

AMERICAN LIVES SERIES | TOBIAS WOLFF, EDITOR

Jill Christman

The Heart
Folds Early
A Memoir

THE HEART FOLDS EARLY IS A MEMOIR ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO MAKE A CHOICE.

Emerging from a childhood that included both devastating sexual abuse and the sustaining joy of being deeply (if imperfectly) loved, Jill Christman's sights were set on building and protecting her own happy family—until her fiancé was killed in a car accident. *The Heart Folds Early* is a story of transformation through tragedy, and an examination of the way in which great loss can make us simultaneously fearful and intrepid.

Christman folds the mournful recklessness of the young widow she was against the backdrop of her later marriage and new motherhood, including the choice to end a half-term pregnancy when a routine ultrasound revealed her baby boy had just half a heart. Courageous, clear-eyed, tender, and unexpectedly funny, Christman reflects on her life and asks: What happens when we're afraid the worst thing will happen and then, sometimes, it does? What does it mean to make and live with a heartrending choice? How do we carry life and death in our bodies and survive with our hearts intact?

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"At once fierce and exquisitely tender, *The Heart Folds Early* is a breathtaking journey into the mind of a mother grappling with an impossible choice. Jill Christman has written a profoundly generous book, offering her story with open palms."

—NICOLE GRAEV LIPSON, AUTHOR OF *MOTHERS AND OTHER FICTIONAL CHARACTERS*

"This book is a continuous wonder, a compulsively readable story told with keen wisdom and nerves of steel about the fierce desire to grow and birth babies from a full life of one's own."

—SONYA HUBER, AUTHOR OF *VOICE FIRST: A WRITER'S MANIFESTO*

"A brilliant, breathtaking memoir about the dignity and necessity of our choices ...Jill Christman writes about the toughest matters of human existence with a directness, empathy, and humor that is the closest thing I'll ever know to love born from a page."

—BROOKE CHAMPAGNE, AUTHOR OF *NOLA FACE: A LATINA'S LIFE IN THE BIG EASY*

Jill Christman is the author of *If This Were Fiction: A Love Story in Essays* (Nebraska, 2022), *Darkroom: A Family Exposure*, and *Borrowed Babies: Apprenticing for Motherhood*. She is a professor in the Creative Writing Program at Ball State University where she serves as editor of *River Teeth: A Journal of Nonfiction Narrative and Beautiful Things*.

