



The Shortness of Life: A Mongolian Lament

Martina Nicolls

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In the winter of 2010, Australian health expert Jorja Himmermann arrives in Ulaanbaatar to work with the Mongolian Ministry of Health providing grants to clinics and hospitals. Her new job is relentless, and the reputation of her boss is formidable. Her Mongolian colleagues include three efficient women, a diligent government team, and Mr. Irresponsible.

In the longest, bleakest winter on record, a flu epidemic strikes. Hospitals are overcrowded, vaccine supplies are depleted, and healthcare workers are pushed to their limits. Crops, cattle, children, and the elderly are dying.

Amid accusations of sabotage, corruption, and misappropriation, Jorja finds peace from her apartment window, watching Brik the unmoving mastiff and Bruce the graceful wrestler. Jorja finds advice in the prophecies of message cards and ancient Mongolian proverbs.

Then the unthinkable happens, and the shortness of life affects them all.

Based on true events, this novel offers a portrait of strength, solidarity, and resilience in the face of a devastating Mongolian winter.

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