



## Esperanza's Box of Saints

*María Amparo Escandón*

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*Esperanza's Box of Saints* is a magical, humorous, and passion-filled odyssey about a beautiful young widow's search for her missing child -- a mission that takes her from a humble Mexican village to the rowdy brothels of Tijuana and a rarely seen side of Los Angeles. Rescued from turmoil by her favorite saint, Esperanza embarks on a journey that tests her faith, teaches her the ways of the world, and transforms her from a fervently religious innocent to an independent, sexual, and passionately devout woman.

## Esperanza's Box of Saints Details

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Π?νος Τουρλ?ς says

Η παρουσ?αση μπορε? να περι?χει SPOILERS

Η γελο?α εκδοχ?:

Μια γυνα?κα ξαφνικ? βλ?πει στον φο?ρνο της κουζ?νας της ?ναν ?γιο που της αποκαλ?πτει οτι η κ?ρη της ζει. Βαθι? θρησκευ?μενη πα?ρνει τους αγ?ους της, τα κομποσκο?νια της, τα αγαλματ?κια της κι αρχ?ζει να ψ?χνει στα πορνε?α της περιοχ?ς της κ?νοντας την π?ρνη, σ?γουρη ?τι η κ?ρη της ?χει π?σει θ?μα μαστρωπ?ν. Φτ?νει ακ?μη και στο σημε?ο να περ?σει λαθρα?α τα σ?νορα για να την ψ?ξει στο Λος ?ντζελες σε μεγαλ?τερης εμβ?λειας και χρηματικ?ς πληρωμ?ς πορνε?α. Τελικ? γνωρ?ζει κι ερωτε?εται ?ναν παλαιιστ? του κατς που αποφασ?ζει να τα παρατ?σει ?λα για χ?ρη της.

Η σοβαρ? εκδοχ?:

Η Εσπερ?ντσα Ντ?ας, φτωχ? μεροκαματι?ρισσα, ζει στο Τλακοταλπ?ν της Β?ρακρουζ (Μεξικ?) και προσπαθε? να συν?λθει απ? τον θ?νατο της κ?ρης της, Μπλ?νκα, μετ? απ? εγχε?ριση ρουτ?νας (χ?ρα η Εσπερ?ντσα εδ? και δ?δεκα χρ?νια). Απλ?, σεμν?, ταπειν?, με στοιχει?δεις γραμματικ?ς γν?σεις, συγκατοικε? με την κολλητ? της και βλ?πουν σαπουν?περες. Θρ?σκα, απλο?κ?, ε?πιστη, προσπαθε? να μαζ?ψει τα κομμ?τια της (?λλον ?ντρα δεν ξανακο?ταξε). Τα "κρ?ματ?" της τα εξομολογ?ται στον ιερ?α της εκκλησ?ας της, που ?χει εξομολογ?σει κι αν ?χει εξομολογ?σει γυνα?κες και ?ντρες. Εκε?νη την ημ?ρα ?μως η ζω? του ανατρ?πεται: η Εσπερ?ντσα ε?δε στον λιγδιασμ?νο, βρ?μικο φο?ρνο της κουζ?νας της τον Σαν Χο?δας Ταδ?ο, τον ?γιο για τις απελπιστικ?ς καταστ?σεις. Ο οπο?ος ?γιος της αποκ?λυψε ?τι η κ?ρη της ζει!!!

Και απ? δω ξεκιν?νε ?λα: ο ιερωμ?νος μ?νει ?φωνος, προσπαθε? να τη συνετ?σει, η Εσπερ?ντσα ?μως δεν ακο?ει τ?ποτα (στη συν?χεια, σταδιακ?, ο ιερ?ας θα αρχ?σει να αγ? και σαρκικ? τη γυνα?κα αυτ?ν, που χρει?ζεται σωστ? καθοδ?γηση και ?χι χαζ? ορ?ματα, ?μως παραμ?νει πιστ?ς στον ιερατικ? του ?ρκο κι ανακουφ?ζεται ?ταν....αλλ? θα τα πο?με στη συν?χεια).

