Azaría
Author:
Anabel Rodríguez
Reader:
Suky Taylor

Azaría is the name of a village in rural Spain, and the story of a young woman in the 1920s, living during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. In Anabel Rodriguez's first novel, the village is a peaceful backwater that is suddenly shattered with a double murder and the disturbing events that follow.

When Inés hears strange screams one night her family persuade her it was nothing, but the village awakens the next day to a horrifying murder scene, and her guilt at not acting drives Inés to become involved in trying to solve the crime. A man is quickly arrested by the Guardia Civil, but Inés suspects the so-called evidence against him is not compelling, and sets about finding his alibi to prove his innocence. However, when the man is released, badly beaten and tortured by the police in an attempt to make him confess, the villagers revolt in fury, resulting in rioting and more injuries.

…The relationship that develops between Inés and the inspector as they work on the case, and the customs they have to observe in order for them to even meet together without creating a scandal in the village, are subtly explored while the author develops the murder investigation into an intriguing search for the truth… a well-written plot with plenty of unexpected directions and a sense of building tension as Inés becomes further tangled up in the mystery.

…The most notable aspect of Rodríguez's writing is its apparent calm movement through the story, while hitting the reader with some truly shocking situations. She manages to blend a shrewd social commentary with a gripping mystery, with clever character development, and with a pleasant read.

…In this way, the book could not only be marketed in Britain as an enjoyable read, but also as a fascinating dip into Spanish history that will be completely new to most readers.

From the readers report by .