

Booklist

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★ **Green Frog.**

By Gina Chung

Mar. 2024. 240p. Vintage, paper, \$17 (9780593469361)

Chung's (*Sea Change*, 2023) dedication—the recipient identified in Korean, 엄마, for “Mom,” whom Chung calls her first storyteller—presciently launches her superb 15-story collection highlighting Korean and Korean American mothers and daughters navigating their lives both together and apart. Mythic Korean origins, deftly reimagined, memorably haunt some stories, including “Green Frog,” in which the tale of the disobedient ranine who only listened to his mother in death parallels a New Jersey family in which the once-upon-a-time rebellious younger daughter returns to fulfil the filial duties of widowed-father-care and restaurant management. Channeling the legendary kumiho (nine-tailed fox), the protagonists turn vulpine in “Human Hearts,” in which a surviving twin is exhorted to avenge her sister’s murder by their grief-stricken mother. Standouts are many, effortlessly ranging from fantastical, futuristic, and slice-of-real-life narratives. A “thanatorobotics” five-year-old version of a dead teen is returned to her parents in “Attachment Processes.” In “Presence,” an exhausted woman seeks sanctuary at a spa after her and her now-ex-husband’s business selling pick-and-choose personalized memory banks implodes. In “Arrow,” a pregnant single woman, unsure of who the father might be, finally accepts, for a while, her estranged mother’s nurturing. In “The Fruits of Sin,” a community of older, competitive, judgmental, church-going women comes together for a pregnant teen. Chung proves she’s a vibrant heir to her beloved first storyteller.

— *Terry Hong*