

# The Dausa Mountain

By Raquel Dionisio Abrantes

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** *English second language fiction is a category all its own. It owes its special charm to naiveté of language and word use and eccentric grammatical constructions that in any other context would be considered faults. In 'The Dausa Mountain' these combine to great effect and manifest before us with surprising beauty. There is much to please the ear, characters are intriguing if somewhat elusive and the voice is honest and strong. A lot of time, through no intention, these stories just don't make it. We're glad this one did. Atypical language treats abound:*

'His double appeared vigorous on the window glass brushstroke by drops incorporated in uneven rivers.'

"Our roses grow in the heart of winter; our nights are never moonless. But our air was infected. Whoever breathes it dies. I ran in time, though I carry my family's weight for burying on my back."

The Dausa Mountain

Peevish, Hector cleaned the mahogany counter; he hard-pressed a smudge of wine. He threw the cloth, poured whiskey into his mug, and sipped. Outside, the rain stained the windowpanes fiercely. The cathedral bells echoed in the distance striking eight o'clock in the morning. A blast of wind opened the timber door and Hector looked towards the entrance. In its fissure he saw Nicolina sculpted by the weak light. Raindrops glistened on the tabs of her coat. Hectic, she headed to him.

"Give me the usual, please."

"I'm not even going to ask how it went," he said and filled a mug with absinthe.

"I barely put words on the paper last evening."

"I don't understand anything about writing, but from what I heard, that's natural."

"No, it's different now. I think I've lost the muse," Nicolina supposed.

“What a rubbish! You only had a bad night.”

“Hope you’re right.”

Her dark hair dripped and she stared at the bottom of her beverage. Nicolina’s tapered eyes blinked in the middle of the light brown liquid. A clank rescued Nicolina from her absorption. A man staggered and fell at the door. From his bag escaped a flute. The man laid his hands on it and embraced the flute to his breathless chest. His eyebrow bled to his long redhead beard. Hector ran to him. He lifted the man under his arms and Nicolina helped them. They sat him on a stool. The man coughed.

“What happened to you, pal?” Hector asked.

“You have a nasty cut,” Nicolina asserted.

“Can you offer me something to drink?” the foreigner muttered.

“Sure,” Hector said.

He decanted a copious portion into a big clay mug.

“Here you have. It seems like your wound needs some stitches.”

The man swallowed ravenously.

“I can do it.”

“Alright; take him upstairs.”

The two circled the counter, crossed a circular door, and climbed the spiral stairs. Once they reach the summit, the glow of the fireplace revitalised the darkness of the small attic. Nicolina undressed her coat and she lit quite a few candles. She traversed the wee lavatory and brought a rag, a needle and a thread. Nicolina pointed to the chair. He sat. She dipped it in a water bucket on the floor and washed his bruise carefully.

“My name is Nicolina. What’s yours?”

“Almir.”

“Where are you from?”

“I come from the north hills.”

“What brings you here?”

“Why do you ask so many questions?”

Nicolina sewed his skin. He puckered his forehead.

“Because I’m interested.”

“I can assure you there’s nothing interesting about me,” Almir said.

“It must be a curse of writers. We see a story everywhere.”

“So, what do you write?”

“Poetry and tales about old and forgotten places.”

“Good.”

Almir’s murky eyes rested on hers and she gave the final stitch. Nicolina landed the objects on the bed.

“It’s done,” Nicolina said.

“Thank you.”

“Where did you get that cut?”

“I don’t want more enquiries.”

“At least...”

“I don’t owe you anything,” Almir interrupted.

“Are you always so rude?”

He stood up abruptly. Almir approached Nicolina. Their noises stayed close to each other and Nicolina inhaled the lavender from his mouth.

“I just don’t like nosy people.”

“My wish is to help.”

Almir took a step back and reclined, heavily, in his seat again. The logs’ crepitate shattered the stillness. She leaned against the table.

“My Dausa Mountain has a beauty of its own. Our dead speak to us through the wind.”

Her eyes were fixed on his and she listened cautiously. His double appeared vigorous on the window glass brushstroke by drops incorporated in uneven rivers. He passed his long fingers amongst the locks of his red hair. The flames danced within his dilated pupils.

“Our roses grow in the heart of winter; our nights are never moonless. But our air was infected. Whoever breathes it dies. I ran in time, though I carry my family’s weight for burying on my back.”

Silence befell on the division. Almir rubbed his beard and Nicolina released a cry.

“If you knew how I envy your tears. Mine have dried.”

“Well, I know the pain. I didn’t bury my mother either. The river is her vault and I visit her there.”

“We’re all prisoners of our shades.”

Almir raised and strolled to the entry. Nicolina pulled her coat and followed him. The aroma of honey suffused their nostrils as soon as they arrived at the rustic cafe.

“How are you feeling?” Hector inquired while he served his clients.

“A bit better; thanks.”

“I’ll make my specialty for you to eat.”

“Don’t bother. I must go,” Almir said.

“Wait! Stay, please. Let me write your story,” Nicolina begged.

“For what?”

“To preserve your home; to hush your ache.”

“Fine; as long as you keep it true.”

The tempest tore the gloominess of the alley. Nicolina and Almir sat at one of the tables in the corner. She lugged a fountain pen from her coat pocket, a slender leather notebook, and a bottle of ink. Hector hummed a song while preparing a pasty food.

Pipes smoke rose above folks' heads. Nicolina wrote nimbly. An empty cup of brew had dried on a yellowish stain beside her. The cursive words flourished in black. Hector beheld them, smiling.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *My short tale 'The Dausa Mountai' has, like most of my writing, a sense of nostalgia. This piece explores companionship, home, sorrow and loss. My works, both poetry and prose, are born from folklore, myths and nature. They serve as metaphors to express the complexity of emotions and thoughts. My writing style can be described as poetic with a dash of gothic. I am inspired by all forms of art.*

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** *Raquel Dionísio Abrantes has a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree in Cinema from Universidade da Beira Interior. Raquel gave a Master Class in Writing of Scripts about Narrative Structure. Her writing has appeared on Write or Die Tribe website, Better Than Starbucks magazine, The Pangolin Review and New Hand Lab. She writes for Read Poetry. More about her work can be found at <https://www.instagram.com/woodland.poem>.*