



The Last Summer of the Death Warriors

By Francisco Stork, Francisco X. Stork

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When Pancho arrives at St. Anthony's Home, he knows his time there will be short: If his plans succeed, he'll soon be arrested for the murder of his sister's killer. But then he's assigned to help D.Q., whose brain cancer has slowed neither his spirit nor his mouth. D.Q. tells Pancho all about his "Death Warrior's Manifesto," which will help him to live out his last days fully--ideally, he says, with the love of the beautiful Marisol. As Pancho tracks down his sister's murderer, he finds himself falling under the influence of D.Q. and Marisol, who is everything D.Q. said she would be; and he is inexorably drawn to a decision: to honor his sister and her death, or embrace the way of the Death Warrior and choose life.

Nuanced in its characters and surprising in its plot developments--both soulful and funny--*Last Summer* is a buddy novel of the highest kind: the story of a friendship that helps two young men become all they can be.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up—Orphaned Pancho's 20-year-old mentally disabled sister is found dead in a New Mexico motel room. He meets D.Q., dying of a rare cancer, at a home for boys. D.Q.'s mother, Helen, forces him to undergo experimental chemotherapy, despite the gruesome side effects. Pancho cares for D.Q. during his stay at a Ronald McDonald-type residence. The one bright spot is Marisol, who works there. D.Q. knows that Pancho plans to find and destroy Rosa's killer. He tries to teach his new friend the way of the Death Warrior: only when you love do you truly live. Though Pancho plots the murder methodically, his plan is never believable. This derails the novel considerably and cancels any mystery that might have quickened the pace of the story. However, the New Mexico landscape is vivid and the author explores Anglo/Mexican relations subtly. Stork's characterizations are solid, from D.Q.'s probing intensity to Pancho's silent rage. Female characters are vivid as well, from Helen's passive aggression to Marisol, who displays a soulful intelligence. The narrative is dialogue heavy, but even philosophical conversations between steely Pancho and effusive D.Q. are natural, and often funny.—*Johanna Lewis, New York Public Library*

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From Booklist

Starred Review Though the police say that his sister, Rosa, died of natural causes, 17-year-old Pancho Sanchez is convinced she was murdered, and he is looking to exact revenge. With no surviving family (his mother died when he was five, and his father only three months before Rosa), Pancho is placed in an orphanage in Las Cruces, where he meets D.Q., a boy who is dying from a rare form of brain cancer. D.Q. is not just determined to find a cure, he's also equally set on training Pancho to become what he calls a "Death Warrior." Together, the unlikely companions embark on a quest to Albuquerque (Stork acknowledges echoes of Don Quixote here), and though they travel for their own reasons, once arrived, each will have to come to terms with what it might actually mean to be a Death Warrior. Stork (Marcelo in the Real World, 2008) has written another ambitious portrait of a complex teen, one that investigates the large considerations of life and death, love and hate, and faith and doubt. Though the writing occasionally tends toward the didactic, this novel, in the way of the best literary fiction, is an invitation to careful reading that rewards serious analysis and discussion. Thoughtful readers will be delighted by both the challenge and Stork's respect for their abilities. Grades 8-12. --Michael Cart

Review

"[An] openhearted, sapient novel about finding authentic faith and choosing higher love."-- *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"Stork's latest marks him as one of the most promising young adult authors of the new decade." -- *The Horn Book*, starred review

"Complicated yet ultimately endearing characters are a Francisco Stork standard. His latest novel doesn't disappoint." -- *Chicago Sun-Times*

"An intricate, engaging story, with the occasional parallel to *Don Quixote*." -- *The Denver Post*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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