

WITH FULL FLOWER

滿花

To have children...or not is the question explored by this short story collection, which uses a floral metaphor to describe the many possibilities women consider when answering it. It is the female characters represented by the most luxuriant blooms who best understand the emptiness beneath their beauty.

This book's title refers to flowers with an extra set of petals, generally called or "double-flowered" or by the Latin scientific name "flore pleno". Because some double-flowered varieties cannot be pollinated, new plants can be produced only from a piece of the old one. Here we have five stories, five varieties of "double-flowered" women – each has missed a chance at motherhood and must therefore examine complicated feelings about what it means to be a "mother".

First, we see a mother's descent into depression and despair from the perspective of her dead baby, now a ghost whose greatest wish is to know if his mother loves him. Next, a lesbian couple working in a yoga studio are busily preparing for a baby and an important performance when a car crash disrupts all their plans. In the only story to feature a woman with a child, the protagonist thinks she has kept her lack of maternal feelings well-hidden, until the pandemic forces their family of three into close proximity, triggering conflict. Then, a college student who has done everything possible to avoid pregnancy envisions a future with children in it after she hears her boyfriend's cat call her "mom", unaware that her relationship with her boyfriend has changed due to her affection for the cat. Finally, when a slip of the tongue causes the colleague of a postmenopausal single woman to think she has a son, she continues to make up stories about him but is unable to explain why, even to herself...

From preparing for a new life role, to accepting or rejecting motherhood, to losing the right to choose, Lin Wen-Hsin's intricate



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psychological descriptions and exquisitely structured storytelling portray women's realities at different stages of life, allowing the reader to tease out the author's thoughts on women's right to choose, sexuality, maternal love, and family. Questions are posed but not always answered, giving us the pleasure of mulling them over.

Lin Wen-Hsin 林文心

Lin Wen-Hsin, born in Taichung in 1994, is currently pursuing a PhD in Chinese Literature at National Taiwan University. Recognized by local literary awards, her writing focuses mainly on the physical senses, emotional experiences, and private thoughts of women. A follow-up to her debut collection, *Playground*, *With Full Flower* is her second short story collection.