



An interview with...

Karen Moline

Interview by Elizabeth Georgiades

'Lunch' is a alluring and compelling story of obsessive love and uncontrollable passion. M is bodyguard to Nick, one of Hollywood's brightest stars, who is witness to Nick's perversity. When Nick meets Olivia his will is challenged for the very first time. Olivia gives in to her dark passion to Nick with devastating results. I spoke to Karen Moline via phone about her first novel.

Me: How did you come to write a book about obsession?

Karen: I had wanted to write about obsession for a long time and didn't know how to tell a story nor did I know how to write fiction because I am a journalist. Back in the middle ages when my partner and I were packaging books, we were working with these two pop stars. They were doing a book and we were putting it together for them. And one of these wanky little jerkoffs said to me 'I want this' and 'I want that on the cover', something that was not physically possible. I said no you can't have this it's physically impossible. Well, the look on his face when I said no; I mean you could have framed it and sold it as a popsicle. I'd never seen anything like that in my life. Didn't even understand the implications of saying no to this person... I wanted to look at why are these people our heroes and what happens with somebody who is undeserving and basically elevated to this position of immense power and fame and you know financial release that no-one can ever say no to them.

Me: Nick, which is the main character certainly seems to reflect this experience. Nick has so much power to do what he wants and commits the most horrific violence against women.

Karen: Part of the point, that I was trying to make was that why, we

the people, and I am just as guilty as anyone writing about these people, why are they our heroes why are they somebody a teenage person would aspire to be and they can be such violent violent disgusting people. But because they are movie stars everyone wants to be them and wants to have a part of them. I'm fed up with all these people who are so unworthy being elevated and it's not just in Hollywood, all around us... one of the queerest ways I could show this is with Nick perpetrating this violence against a total stranger. Girls that just want to have a part of him and why are they so willing.

Me: Olivia is very aware of her attraction to Nick. And I feel that she goes into this relationship with the mind of just getting it over and done with.

Karen: I think love and sex is something you think is going to be simple and you think is something you can control it. I defy any one who can. Olivia is a strong-willed person, equal to Nick's strong will. Nick is not used to being challenged and at first he kind of gives in to her. He doesn't know what to do and when he gets his bearings back, it's always a kind of quest of wills, whose will is going to be on top. It's very fascinating of nature because you can never understand human nature. And Olivia keeps acting out her fear and that is what keeps her going.

Me: I thought it was appropriate that she confide in her female friend.

Karen: I really wanted to do that. I get fed up with these books on obsession where these people act in a vacuum, like they have no friends. Women especially, for guys it's harder to talk, have no problems in confiding and its so important to talk about. And Olivia's friend is just what a friend should be, sympathetic and she doesn't judge.

Me: M, who is the narrator of the story, is not a completely passive character but seems to let Nick get away with a lot of perversities.

Karen: M is the classic enabler. M is a very tragic person. He and Nick are warped beyond imagin-

ing. You hope that there is salvation for them. M doesn't have Nick's physical beauty or grace. It's a very Cyrano kind of situation. The man that you judge by his face is the one with the soul and the man without a soul gets all the glory which is what Hollywood is about in a way. M is the other aspect of personality, always on the outside looking in. He's a keen observer, never going to be a participant... In a way, I hope that people see this as a very moral kind of Greek tragedy where these characters act badly and get punished.

Me: Nick's character and the way he builds the myth around his identity and the way people interact with him seems to be saying something about our current situation, for instance what happened to River Phoenix, and the way we build up certain stars to be our heroes.

Karen: Nick is a self-invented person. Which has something in common with Australia and America, our countries were made from scratch, also by self-invented people. You are very right to mention River Phoenix, here is somebody, who as journalists, we all knew that this guy was smacked out of his tree. You just had to look at him and know he was taking drugs, because physically he had all the symptoms of somebody who was a substance abuser. But nobody ever wrote about it. He would ask journalists not to say that he smoked because he was Mr. whole-food-Greenpeace-don't-wear-leather y'know vegetarian who is smoking three packs of cigarette and is a junkie to boot. And everybody wrote about the clean-green River Phoenix. It is a total tragedy that he had to die like that. But he made a choice, he wanted drugs and he got the drugs he wanted.

M: Apart from your observations of Hollywood and personal experiences, who were your literary influences?

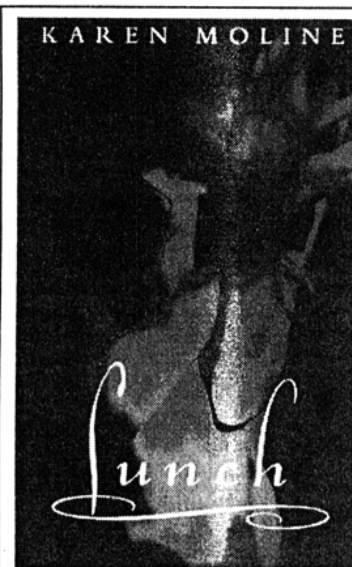
Karen: Angela Carter is a huge influence just because she writes about the magical and the everyday. She's involved in fairytales and myths that interest me very much. Another writer that influences me is American Rachel Ingalls. She has a deadpan style and writes about the horrific as if

its everyday and her stories all have a kind of zinging twist to them in the end. She's not very well known but I think she's a genius. I admire this kind of steadfastness in her writing which is very simple but very evocative at the same time.

Karen Moline has sold 'Lunch' to eight countries, Australia being the first to publish it. 'Lunch' is also considered to be made into a film. In her next book Karen Moline wants to write something that has a large scope, set in a lot of different countries with lots more characters. Something that has less to do with a specific theme such as obsession and more to do with a saga.

Karen Moline is a freelance writer specialising in entertainment and popular culture. Her articles have appeared on a regular basis in nearly every major newspaper in the US, UK, and Australia. She has also provided celebrity interviews for Channel 9 in Australia.

'Lunch' is available at the University Bookshop and all other good bookstores. Published by Pan Macmillan its retail price is \$14.95.



Yes! You too can be the proud owner of your very own copy of "Lunch" if you drop into Semper on Thurs the 26th of May, 1-2pm, with a stocking on your head and propose marriage to the editor of your choice.