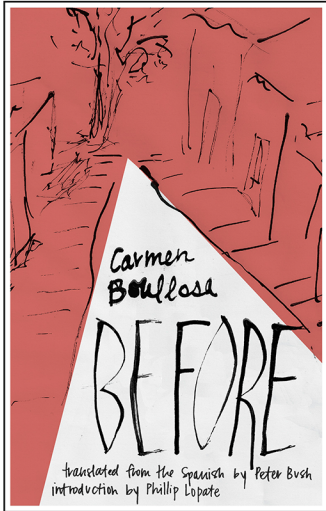


About the Book



By Carmen Boullosa | Translated by Peter Bush
120pp | \$14.95 US
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A profound and moving coming-of-age novel that explores the end of one woman's innocence in childhood.

Originally published in 1989 as renowned poet Carmen Boullosa's second novel—though it was the first she ever wrote—*Before* tells the story of a woman who returns to the landscape of her childhood to rebuild her past and regain her innocence, knowing that in order for her to discover her lost identity, she must overcome the fear that held her captive as a little girl.

Part ghost story, part bildungsroman, *Before* is a moving exploration of the path to womanhood and innocence lost that won Boullosa the Xavier Villaurrutia Prize, Mexico's most prestigious literary award, marking the arrival of a brave and unique new literary voice in Mexican literature who has gone on to dazzle the world with her inventive and profound storytelling in bestselling, award-winning novels such as *Texas: The Great Theft*, *Heavens on Earth*, and *Cleopatra Dismounts*.

Discussion Questions

1. This story is described as a “ghost story”, and the narrator herself makes the claim that she is a ghost. Why do you think Boullosa wrote the story through this perspective? What could the narrator “being a ghost” symbolize?
2. The novel explores the relationship between our narrator and her mother figure, who for most of the book she calls “Esther.” Why do you think the narrator holds Esther at such a distance, and what do you make of her description of being born and the disconnect with which she talks of the development of their relationship? How is this different from her relationship with her father, who she has no problem calling “Dad”?
3. Throughout the book, the narrator is menaced by footsteps and terrifying noises whenever she tries to fall asleep, and is only able to fend off the sounds by surrounding her bed with pebbles she collects. What do you think the footsteps and noises, and the pebbles represent for her?
4. Discuss how grief is dealt with throughout the book, and how it manifests in our narrator and how other members of the narrator's family appear to deal with their grief. How does the narrator's grief change the way she sees the world?
5. How does the way the narrator see her sisters change as they grow older? How is this represented in the narrator's language, in the way she describes them?
6. At the end of the book, the narrator recounts a terrifying scene, as she is surrounded by her “pursuers” and discovers she is bleeding. She believes it is because she “dreamed no more,” and then describes this as her death scene. How does this scene represent the major changes happening in the narrator's life?