

# New Passengers

“A poised debut brimming with wry humour and tender minimalism... A hybrid between novel and poem.”

– Kizaja Ulrikke Routhe-Mogensen, Politiken

“Tine Høeg writes about the life of the young woman in a distinctly concise form. The text has the look of free verse, but she has used it to elevate everyday realism to something greater and more interesting. It is executed originally and with linguistic precision.”

– Fyens Stiftstidende

“A brilliantly original novel in verse, *New Passengers* tells the story, taut and well-crafted, of a young woman’s disorientation and search for her adult self... In his masterful translation, Misha Hoekstra has captured the complex shifts and nuances of Tine Høeg’s unique poetic style, her sense of timing, and her humor, bringing to English one of Denmark’s most compelling new voices.”

– PEN America

“A tremendously accomplished and stylistically audacious debut.”

– Melfar Posten

“A highly well-turned and deeply humorous tale of leaving behind life as a student and stepping directly into deep water as an adult with all the uncertainties and embarrassing situations it entails. A subject that most recent graduates can relate to – myself included. It is an interesting phase in contemporary life to illuminate, and a terrain that hasn’t been explored very much at all, but Høeg has now laid a remarkable and successful foundation.”

– Anne Skov Thomsen, Nordjyske Stiftstidende

"I devoured Tine Høeg's apple-green, bitter-sweet crush of a novel in a single afternoon... A wonderful, sad yet cheerful debut."

- Linea Maja Ernst, Weekendavisen

"Read it, perhaps on a train, and consider which of your fellow passengers you might just start an affair with."

- Thomas Rude Andersen, LitteraturNu

"A raw, pertinent, and of-its-time debut novel, written in minimalist prose with a fast metre and wonderfully dry humour."

- Helle Regitze Boesen, Litteratursiden

"The kinship with self-aware and succinct text forms cultivated on social media is undeniable."

- Solveig Daugaard, Information

"Elegant and taut."

- Kulturxpressen



# New Passengers

by Tine Høeg

Translated from the Danish  
by Misha Hoekstra

Lolli Editions



*you can't write me  
I'll write you*





# August





\*

I've bought a monthly pass

I've been assigned a new name

a teacher's name

comprised of four letters  
from my first and last names

I've been given the code to the high school network  
which is changed every six months according to the principle

summer16 winter16 summer17 winter17

I've been briefed  
on the systems

it's by chance  
we fall to talking on the train  
my first day of teaching

I'm nervous and our legs  
graze each other  
when we sit down

you're a graphic designer at a travel agency

you're a commuter too

you're ten years older than me

you're married and father to a girl

\*

I look at my reflection in a store window  
at Copenhagen Central Station on Tuesday

I buy two cups of coffee  
and position myself on the escalator

turns out  
you've done the same thing

we board with the cups

I donate mine to two teenagers  
who sit leaning up against each other  
looking tired

they're happy and surprised

blood in my body

a thrumming in my ears  
when the train starts to move

\*

the first time I see you naked:

train toilet

someplace between Copenhagen and Næstved

I've never wanted

someone this way before

\*

feels as if I've got a fever

the students resemble each other

have the same names

skinny legs big sneakers

four classes of Danish  
one as homeroom teacher

homeroom teacher

the classrooms are hot

a smell of sweat  
perfume

pasta and tuna  
from the boys' plastic tubs

they eat during class

I can't recognize my voice  
when I stand at my desk and talk

the students' eyes

I scratch at my cheek

each group must bring a set of camping cookware

my colleague STAR has interrupted my teaching  
to talk about the intro trip

he teaches Danish and history  
and walks around in a T-shirt with the legend:

moral beacon

his beard thick and well trimmed

I wonder if he's ever felt the way  
I feel now

it *is* tough at the start says EMO

she teaches drama and painting

but after three four years it becomes more manageable

hundreds of peacock eyes  
stare at me from her skirt

hi Mom  
written in marker

winter is coming  
written in ballpoint

I'm out on the toilet  
every lunch hour with my coffee

I gaze at the graffiti

hearts stars

an alien

where do you go during lunch?

EMO passes me in the coatroom on Friday  
and drags me to the cafeteria

high ceiling and hubbub

the teachers sitting together

special of the day on plastic trays

STAR talks loudly and shovels it in

something Asian

also a salad bar for tossing something together

five kinds of dressing in tubes

you grab me a napkin?

I tell you the last period yesterday

are the tomatoes from your greenhouse?

