



Family Trust

Kathy Wang

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Meet Stanley Huang: father, husband, ex-husband, man of unpredictable tastes and temper, aficionado of all-inclusive vacations and bargain luxury goods, newly diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. For years, Stanley has claimed that he's worth a small fortune. But the time is now coming when the details of his estate will finally be revealed, and Stanley's family is nervous.

For his son Fred, the inheritance Stanley has long alluded to would soothe the pain caused by years of professional disappointment. By now, the Harvard Business School graduate had expected to be a financial tech god – not a minor investor at a middling corporate firm, where he isn't even allowed to fly business class.

Stanley's daughter, Kate, is a middle manager with one of Silicon Valley's most prestigious tech companies. She manages the capricious demands of her world-famous boss and the needs of her two young children all while supporting her would-be entrepreneur husband (just until his startup gets off the ground, which will surely be soon). But lately, Kate has been sensing something amiss; just because you say you have it all, it doesn't mean that you actually do.

Stanley's second wife, Mary Zhu, twenty-eight years his junior, has devoted herself to making her husband comfortable in every way—rubbing his feet, cooking his favorite dishes, massaging his ego. But lately, her commitment has waned; caring for a dying old man is far more difficult than she expected.

Linda Liang, Stanley's first wife, knows her ex better than anyone. She worked hard for decades to ensure their financial security, and is determined to see her children get their due. Single for nearly a decade, she might finally be ready for some romantic companionship. But where does a seventy-two year old Chinese woman in California go to find an appropriate boyfriend?

As Stanley's death approaches, the Huangs are faced with unexpected challenges that upend them and eventually lead them to discover what they most value. A compelling tale of cultural expectations, career ambitions and our relationships with the people who know us best, *Family Trust* skewers the ambition and desires that drive Silicon Valley and draws a sharply loving portrait of modern American family life.

Family Trust Details

Date : Published October 30th 2018 by William Morrow

ISBN : 9780062855251

Author : Kathy Wang

Format : Hardcover 400 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Family Trust for online ebook

DJ Sakata says

Favorite Quotes:

Erika didn't like most ethnic restaurants, and in particular the cheap authentic ones, an admission that in native Bay Area circles was viewed with the same muted horror as Holocaust denial or the use of trans fats.

...her fingers flew past an array of the graying and bald. "Here's someone I went on a date with last week," she said. "But he was only interested in, you know, a nurse with a purse."

Do not speak to her again. Someone like that, you end all communication, immediately. Witches feed off attention. Take away the broom, they can't fly. All right?

Linda was satisfied to note that Teddy, the alleged future husband of Shirley Chang, was at least the same height if not shorter than Winston and had the same pitch-black pomade hairstyle—it must be a trend with older Asian men, she thought, just like how all the women simultaneously emerged with the same enormous perms after sixty.

My Review:

This book was a bit uneven for me, but maybe it was just flying several levels over my head as I have zero interest in venture capitalism or corporate lifestyles as those topics are more than my tiny brain can comprehend and tends to scorch the little pea inside. However, I seem to quickly queue up for all the snark and salacious details mined from this unusual family's tangled secrets and snide inner musings. The storylines were complex and highly nuanced with generous servings of razor-sharp wit and eviscerating observations. It was well worth wading through the more tedious detritus of their obsessive financial wranglings to get to their peculiar predicaments and curiously confounding choices. They seemed overly driven and nearly consumed with amassing status and money, and how they were being seen while doing so. The vast majority of this large and oddly intriguing cast of characters were rather vile, although Stanley was full-on heinous. I was equally repulsed and fascinated, and couldn't quite seem to get enough or a full grasp of what was transpiring – what does that say about me? I have not yet read Crazy Rich Asians, and while I really wish I had, I also know I'd actually rather be one.

Jaclyn says

Finally -- a book to satisfy my post-Crazy Rich Asians cravings!

