

★ **The Seep****Chana Porter**

Soho Press (Jan 21, 2020)

Hardcover \$25.00 (216pp)

978-1-64129-086-9

The invasion was gentler than expected: The Seep entered the water supply, melded with people, and dulled their fears, offering them a future free of pain, need, and death. But there are some who find this new utopia wanting. Chana Porter's mindbending *The Seep* issues a keen for lost passion, sharp edges and all.

Omnipresent but unseen, operating like nanotechnology or an animating spirit, The Seep joins with sentient beings and inanimate objects alike, binding all together. Through *The Seep*: you can feel the history of a tree, can trace your atoms back to time immemorial, can change your form. Bears become like people, mourning lovers assume the faces of the departed. Once an artist, Trina becomes a doctor, deriving new satisfaction from helping others; her wife, Deeba, decides that she wants to start over as a baby.

Deeba's rebirth is like a death to Trina. Already dubious about the magnanimity of The Seep, she finds herself unable to cope. She's resistant to keeping up appearances, loses herself in alcohol, and mourns with ferocity. When she encounters a boy untouched by The Seep, who's just entering this new and dangerous world, protecting him seems like a chance to redress all she's lost.

*The Seep* is an intoxicating takeover narrative, its promises as appealing on their surfaces as they are frightening in their implications. Trina remains reticent to give herself over to the beings that erased disease, poverty, and divisions; she walks through a world in which strife has been erased, yet only she seems like more than an automaton. As *The Seep* gets bolder and its moves more presumptuous, reluctance turns to alarm, and questions about what we lose when we sacrifice our worry arise, brazen and demanding.

*The Seep* is a daring paean to human vulnerability and a bold speculative inquest into what makes life worth living.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (January / February 2020)

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