

## Nefando

**Mónica Ojeda**

**Sarah Booker, Translator**

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In Mónica Ojeda's horror novel, six artists in Barcelona are connected to an infamous horror video game, *Nefando*.

Unfolding through a prism of perspectives, the story switches between inhabiting the consciousnesses of roommates Kiki, Iván, El Cuco, and the three Teran siblings. It also includes interviews with an unnamed questioner. In the process, the cast's relationships to *Nefando* and to each other are revealed in all their unseemliness.

The literary, stylized chapters take the form of their focal characters' minds. Writer and FONCA scholar Kiki's sections include a steamrolling interior monologue. Coder El Cuco's sections break into computer code, and Iván, who possesses an MFA in literary creation, narrates in the second person. Further, all of the roommates contend with irrepressible thoughts, obsessions, and attractions.

Very much a novel of ideas, this slender volume tackles myriad themes, from the nature of writing to childhood, memory, religious repression, programming, conformity, violence, language, and silence. It also explores childhood abuse and its aftereffects. Like the video game it centers around, *Nefando* isn't for the faint of heart. It confronts the evil, unspeakable aspects of human nature, refusing to turn away its lucid, dissecting gaze. Instead, in dizzying poetic prose, it zooms in on these horrors, asking why and where they come from. Its darkness rests in the revelation of that which society would like to imagine don't exist.

*Nefando* is a haunting and disturbing novel that ruminates its way to a terminus of reckoning and self-knowledge—if such a thing, as El Cuco notes toward the novel's close, is even possible.

SÉBASTIEN LUC BUTLER (November / December 2023)

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