

Meaty Pleasures

"In the whirlwind of hook-ups I saw every afternoon, that stitching together of Thursday after Thursday with love and desire was the essence of continuity."

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MÓNICA LAVÍN

Translated by Dorothy Potter Snyder

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Meaty Pleasures by Mónica Lavín, translated by D. P. Snyder (Katakana Editores, 2021). Cover image by Karla Cuéllar Suárez.

The following story, "Thursdays," is excerpted from [Meaty Pleasures](#), a collection of fiction by award-winning Mexican writer Mónica Lavín, translated by Dorothy Potter Snyder and published by Katakana Editores in September 2021. Meaty Pleasures is available for [purchase in print](#) or [as an e-book](#).

Thursdays

I shouldn't have done it. But I couldn't help it. For me, all it took was to see them walk in with that excited yet guarded stride, she with her voluptuous figure and long, shapely legs and he, tall and slender, his gaze shielded

behind dark glasses and his arm firmly wrapped around her waist. I caught sight of them from behind the half-open door of another room as they passed through the dark hallway, and, after they slipped by, I felt relieved that they were the same ones as always. The ones from Thursdays at five o'clock, the ones from Room 39. The weekly routine comforted me. In the whirlwind of hook-ups I saw every afternoon, that stitching together of Thursday after Thursday with love and desire was the essence of continuity. Who could be like them, stealing away for a few hours in the afternoon, sometimes for just one hour, to find real sweetness in someone else's arms? Who might be able to forget all about Chino, Nachito and Lola, and the smell of beans simmering and instead, with their legs sheathed in silky stockings, permit themselves a lingering touch on a calf or a thigh with the exquisite attention of someone measuring and investigating the world of forms? Who could be the object of such mutual and consummated desire?

I never used to think like this, nor did I even really see my own legs. They were just good for getting me around. I hadn't grasped how undesired I was while I was witnessing the endless series of casual couples that wandered through these hallways, their moans muffled behind closed doors. But now I understood that just having a husband was no solace. Because if it were, why would the couple from Room 39 always return to reenact their inevitable coupling? Why would they come here once a week if they had some other option? Why the dark glasses? Why that specific time of day? Why were they in such a hurry?

At seven o'clock in the evening, the door to Room 39 opened. He glanced down the hallway and let the woman know the coast was clear. I returned to observe them, this time from behind, clasping each other's hands in a lingering goodbye to prolong the rendezvous. I was making it last, too, and I'd dare to come a bit closer to the stairwell so I could watch their heads descend to the first-floor hallway that opened out onto the street. I hurried

back to their room. I didn't want Teresa to beat me to it, because she did her rounds at the same time of day on the same floor. I would close the door behind me and take a look around at the mess, the same mess that in other rooms inspired weariness in me, sometimes even disgust. But there, I would fling myself face down on the bed and breathe in all the aromas trapped in the used sheets. I extracted the smell of her perfume, like fresh-cut grass, and his woody aftershave. I breathed in the sweat that dampened those over-laundered scraps of cloth and I'd find the traces of semen that escaped from the woman's filled, satiated vagina. Lying on that used sheet, my heart would beat wildly, and a rush of blood sent me into ecstasies. There, amid the evidence, I took part in the love ritual.

After a while, I would emerge into the shadowy hallway and deposit the bundle of sheets with more delicacy than usual into the basket overflowing with linens. I was deeply grateful for these weekly visits, and I opposed any change of work schedule or floor. Those months had turned into a succession of pleasurable Thursdays. That's why I dared. When I first took the job, my boss emphasized the importance of being discreet and never having contact with the clients. Avoid being seen, never speak to them. But I wanted to do something to show them how happy I was they were there, like at a wedding when you hug the newlyweds with all your heart. That's when the idea of the flower came to me. The other maids teased me that a beau had given it to me. Nacho was so romantic, they joked.

