



★ **Three**

D. A. Mishani

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D. A. Mishani's *Three* is a gripping novel that begins with an affair and continues through the salacious surprises and everyday horrors of contemporary dating.

What pains Orna most about her recent divorce is that her ex-husband is terrible about communicating with their son. Orna, at least, is hungry to shield her sensitive boy, so they take trips to Tel Aviv's beaches, and she throws him a lavish birthday party. She also acquiesces to his therapist's suggestion that she begin dating again.

But Orna doesn't want to fall in love. To be safe, she chooses someone bland from a site for divorcees: Gil, a soft-edged lawyer with little to say, and who makes few demands. Not much about Gil generates excitement. He is, at most, a passing source of escape. That is: until Orna discovers that Gil is still married.

Parlaying her anger toward her ex into a scheme to punish Gil for his own marital malfeasance, Orna lands in uncomfortable territory: she's furious, exacting, and even a little mean. Still, it's nothing that cheating men don't seem to deserve from cheated-upon women. Not until a failed tryst near the novel's midway does it become apparent that Orna, and her voyeuristic audience, have underestimated Orna's momentary mark. Mishani's thrilling text becomes a horrifying cautionary tale in which no one person is wholly safe.

Astute characterizations of the novel's women—first Orna; then Emilia, a foreign worker with whom a ghost is desperate to communicate; and an observant policewoman—reflect how exhaustion serves to muffle busy people's best instincts. Gil, who's described in the most unflattering terms, becomes frightening precisely because he's so banal.

Three is a mesmerizing psychological thriller whose violence comes to feel inevitable, but that also sparks hope for retribution.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (July / August 2020)

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