*She is Haunted,* by Paige Clark rev. by Meilani Aguila

Two Dollar Radio

Paige Clark is a Chinese-American-Australian fiction author located in Los Angeles. Several of her fiction stories has appeared in *Meanjin*, *Meniscus*, and *New World Writing*. In 2019, she was runner-up for the Peter Carey Short Story Award and shortlisted for the David Harold Tribe Fiction Award. Her research addresses the relationship between race, craft, and the teaching of creative writing. *She is Haunted* is a debut compilation of her stories then published by Two Dollar Radio. The collection of these fiction short stories draws from overlapping themes between, family, love, and trauma.

In *She is Haunted*, characters deal with unique challenges, a mother trims her daughter’s hair due to her own hair loss, a woman ends a relationship because of past issues, and women facing grief. The women characters in each story are unique but share similar themes of growth and realization. These characters seeked recognition, connections and compassion while providing insight of Asian identity and intergenerational family trauma. Paige Clark was able to encapsulate the ideas of pushing emotional connections into her work and upon the first story “Elizabeth Kubler-Ross”. Presented in the first story, Clark skillfully depicts a woman who is on a mission of a life with her partner and child, offers her dog, cat, and even her own mother to God. The narration of desperation and composition resonates with readers as it shows difficult decisions by my own or by the hand of destiny with tough questions. Clark states, “I’ll miss the dog, but I’m counting my blessings. At our last appointment, the doctor said my baby is as big as a pineapple. I’ll name her Eve.”

Losses shadows on multiple events throughout Clark’s collections of stories. The same elements of desperation recurring and intertwined into each narrative of the stories. Proving fractured relationships between family, significant others and unfulfilled desires. In one story, a woman grows her hair after facing her abusive, jealous mother in “Why My Hair Is Long.” In another story titled “Private Eating”, a woman adopts different beliefs and lifestyles for a new boyfriend after shortly ending her past relationships.

Reading these stories, I find value in Clark’s approach of presenting her perspective on Asian-American experiences. It never showed exactly what it is to be Asian-American, yet it authentically captured the essence of the experience through these stories. It proved the reality of daughters challenges immigrant mothers while yearning for their approvals, expressed support to grieving friends through soup and fighting barriers of correcting old terminology that were found incorrectly represented such as “oriental”. The sense of approval radiates throughout the entire collection of stories, influenced the characters roles, relatable mindsets and in isolations. *She Is Haunted* successfully explored different outcomes to a person when hurting, how they get ready for grief, and how to forgive after all the pain.