

A CABEÇA CORTADA DE DONA JUSTA

The Chopped Head of Dona Justa



Author: Rosa Amanda Strausz

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Dimensione: 14x21 cm

A masterful example of Brazilian magic realism.

In a ravine of the Rio dos Afogados there's a dark construction. Dug in the earth and closed by a heavy iron grate, lies a cave that served as a prison and tomb to many of the slaves forced to work at the Fazenda dos Afogados. There, at the bottom of the cave, lies the severed head of Dona Justa, a healer who got violently killed in 1832, and whose head is the narrator of this story.

More than a century after Dona Justa's death, Margarida's monotonous life as a retired bureaucrat is shaken by a novelty: she has just inherited a farm near Três Rios, a former coffee region. Trying to take possession of her inheritance, Margarida ends up pulling the thread of a long history, which begins in 1798, with the unforeseen appearance of a barber surgeon called Armand Maurois, who was thrown overboard and found almost dead on a beach.

To save the life of Armand is Dona Justa, a mysterious healer well respected in the region. When the two fall in love, one of the most curious couples of the newly installed Court in Rio de Janeiro is formed. As a reward for an invaluable service provided by Dona Justa to the most loved personal chamberlain of the governor of the area, Armand is awarded a portion of virgin forest, closed and hostile, which he intends to transform into a coffee plantation. It's a big challenge: until then, sugar cane was the only product farmed in the region.

Armand and Dona Justa manage to turn the farm into a productive coffee plantation, but their success demands a price. Their ambition ends up attracting to those lands the envy of their neighbours, as well as a terrible curse.

Between the moment when the land is cursed (with the beheading of Justa) and the time in which Margarida arrives to take possession of what she believes to be hers by right, the darker side of the Brazilian imagination



parades, creating a story full of mysteries to solve. Undead, penate souls, demon girls, priestesses, and emissaries of the Devil will take part in a highly entertaining plot in which history and pure imagination take turns.

Press:

«It was about time for the author of the outstanding *Sete ossos e uma maldição* to take the chance and write a scary novel for grown-ups. Rosa Amanda Strausz engages the reader in a plot that touches several generations with lots of mysticism and unexpected twists.»

Raphael Montes

«Rosa Amanda Strausz presents a vivid novel, full of movement, humor and an impressive evocative talent. The author created a smart and highly engaging work.»

Cíntia Moscovich

«Rosa Amanda Strausz is a magician who masterfully dominates words. There's no closed barrier between imagination and memories. What happens on one side affects the other, either in a scary or funny way. You'll need courage to cross the first page.»

Maria Valéria Rezende

Rosa Amanda Strausz took advantage of her ten-year experience in yards and extensive research on healers to write her first novel for grown-ups, *The Chopped Head of Dona Justa*. The author has about 30 books published among short stories, horror, biographical essays and children's and youth books.