La Perla de Sanzio
Author:
Juan Ramón Barat
Reader:
Isabelle Kaufeler

La perla de Sanzio (Raphael's Pearl)

Fifteen-year-old Andrés is devastated when the body of his father, a highly esteemed policeman with an illustrious career is found in the swimming pool of the Hotel Birmania (Burma). The autopsy concludes that he died of a heart attack following an overdose of barbiturates, but there is no obvious explanation for why he was at the hotel in Castellón, up the coast from his home in Valencia, and no reason to suspect suicide. Given the dangerous nature of his caseload, his close friend and colleague, Chief Inspector Germán Trujillo, embarks on a murder investigation.

Andrés returns to school when term begins in September but struggles with his own grief, his mother's grief and depression and the presence of his well-meaning but annoying uncle and aunt who have come to stay and support them…

When attempting a research project for school Andrés is forced to use his father's old laptop and discovers it contains several files that appear to be in a strange, unintelligible code. Frustrated by the apparent lack of progress in Trujillo's police investigation, he enlists the help of Laura, who turns out to be a computer whizz, and they manage to crack the code.

La Perla de Sanzio is an action-packed and gripping read. Barat draws the reader straight in with the discovery of the body of Andrés's father is discovered and maintains a rapid, but not rushed, pace throughout. The main plotline focuses on Andrés' search for his father's killer(s), but his long-term friendship with Franky and burgeoning friendship with Laura, his grief and his relationships with his family provide subplots that blend in well with the main storyline while providing context and a counterbalance of realism and mundane teenage life that prevent the more imaginative aspects of the story from seeming too far-fetched.

La Perla de Sanzio is a highly suitable candidate for translation and ought to travel well to the UK.

From the reader's report by .