

The Interpreter's Daughter

Teresa Lim

Pegasus Books (Sep 6, 2022)

Hardcover \$27.95 (341pp)

978-1-63936-268-4

Teresa Lim's memoir *The Interpreter's Daughter* reveals hidden family secrets amid accounts of love, loss, migration, and memory.

In 1935, Law traveled from his adopted home in Singapore to his native village in Canton to die. Accompanied by his daughters, he had a final family photograph taken during their stopover in Hong Kong.

Decades later, Law's great-granddaughter, Teresa Lim, moved from Singapore to London with her British husband and their young son. Believing herself to be versed in British culture, she was in fact undone by culture shock. To cope, she reached out to other women in her family who lived abroad to suggest that they write a family cookbook together. She wrote a preface for the book about Law, whose lineage they all shared. But in writing about the people in the picture, she realized that one of them was a stranger to her: her great aunt, Fanny.

Determined to find out what happened to Fanny, Lim discovered that members of her family had been on the move for generations, becoming trailblazers not because they wanted to, but because they were forced to. She discovered that Fanny was the greatest trailblazer of them all. But because of how Fanny died, her existence was erased from family lore.

Based on extensive genealogical and historical research, *The Interpreter's Daughter* weaves historical notes from China, Singapore, and the British Empire together with stories from Lim's family. It suggests that every life story is worth telling, but also makes evident the fragility of memory, using the example of how words of Fanny's accomplishments were silenced in less than a generation.

The Interpreter's Daughter is an expansive memoir about family, migration, and the delicate nature of remembrance.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (September / October 2022)

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