Δ?νοντας ?σως προσωποπ?ηση στις ελπ?δες της και μια δι?ξοδο στη στενοχ?ρια της, συμπερα?νει αυθα?ρετα ?τι η κ?ρη της απ?χθη απ? κ?κλωμα παιδεραστ?ας κι αρχ?ζει τις ?ρευνες. Ε?ναι απ?στευτες οι περιπ?τειες που ζει η Εσπερ?ντσα, ε?ναι απ?στευτος ο τρ?πος που ε?ναι γραμμ?νο το βιβλ?ο, το οπο?ο ακροβατε? επικ?νδυνα αν?μεσα στη θλ?ψη και στο γ?λιο, δηλαδ? ?ταν μια φτωχ?, σχεδ?ν αγρ?μματη και λα?κ? (με την καλ? ?ννοια) γυνα?κα, φορτωμ?νη με ?να σωρ? αγ?ους, οσ?ους, κομποσκο?νια και τ?ματα ?ρχεται αντιμ?τωπη με τον δ?σκολο και σκληρ? κ?σμο της μεξικανικ?ς και της αμερικανικ?ς αργ?τερα ν?χτας κι ?μως ξεφε?γει χωρ?ς να τη βι?σουν ? να την τραυματ?σουν ? να τη σκοτ?σουν, ε ε?ναι αξιοθα?μαστο πρ?γματι! Ειδικ? στο σημε?ο που κ?θε τρεις και λ?γο προσε?χεται και σε διαφορετικ? ?γιο αν?λογα με την περ?σταση ("?ταν η Εσπερ?ντσα ?πεσε απ? το ποδ?λατο...ευχαρ?στησε τον αρχ?γγελο Γαβρι?λ, προστ?τη των δρ?μων...?ταν π?τυχε η δ?σκολη συνταγ? με τα γεμιστ? καβο?ρια...ευχαρ?στησε τον Σαν Πασκου?λ Μπαγ?ν, προστ?τη των μαγε?ρων και των νοικοκυρ?ν...?ταν η γ?τα της χτυπ?θηκε απ? αυτοκ?νητο και τη γλ?τωσε, η Εσπερ?ντσα ευχαρ?στησε τον ?γιο Φραγκ?σκο της Ασ?ζης, προστ?τη των ζ?ων...?ταν βρ?κε το μενταγ?ν που της ε?χε χαρ?σει ο Χοσ? Λου?ζ...ευχαρ?στησε τον Σαν Παφνο?κιο, προστ?τη των χαμ?νων ανθρ?πων και πραγμ?των. Τ?ρα ?πρεπε να ευχαριστ?σει τη Σ?ντα Αρτ?λια, προστ?τιδα των θυμ?των απαγωγ?ς"-σελ. 126-127) δε γ?νεται ? να χαμογελ?σεις με την ταπειν? και απλο?κ? ζω? ? να ξεκαρδιστε?ς πρ?χειρα στα γ?λια με αυτο?ς

τους φτωχο?ς, βαρεμ?νους Μεξικανο?ς που η ζω? τους ε?ναι οι σαπουν?περες.

