

## Fog & Car

**Eugene Lim**

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In Eugene Lim's novel *Fog & Car*, a divorced couple learns to live without one another.

After their seven-year marriage ends, Fog and Car retreat to different parts of the country to lick their wounds. Adrift and unsure of what to do, each copes as best they can in their own ways: Fog with inertia, Car with a flurry of restless movements. Over time, they acquire interests—romantic and otherwise—in other people, only to realize that escaping their pasts is impossible.

The story alternates between Fog, a teacher who indulges in abstract ramblings about his nostalgic longing and loneliness, and Car, a freelancer whose aimless drift through jobs, holidays, and social events is conveyed through more grounded language. Both nurse an obsession with cleanliness: doing laundry, scrubbing floors, and fixing leaks serve as inadequate penance for being unable to salvage their relationship. The prose refuses to cover for the characters' shortcomings, leaving each ungenerous thought and every stammered sentence intact.

After a quiet, poignant first part, the former couple's lives take a surreal turn. While Fog connects with a woman from his hometown, Car bumps into a friend whose disappearance placed a wedge in her marriage to Fog. True to their natures, Fog settles into his new normal without bothering to dig beneath the surface, while Car's quest accelerates into a disjointed, alcohol-soaked chase for a closure that will not arrive in any form she recognizes. In the end, Fog and Car move on because there is nothing else for them to do. For all of their searching and striving, their only reward is a future that is different from, though not better than, the past.

*Fog & Car* is an uncommon, wistful novel that explores whether it is possible for one person to truly know another.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (July / August 2024)

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