La forastera
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3.La forastera (The Outsider)

La Forastera is a complex unpicking of family relationships confused by generations of lies and secrecy. It is also a portrait of life in a small rural community populated by an aging gang of misfits.

The book opens with the discovery of a body: Angela finds wealthy landowner Julian Jaldon hanging from a walnut tree, on the same date his father committed suicide by the same means. Julian leaves behind twin sisters, who return to the village with a plan to turn the whole place into a tourist attraction. He also leaves behind the caretaker of the property, Dionisio. The two were in a secret relationship (known only to Angela and Ibrahima), but the twins throw Dionisio off the Las Breñas property along with all the other workers. A few days after his dismissal, Dionisio bursts into the house as the twins are having breakfast and shoots himself with a rifle. This sparks Angela's ultimate act, to revenge him as well as herself. She packs one small bag and leaves town, after burning both her own home and Las Breñas to the ground.

La Forastera is reminiscent of the Inspector Montalbano mysteries, with its remote setting, touch of humour and its collection of eccentric characters, usually identified by their job or nickname, who congregate in Tomas' bar on a Sunday night to drink and swap stories.

La Forastera is a perfect candidate for translation. The arid, rural setting of southern Spain and Angela's memories of 1980s London provide an obvious contrast between the foreign and the familiar which appeals to UK readers. The book combines mystery, nature, humanity and revenge, with a hint of magic. It is at once a family saga, a murder mystery, and a journey of self-discovery. It has something for everyone.

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