It was a coral pink rosebud, just about to fully open. At four-thirty, the room was vacated by the previous clients, and I rushed in to clean it, planning not to leave until just before the hour. I didn't want to risk some other couple occupying that room, although I knew Tomás at the front desk already had instructions to make sure it was free every Thursday at five. I filled a glass with water, put the rose in it, and placed it on the scratched-up dresser. The rose was reflected in the mirror, and the bare walls and mattress marked

with cigarette burns became tinted with the blushing color of the rose. I breathed in the perfume of the flower that would celebrate the event this time, joining in with the vapors and secretions of the lovers' bodies. I left at one minute to five, excited and also a bit nervous about the invasion that impinged on the couple's well-guarded anonymity. I put my trust in God, who, after all, had placed them in my path. During their two hours of lovemaking, my heart was all aflutter. I made beds, replaced toilet paper, and put clean towels in the other bathrooms, swept and walked around. And all the while, the image of the fresh, pink rose witnessing their naked bodies and their total surrender to each other stayed with me as if it were my feet in that glass of water.

I heard the sound of the door opening, and I peeked out from another room. I noticed that his gaze studied the hallway with greater caution. I took a deep breath and suppressed the temptation to run over and introduce myself, to confess that I was the rose-lady and that I hoped that I hadn't bothered them. I clenched my fists, not daring to watch as they disappeared at the bottom of the stairs. I went into the room. The same offering of disarray. Beneath the glass, now without the flower, was a fifty-peso bill. It was a kind of answer. I took it. After basking in the familiar aromas and the ritual to which I had added my rose, I walked out excitedly with the bundle clasped to my chest, only to then leave it regretfully in the pile of other stained sheets.

The following Thursday, five-thirty came and the people from Room 39 didn't show up. Still hopeful, I guessed there had been some slight mishap. But the next Thursday confirmed that the routine had been broken. Even so, I clung to the possibility that there had been a schedule change, a shift of location. Maybe she had a husband who had found her out or he had a wife who had gotten in the way. Maybe someone was sick, maybe someone had died. Maybe.

Ever since then, used sheets are a torture and a penance for me. And the smell of roses makes me sick.

An excerpt of "Thursdays" in its original Spanish can be enjoyed below. A bilingual edition of Meaty Pleasures will be released by Katakana Editores in October 2021.

Los jueves

No debí hacerlo. No pude evitarlo, me bastaba verlos entrar con ese paso excitado y cauteloso: ella con el cuerpo garboso y las piernas largas y bien formadas, él, esbelto, con la mirada protegida por los lentes oscuros y el brazo asido a la cintura de la mujer. Yo los espiaba por el pasillo oscuro, tras la puerta entornada de otra habitación, y sentía alivio cuando después de los pasos sigilosos verificaba que eran los mismos. Los del jueves a las cinco de la tarde, los de la habitación 39. Esa repetición semanal me reconfortaba. En el torbellino de los encuentros pasajeros que atestiguaba todas las tardes, éste hilvanar jueves tras jueves con puntadas de amor y deseo exhalaba continuidad. Quién pudiera como ellos robarle unas horas a la tarde, una tan solo, y encontrar cierta dulzura entre unos brazos. Quién pudiera olvidarse del Chino, de Nachito y la Lola, de los frijoles hirvientes y, con las piernas enfundadas en medias suaves, dejarse recorrer las pantorrillas y los muslos con el interés de quien mide y palpa las formas; quién pudiera ser objeto de deseo respondido y consumado.

Lavín, Mónica. "Los jueves" from *La isla blanca*. Lectorum, 1998.

Snyder, Dorothy Potter. "Thursdays" from *Meaty Pleasures*. Katakana Editores, 2021.

Mónica Lavín (Mexico City, 1955) has authored over twenty novels and short stories and essay collections. She was awarded the Gilberto Owen Premio Nacional de Literatura for her short story collection Ruby Tuesday no ha muerto, the Premio Narrativa de Colima for her novel Café cortado, the Premio Iberoamericano de Novela Elena Poniatowska for the novel Yo, la peor, and was shortlisted for the Vargas Llosa Novel Award for her novel Cuando te hablen de amor. She is a professor and researcher at the Universidad Autónoma de México (UACM) and a member of her nation's prestigious National System of Creators.

D. P. Snyder is a writer and translator from Spanish. Her writing has appeared in The Sewanee Review, Exile Quarterly, Two Lines Journal, World Literature Today, Review: Literature and Art of the Americas, and World Literature Today, among other publications. Her story "La puerta secreta" (The Secret Door) won recognition at the 2020 International Short Story Competition of the San Miguel Writers Conference. She is a contributor to Public Seminar, Reading in Translation, and Asymptote.

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