ago to a beautiful baby boy. In my wildest dreams I never would have thought that a first book and a first baby would arrive the same year. But if you want to make God laugh, just tell her your plans.

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by Helen Wan

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