



La Moretta (Electric Literature's Recommended Reading Book 86)

Maggie Shipstead

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"I enjoy reading all varieties of short fiction, but often my favorite stories are those that feel like micro-novels, for the deep reach and breadth of their perspective into the characters' lives, as well as those that take chances with structure or voice and thus freshen the form," writes Chang-rae Lee, author of "On Such a Full Sea," in his introduction to this issue of Recommended Reading. "Maggie Shipstead's 'La Moretta' is one such story, plus, as the title suggests, it's a dark tale, the sort which I think gives most people a special delight. I don't know about you, but I like to squirm and wince as I read short fiction, feel the pinpoint compressions a writer effects as he or she traces a set of flawed and discomfited characters.

"In this story, it's a newlywed couple on their honeymoon in the Carpathian foothills in Romania, circa 1974, who are already going in very different directions. But this isn't just some 'closely observed' presentation of a marriage scuttled before it's even launched. Shipstead can and does aim higher, for she's a hugely talented young writer—her debut novel *Seating Arrangements* is positively Updikeian in its arch, all-knowing vision and beautiful, effortless-seeming prose—and her gifts of empathic imagination are on full display here, offering us a crystalline x-ray into the lives of two people who may have never loved one another and are clearly headed for trouble."

About the author:

Maggie Shipstead is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a former Wallace Stegner fellow at Stanford. *Seating Arrangements*, her first novel, won the Dylan Thomas Prize and the L.A. Times Book Prize for First Fiction. Her short fiction has appeared in many publications including *Tin House*, *VQR*, *American Short Fiction*, and *The Best American Short Stories*. Her second novel, *Astonish Me*, comes out in April.

You can read her story, "Angel Lust," also in Recommended Reading.

About the Guest Editor:

Chang-rae Lee is the author of *Native Speaker*, winner of the Hemingway Foundation/PEN/Hemingway Award for first fiction, *A Gesture Life*, *Aloft*, and *The Surrendered*, winner of the Dayton Peace Prize and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Selected by *The New Yorker* as one of the "20 Writers for the 21st Century," Lee is professor in the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University and a Shinhan Distinguished Visiting Professor at Yonsei University. His new novel, *On Such a Full Sea*, is available now.

About the Publisher:

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