



A Cage in Search of a Bird

Florence Noiville

Teresa Lavender Fagan, Translator

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Florence Noiville's *A Cage in Search of a Bird* is an engrossing psychological thriller that examines the emotional depths of obsession. The book is gripping as it explores the relationship between two friends who become tortured by each other's presence. Throughout the compelling novel, the question of who is the bird and who is the cage is present in every suspenseful detail.

Laura Wilmote moves to Paris at eighteen to attend high school. There she meets the city-savvy daughter of a butcher, C., who is more than happy to take Laura under her tutelage. After high school, they drift apart.

Laura becomes an author and television journalist with her own show. C. reappears one day at one of Laura's book signings. C. is down on her luck, so Laura gets her a job at the television station. Thus Laura's nightmare begins. C. methodically begins to expropriate her life and denigrate Laura's professional reputation. After consulting a mental-health expert, Laura comes to suspect that C. has de Clérambault syndrome, or erotomania, a delusional disorder that makes C. believe Laura is in love with her.

The narrative dives right into this situation, without much backstory or many scenes that illustrate Laura's belief that C.'s behavior is delusional. A first-person point of view leaves Laura explaining C.'s action, and there is some loss of narrative tension as a result. Teresa Lavender Fagan's translation imparts Noiville's philosophical overtones, employed through a brief, fragmented narrative style. Masterful short entries follow Laura's interior struggles, even as she sheds her own identity to escape C.'s obsessive and destructive pattern.

Reminiscent of *Single White Female*, *A Cage in Search of a Bird* asks questions about delusional obsession. Noiville's novel is a sharp, taut thriller, both thought-provoking and terrifying.

MONICA CARTER (Winter 2017)

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