Η Εσπερ?ντσα καταφ?ρνει να μπει στο Λος ?ντζελες κρυφ? και να γ?νει κι εκε? ξακουστ? (αφο? εξομολογε?ται στον ιερ?α της, τ?ρα και τηλεφωνικ?ς, τις αμαρτ?ες της, δεν ε?ναι πλ?ον αμαρτ?ες!), να ζ?σει κι ?λες περιπ?τειες, να γνωρ?σει ?ναν κατ?ξανθο ?ντρα, παλαιστ? του κατς, που του αλλ?ζει τη νοοτροπ?α (κι αυτ?ς με τη σειρ? του την κ?νει να ξανανι?σει γυνα?κα) αλλ? τον παρατ?ει χωρ?ς δε?τερη κουβ?ντα ?ταν ερμηνε?ει ?να σημ?δι ?τι πρ?πει να γυρ?σει π?σω στο σπ?τι της. ?ντως γυρ?ζει στο σπ?τι της και σ?νει χοντρ? καβγ? με τη συγκ?τοικ? της γιατ? καθ?ρισε τον φο?ρνο της "κι εγ? τ?ρα πο? θα δω τον ?γιο;" τη ρωτ?ει! Τελικ? η Εσπερ?ντσα της αποκαλ?πτεται στη σκουρι? του νεροχ?τη, ?τι ε?ναι καλ? και να μην ανησυχε?. Χαρο?μενη, η Εσπερ?ντσα βλ?πει ξαφνικ? δ?πλα της τον ?νχελο που την εντ?πισε επιτ?λους και τη ζητ? σε γ?μο. Η Εσπερ?ντσα ?μως αρνε?ται την πρ?τασ? του γιατ? τ?ρα βρ?κε την κ?ρη της και δεν πρ?πει να φ?γει απ? κοντ? της. Καν?να πρ?βλημα, ?μως! Απλ?ς οι νι?παντροι πα?ρνουν μαζ? τους στο Λος ?ντζελες, τον νεροχ?τη, τις σωλην?σεις, τη βρ?ση και τα πλακ?κια του σπιτιο? της Εσπερ?ντσα ξηλωμ?να!!!!!!

Π?ρα πολ? καλ? βιβλ?ο, με ξεκαρδιστικ? στιγμ?τυπα, που ειλικριν? δεν ξ?ρω αν η συγγραφ?ας σατιρ?ζει την απλο?κ?τητα και την ευπιστ?α των συμπατριωτ?ν της ? με ?ξονα και δ?ναμη ακριβ?ς αυτ?ν την π?στη τους σε ?λους τους αγ?ους μ?ς δε?χνει ?τι υπ?ρχει δ?ναμη και θ?ληση κι αυτ? υπ?ρχει μ?σα μας και χ?ρη σε αυτ?ν ?λα μπορο?ν να γ?νουν πραγματικ?τητα και να υλοποιηθο?ν.

Με πολ? ωρα?α μην?ματα αν?μεσα στις γραμμ?ς, με ανατροπ?ς και ?να ?ντονο ενδιαφ?ρον για την εξ?λιξη της ιστορ?ας, δ?σκολα θα αφ?σετε αυτ? το βιβλ?ο απ? τα χ?ρια σας. Βασικ? στην αρχ? το αντιμετ?πισα με σκεπτικισμ?, σκεφτ?μουν ?πως ?γραψα στη γελο?α εκδοχ? πιο π?νω, το γρ?ψιμο ?μως, που ε?ναι τ?σο προφορικ? και λογοτεχνικ? ταυτ?χρονα, με κα?ριες παρατηρ?σεις και εξελ?ξεις, με καταπληκτικ? σκιαγρ?φηση ολικληρωμ?νων χαρακτ?ρων, ε?ναι και Ωκεαν?δα, ε λ?ω δε γ?νεται, κ?που θα καταλ?ξει. ?μουν σ?γουρος ?τι η Μπλ?νκα ?ντως ?ταν νεκρ? και σ?γουρα το βιβλ?ο κ?τι ?λο ?θελε να πε? και ?χι να κορο?δ?ψει ? να αστειευτε?. Και δε βγ?κα χαμ?νος. Κατ?λαβα τι σημα?νει να ε?σαι μ?να και ως πο? ε?σαι διατεθειμ?νη να φτ?σεις για το παιδ? σου!

Στα ελληνικ? απ? την Ωκεαν?δα το 1999.

## Fermentum says

3.5

OK Quirky book. Being of Latin descent I understand the book more than the regular non-Latin. My Grandmother had her saints too.

From the book, Some of Esperanza's saints:

Juan Soldado, the unofficial patron saint and protector of illegal immigrants

San Adjutor, patron saint invoked against drowning

San Antonio de Padua, patron of lost people and invoked by women who wished to get husbands.

San Francisco de Asís, patron of animals and pets,

San Gerardo Mayela, patron of housewives,

San Isidro patron saint of the rain and poor weather conditions.

San Judas Tadeo, saint for desperate cases.

