



Swift as Desire: A Novel

By Laura Esquivel

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Swift as Desire: A Novel By Laura Esquivel

Instead of entering the world crying like other babies, Júbilo was born with a smile on his face. He had a gift for hearing what was in people's hearts, for listening to sand dunes sing and insects whisper. Even as a young boy, acting as an interpreter between his warring Mayan grandmother and his Spanish-speaking mother, he would translate words of spite into words of respect, so that their mutual hatred turned to love. When he grew up, he put his gift to good use in his job as a humble telegraph operator.

But now the telegraph lies abandoned, obsolete as a form of communication in the electronic age, and don Júbilo is on his deathbed, mute and estranged from his beloved wife, Lucha, who refuses to speak to him. What tragic event has come between two such sensuous, loving people to cause their seemingly irreparable rift? What mystery lies behind the death of the son no one ever mentions? Can their daughter bring reconciliation to her parents before it is too late, by acting as an interpreter between them, just as Júbilo used to do for other people?

Swift as Desire is Laura Esquivel's loving tribute to her father, who worked his own lifelong magic as a telegraph operator. In this enchanting, bittersweet story, touched with graphic earthiness and wit, she shows us how keeping secrets will always lead to unhappiness, and how communication is the key to love.

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Swift as Desire: A Novel By Laura Esquivel Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #7673214 in Books
- Published on: 2001-09-11
- Released on: 2001-09-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .85" h x 5.58" w x 7.64" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 208 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Laura Esquivel's *Swift as Desire*, an enchanting and sensuous romance, reflects upon an undying love and the will to overcome an unspeakable tragedy. As in her bestselling novel *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Swift as Desire* is rich with metaphor, coated with magic, and very much about the power of desire. Júbilo, a telegraph operator blessed (or cursed) with the ability to hear what people feel, radiates joy from his birth. He spends his life mediating for others and salvaging their relationships, until disaster strikes his own life and causes him to question, even loathe, his supernatural gift.

He who knew that no matter how quiet the air was, there were always hearts beating, planets spinning in the heavens, bodies breathing, plants growing; and all producing sounds, but he hadn't heard anything! He hadn't heard anything!

Writing the novel as a tribute to her father (himself, a telegraph operator), Esquivel integrates her belief in the power of words. *Swift as Desire* is an engaging and enjoyable story that anyone with the slightest interest in a sensually romantic novel will find quite desirable, indeed. --Yvonne Schindler

From Publishers Weekly

The princess of modern Latin literature (second only to Isabel Allende) has written yet another quirky and sensual story with a moralistic twist, its cute-as-can-be characters arguing and loving with equal passion. But Esquivel's fourth novel lacks that certain something that enthralled readers of *Like Water for Chocolate*. Her writing is choppy, cliché-laden and has the feel of a translation (no translator is credited). Yet it invokes chuckles and sighs, and if a reader craves more of the sweet wackiness that made the author's first book so appealing, *Swift As Desire* certainly delivers. Since birth, Júbilo has had a zest for life and an uncanny ability to hear the words in people's hearts before they are able to (or just didn't want to) say them. He puts his talents to good use as a telegraph operator in 1920s Mexico and falls in love with beautiful, wealthy Luz. The couple marries, has children and enjoys a heavenly existence. But something happens during their idyllic life together that drives them apart. Now, their daughter Lluvia is nursing her father as he is bedridden with Parkinson's disease. Before Júbilo dies, Lluvia desperately wants to know the cause of her parents' separation. Through Morse code, she communicates with her father and uncovers the secret nothing juicy, just a sad story that could have been avoided if the lines of communication between husband and wife had been more open. Esquivel's storytelling abilities are in top form here, and, despite its unoriginality, the novel succeeds in conveying a touching message of the power of familial and romantic love.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-With a touch of magical realism, and a strong dose of sensuality that almost tips over into obsession, the author of *Like Water for Chocolate* (Doubleday, 1992) tells a love story like no other. Teens will be transported into a different culture, and a different way of thinking and of viewing the world when they meet Jubilo Chi. When he was a young child his Mayan grandmother taught him her language, and he became the sole interpreter between his grandmother and his Spanish mother. His translations, rather than literal, seek reconciliation between the warring women and eventually their suspicion turns to love. The power of words and of unspoken messages shape Jubilo's life and lead to his career as a telegraph operator. He also embraces the Mayans' intimate connection with the universe, especially the sun, and can often

discern emotions using this connection. Eventually the family leaves his grandmother and Yucatán and moves to Mexico City, and at 17, Jubilo meets 15-year-old Lucha. Their attraction is immediate and eventually they marry. Their passion is boundless, but Jubilo's job provides only the bare necessities, and Lucha's desire for the fine things turns to discontent and the source of their troubles. After two children and many years of marriage, they separate, but their daughter, Lluvia, caring for her father, now old and ill, is determined to unravel the mystery of their inability to reconcile. How she does so provides the climax to this tale of love, laughter, desire, and remorse.

Molly Connally, Kings Park Library, Fairfax County, VA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dorothy Bernstein:

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