Cien Noches
Author:
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Reader's name:
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Cien Noches [One Hundred Nights] is a novel with the feel of noir fiction and erotica. The story follows the protagonist, Irene, an exceedingly beautiful, upper class psychology student from Madrid with an insatiable libido, who lives in Chicago for graduate school. Her academic interests lie mostly in psychological pathologies and sexual behavior of all kinds.

Even though Irene has frequent sexual relations with many men, two are the loves of her life. One is an Argentine guitar player, Claudio and the other an immensely wealthy New York business Magnate, Adam Galiger. Claudio is her boyfriend, who Irene loves deeply. Irene and Adam meet by chance in a bar and begin a sexual relationship so alluring that they meet for sex whenever they happen to be in the same city. In spite of the ongoing affair Adam is in love with his wife and Irene with Claudio. Their relationship illustrates Irene's belief that sex and love may exist independently.

Adam is so fascinated by the idea that human beings must have multiple sex partners that he commissions a multi-million dollar project for the purpose of discovering if his hypothesis is correct. It seems that the purpose of this study may also be to justify his own infidelity. For the project, an army of private eyes tap phone lines, hack computers and spy on thousands of unsuspecting individuals to provide evidence of their unfaithfulness to their patron. The files they create on these people and their infidelities are interspersed throughout the narrative.

The author maintains great tension throughout the novel, making it hard to put down. The tension reaches a crescendo in the latter stages of the novel in which we discover that just when Claudio is poised to achieve success as a guitarist, Irene discovers that he has gambled away all their money and is being pursued by thugs seeking repayment. Irene takes it upon herself to contact the loan shark, who is demanding money and threatening Claudio with imminent harm. Irene, being sexually uninhibited, performs oral sex on him in exchange for buying time for Claudio and then goes to work clandestinely as a prostitute in a brothel to try to pay off the debt.

We also discover that Claudio's father, who was a prominent Peronist in Argentina, was forced to flee to the U.S. where he is still pursued by Argentine hitmen. This forces Claudio and his family to go into hiding in a small city in the southeast while Irene summers in Madrid. When Claudio and Irene eventually reunite in Chicago their bliss is short-lived as Irene, realizing that Claudio is still gambling, leaves him the night in which Claudio is shot and killed in his bed by a sophisticated gunman. Since the police show little interest in solving the crime, Irene is determined to find out if the culprits were the loan sharks, an Argentine death squad or someone else.

Irene discovers that Claudio's was suffering from terminal cancer and he would die in agony in a very short period of time. Given that there was no forced entry to the apartment and Claudio was

killed while he slept, Irene concludes that, shockingly, the mastermind of his demise was his mother, who knowing that his death would be hideous, hired professional killers, providing them the apartment key, to kill him painlessly in his sleep.

Luisgé Martín is the author of many novels and short stories. One recurrent theme in his works, that is manifest in Cien Noches, is that of impossible love that leads towards destruction.

The backbone of the entire narration is Irene's life. There are several ancillary plotlines that include her friend Adela and Claudio's family but all are directly related to Irene with the exception of the private investigators' files. The well-written, believable dialogue is woven into the story in a seamless manner.

The story is a blend of noir, crime and erotic literature. The concepts of love and sex being often unlinked in Cien Noches was also expressed extensively in Milan Kundera's The Unbearable Lightness of Being.

The subject matter is totally engaging and quite unpredictable. The skillfully written sexual content is not in any way gratuitous but is essential and intriguing. The revelation that the mother orchestrated the murder of her son takes the reader completely by surprise.

I believe that this novel should be translated to English because it will be well-received in the U.S. The settings and references are well-known and relevant to contemporary American life.