

# El invierno que tomamos cartas en el asunto

The Winter We Took Things Into Our Own Hands



UK panel's choice Year 2016

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*The Winter We Took Things Into Our Own Hands, literal translation but the Spanish title involves a play on words involving 'cartas' (letters) which are both a key feature of the book and part of the Spanish expression for taking things into your own hands.*

Winter arrives at Porvenir and brings bad news with it: due to lack of post, they are going to close the post office and transfer the staff elsewhere. Text messages, emails and WhatsApp seem to have won the day, even in the middle of the mountains. Sara, the only postwoman in town, was born there and lives there with her three small children. She spends many hours with her neighbour, Rosa, a woman of eighty who is prepared to do anything to prevent Sara and her children from suffering. But what can an old lady do to stop the lives of those she loves most being turned upside down? Perhaps something as small as writing a letter, one that she has kept safe in her heart for sixty years...

## UK panellists opinion:

'El invierno que tomamos cartas en el asunto' is set in Porvenir, a small town in the mountains, over the course of a winter. At the beginning of November Sara, the town postwoman, who has lived in Porvenir her entire life has received an email from the postal service informing her that due to the decline in the number of letters sent and received in the town, the post office is likely to close and she would then be transferred to Madrid. When she hears this news, Sara's elderly friend Rosa, who helped deliver Sara and is like a surrogate aunt to her, is determined to take action to keep Sara in Porvenir.

Rosa begins a chain of letters by writing a letter of apology and reconciliation to Luisa, her best friend from childhood, who left the town without a trace after Rosa married the man with whom she was in love. Although she is unsure whether Luisa is still alive, she sends it to her family home explaining that she does not expect a reply and only asks that she write a letter about whatever she wants to another woman in the town in order to increase demand for the local postal service and show the bosses in Madrid that the town needs Sara and the service she provides.

'El invierno que tomamos cartas en el asunto' is an engaging, heart-warming and enjoyable story and a smooth and easy read.

Doñate's style is light, informal and easy to read and this, combined with the small town and community setting, and the lively, connected but varied characters has echoes of Maeve Binchey. While the overall story is one of hope, positivity, agency, friendship and love, the characters and their lives are by no means perfect and the difficulties and challenges they face in a changing world - potential unemployment, loneliness, the demand of expectations from parents and society - make the story realistic and relevant.

The dialogue is authentic and natural and the characters all have their own voices.

'El invierno que tomamos cartas en el asunto' is a highly enjoyable read, likely to appeal to a British audience who enjoy commercial and literary fiction.

From the reader's report by [Isabelle Kaufeler](#) [3]

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Additional information **Prizes and reviews:**

"This beautiful novel tells us a story of simplicity, kindness, peace and love." "A story that really hits home, and which could quite possibly be adapted as a film script."

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