

Not the Real Jupiter

Barbara Wilson

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Amateur sleuth and literary translator Cassandra Reilly returns in Barbara Wilson's *Not the Real Jupiter*, an engrossing mystery about the secrets behind a small Portland press.

Cassandra is translating the work of a fiery Uruguayan, Luisa, who dislikes how Entre Editions is handling her book. She agrees to advocate for Luisa. But Giselle, the publisher, is killed before Cassandra can meet her. In the course of her slow, chatty investigation, Cassandra uncovers Entre Editions' heated employee relationships, which include lesbian love and financial misdeeds; background about Giselle's Québécois family; and a writer who knew Giselle's mother. She juggles her own deadlines, too.

Sophisticated humor follows from the ins-and-outs of translation work. From managing projects like a difficult book about new motherhood, to competition, egos, and the annoying tendency of reviewers to make translators feel invisible, Cassandra's work parallels her sleuthing in entertaining ways. Cold mothers and alienated daughters also populate the book, tying into Giselle's circumstances and revealed past in serendipitous ways.

Luisa's periodic communications with Cassandra are a text highlight. She is brash but sensitive, a once-promising writer whose lack of modesty is a source of levity. Portland area highlights are featured as Cassandra peruses Powell's, sleeps at the Sylvia Beach hotel, and meets passionate writers, too. The particulars of the mystery are less compelling: key facts are divulged by people who are all too willing to talk, and the culprit is a shadowy background figure. Cassandra takes the spotlight as an unconventional expat whose current flux hints at the pitfalls and pleasures of a wandering life.

Not the Real Jupiter is a fascinating mystery novel that probes women's stories and exposes niche publishing corners in delightful ways.

KAREN RIGBY (May / June 2021)

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