I absolutely loved this book. Where Kevin Kwan's trilogy was an affectionately hilarious take on the super rich Chinese families in Asia, Kathy Wang's story is a biting yet heartfelt comedy on a wannabe rich Chinese American family in Silicon Valley. It's a story that feels universal -- any rich family can have a similar battle over inheritance. But it's also specifically Silicon Valley, with the conversations around wealth and the tech innovation approaches to achieve wealth. And there are little touches that feel uniquely Chinese -- and more accurately, Chinese-American and first+second generation immigrant. Things like the network of

friends/rivals built amongst Chinese immigrants in America, the subtly ostentatious displays of wealth that signal the difference between rich and wannabe rich, the idea of the American dream and the lives in Asia people give up for their shot at it. Things I can't quite quantify in words, but are woven through the text that makes it feel like an Asian-American story. It doesn't have as many of the sly insider details as Kwan's trilogy, but it's still to me a big win for Asian American rep in contemporary fiction, and I think will appeal to fans of Crazy Rich Asians.

Family patriarch Stanley is dying and his family -- ex-wife Linda, daughter Kate, son (name?) and current wife Mary -- are all angling for their inheritance. Linda has little faith in Stanley's financial skills and urges her kids to basically get a dollar figure in writing from their father. She also decided to try online dating for a lark, and I just love how formidable and likeable this woman is. Michelle Yeoh may be a bit young to play her, but I'd love to see Michelle bring this character to life onscreen.

Kate is the family peacemaker / caregiver, a woman who is kicking ass career wise and has a great family, but discovers her husband (a supposed genius trying to start his own business) may be hiding something from her.

The son reminds me of the Eddie character in Crazy Rich Asians -- always angling for the next step up in the corporate ladder and wondering why he isn't getting his due reward for his financial and business genius. A former classmate makes him an offer that may make his dreams of major wealth and entry into top-tier Silicon Valley C-suites come true, and the results are hilariously fitting.

I also loved Mary's chapter -- she knows who she is within the family dynamic and loves Stanley for the financial stability and relative comfort he brings to her life. She massages his feet and makes him feel like a king, and he gives her money and a house. It's all very clear and straightforward and I like how Kathy Wang shows how she does have genuine affection for Stanley instead of painting her as totally avaricious. This holds true for the other characters -- despite the discussions over inheritance and wealth, Wang keeps them all human and sympathetic.

Even Stanley -- whom we learn has anger management issues and a history of obfuscating the truth to make himself feel more important -- is portrayed with sympathy, and by the end appears almost like a King Lear tragic figure, a man who wanted to be larger than life but cannot escape the realities of age.

Finally, I love the feminist feel of this book. While the men in the Huang family are the ones most overtly grasping at wealth and corporate success -- and most bombastic about their claims to such -- it is the women who reveal themselves as the true successes, which they've achieved through much quieter means. I love that because the idea of the American Dream often rewards the extroverted and the ruthlessly ambitious. So I love this nod to the Susan Cain-esque quiet revolution, where you don't have to be a Type A go-getter to achieve success.

+

Thanks to Harper Collins Canada for an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Nicole Wagner says

This is a tough book to characterize, but I loved it.

There are so many misconceptions about the wealthy. This book pokes and prods those, revealing that some

clichés have merit and others are more complex than one may imagine. The Bay Area/Silicon Valley is sort of a hotbed of new money and hungry business startups, and the story takes place there.

This book is ironically funny, tentatively tender, and entirely fascinating.

Florence Fales says

Family Trust by Kathy Wang was very good!! The story follows the Huang family. The parents divorced after 34 years. The family is Chinese. The father got remarried. He still wanted his children, a son and daughter, to have family dinners including his ex-wife. The daughter Kate and son Fred had lived of their own. The father, Stanley got cancer. He always talked about his money. The Linda, the ex-wife, kept asking the son about the fathers will.

The family went through a lot of ups and downs. It's quite a good read!!!

Margo Littell says

When Huang family patriarch Stanley receives a harrowing diagnosis from his doctor, his family is forced to confront the reality that he has very little time left. They accept the news with varying degrees of grief. Stanley's children, Fred and Kate, can't fully forgive his transgressions from their childhood. Stanley's ex-wife, Linda, still resents how badly he handled the money she made for them when they were married. And Stanley's much younger second wife, Mary, accepts that caring for an elderly man is exactly what she signed up for--as long as a windfall is on the other side. But no one knows exactly how much Stanley is worth, or the contents of his will. They can't say it outright to each other, but each wonders obsessively: How much will I get when Stanley is gone?

