



Only Child: Writers on the Singular Joys and Solitary Sorrows of Growing Up Solo

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Only children don't have to share bedrooms, toys, or the backseat of a car. They don't have to share allowances, inheritances, or their parents' attention. But when they get into trouble, they can't just blame their imaginary friends. In *Only Child*, twenty-one acclaimed writers tell the truth about life without siblings—the bliss of solitude, the ache of loneliness, and everything in between.

In this unprecedented collection, writers like Judith Thurman, Kathryn Harrison, John Hodgman, and Peter Ho Davies reflect on the single, transforming episode that defined each of them as an only child. For some it came while lurking around the edges of a friend's boisterous family, longing to be part of the chaos. For others, it came in sterile hospital halls, while single-handedly caring for a parent with cancer. They write about the parents who raised them, from the devoted to the dismissive. They describe what it's like to be an only child of divorce, an only because of the death of a sibling, an only who reveled in it or an only who didn't.

In candid, poignant, and often hilarious essays, these authors—including the children of Erica Jong, Alice Walker, and Phyllis Rose—explore a lifetime of onliness. As adults searching for partners, they are faced with the unique challenge of trying to turn a longtime trio into a quartet. In deciding whether to give junior a sib, they weigh the benefits of producing the friend they never had against the fear that they will not know how to divide their love and attention among multiples. As they watch their parents age, they come face-to-face with the onus of being their family's sole historian.

Whether you're an only child curious about how your experiences compare to others', the partner or spouse of an only, a parent pondering whether to stop at one, or someone with siblings who's always wondered how the other half lives, *Only Child* offers a look behind the scenes and into the hearts of twenty-one smart and sensitive writers as they reveal the truth about growing up—and being a grown-up—solo.

From the Hardcover edition.

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