



Nobody's Sleeping

Author:

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ON A SCALE FROM 1 - 10 (10 being the highest score) how would you rate this book?9+

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The author is a Galician academic, theater critic, and award-winning translator is also an active feminist who often participates in demonstrations. Her debut novel, *Cardume* (2007) received the prestigious Xerais prize of Galician letters. This is Xina Vega's third fiction publication. Although referred to as a novel, to my mind *Nadie duerme* fits uncomfortably in the category of novel: too brief and lacking in any character development it works as a novella, a long short story, or even the basis for a film script. No matter. It is an intense and relentlessly brutal text that does not blink in presenting the harsh realities of human relations, specifically distilled down to sex and the power structures that govern it, from gender, race, age, nationality, class. Needless to say that young white men always have the upper hand. The basic premise of five characters who coincide one night in an isolated hotel on the side of a highway might seem the basis for a cheap joke but the author manages to weave a powerful sequence of vignettes around them. The characters are not named as they are types: the mature married woman with children who has just had an abortion, an aging rejected male suitor, an African immigrant man looking for a better future, a sexually abused runaway teenager, a lonely and horny travelling salesman. The title comes from García Lorca's *Poet in New York* and anticipates the nightmarish atmosphere of the text. Instead of Lorca's surrealism, Vega opts for what has been termed "dirty realism". There is no softening or retouching the grim reality here as the author probes some very dark corners of our human condition. Vega's is a very original voice, eloquent and dazzling. She conjures some extraordinary images that make us see something so basic and common as sex and power struggles in a new--albeit thoroughly degraded--light. *Nadie duerme* has been called a primal scream. It certainly packs a huge and gruesome emotional punch. The final image is unforgettable.

The text has received rave reviews online (4 out of 5 stars) and is already in Princeton's library collection. I recommend it for translation (and offer to do it myself!). The theme is, of course, universal, timeless, and relevant to most Western cultures today. I can see *Nadie duerme* being used in various college courses, particularly gender studies. The fact that it is so short and can be read in one sitting (if one can stand the unremitting tension) is a big plus in today's market.