



## The Bitch

**Pilar Quintana**

**Lisa Dillman, Translator**

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In Pilar Quintana's engrossing novel *The Bitch*, a woman's search for companionship leads her to an orphaned puppy.

Damaris and her husband, Rogelio, have an uneasy, distant relationship. They live in a shack on a bluff near the ocean in Colombia. They are separated from the closest town by an inlet that fills with water during high tide, isolating them geographically and socially. For many years, they tried to have children, but never did.

Now in her forties, Damaris adopts a puppy, Chirli, to ease her loneliness. Her husband is skeptical, and Damaris worries that he will treat Chirli as cruelly as he treats his own dogs.

Chirli, who gives Damaris a measure of happiness, ends up bringing the couple together at times, but she also sometimes advances their rifts. As Chirli matures and learns about the wider world, her relationship with Damaris becomes strained. Damaris's hopes for personal revitalization are further stymied by the harsh realities of village life; her husband and neighbors express doubts that a dog could provide the consolation she needs. Momentum and suspense are generated by the question of whether Damaris and Chirli will find a way to live together in peace.

The Colombian setting is both beautiful and oppressive. Its ocean is dangerous and unpredictable, as is the nearby, looming jungle. This moody, unsettled atmosphere is bolstered by the book's troubled characters, who struggle with poverty, violence, and loneliness. Some prove mean, but all are memorable and complex, dealing with personal frustrations and living in houses that crumble from neglect, and that face constant storms and damp.

*The Bitch* is a subtle, moving novel about a struggle to overcome loneliness in an eerie place, among memorable people and animals.

REBECCA HUSSEY (July / August 2020)

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