

PASSING FOR HUMAN

A Graphic Memoir

By Liana Finck

222 pp. Random House. 2018.

Liana Finck is exceptional, a cartoonist and illustrator whose work first appeared in the *New Yorker* by the end of her twenties. *Passing for Human* is hailed as "a neurological coming-of-age story" in the newer genre graphic memoir. This, her second of three books is big and heavy, immersive yet spare, and written longhand—even the copyright page. The dexterity of its design suits the story: an imaginative, socially awkward girl named Leola (she is expelled from school for "walking on all fours like a dog," 110) tries to find her shadow. Tentative and fearful, Leola narrates and re-narrates her origin story, probable "lineage[s] for my weirdness" (105) and mirrored by *the* origin story (see Genesis 1:1). An architect mother's squelched creative impulse? A physician father's dreamy oddness? Adam and Eve? Jonah or Job? Chapter one is followed by chapter one is followed by . . . ; well, you get the picture. Finck is a talented visual artist and a natural-born storyteller (of course, it helps to have the wider vantage point of an outsider). The tale is sensitive and dramatic, and we are swept away in a gust of concern and delight. Does Leola recover her shadow? Does she see her reflection? I will reveal only that midway, it begins to rain. But there is no flood. With a fine-tipped black pen, Finck draws a puddle and labels it "glitter." —Lisa Thaler, author of *Look Up: The Life and Art of Sacha Kolin*, 24 August 2020