
NOSOTROS LOS NO-ESCRITORES (We, the would-be writers)

Author: Lorena Chanes

Genre: Novel

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Reader: Margaret Jull Costa

Jorge is a would-be writer, who travels from Seville to Barcelona, hoping to become a real writer. In a bar, he happens to meet a real writer, Mario Sala, who confides in him about the one-night stand he has just had with someone he refers to as 'the most beautiful woman in the world'. The woman, alas, stole his laptop, on the hard disk of which was the one copy of his latest novel. He is less concerned about this, however, than about finding the woman again.

Carol, the woman in question, is Canadian and scrapes a living selling stolen items to Mosca, a fence and trafficker of exotic animals (they sit in their cages in his back yard). Carol checks out the files on the computer and copies the most interesting-looking file onto a CD, before passing the laptop on to Mosca.

Mario's way out of writer's block or mental distress is usually to take a train out of Barcelona along the coast to get a glimpse of the sea and to linger briefly on the beach. On his way back from one such outing, he sees Carol. He beams with delight, and she takes flight. He pursues her down into the Metro and out into the street, where they both finally collapse onto a bench. They talk and soon feel like old friends. No mention is made of the laptop. Mario is in love, and Carol is almost in love (she also has an on-off relationship with Mosca). One day, she goes to see Mario unannounced. He has gone off on one of his train trips, and she meets his friend and neighbour, Jose, and they start a 'kind-of' relationship too.

Jorge makes friends with two other would-be writers, Inés and Andreu (self-proclaimed Kafka for the 21st century). Inés introduces Jorge and Andreu to the Professor (with whom she is having an affair), and under his tutelage, they do actually start to write, although Jorge's novel is more in his head than on paper.

Carol suddenly feels that she must choose between the three men in her life, but unable to make that choice, she leaves.

Shortly after Carol's disappearance, Jorge finds that the novel he is writing in his head comes to a halt. He wonders if it is perhaps wrong to write a novel based on other people's lives and conversations. Even though he knows Mario has lost the woman he loves, he goes to see him at his apartment not in order to console him, but to try and sort out whether a writer is justified in having feelings of remorse. He finds Mario sitting in the dark, gingerly holding a CD as if it were some highly dangerous object. Jorge doesn't ask how Mario is feeling, instead, he talks about his own book and complains that he can get no further with it until reality moves on. Jorge decides that his time in Barcelona is over and he returns to Seville.

A few days later, the police surround Mosca's house in the night, but when they break down the door, they find no one there, apart from a lot of dead animals in their cages and a hanged man.

Despite the grim ending, this is a very playful little book about the teeming world and arrant egotism of would-be writers. This combines with an equally intriguing love quadrangle (for want of a better word). What we are reading, we realise at the end, is Jorge's novel, woven out of chance encounters with other people who then become his characters.

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