



Reader's Guide



Other novels by Dorthe Nors
So Much for That Winter (2016)

Mirror, Shoulder, Signal Dorthe Nors

Translated by Misha Hoekstra

Pushkin Press

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About the author

Dorthe Nors was born in 1970 in Denmark, and studied literature at the University of Aarhus. Her short stories have appeared in numerous international periodicals, including the *Boston Review* and *Harper's*, and she is the first Danish writer ever to have a story published in the *New Yorker*. Nors has published four novels, in addition to a collection of stories, *Karate Chop*, and a novella, *Minna Needs Rehearsal Space*, which were published together in English by Pushkin Press. *Karate Chop* won the prestigious P.O. Enquist Literary Prize in 2014. She lives in rural Jutland, Denmark.

About the translator

Misha Hoekstra, born in the US in 1963, has won several awards for his literary translations. He lives in Aarhus, where he works as a freelance writer and translator, in addition to writing and performing songs. He also translated *Minna Needs Rehearsal Space* for Pushkin Press.

About the book

Sonja is an intelligent single woman in her 40s whose life lacks focus. The situation must change – but where to start? By learning to drive, perhaps. After all, how hard can it be? Very, as it turns out.

Six months in, Sonja is still baffled by the basics and her instructor is eccentric. Sonja is also struggling with an acute case of vertigo, a sister who won't talk to her, and a masseuse who is determined to solve her spiritual problems. Frenetic city life is a constant reminder that every man (and woman) is an island: she misses her rural childhood where ceilings were high and the sky was endless. Shifting gears is not proving easy.

Discussion points

Many novels about existential crises have been told from the perspective of a man - how did it feel to read one told from that of a woman?

In the language of the novel, Dorthe Nors uses slang and puns to create a surface lightness that hides more complex ideas beneath it. Why do you think she does this?

Sonja translates Swedish crime novels for a living - how does the theme of translation affect the reader's experience of a translated novel?

Do you think that society struggles to understand women who don't follow a conventional path in life?

How might the novel be seen as a comment on the loneliness of modern life?

Themed reading

Deborah Levy *Swimming Home*
Marilynne Robinson *Lila*
Ali Smith *How To Be Both*
Albert Camus *The Outsider*