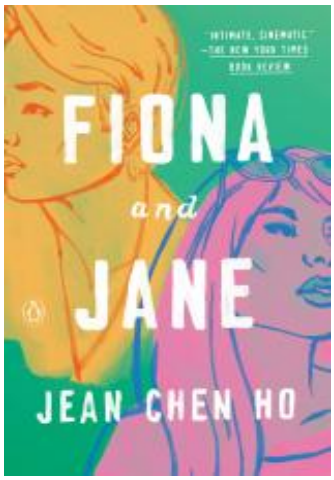
Fiona and Jane

by Jean Chen Ho



About the Book

A witty, warm and irreverent book that traces the lives of two young Taiwanese American women as they navigate friendship, sexuality, identity and heartbreak over two decades.

Best friends since second grade, Fiona Lin and Jane Shen explore the lonely freeways and seedy bars of Los Angeles together through their teenage years, surviving unfulfilling romantic encounters, and carrying with them the scars of their families' tumultuous pasts. Fiona was always destined to leave, her effortless beauty burnished by fierce ambition --- qualities that Jane admired and feared in equal measure.

When Fiona moves to New York and cares for a sick friend through a breakup with an opportunistic boyfriend, Jane remains in California and grieves her estranged father's sudden death, in the process alienating an overzealous girlfriend. Strained by distance and unintended betrayals, the women float in and out of each other's lives, their friendship both a beacon of home and a reminder of all they've lost.

In stories told in alternating voices, Jean Chen Ho's debut collection peels back the layers of female friendship --- the intensity, resentment and boundless love --- to probe the beating hearts of young women coming to terms with themselves, and each other, in light of the insecurities and shame that holds them back.

Spanning countries and selves, FIONA AND JANE is an intimate portrait of a friendship, a deep dive into the universal perplexities of being young and alive, and a bracingly honest account of two Asian women who dare to stake a claim on joy in a changing, contemporary America.

Discussion Guide

1. Fiona and Jane betray each other over the years, but in the end, their friendship endures. They are both able to accept

the past, forgive each other?s mistakes, and recognize the ways the other has changed and grown over the years. Do you think they are able to forgive themselves?

2. Jane grew up solidly middle-class. Born in the US, she is an only child with college-educated, professional parents. Fiona, on the other hand, helps support her single mother, who is a card dealer at a casino. How do you think class affects their relationship as teenagers? How does it change their relationship as they became adults?

3. Teenage Fiona is remarkably ambitious and self-sufficient. She saves up enough money to buy a car in high school, then she moves to New York and gets into law school. But after her breakup with Jasper, she seems to flounder. She drops out of law school, and a dodgy boyfriend drains her bank account. What do you think causes this shift in her character or trajectory?

4. Jasper, Willy, Gabriel, Aaron, Bobby; Carly, the various Korean men, Julian, Naima. What do you think Fiona and Jane seek in romantic partners? Do you think what they look for changes over the years? How much do you think their past informs these attractions (and the relationships that ensue)?

5. When the girls are in high school, people call Jane Fiona?s ?bodyguard.? Throughout the collection, there are a number of occasions in which Jane tries to protect Fiona. Where do you think this instinct comes from? When does it succeed, and when does it backfire? And where do you think the line between friend and guardian falls?

6. How do you think Jane?s relationship to her father?s queerness shapes her own attitudes toward identity, dating and romance? How do you think his struggles with mental health affect her sense of self-worth?

7. Won was such an important friend to Fiona and Jane during their teenage years. What impact do you think he has on their lives? What do you make of how their relationship with him evolves? Have you had a friend like Won, someone who added a special, invaluable element to a dynamic? Are you still in touch?

8. Fiona grew up with a single mother and immigrated to the US as a young girl. How do you think her childhood affects her later desire to escape her family dynamic --- to move to New York and forge a new life for herself? In what ways was she successful? In what ways did she create similar, toxic patterns as an adult?

9. Before Fiona moved to New York, she stole $5,000 from the pastor?s office at Jane?s mother?s church, while Jane stood guard outside. How do you think this incident changed the girls? relationship?

10. When Fiona and Jane are in their 20s and living on opposite sides of the country, they fall out of touch, the bond of their teenage years marred by unspoken distance. But when Fiona moves back to California in her 30s, they reconnect and their friendship deepens. What do you think causes the distance between them, and how do you think they are able to overcome it? Have you ever had a relationship that withstood fallow years and was able to grow stronger? Do you think there are benefits to taking friendship breaks?

11. Fiona and Jane both have complicated, often fraught relationships with their mothers. How do you think these relationships affect the girls? sense of home and their place in society? Do their relationships with their mothers change over the years? How are the lives they seek different or similar to the lives their mothers sought?

12. While reading these stories, what surprised you about FIONA AND JANE in regards to Asian American identity and the way it intersects with race, class, gender and sexuality? What do you think is the role of fiction in addressing these social, political and cultural issues in the US today?

Author Bio

Jean Chen Ho is a writer and doctoral candidate in Creative Writing and Literature at the University of Southern California, where she is a Dornsife Fellow in fiction. She has an MFA from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and her writing has been published in *Guernica*, *The Rumpus*, *The Offing*, *Apogee*, *McSweeney?s Internet Tendency*, *VIDA*, *NPR*, *Buzzfeed*, *Bitch Magazine* and others. She was born in Taiwan, grew up in Southern California and lives in Los Angeles.

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