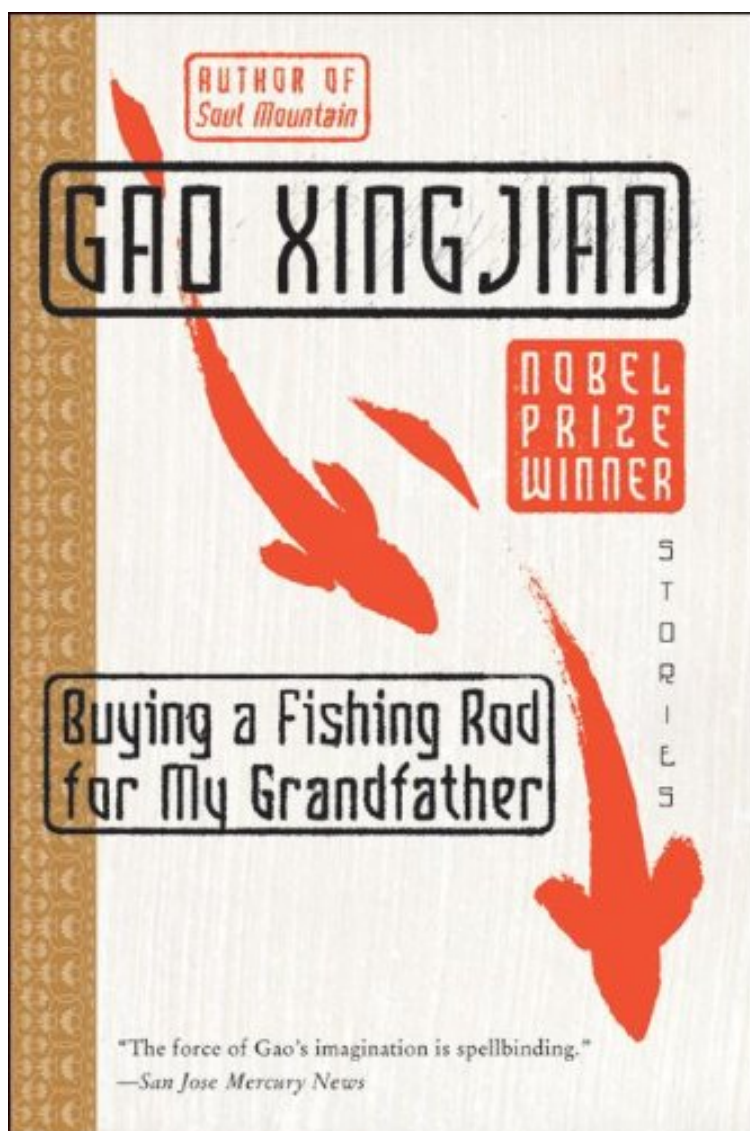


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# Buying a Fishing Rod for My Grandfather: Stories



Par Gao Xingjian

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**Description :** Description du produit Novelist, playwright, essayist, and short-story writer Gao Xingjian is that rare breed of artist able to express himself with equal grace in almost any form of literature. In 2000 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in recognition of his astonishing talents. The collection *Buying a Fishing Rod for My Grandfather* offers this author's own selection and arrangement of his shorter fiction. Written between 1983 and 1990, these beautifully translated stories take as their themes the fragility of love and life, and the haunting power of memory. In "The Temple" the narrator's acute and mysterious anxiety overshadows the "delirious happiness" of an outing with his new wife on their honeymoon. In "The Cramp" a man narrowly escapes drowning in the sea, only to find that no one even noticed his absence. In "The Accident" a bus hits a cyclist and, as in stop-action film, the chaotic aftermath gives way to a calm, ordinary

street corner with no trace of the previous drama. In the title story the narrator attempts to "unburden myself of homesickness" only to find himself lost in a labyrinth of childhood memories. Everywhere in this collection are powerful psychological portraits of characters whose unarticulated hopes and fears betray the never-ending presence of the past in their present lives. Gao Xingjian has shown a mastery of the epic form in his novels *Soul Mountain* and *One Man's Bible*. In *Buying a Fishing Rod for My Grandfather*, he brings the same passion and precision to the short story.

Prsentation de l'diteurThese six stories by Nobel Prize winner Gao Xingjian transport the reader to moments where the fragility of love and life, and the haunting power of memory, are beautifully unveiled. In "The Temple," the narrator's acute and mysterious anxiety overshadows the delirious happiness of an outing with his new wife on their honeymoon. In "The Cramp," a man narrowly escapes drowning in the sea, only to find that no one even noticed his absence. In the titlestory, the narrator attempts to relieve his homesickness only to find that he is lost in a labyrinth of childhood memories. Everywhere in this collection are powerful psychological portraits of characters whose unarticulated hopes and fears betray the never-ending presence of the past in their present lives. From Publishers WeeklySix stories, published in Chinese between 1983 and 1991, offer a sample of Nobel-winner Gao's sharp, poetic early work. In "The Temple," the unnamed narrator and his new bride alter their honeymoon plans to pause in a provincial town. Though the two are blissfully happy, they find the town's inhabitants and its Temple of Perfect Benevolence vaguely disquieting. A muted reference to the Cultural Revolution ("It all felt so different from the time when we were graduates sent to work in the countryside") may explain the unease. Gao (*Soul Mountain*; *One Man's Bible*) explores the simultaneous enormity and anonymity of death in "The Accident," when a man on a bicycle with an attached baby buggy rides, either carelessly or deliberately, into a bus. The man is killed, but his young son survives; a crowd forms, passing around rumors, while the cops take away the bus driver and the blood on the road congeals. The title story employs collages of memory and haunting daydreams to mourn the destruction of the narrator's grandfather's village. A "sparkling lake" has been paved over, and the river where the narrator and his grandfather used to fish is dry: "The sand murmurs that it wants to swallow everything. It has swallowed the riverbank and now wants to swallow the city along with your childhood memories and mine." Gao intends his stories to reveal "the actualization of language and not the imitation of reality" storytelling, in other words, is not his goal. These spare, evocative pieces bear that out; often the lovely prose (nicely translated by Lee) is reward enough. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. BooklistGao Xingjian, winner of the 2000 Nobel Prize for literature, is a sensitive, microscopically observant writer. Though few in number, the stories in this collection are richly diverse. One is a bittersweet reflection of a newlywed on his honeymoon; another a Pinteresque dialogue in a park; a third a traffic accident recounted in real-time with all its voyeuristic detail and authentic philosophical questioning, and still another, a strong memory-driven, first-person tale that follows the mental trail of a man who passes a fishing equipment shop and begins to remember his grandfather. For variety of content, stylistic experimentation, graceful language, and poignant insight, Xingjian is a writer who does it all beautifully. Janet St. JohnCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved