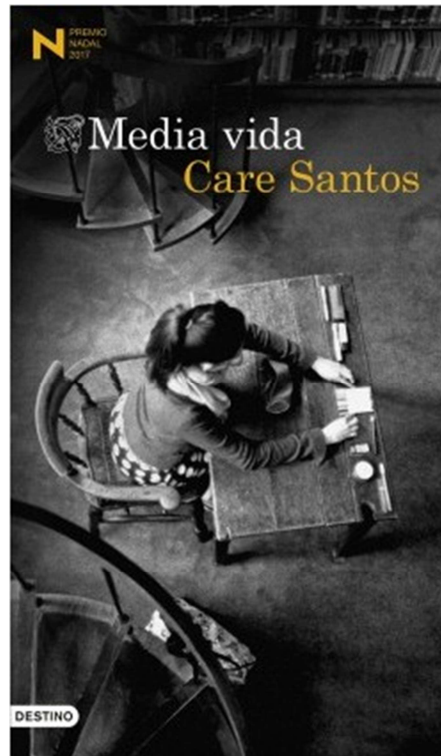


MEDIA VIDA

Winning novel of the 2017 Nadal Literary Award



Publishing date in Spain: February 8, 2017

421 pages

LONG STORYLINE SUMMARY

(with spoilers)

I.1950

THE GAME OF THE GARMENTS

Five 14-year-old girls play «Truth or Dare» in their shared room of a convent school. We're in 1950 and they are Nina, Julia, Lola and the twin sisters Olga and Marta, for whom is the last

night in the school. Olga is the master of ceremonies. The game is about giving a valuable object as a garment and get it back by following the master of ceremonies' orders. Tonight's game is dangerous, announces Olga: they must go down to the room next to the woodshed, where Vicente sleeps, a 19-year-old boy affected by a psychic disability, and cut him a lock of hair. The friends do the test, scared, with different degrees of success. When it's Julia's turn to do it, the game turns into a nightmare: Julia doesn't come back. They hear screaming, hitting and panting. The nuns get out, alerted, from their rooms. Vicente has raped Julia. The nuns decide to expel immediately the girl and imprison the disabled boy.

II. 1981

WHITE MONOPOLE

In this part we meet again with the 5 protagonists of the previous scene, 31 years later. We're now in 1981, it's been six years since the Franco dictatorship ended and the Divorce Law has just been approved. The action of the rest of the novel happens on July 29th, the same day that Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer got married. Throughout the plot there will be several references to the televised broadcast of this wedding.

Olga

The action begins when Olga discovers a hidden telephone in a wardrobe of the family home, in which she has just moved. Through this phone she can spy on the conversations of her twin sister, Marta, who has inherited an old store in the ground floor that she's going to turn into a restaurant. Olga is now the wife of a dermatologist. She has a boring life, dedicated to the care of her husband (always absent) and her kids, already adults. It's her who comes up with the idea of arranging a dinner with her old colleagues from the convent school. She locates them, sends the invites. She talks about it with her sister, with whom she has a horrible relationship. Olga is completely sure that Julia will attend, although her sister doubts it. It seems she's the only one who ignores the gravity of what happened in the past and the consequences that those facts may have had in the present. Maybe because she wants to ignore them, she starts to discover herself. Thanks to her dedication, Olga manages to pull off her plan and have the dinner of the 5 friends in Marta's new restaurant, called 'Media Vida'. In this first part, it is also explained her family's history: the recent wedding of her mother with a Franco supporter to avoid facing bankruptcy.

Marta

After being abandoned by her husband Álex the very same evening of the dinner, Marta decides to cancel the meeting. She explains this to her sister, but Olga doesn't want to listen to her. She insists in keeping the commitment. Only one call of Julia's secretary confirming Julia's attendance will get Marta not to cancel the plans. Olga and Marta talk about Álex. It is stated her bad relationship, Olga's interest in meddling into her life since forever and the story of how she became a famous cook thanks to the cooking consultancy in which she's involved. Despite everything, Marta is not a satisfied woman. Only the project of the restaurant, brand-new, makes her feel accomplished. The rest of her life has disappointed her.

Lola

Her life, she says so herself, has been slow. She fell in love with a man when she was still a teenager, but she couldn't have him until several decades later. Now that man is dead, she's pregnant and about to give birth, and she has just fallen in love with her step-son Andrés, a 19-year-old boy that she loves without daring to admit it. At the same time, she has received a letter of a former old flame that wants to resume their relationship. She has decided to accept him only to escape her guilt. She attends the dinner after going to the postbox to send her answer. She's convinced that this will change her life.

Nina

She arrives late to the restaurant, bragging of having spent the evening in bed with a new lover. Little by little it will be evident the messy love life that she has had throughout her life since she got pregnant when she was seventeen and was kicked out from home. Episodes of her life are told here: her involvement as a producer in the Barcelona concert of The Beatles –a milestone in the Spain of the dictatorship– or her return to Barcelona after her parents' death. There are also details of her life: separated, she's looking forward to getting divorced thanks to the new law; has two kids, is a grandma, and her new boyfriend is a married man.

Julia

The one that has suffered the biggest development. She was an orphan, raised out of pity by the nuns. Now she's a congresswoman and has a PHD in Law. We follow Julia since she arrives to Barcelona with her secretary. She goes to the radio, where she has an interview about the new Divorce Law (which she has written). Then she goes home, a humble flat in a neighborhood from the outskirts, where she meets again with an old friend, Ramona, who she met in prison

and who is responsible for her being a politician. In the afternoon, she visits Vicente in the psychiatric center where he's hospitalized (thanks to her, because she's the one paying its fees). Once the visit is over, while it's pouring down in Barcelona, Julia goes to the dinner with her friends in the Media Vida restaurant. She wonders why she wants to see them, after that cruel game scarred her life severely 30 years ago. But she'll never get to the restaurant: she suffers an accident when she's a few meters away.

TENEBRISM

There is a power cut and the four friends remain in the restaurant, candlelit, like when they were kids. They have had too much for dinner and Lola dares to suggest the same game from their childhood. They each give a garment. The rules are established: one of them will ask a question as intimate as possible. The others must answer it.

Throughout the answers, the differences among them are more and more evident. Also their privacy, as well as the big reveals, are out in the open: Marta discovers that Nina's lover is, in fact, Álex, her husband. Lola sees her decision questioned. Olga starts to suspect the absurdity of her life. Nina realizes little by little that her new lover and Marta's husband is the same person.

In this part the action weaves through the dialogue. The intimacy that the four women share not only points out the differences between them, but also defines the place that each one of them occupies in the map of a society still traditional but changing.

The meeting must be interrupted suddenly when Lola goes into labor and they have to accompany her to the clinic to give birth.

EMBROIDERY SCISSORS

In the clinic where Lola is going to give birth to her daughter, the five friends finally meet. Julia has been taken there after the accident and Ramona takes as her role to be the connection among them. The reunion takes place in Julia's room, where the future of her relationship starts to come into view and where Olga finally apologizes to Julia for what she did to her.

THEMES

- Forgiveness: its need, its meaning. Can the unforgivable be forgiven?
- Guilt and its influence in our lives.

- The passing of time in people's character and in its relationships with others.
- The transition between the dictatorship and the democracy in the Spain of the 80s.
- A tribute to the women born in the 30s.

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