

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **A Person of Interest.**

Choi, Susan (Author)

Feb 2008. 368 p. Viking, hardcover, \$25.95. (9780670018468).

Tenured math professor Lee has been teaching at a midwestern university for ages, yet he is utterly isolated within a web of anger and regret. When the popular young department star is gravely injured by a mail bomb, Lee is physically unharmed but psychically devastated. Assailed by painful memories of his affair with his only friend's wife and his own failed marriages, Lee, whose Asian background is left deliberately vague, is completely undone when he becomes a person of interest to the FBI. How he handles the hostility of his colleagues and the invasion of his privacy by the government and the press is the engine that drives this intricately psychological novel's brainy suspense, while the slow unveiling of his past tells a staggering story of love betrayed. Choi follows the game plan of her lauded second novel, *American Woman* (2003), a takeoff on the Patty Hearst story, venturing here, albeit superficially, into Unabomber territory. Lee is unconvincing as a mathematician but mesmerizing in his ineptness and anguish. Subtle humor, emotional acuity, and breathtaking plot twists keep this tale of wounding secrets rolling as Choi's brilliant calculus of revelation and forgiveness delivers a triumphant conclusion.

— *Donna Seaman*