San Martín Caballero "If you want your business to thrive,

San Pafnucio, patron of finding lost, stolen, and misplaced things.  
San Pascual Bailón, patron of cooks and housewives,  
San Rafael Arcángel, patron of all drivers and travelers, patron of the roads,  
San Ramón Nonato, always called on for protection against people talking behind one's back.  
Santa Artelia, patron of kidnapping victims.  
Santo Niño de Atocha rescue from danger and violence.

Quotes:

Faith is the most powerful shield against the worst, But you cannot force someone to believe.

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"God can really do it all single-handedly, but He's the boss, He can afford to have as many assistants as He wants,"

=====

I know I should feel right at home in Los Angeles, with all these Mexicans reclaiming their land,

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### **Marisa says**

a story of searching for a sign of how to live after losing someone incredibly close and important in your life. Those months, and years can turn you into a different person, and taking a long journey through mexico and los angeles and back can give you all the answers you might need. She describes a three bedroom house in Downey, with an overflowing purple jacaranda tree, which is the house i moved into and grew up in, I wonder if a mexican wrestler named Angel lived there long before we did.

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### **Wendy says**

Esperanza is trying to deal with the sudden death of her daughter Blanca, when her favorite saint San Judas Tadeo appears to her in the oven door and tells her Blanca isn't dead after all. Thus begins Esperanza's quest to find her little girl. This journey takes her to Tijuana and LA, into the seediest of apartments and brothels, putting her in danger physically and spiritually. But despite the difficulties, Esperanza stays true to her faith and loyal to the memory of her daughter. I love the style and format of the book, a mix of inner monologues, confessions to the priest (probably my favorite parts), and other somewhat random conversations. Desperate and hopeful, innocent and erotic, mystical and real, this book is intriguing and impossible to ignore.

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### **Amanda says**

I really liked this a lot! It was cute, adorable, and wonderful and magnificent all at the same time. I giggled at the ending, which was unsurprising but again, cute and adorable. If you're looking for a fun, quick, and interesting story, grab this book. It requires a bit of suspension of disbelief.

It's not quite on the same level as Isabel Allende, but *Esperanza's Box of Saints* has that same sort of fantastic element to it.

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### **Matt Carton says**

More 3-1/2 than 4 stars. This book really grew on me as I read. Esperanza is one of those characters whose dogged determination wins out over what we might consider reality. By the end of this novel it doesn't matter what is true or not - I just admire that she has been true to herself. This is a book I had never heard of had it not been for Goodreads.

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### **Amanda says**

I couldn't see how this was going to end well, but I definitely had a smile on my face as it finished.

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### **Jill says**

I couldn't help thinking as I was reading how awesome a movie this story could make. Not a big-budget/blockbuster/blow stuff up type of movie, but one of those really awesome indie art-house type movies where oven grease magically becomes a talking saint, we could watch the growth of Esperanza's altars, the dingy settings, oh.. and the wrestling scene... So great.

Esperanza loses her daughter to a virus and, in her grief, Saint Judas Tadeo appears to her in the grime of her oven window to say that her daughter is not dead. Esperanza is a devout Catholic and puts all of her faith into her saints. She becomes certain that her daughter was sold into child prostitution and travels to Tijuana and eventually into the U.S. searching for her daughter by working in brothels, talking to pimps and prostitutes, following leads that people give her along the way. She carries a box of saints everywhere she goes and her collection grows as she travels. She builds altars in brothels and becomes such a sensation that she does pretty well for herself. I loved the characters she meets along the way. The priest, the tourist agency manager, and the wrestler were my favorites. Some of them are so well-described that it's as if they are sitting in front of you. Esperanza's voice is fantastic and her certainty in her mission despite her bizarre circumstances is really well done.

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### **Dea says**

Hmm. Okay. Let me try to tackle this. My feelings about *Esperanza's Box of Saints* are all over the place.

This book is pretty cute, which makes it hard to reconcile with the *extremely* dark subject matter. Honestly, I'm not sure how the author did it. The writing is light and charming, but whoa is it dark. Like, every major plot development is super horrendous and grim but described with vivid colors and smells and charming scenes. It's kind of amazing that the author was able to accomplish this. (This is not a compliment... I don't think.)

