

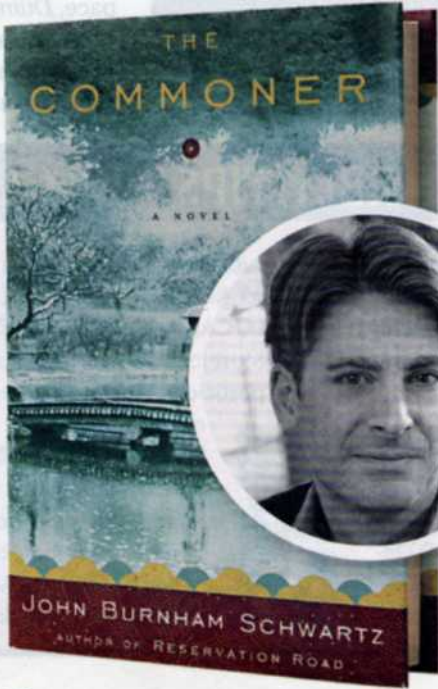
The Commoner

by John Burnham Schwartz | ★★★★★

REVIEWED BY MICHELLE GREEN

NOVEL

A bittersweet story narrated by Haruko Endo, a brewer's daughter who marries into Japan's cloistered Imperial Family, Burnham Schwartz's fourth novel expertly evokes the sense of powerlessness and isolation that mark both royal life and bad marriages. Inspired, according to the author, by the emotional struggles of Japan's fragile Empress, the former Michiko Shoda, and of her daughter-in-law Crown Princess Masako, a Harvard graduate defined in court circles by her inability to produce an heir, *The Commoner* is an artful meditation on the limits of love and duty. No happy endings here, but with a spare prose style that perfectly mirrors its setting, this novel will thrill readers who crave literary romance.



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