Fred's disastrous personal and professional choices, Kate's marital implosion, and Linda's unexpected connection with an internet love interest heighten their fixation on Stanley's will, which comes to represent a measure of freedom--if any money exists at all. Set in a Silicon Valley that is as monstrous and absurd as it is true to life, Family Trust examines the nature of family loyalty and obligation, as well as the choices that set lives on seemingly irreversible courses.

Review originally written for the City Book Review. I received a free ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Emily May says

how early the days turned black once winter began.

Ooh, this is a good book for fans of those literary family dramas about rich people and the unbelievable shit they get up to. It's sort of like a Celeste Ng novel but with a bit more melodrama and obnoxiousness; a bit like a quieter, more serious Crazy Rich Asians.

It's a story about a wealthy Chinese-American family in Silicon Valley, and how their patriarch's pancreatic cancer diagnosis affects them all. The similarities with Ng's work are most obvious in the way Wang

explores character interactions and **tells her story through details and careful observations of human behaviour**. The characters are in turn annoying and sympathetic, which makes for an interesting and multilayered read.

There's Stanley Huang himself-- a selfish old man prone to violent fits of temper. There's his smart and financially savvy ex-wife Linda, who has just gotten into online dating; his son Fred, a Harvard Business School graduate who is trying to boost his career and impress his gold-digging girlfriend; his daughter Kate, the breadwinner in her household, currently supporting her husband's start-up; and his second wife Mary, who may or may not be lurking in hopes of a shiny inheritance.

If you like books about **carefully-drawn characters** and some **juicy drama**, Family Trust should hit the spot. Wang handles each character with care and sensitivity, but also isn't afraid to poke fun at them. Humans are ridiculous, especially in the upper echelons of the business world, so be prepared to roll your eyes at times— such as when Fred despairs over his mediocre achievement of landing a job with a \$300K salary(!)

What was Denny up to in the attic? What was her husband doing with his life?

Additionally, the mysteries of Stanley's will and finding out exactly what Kate's husband gets up to in the attic every day make for a compelling read.

Really, though, there is an even greater value in this book. It serves as a portrait of a modern generation of Chinese-Americans who have been pushed to achieve, attend America's best schools, and break into the business and tech worlds. Wang portrays this world with its flashy promises and subtle racism and not-so-subtle sexism, and taps into an experience that many East Asians are having right now in America.

In the 2010 census, East Asians made up just over 4% of the US population and yet in 2013 they made up more than 20% of the workforce at Google, Intel, Yahoo, Hewlett Packard, and LinkedIn. One Chinese-American engineer described feeling "stuck in between" being Asian in Silicon Valley; viewed as a high-performing and privileged group, often overlooked in affirmative action programs, but still stereotyped and held back from the majority of executive positions.

The experiences had by Fred and Kate in this book will mirror that of many others in the second decade of the 21st Century. And for those readers, like me, who do not fully relate, it is perhaps even more interesting to gain insight into the lives of Chinese and East-Asian Americans in Silicon Valley. **A valuable, engaging read.**

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leslie hamod says

Stanley is a very successful man. He came to this country poverty stricken, but look at him now! Very rich! As a Chinese man, he has been obstinate, easy to anger. Frightening his wife and children until, unable to cope with his predefined expectations, His wife divorces him.

What to do? Mary comes along to rub his feet, cook his favorite food. She is described as a placid cow but she knows it isn't so. This is just the life of a good Chinese woman. Now that Stanley has suddenly been diagnosed with cancer, she is even more doting.

Linda, wife number one, doesn't want to know anything about it. She has her own life now. Divorced for ten

years! But they have two children, or shall I say grasping adults. She begins to worry about his will. Oh, yes, and indulge in a little internet dating.

Great story, intricately woven, with characters that are so easy to hate! Watch the family dynamics change as the patriarch uses his illness to manipulate. See what happens when an inheritance becomes suddenly relevant. Sometimes funny, occasionally sad, you become part of this family. As Linda worries about the new will, she also wonders if men really want to date her. Her son Fred, is much less successful than people know. Daughter Kate seems to love to complain while her husband is starting up a business that seems to be nonexistent!

