



★ **Neverforgotten**

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Levine Querido (Aug 31, 2021)

Hardcover \$17.99 (288pp)

978-1-64614-094-7

In the poetic novel *Neverforgotten*, a boy forgets how to ride his bike—and this outwardly straightforward premise leads to a complex, almost allegorical story.

Charcoal pictures begin the story, showing a crowd of children on bicycles caught in a dust cloud, city streets, and streets that push against hills and into mountains. Their gray scale is evocative; the story that follows has the bright hues of poetry.

Fabio can no longer ride his bike. He feels that he has been told a lie: his parents said that the body never forgets, yet he, the boy who once flew on his bike, can no longer make sense of it and his body in space together. Without his bicycle skills, he no longer leads the neighborhood, moves through the city, or sees outside himself. His world is reduced within seconds, and Fabio works to understand the terrible contraction.

The prose mimics the bike's flight and speed. It figures the gradual expansion of Bogota in as a monster eating its way into the hills and mountains, with insatiable hunger and surrounding everyone. In this new isolation, Fabio turns to his elderly neighbor, Mamalicia, who suggests that Fabio "forget that you forgot." But only one thing can push him to where the body takes over, and it's something he never imagined.

Unexpected metaphors exacerbate Fabio's emotions, giving dimension to his perspective as he moves from boyhood into something else. Surreal images—of a small man in whom a huge man struggles to escape; of a city that consumes as an encroaching giant; of ancient fruit that might spawn dinosaurs—give terrifying, but apt and powerful, proportions to his uncertainty about the world.

Neverforgotten is a lyrical and moving novel with a melancholic ode to coming of age.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (July / August 2021)

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