Los elegidos
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The novel *Los elegidos [The Chosen Ones]* was published under the Destino imprint of the Planeta publishing house in spring 2023. The author, Fernando López, was born in Barcelona, Spain in 1977.

López is already the author of over 40 published works, including adult novels, books for adolescent readers, plays, and even two light-hearted non-fiction guides for surviving high school. The author is the recipient of several literary awards, and one of his novels, *La edad de la ira [The age of fury]* was released as a limited television series in 2022.

Los elegidos is set in Spain during the years following the Civil War. The themes are strongly interwoven and reach out to readers of many backgrounds. The main characters are Asun, a cisgender woman, and Santos, a homosexual man. They are married, and they work together inside a clandestine anti-dictatorship cell. Their job within the cell is recruitment. The lives of the two young adults are most tightly connected by the literature they love, the vehicle by which they express their respect and their love for each other.

The descriptions of life under the Franco dictatorship are clear and harsh. Choosing any type of lifestyle or viewpoint in opposition to the government was unacceptable in the Spain of the 1950s, and the marriage of Asun and Santos is planned for the purpose of protecting him and allowing him to continue his political activities. Asun’s own father had been imprisoned for his political views, and he never returned. His family never even received his body. To help her mother, Asun earns money singing *coplas*, a traditional type of Spanish ballad, and in the bar where she works, she is constantly obliged to protect herself in rough situations. This is where she meets Santos.

Once Asun and Santos are married, the novel follows their shared experiences living in a society that is dangerous, one where government sympathizers frequently denounce others, with deadly result. The story is solid, and it pulls the reader into its world. The dialogue is impeccable, clear, and rich.

Nando López spent seven years writing this novel, and his attention to detail, both in historical details and in character development and story, is evident on every page. The text is dense yet contains nothing superfluous.

The tension caused by the dangers faced by Asun and Santos keeps the story moving forward, yet the novel never simply skims the surface. The reader has the impression of being deep in the world of the characters, and narrative details are far more than cursory plot tools. Each portion of the story moves the reader both forward in the events described and deeper into the society in which the characters live.

This novel fully deserves translation into English. An English-speaking audience would benefit from a short additional introduction to provide basic historical context, and there are a few names of organizations and points of historical fact that could be briefly glossed within the text.

The themes of sexual freedom and the fight for political and social freedom are, of course, universal and not at all limited to the problems of mid-20th century Spain. The characters are all drawn with such clarity and truthfulness that a reader from any time and place would be able to identify people like these characters in any society suffering under political and social repression. A U.S. audience might benefit from a short introduction to provide basic historical context, and there are a few names of organizations and points of historical fact that could be briefly glossed within the text.

The handling of sexuality in the novel is open and blunt, and the themes and struggles will resonate strongly with adults. This novel might not be appropriate for young readers, as the author himself has indicated during an interview. In any case, the extratextual references to classic works of literature and the novel's overall quality make it most appropriate for adults who love life, who respect danger and hard choices, who love others, who value diversity and freedom, and particularly, those who value the power of good literature.

Los elegidos is a superb example of the best in contemporary Spanish literature.