



Deceit and Other Possibilities

Vanessa Hua

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In this powerful debut collection, Vanessa Hua gives voice to immigrant families navigating a new America. Tied to their ancestral and adopted homelands in ways unimaginable in generations past, these memorable characters straddle both worlds but belong to none.

From a Hong Kong movie idol fleeing a sex scandal, to an obedient daughter turned Stanford imposter, to a Chinatown elder summoned to his village, to a Korean-American pastor with a secret agenda, the characters in these ten stories vividly illustrate the conflict between self and society, tradition and change. In “What We Have is What We Need,” winner of The Atlantic student fiction prize, a boy from Mexico reunites with his parents in San Francisco. When he suspects his mother has found love elsewhere, he fights to keep his family together.

With insight and wit, she writes about what wounds us and what we must survive. Her searing stories explore the clash of cultures and the complex, always shifting allegiances that we carry in ourselves, our family, and our community. DECEIT AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES marks the emergence of a remarkable new writer.

Deceit and Other Possibilities Details

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Author : Vanessa Hua

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From Reader Review Deceit and Other Possibilities for online ebook

Jenny Williams says

I enjoy short stories but haven't read an entire collection in several years, so I approached "Deceit" warily, expecting to pick it up and read a story here and there over the course of a couple of months or even a year. Happy to report that any lingering skepticism had entirely vanished within the opening pages. I read the whole collection within a week. It's a different sort of pleasure than reading a novel: one experiences the pang of loss upon reaching the end of a satisfying story while feeling the delicious excitement of anticipation for the mysterious new story that awaits. Each story is utterly different than the others, but they sing with common resonance, like chimes.

Naz (Read Diverse Books) says

Closer to 4.5 stars.

One of the best short story collections I've read this year.

As the title may suggest, the common thread in all of these stories is deception. Let me tell you, this makes for fascinating storytelling and tension. Some of the characters deceive themselves while others outwardly and egregiously deceive others with potentially disastrous consequences. Another common thread is the characters themselves! A few characters make an appearance in other stories, which is always a plus in my book because despite how much I now like short story collections, I can't quite abandon my bias for novels. Recurring characters offer familiar grounds for a novel lover like myself.

The stories center around first generation immigrants or the American children of immigrants. And I must note that despite all these common threads, the stories manage to be drastically different from each other. This is a huge plus!

For the in-depth review, visit my blog: [Read Diverse Books](#)

Kaitlin says

I don't often read short stories (am more of a novel and essay junkie), but I was deeply drawn to the characters and narratives in this collection. Hua is a talented writer whose insights into immigrant and identity politics build stories that resonate well beyond the page -- I'm now counting down the days until her novels are published!

These stories speak with intimacy about the shared human experience of feeling like an outsider, of young love, of spiritual quest. All of the characters, like us, are flawed but seeking a form of redemption just beyond grasp. Take this collection with you on a journey or cozy up on a Sunday afternoon to fall into the tantalizing grip of Hua's prose - and who wouldn't love a writer who writes so viscerally about lychees?

A tempting bite, from the story of Old Wu: "Juicy and sweet, its flesh snowy-white. He spit the shiny pit into his cupped palm, and he had another, savoring the sweetness of sultry summer nights. His mother used to peel lychees for him, digging in her thumbnail to break the flesh. Long ago, the emperor's concubine had pined for the taste in winter. With lychees crammed into saddlebags, imperial soldiers galloped north,

handing off the precious cargo to the next rider each time the horse tired, completing the journey of two weeks in two days.”

Hua is a writer to watch - excited for more to come!

Kevin Allardice says

This is a fantastic collection, diverse but thematically whole, way more than the sum of its parts. In examining the experience of first-generation Chinese Americans, who are stuck at the intersection of their heritage and the demands of their present, Hua shines surprising spotlights at the fissures of the quotidian. While that might sound shoe-gazing, these stories are very propulsive and often quite suspenseful. Hua applies just the right amount of pressure to launch both the characters and readers into unexpected situations. "Line, Please," the first story, is a personal favorite, and will show you why this collection is getting so much attention.

Ethel Rohan says

There's an intense energy to the stories in Vanessa Hua's DECEIT AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES (love the dissonance of the title) that mirrors the fraught, sometimes frenzied lives of its struggling Asian, immigrant characters.

The persistent depiction of excess in the settings (including San Francisco, my home town) and action within this collection parallels men and women at low points in their lives who are driven to extremes because of their sense of not having enough—of belonging, identity, acceptance, understanding, uniqueness, freedom, wealth, success, and/or love.

“In your dreams you escaped the prison of your circumstances.” But repeatedly these earnest, yearning characters refuse to rely only on their dreams to escape the prison of their circumstances and they often make poor choices and bad mistakes as they strive toward “bigger, brighter” versions of themselves. These are vivid, sensory and imaginative stories (loved all the food details and inventive scenarios) rich with original similes and imagery. Stories that allowed me to empathize with unique and diverse characters and their dilemmas—something we need to experience much more of in books and writing.

Xhenet Aliu says

Five stars for the title alone. Five stars retained for the subversively funny, compassionate-yet-unflinching stories of outsiders, people who want, people who don't get what they want, people who flee from, people who flee to, people who are wholly recognized and by Hua as people, which should not be as radical as it somehow feels.

Lauren says

All the stories were subtly dark, and all the characters seemed to be struggling with some sort of embarrassment.

