



## Slipping

**Mohamed Kheir**

**Robin Moger, Translator**

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A depressed journalist finds himself on a strange journey in Mohamed Kheir's haunting novel *Slipping*.

Seif's heart has not been in his job of late, so he is surprised to receive an important yet mysterious assignment: he must accompany Bahr, a strange man who spent years abroad and has returned to Egypt in search of something. What it is, and why he chose Seif to help him, Bahr will not say. All Seif can do is follow along and hope he will find the answers he seeks.

Seif and Bahr have both suffered devastating losses. Their travels bring to mind memories of the women they've loved and lost, and of how their lives have not gone according to plan. In between these segments lie seemingly unconnected, even inexplicable stories: a mother receives visions from her dead husband, a man awakes far from home with no memory of the past three days, and an inspector happily rents a room in a building that the tenants decry as unlivable. Each lyrical vignette conceals as much as it reveals. Then, one by one, the threads are woven together into a tapestry of grief and indifference.

Kheir's masterful storytelling not only encourages, but almost necessitates, rereading. Seif's journey takes him around Egypt, but his sorrows are not so easy to leave behind. He keeps his innermost thoughts to himself, hiding his weaknesses. And yet, even if Seif were to share his troubles, those around him prove just as vulnerable as he. The closer he gets to the truth of things, the more it becomes apparent that there is no truth, and that there is no one to prevent him from slipping further into unreality.

*Slipping* is a novel about the fragility in all things: society, love, even reality.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May / June 2021)

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