Also a great insight into the Asian community, including expectations, marriage, motherhood, and the perception this family has of the American culture. A very admirable book.

Claire says

I received Family Trust as part of a Goodreads giveaway.

Family patriarch Stanley Huang has been diagnosed with a terminal case of pancreatic cancer. For years he has reassured his family that they will be taken care of when he passes with a generous inheritance. Now that that time is near, those closest to him becoming increasingly concerned with their futures as they face an array of personal and professional crises. Stanley's son Fred, despite an Ivy League education, struggles to rise to the heights of success he feels he deserves. Meanwhile, Stanley's daughter Kate manages a fairly successful career, though her family life is imploding before her eyes. His ex-wife (and Stanley and Kate's mother) Linda wades into the world of online dating while staying intent on making sure her children get their due from Stanley's estate. Finally, all three are suspicious of Stanley's much younger second wife, Mary, who they suspect of neglecting his care so that she might live the life of a rich widow once Stanley is gone.

I loved this book. Not because you're cheering for any of the characters--by and large they're not terribly likable people. But it's a fascinating world, a privileged family aspiring to even higher echelons of wealth and power, all while battling expectations and racism tied into their identities as Asians and Asian-Americans. Couldn't put it down.

Jenny Lehnhoff says

When Stanley Huang develops life threatening pancreatic cancer, the successful twice married father of two must put his affairs in order. Can Stanley pass on his legacy while his family: Linda, ex-wife of 34 years, Fred and Kate, his adult children, and second wife Mary of 9 years squabble on who gets the fair share of the inheritance?

I really enjoyed Family Trust because of its strong character development and its ability to make me think of my own family dynamics. Although some of the passages about the corporate world dragged for me, I would definitely recommend this book as a must read for lovers of fiction.

Although I gave this book a five star rating, I would have enjoyed the story more if there was fewer content on the business world. However, I did recognize the elaborate set up the author created in order to make the ending fantastic (which is why it is five stars).

In terms of potentially offensive content, Family Trust is an adult novel with adult themes. There are a few

swear words sprinkled here or there and the occasional mention of sexual content. However, these things are few and only mentioned when necessary for content.

I felt the story was especially strong in the area of character development. The author focused on only a handful of main characters. Each main character was given their own chapters in order to advance the narrative in their point of view. This paid off especially well at the end because I thoroughly understood where each character was coming from in their actions.

In conclusion, I highly recommend that this book be a must-read. It really is an enjoyable experience.

Katie B says

I'm kinda left with this empty feeling. It's like this book lacked heart and there was this coldness to it. And maybe that was intentional given so much of the focus is on what a dying man is leaving in his will and who will get what. In a family drama though I expect to feel more for the characters than I did with this one.

Stanley Huang has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. His ex-wife, Linda, encourages her adult children to get Stanley to divulge how much he is worth and who gets what so there are no problems with his second wife, Mary, after he dies. Linda wants to make sure her kids get their fair share given she was the one who was the primary breadwinner when she and Stanley were married. With Stanley's death approaching, Linda, her two kids, and Mary will all face challenges that will make them question what is really important.

The book gets off to a really slow start because there is too much focus on business and the lives of characters who really have nothing to do with the story. The book alternates chapters between different family members and so you are just getting to know the main characters but you're also getting all this unnecessary info which makes it overwhelming to read. Thankfully, after about 100 pages, you finally will feel like you are starting to understand this family a bit better.

I liked the idea behind this book but I can't say I loved this story. If you are looking for a book that explores the business side of Silicon Valley and people motivated by money, this is a decent pick. But as a family drama, I just don't think this comes close to matching some of the other books I have read recently.

I won a free copy of this book from LibraryThing's Early Reviewers program. I was under no obligation to post a review and all views expressed are my honest opinion.

Virginia Gavin says

I love,loved,loved this book!Funny,sad,poignant-you will find yourself drawn in to this family's story.I'd give it 10 stars if I could.One of my favorite books this year!

Sejal says

This book was interesting and not what I was expecting. I had categorized it in the "lighter chick lit" category which is my mistake and possibly some of the marketing, but in reality it is more a wry and quite literary family saga in the vein of THE CORRECTIONS than the sort of Nest + Jodi Picoult I first thought it was. If you think it will be warm and easy to read then I can see why someone would be disappointed.