Ali Eteraz says

There came a moment during my reading of these stories that the "Chinese-American" overlay of the stories faded away and I started experiencing an immersion in the narrative that occurs when you start identifying with the characters. This kind of writing is not easy to do, but when done well, as it is here, seems so beguilingly seductive. The characters in these stories are almost all looking for something. It is not identity so much as belonging. They look for belonging in God, in nature, in status, in relationships, in family, and in love. They don't often find it, but you experience their ache and their need with them. I have been a fan of Vanessa's work since hearing her at LitQuake in San Francisco and this debut is a worthy testament to her talents. Loaves and Fishes was my favorite in this collection, an almost perfect reinterpretation of Biblical myth. These are stories to be savored and enjoyed. I received an advanced copy with no expectation of a review.

Yi says

Every story in this collection is worth poring over, from its chosen setting--an airplane; a village in Africa; a campground--to its characters.

Hua genuinely understands the need for every word to count. She explores the conceit of immigrant life from varied angles in this book, and never disappoints. Pick this one up. You won't be sorry. I read one or two each night before I went to bed and found myself looking at people in different ways each following day.

Moxie Bangs says

vanessa hua's debut short story collection is an amalgam of bay area lives that touch but never once blur. her character's run a gamut between the super celuloid sex scandals of a Hong Kong reality star, a half closetted, half-Chinese-San-Francisco queer couple, a teenaged Mexican Dreamer in the Castro watching his mother choose tradition and loyalty over other possibilities, and Chinese software engineers between Visas roughing it in the redwoods, and that's just a few of Deceit's highly compelling characters. but if hua's unique story lines share one common thread, it's the human desire, shown in the reinvention of immigrant stories, to reveal only that which can be loved. deceit in hua's collection is an act of love, the way we hide from one another as we try to be what the other most needs. love in hua's Deceit is wary and aware. from FOBs through the second generation, in hua, deceit is the first stop on the road to out.

Laura says

This gem of a short story collection was so beautifully conceived and written. I loved how how the characters were often people or types you might have read about in news stories, such as the Asian-American who finds stardom in Asia, the everyday person whose poor judgment embroils them in a shooting, the girl who feigned an acceptance at Stanford and spent a quarter there faking it. Hua humanizes them, helps you understand how and why they make the decisions they do. The writing was spare, without an extraneous word, the metaphors perfect, as when the Stanford "student" said her ability to leap into the window made her a "debutante but for the stench of dirt and sweat." Though Hua tackles some heavy topics -- divorce, infidelity, homophobia -- she writes with a wry wit that makes the stories a pleasure to read. You could do no better than to spend a few days with these thought-provoking but enjoyable stories.

Zak says

An enjoyable collection of short stories. While the underlying theme is deception, the stories cover a wide spectrum of topics including infidelity, 'coming out of the closet', charity and even a desire for kids. Hua manages to maintain a palpable sense of tension throughout. The first story is obviously based on the real-life sex photo scandal of Hong Kong celebrity Edison Chen.

One thing I noticed, the writing seemed to get stronger as the stories progressed. It seemed to me, as I was reading, that there was a gradual but notable change in style, to the extent that I would believe it if told the later stories were written by a different person. Then in the "Acknowledgments" at the end, Hua states that the stories were written over a span of more than a decade. I wonder if this had anything to do with it and if the stories were presented in a chronological order, according to when they were written. A commendable debut.

Constance Hale says

I stared at the cover of *Deceit and Other Possibilities* for weeks before having a quiet stretch to dip in. The title was a riddle, almost an oxymoron. The mirror images of cranes was starkly beautiful and slightly creepy.

What I found behind the cover was equally intriguing. There was the novelty of the characters. I was meeting such people, it seemed, for the first time in fiction. These mostly Asian-American protagonists explore the "American" side of that equation. Many have immigrant parents (or, in one case, parents who were interned in WW II) but are themselves grounded in the bourgeois habits of the greater Bay Area.

Hua's stance toward her characters is sometimes wry, sometimes detached, but always sympathetic. For the most part, the writing is precise, unadorned, unsentimental. Occasionally, carefully, she lets it soar, as in the final image of cranes in "The Deal."

My favorite story, though, is "Harte Lake." All the themes resurface here—not just deceit, but also loss, hurt, betrayal, grit, and a certain uncertainty about the self. But in the final moment of the story, and in the ambiguous name of the lake, we also get a dose of redemption.

Kate says

Deceit and Other Possibilities is an engaging and heart-wrenching collection of stories that provide a glimpse of life as an immigrant in America today. Covering a wide range of characters found in difficult situations across the globe, Hua's attention to detail and love for her characters make it easy for the reader to become immersed in the stories as they unfold. I am looking forward to reading more of Vanessa Hua's work.

Ming says

First, two things: (1) this is the MOST diverse book I've ever read (yay!) and (2) I cannot wait until her novel is available.

I was relieved and refreshed by this book, especially during this awful time of Chump America.

This collection of short stories is creative, each story distinct and satisfying. My only complaint is that short stories end too soon.

I almost forgot that I was reading letters and words. I felt as if I were dropped into the stories. And there were many "killing me softly" moments when it seemed my personal truths were exposed.

The author wrote varied and diverse characters: old and young; gay and straight; American immigrant and multi-generations American; Mexican American, Korean American, Japanese American, and Chinese American.

My favorite stories were: "For What They Shared" (an absolutely ingenious concept), "The Responsibility of Deceit," and "The Older the Ginger."
