



The Memory Museum

M Lin

Graywolf Press (Apr 21, 2026)

Softcover \$17.00 (272pp)

978-1-64445-385-8

The short stories collected in M Lin's encompassing book *The Memory Museum* concern the conflicts and commonalities experienced by Chinese nationals, who reflect upon the past, travel abroad, emigrate, or remain within their home country.

The stories progress with flowing surety, alternating between contemporary settings and dystopian visions. Both subtle and acute dissent against China's sociopolitical repression is used to question the control of fertility, speech, education, and economic opportunities. In one story, an elderly woman narrates from the late twenty-first century, describing an environment of climate change, war, and technological overreach. Part of China's "One-Child Generation," she also recalls the country's decades-long population control edict.

In another tale, a couple travels to Morocco despite their plans to divorce. Though she longs for an enchanting vacation, the wife finds herself arguing with her almost-ex-husband regarding China's severe COVID-19 containment measures. Elsewhere, an "Olfactory and Gustatory" specialist in the future works at an institution that preserves public and private memories. Accessing her late grandmother's remembrances, the specialist views herself as a four-year-old while watching her parents' fateful arrest for political activism.

Though the future-based works are compelling, the book's contemporary stories resonate most because of their immediate details and emotions. The stories are heightened by captivating language and imagery: the fragrant petals of Beijing's yulan flowers tremble "like the wings of idling butterflies." In one offbeat, sensual story, a Chinese accountant and a migrant masseur from Xi'an have an affair in Pittsburgh. In another story, beleaguered thieves ally with other troubled individuals and rethink their schemes after being treated with kindness by a café owner.

Integrating past, present, and future glimpses of China with cultural yearning and dissatisfaction, *The Memory Museum* is an insightful and adroit short story collection.

MEG NOLA (May / June 2026)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.