I like to read reviews I find useful so I will say that if you liked books like AND THEN WE CAME TO THE END and THE LEFTOVERS and the Franzen sort of oeuvre you will like this. If you like more the cozy mystery and warm family drama then this may strike you as harsh. I like all kinds of books dependent on my mood and so was engaged with this novel. Actually a very pleasurable surprise as it is hard to find that "readable literary" that I prefer.

A ending note that as a person of colour living abroad, I was surprised to read some of the reviews referencing race in the book in a negative manner, which is the only reason I was spurred to write a review here at all. This is a novel about another culture in America and I think it is important to be open to other culture's values and identities even if it doesn't "jell" with your own. I am an aspiring (one day, far away day) writer and I shudder to think how a book about British Indians and our family dramas might be received.

Thanks to Harper Collins for the early.

J says

This book is amazing.

If you come from a family with no money, this will fascinate you. If you come from a family with tons of money, this will fascinate you too. And make you cringe. And laugh. And yell "OMG NO" in response to some of this wild dialog.

Anyway I really enjoyed it, so. Highly recommend.

Reading Fool says

I received an Advance Reader's Copy of this book.

Stanley Huang is dying of pancreatic cancer, and as the patriarch of the Huang family, he wants to gather his ex-wife, son, daughter, and current wife. This story has multiple layers - commentary on Chinese-American families, Silicon Valley, failing marriages, parents' expectations of their children, and so much more. Told in alternating chapters from the different characters' perspectives, this very impressive debut novel is complex, interesting, and one that I could not put down. The writing is so witty, and there were so many relatable moments, whether you're Asian or not. I loved this book!

Angela Johnson says

I received this ARC from a goodreads giveaway hosted by William Morrow Books! And here is my honest

review:

The first thing that caught my attention was this cover. Is it not beautiful? The gold and red contrast in such a gorgeous way and the gold floral design weaves in and out of the text.

When I held this book, the best description I could come up with was meaty. It felt thick, it felt like there were a lot of words, a lot of story to tell.

I wasn't disappointed. This is a family drama. Characters and characteristics you'll both love and hate. Situations that we've all heard about on the news, or more intimately through friends or family, or maybe even experienced. The trials and tribulations of relationships: marriages, parenthood, childhood, working relationships, friendships.

I felt satisfaction as I finished this book. The format was something I particularly find alluring in novels. 4 different point of views, alternating between. It keeps the story from getting stale, or too involved, it gives you breaks. It gives you cliff-hangers and then lets you forget about that character just long enough to be jolted when you turn the page and it's back to their chapter.

This book follows the Huang family: Stanley & Linda and their two grown children Kate and Fred. Stanley and Linda are divorced and have been for about a decade when the book begins. Stanley has since remarried to Mary, a woman very much his "junior." Kate is married with two small children of her own. Fred is in a relationship with an angling saleswoman, Erika, and he's already been married and divorced.

Some of the quotes in this book just left me wanting to read and re-read the lines over again. For example "Instead, life just seemed to be a series of small mistakes, which you continued to make over and over again." Isn't that just so perfectly true and insightful?

One underlying theme I noticed was that the Huangs were all a little angry - they may have shown it in different avenues, but they all were nursing feelings of injustice, whether valid or not. Sometimes it cast bit of a cynical view on people and life, but realistic, and not overwhelmingly so, just honest.

Another aspect of author, Kathy Wang's writing that I really enjoyed was her set up. Sometimes I'd be reading a chapter and think "wait... where is this taking me?" but every anecdotal memory a character recalled had a point and played out immediately after. It was a very satisfying feeling to have the question (where is this going?) answered almost always so immediately.

It was an insight into a world I don't know much about, nor am that interested in (financial industry - investing, stocks, venture capitalism, etc). But it didn't beat you up with industry vernacular or bog you down in too many details. It was enough that the reader could understand the situation without drowning in acronyms or numbers.

My favorite character was definitely Kate. When you read it, let me know who your favorite was, too!

I'd recommend this novel. It comes out in October of 2018! Further, the author has been active on instagram and interacted with my posts, which I always find especially endearing.
