



## Carnality

**Lina Wolff**

**Frank Perry, Translator**

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In Lina Wolff's psychological thriller *Carnality*, a writer arrives in Madrid and sets out to become a new person.

The writer observes a married couple, Santiago and Miranda. He has dementia; she cares for him. Enchanted by their bond, she offers to assist Miranda in taking care of Santiago. But in close proximity to the couple, she worries about her body. She's jealous of Miranda—vibrant, beautiful, and selfless—and other women whose lives seem perfect and untouchable.

The writer's days are further complicated by her house guest, Mercurio, who's in hiding after appearing on a web series run by a nun. He committed adultery, but hopes that his wife, Soledad, can forgive him. Soledad awaits a heart transplant, after which Mercurio hopes that she will have different feelings toward him. The nun told him that he should give his own heart to her to atone for his sins, though; he is paranoid and shifty, hiding from her men.

The writer is a detached observer. The narrative shifts between her, Mercurio's monologues, and Lucia's correspondence. Mercurio is insecure about his sexual urges and rationalizes through topics like the gender divide and domestic violence. Together, the trio's words have a lulling affect, complementing the gradual reveal of people's true natures.

The book includes queasy descriptions of altercations between Mercurio and his past lovers. Such details are appalling and intimate, demanding introspection on the role of blame within mercurial relationships. And as people's past and present wanton deeds come to the fore, human obsessions with body and pride complicate the book's questions around sex and abuse.

In the psychological thriller *Carnality*, a writer confronts terrifying questions about gender and violence.

ALEENA ORTIZ (July / August 2022)

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