

## Tiger

**Ashley Mayne**

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*Raw prose evokes the animal nature of these inquisitive characters who fight for redemption across the globe.*

Ashley Mayne's newest novel reads like a fevered dream as it trades between the accounts of a priest and a young man for whom love, lust, and violence inextricably coexist. *Tiger* is a sumptuous and disturbing tale of twisted eroticism and elusive redemption.

There was a night in Father Ochoa's boyhood that he cannot overcome. Demons were defanged. Rescuers morphed into predators. All came undone. As he trades nation for nation, and lust for lust, Father Ochoa tells himself that he chose those events, and participant-not-prey becomes the lie around which his lonely life grows.

When Father Ochoa accepts a position teaching in a boy's school in Connecticut, he meets Tony, whose demons are familiar—another boy who needs to be rescued. But can Ochoa, whose vestments require that he listen and comfort, offer solace without becoming a predator himself?

Though Mayne's scenes shift constantly—the northern woods, Mexican compounds, old Europe, New York, the Far East—her novel unfolds in a tragic cycle, its poignancy wrapped up in needy calls that only tigers can answer. Her prose, even at its most tender, is animalian, and her characters constantly struggle to supersede their feral instincts.

Tangles of branches, the cold stones of quiet churches, jungles where monsters lurk—these become the settings for Ochoa and Tony's liaisons, which toe a line between need and deception. And when Ochoa leaves, Tony is left to decipher lessons learned at the wolf-priest's breast. Years later, a wild girl—a girl who needs to be rescued—becomes his ultimate challenge, his moment of truth in someone else's childhood night.

*Tiger* is a hybrid novel, painful in its elegance and replete with tortured questions around love and redemption. Mayne's prose is ferocious and lovely, sometimes both within close confines. This is a haunting story that confronts the spaces in which violence and beauty meet.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (Fall 2015)

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