

# INVISIBLE PUBLISHING

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## READING GUIDE: Bindu Suresh's *26 Knots*

Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing *26 Knots* to read and discuss. What follows are some of the thoughts and themes that went into the writing of it; hopefully they can now serve as a sort of guide.

Love—especially romantic love—was a big preoccupation of mine during the years I wrote this book. How would a certain individual's unique romantic foibles and strengths play off another's? How does one's romantic history—and family history, and even family's romantic history—affect the choices that are made in a relationship? This novel is about what is done with the love that is felt—what do each of the four main characters do with their love, and why? And, over the course of the book, are they changed by it?

While writing this book, I was inspired by the relationships around me, by a comic's off-hand comment in a London club, and by certain novels (notably Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*). What are the echoes of those novels in this one? In which ways is this book different? Can you think of other works that are reflected in *26 Knots*?

The form I employed in this novel—with its short, episodic, poetic-prose scenes—is unusual (but also had its models: *Invisible Cities* by Calvino and *Coming Through Slaughter* by Ondaatje come to mind). How do the novel's form and length affect the story that is told (and that can be told)? Does the form serve the story well, or badly?

The book is set in a beloved city of mine: Montreal. And, while many cities in Canada are multilingual, Montreal is special in the way that Canada's two primary languages, English and French, interact and co-exist. Gabriel speaks English, primarily; Pénélope and Adrien are native francophones, but who speak English well; Araceli speaks Spanish on top of these. Is language ever a barrier in these relationships? On the other hand, are there places where you see it facilitate a meeting, conversations, love? In this novel, how does language aid or prevent love – or does the expression and understanding of love exist as totally apart from love itself?

I hope this guide has been helpful. Thank you again for picking up *26 Knots*!

Yours,  
Bindu Suresh