It's also repetitive, and I grew tired very quickly of the constant descriptions about Esperanza's stunning!

gorgeous! beauty and the horrible men who want to... do... things... to her. This happens on just about every. single. page.

Still, I somehow enjoyed this little novel? I really wanted to see how it ended. (view spoiler) I don't know! This book was adorable and awful all at once.

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### **Christina says**

Esperanza's Box of Saints is a short novel, but one that I truly loved. A spiritual woman, Esperanza lives in Mexico with her best friend. Both have lived lives filled with tragedy. First, their husbands were killed in a tragic accident. Most recently, Esperanza's daughter died in the hospital unexpectedly. The book follows Esperanza as she travels through Mexico and the United States searching for her daughter, hoping to find her alive.

Along her journey, Esperanza does things full of sin and lust-- anything if she could just have her daughter back! This love and dedication really made me feel for her. I couldn't believe what she was willing to put herself through. This book is so sweet and touching. Even if you are not religious (as I am not) you will love this book.

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### **R?dvan says**

Vakit kayb? diyemem ama çokta bir ?ey katm?yor insana.

Finali biraz saçma olmu?.

K?z? ölmü? dindar bir kad?n Esperanza. Cenazenin ertesi, bir azizin silüeti beliriveriyor mutfa??n?n cam?nda. "K?z?n ölmeli" diyor.

Ertesi gün bir kez daha ayn? senaryo.

Böylece Esperanza ba?l?yor k?z?n? aramaya. Bir daha a görünmüyör aziz ona. Ama vazgeçmiyor Esperanza. Yolculu?u gene kendi evinde mutfa??n?n cam?nda son buluyor. Me?er aziz efendi "k?z?n ölmeli kalbinde ya??yor" mealinde bir ?eyler demeye çal??m??.

Eh i?te ...

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### **Amy Peavy says**

I continue to love this book. Maybe I should read this again this year..

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### **Mona AlvaradoFrazier says**

This was a book with an implausible storyline, but entertaining and well written. This is a story of loss, friendship, and faith.

An apparition of a saint tells Esperanza that her daughter is not dead. She leaves her town in Mexico and searches through the brothels of Tijuana and Los Angeles, looking for her daughter who she believes was

kidnapped into prostitution. The assortment of characters she finds is often hilarious and not as frightening as one would imagine happening in reality.

The novel is a quick read, rich in description, and hits on many aspects of Mexican culture and beliefs. I understand that the writer wrote a screenplay for this book, titled "Santitos," directed by John Sayles, which won several film awards in 2000.

The writer's unique voice and makes me want to read her second book, *Gonzalez and Daughter Trucking Company*.

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### **Holly says**

This book does have a fun premise: Esperanza begins a desperate search for her deceased daughter from her small Mexican town to Tijuana to LA after she sees an image of the saint for desperate causes in the grease of her oven window. However, the overall package doesn't satisfy and falls flat w/ too many conveniences: Esperanza is gorgeous - but doesn't know it; she's in and out of hideous situations - but doesn't get hurt; everyone she meets falls in love w/ her - even the most despicable of men. She finally "wins" by exploring her sexuality and by fulfilling the ideal of physical beauty, riding off into the sunset w/ her "prince". Overall, this is a beach book - shallow, impersonal, unthematic, and predictable, not enough substance to support those sections that are well-written (I enjoyed the Tijuana sections w/ Dona Trini and her mysterious milk baths and favorite cow).

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### **Chris says**

Quirky and interesting. Picked this book as part of my summer reading challenge - "Read the World" category. It may not completely count as it ended up in Los Angeles...but I'm sure I will pick up something else that fits the category. Esperanza was truly all about Hope and Faith. Praying for the intercession of the saints and carrying them both in her heart and literally with her. She prayed and because she was open to God's will, she even got an Angel in the deal! An interesting peek into the world of brothels and reflection on what constitutes sin.

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