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The Last Lover (The Margellos World Republic Of Letters)



Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 Best Translated Book Award for fiction, presented by Three Percent, a resource for international literature. In Can Xue's extraordinary book, we encounter a full assemblage of husbands, wives, and lovers. Entwined in complicated, often tortuous relationships, these characters step into each other's fantasies, carrying on conversations that are forever guessing games. Their journeys reveal the deepest realms of human desire, figured in Can Xue's vision of snakes and wasps, crows, cats, mice, earthquakes, and landslides. In dive bars and twisted city streets, on deserts and snowcapped mountains, the author creates an extreme world where every character is driving death away with a singular performance. Who is the last lover? The novel is bursting with vividly drawn characters. Among them are Joe, sales manager of a clothing company in an unnamed Western country, and his wife, Maria, who conducts mystical experiments with the household's cats and rosebushes. Joe's customer Reagan is having an affair with Ida, a worker at his rubber plantation, while clothing-store owner Vincent runs away from his wife in pursuit of a woman in black who disappears over and over again. By the novel's end, we have accompanied these characters on a long march, a naive, helpless, and forsaken search for love, because there are just some things that can't be stopped or helped.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Last Lover is written by Can Xue (pen name for Deng Xiaohua), and translated from Chinese into English by Annelise Finegan Wasmoen. If Quentin Tarentino was living in a Vanilla Sky-esque

world in the middle of a Twilight Zone episode and writing in traditional Chinese metaphors, this book would be the result. This has to be the strangest book I have ever read. Having a little bit of background in Chinese culture, I was able to understand some of the writing stance of the author. Many Chinese stories are told through metaphors (much like reading Aesop's fables). In the Last Lover, we follow along the journeys of the characters Joe: a worker at a clothing factory and separately his wife Maria. Vincent: the owner of the clothing factory and separately his wife Lisa from the gambling city. Reagan: the owner of a Rubber Tree plantation who buys his uniforms from the clothing factory and briefly his sometimes mistress, Ida. Each of these characters is on their own journey through their thoughts and every single one of them has trouble telling reality from the created worlds within their minds. There is a blending of realities between characters as they each feature at some point or another within the "reality" of the other characters. Can Xue has also created many other interesting characters along the way. I can't really say that this is a "good" book, but I can't very well rate it below 3 stars. If nothing else, the creativity and originality of the Last Lover is beyond comparison. Can Xue paints beautiful descriptions of the people (when relevant) and their locations. She does an amazing job of making you constantly question reality, just as each character does themselves.

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