



This Little Family

Inès Bayard

Adriana Hunter, Translator

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Inès Bayard's novel *This Little Family*, translated from French, is about the devastating aftermath of a rape.

Raised in a loving household outside of Paris, Marie moves into the city as an adult. She works, dines out, and promenades with her husband and friends. Money is no worry; her husband is a lawyer. Just as she decides to bring a child into her perfect world, a CEO rapes her and threatens her against speaking out. Harboring this secret, her ensuing pregnancy and motherhood send her into a downward spiral.

Marie's transformation is dramatic. Her pent-up anger and shame come out through humiliating fainting and falling spells, physical attacks, and daydreams about hurting her loved ones. The activities that she used to enjoy, like cooking and dressing up, turn into opportunities for revenge. Her raw feelings are relayed in stark, unsentimental terms.

Marie becomes aware "that she is part of a large organization, and that she personally contributes to the workings of a system that's now starting to betray her." The dominant paradigm works for her mother, sister, women coworkers, and the women at her son's nursery, all of whom seem content and happy. They want Marie to uphold the status quo, too. As her behavior begins to shift, they ask only after her son—not her. Marie's demise begins when she resists the system in her own way.

With protests and court cases in its background, Marie's story becomes political. Her declarations about the plight of all women punctuate the text, and her experiences are a dangerous potentiality for all survivors.

Unwavering along its path toward tragedy, *This Little Family* is a provocative novel that plunges into the recesses of women's psyches.

MARI CARLSON (May / June 2020)

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