

24 Hours with Gaspar

Sabda Armandio

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A bank robbery gone wrong ends in death in *24 Hours with Gaspar*, Sabda Armandio's engaging, happenstance-led thriller.

Gaspar is frivolous and aloof, convinced that he's gifted with the ability to end up in the right place at the right time. He believes that his motorcycle, Cortázar, takes him where he needs to be. He gathers an otherwise disconnected group of people, recruiting each of them with a purpose in mind: they are going to free a mysterious black box that's being held in a jewelry store.

About the nuances of personal choices and discoveries amid intense chaos, this book involves a luchador, a sentient motorcycle, an underground music scene, and a complicated multigenerational immigrant family that has more secrets than sense. These elements are teased out via witness statements given to the detective investigating the robbery case. As the detective attempts to guide the narrative with tidy, official questions, the interviewee responds with musings on what the events meant and why they happened. The latter jumps between topics and events; whenever a person's connection to Gaspar is revealed, it evokes an earlier moment and prompts differing emotions, shading the audience's perception of the events.

Despite the interview's focus on the crime, the robbery itself is less a concern than what happens after it. As it switches between the interview and live-action scenes, the narrative assumes a breathy pace. People and events are introduced in a similar way. In contrast, the book's denouement hits heavy as realizations sink in.

24 Hours with Gaspar is an insightful thriller in which a stolen memory carries more value to a thief than all the jewels in the world.

MAYLON GARDNER (May / June 2023)

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