BROM pours crab salad onto a slice of black rye

her husband owns a fish restaurant



LUST teaches math and physics

she taps an egg against the table

EMO asks are they your own?

I say nothing

I glance at their mouths  
and out the window:

the parking lot and the vast Bilka

STAR says something funny and everyone laughs

I sit with the stem from a pear

you twist the top off a cola

you unpack a sandwich  
from some tinfoil  
some three miles from here

my pulse quickens with the thought

your hands around the bread

a small trail of spit from your mouth  
when you take a bite

\*

the second time I see you naked:

between bushes in a park

we got out in Ringsted

I'm off early

you told them at the agency  
that you had a meeting

your body is softer  
than the bodies I'm used to but

your cock's incredibly hard

you draw my finger  
down across your face  
and take it into your mouth

August begins to glow

you've got broad hands

dirty nails

you open your eyes wide when we kiss

as if you're surprised to see me

you have a tattoo  
on the inside of your upper arm

a small wreath with a name inside

what's it say? I ask  
turning your arm

Evy you say

that's my daughter

I sketched it myself

both of us are startled  
to find me bending down

to kiss the tattoo

\*

the third time I see you naked

I get a gash on my forehead  
from a barbwire fence

when we squeeze into a shed  
for storing yard waste

then it rains

semen blood summer drizzle

\*

what did you do to your forehead?

get out your readings I say

my homeroom students ask lots of questions:

do you have any kids?

are you married?

where do you live?

you go out on the town?

have you got a boyfriend?

I say:

I live in Amager

the students have clandestine conversations  
on Facebook during class

suddenly they all smile at the same time

I don't know if it's because of me

something I've said

my clothes

a gob of spit flies from my mouth  
as I stand by my desk and discuss

the essay genre

I pretend to ignore it  
and keep talking

while I replay in my head  
the gob in slo-mo

\*

students aren't permitted in here

the janitor stands in the door to the copy room

I'm a teacher I say  
and show him my ID

he looks at it for a long time

remember to clean up after yourself he says

\*

I distribute welcome leaflets to the parents

they sit at the student desks

the students sit in the windowsills

there's cake and coffee  
if you're into that sort of thing

STAR makes a sweeping gesture

he's like a fish in water

he's thirty-five and wearing a tweed jacket

it gives me authority he laughed  
when we were fetching the extra chairs

I explain about the book depot

the smoking policy

Danish class

when the parents ask questions  
they only look at STAR

he explains about student counseling

the intro trip

the assignment oasis



or more colloquially:

the homework dungeon

the parents laugh

he moves on to the class trip

we'll go in November

the Colosseum

the food

the Roman metro

the eyes

the noses

the various ways of sitting

I try to figure out how students  
and parents fit together

I try to understand that the students  
are somebody's kids

\*

can you grab me those hearts?

my sister futzes with the glue stick

she lives in Valby

she goes to med school  
and is a year and a half younger

how far have you got with the names?

we're getting there I say

the place cards are for November

Thomas is a chef

he put the ring in a pastry shell

do you want mother of the bride and father of the bride  
or just their names? I ask

no damn idea

Thomas! she yells out to the kitchen

no their names she says then

never mind! she yells

and peels the plastic from a gold marker

well how's it going with the teaching?

she asks without glancing up

she puts the cap back on the marker  
sets the paper down and cocks her head  
like when she was a girl

I think it's hard I say

sometimes I just can't understand  
how it happened

what?

that I'm somebody's teacher

she looks up and laughs

I'm not trying to be funny I say

don't you feel that way  
about being somebody's doctor?

nah she says

that's just the way it is

hey what did you do to your forehead?

she leans in across the table

I push my chair back

I biked into a branch on the way to Central Station

want me to look at it?

no it's fine

I rearrange the bangs over my brow

apple cider and cookies says Thomas  
stepping into the living room with a tray

he bows deep before us

from Discovery cultivars

unfiltered

thanks I say and take a glass

how goes with the commute? he asks

well it's actually not too bad

\*

your hand

in a square of light

the sun casts through the train window

\*

it was right there

you point out the window

her name was Martha

we're someplace in Høje-Taastrup

once you wrote  
the name of your high school girlfriend

in graffiti along the tracks

of course it was painted over long ago you say

but I always look anyway

I leaf through your sketchbook  
while you're in the toilet

I write my name  
on one of the pages with your pencil  
and rub it out again