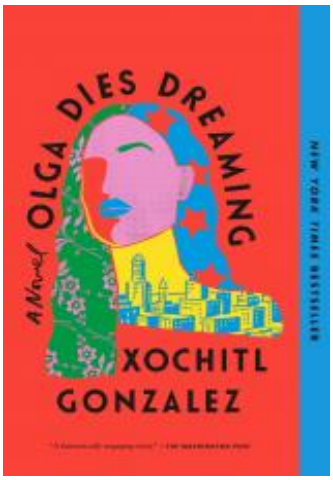
Olga Dies Dreaming

by Xochitl Gonzalez



About the Book

A blazing talent debuts with the tale of a status-driven wedding planner grappling with her social ambitions, absent mother and Puerto Rican roots --- all in the wake of Hurricane Maria.

It's 2017, and Olga and her brother, Pedro ?Prieto? Acevedo, are boldfaced names in their hometown of New York. Prieto is a popular congressman representing their gentrifying Latinx neighborhood in Brooklyn, while Olga is the tony wedding planner for Manhattan?s power brokers.

Despite their alluring public lives, behind closed doors things are far less rosy. Sure, Olga can orchestrate the love stories of the one percent, but she can?t seem to find her own...until she meets Matteo, who forces her to confront the effects of long-held family secrets.

Olga and Prieto?s mother, Blanca, a Young Lord turned radical, abandoned her children to advance a militant political cause, leaving them to be raised by their grandmother. Now, with the winds of hurricane season, Blanca has come barreling back into their lives.

Set against the backdrop of New York City in the months surrounding the most devastating hurricane in Puerto Rico?s history, Xochitl Gonzalez?s OLGA DIES DREAMING is a story that examines political corruption, familial strife and the very notion of the American dream --- all while asking what it really means to weather a storm.

Discussion Guide

1. Olga and Prieto are highly motivated, career-focused people who are invested in their communities. In what ways do the divergent trajectories of the two siblings reflect their different relationship to their hometown of Brooklyn? To the values of the society around them?

2. Family is an essential thread in this story, and we see this through different lenses --- whether it?s Olga cunningly providing napkins for Mabel?s wedding or whether it?s Prieto rooting Olga on from the sidelines. Which of these moments resonated with you and how you show up for those in your own family? Why?

3. Mateo enters Olga?s life and unapologetically discloses his own backstory. How does their romantic relationship change and influence some of the decisions Olga makes?

4. Evaluate Olga and Prieto?s relationship with Blanca. How does their sense of self change as their relationship with their mother evolves throughout the novel?

5. The landfall of Hurricane Maria is crucial to the overarching plot, especially as we witness the lack of U.S. intervention in the aftermath. How does Xochitl Gonzalez bring the discourse around aid and relief to the forefront of this novel through her characters?

6. How important was it for readers to hear Blanca?s voice through her letters to her children? What did the letters reveal about Blanca?s decisions when it came to her family? How did they make you feel about her choices?

7. How do the changes to the neighborhood where they grew up in affect Olga, Prieto and their friends and other family members differently? How does it feel unfair? How does Olga reconcile the transformation of her own life with the gentrification around her? How does it differ to Mateo?

8. Both Olga and Prieto are children of the diaspora, but they have different relationships to their communities and to Puerto Rico. Does one approach seem better than the other to you? Is it important to feel connected to one?s roots?

9. This novel also exists with the backdrop of multiple weddings. How does class change the role of weddings for the various stakeholders? How is the culture of wedding planning juxtaposed with everything that?s at stake for Olga and her family?

10. Share your thoughts on the novel?s ending. Could things have turned out differently for Olga and Prieto? What about Blanca and Mateo?

11. In the beginning of the novel, Olga sees herself as more successful than Mabel. What do you think has shaped that notion of success, and how do we feel that might have changed by the end?

12. The characters in this novel have all experienced large traumas. What are some of the healthy and unhealthy ways they have moved past them?

Author Bio

Xochitl Gonzalez is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the award-winning novel OLGA DIES DREAMING, the Reese?s Book Club pick ANITA DE MONTE LAUGHS LAST, and LAST NIGHT IN BROOKLYN. She is a contributor to *The Atlantic*, where she was recognized as a 2023 Pulitzer Prize finalist in Commentary. A native Brooklynite and proud public school graduate, Gonzalez holds a BA from Brown University and an MFA from the Iowa Writers? Workshop.

Olga Dies Dreaming

by Xochitl Gonzalez

Publication Date: February 7, 2023
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: Flatiron Books
ISBN-10: 1250786185
ISBN-13: 9781250786180