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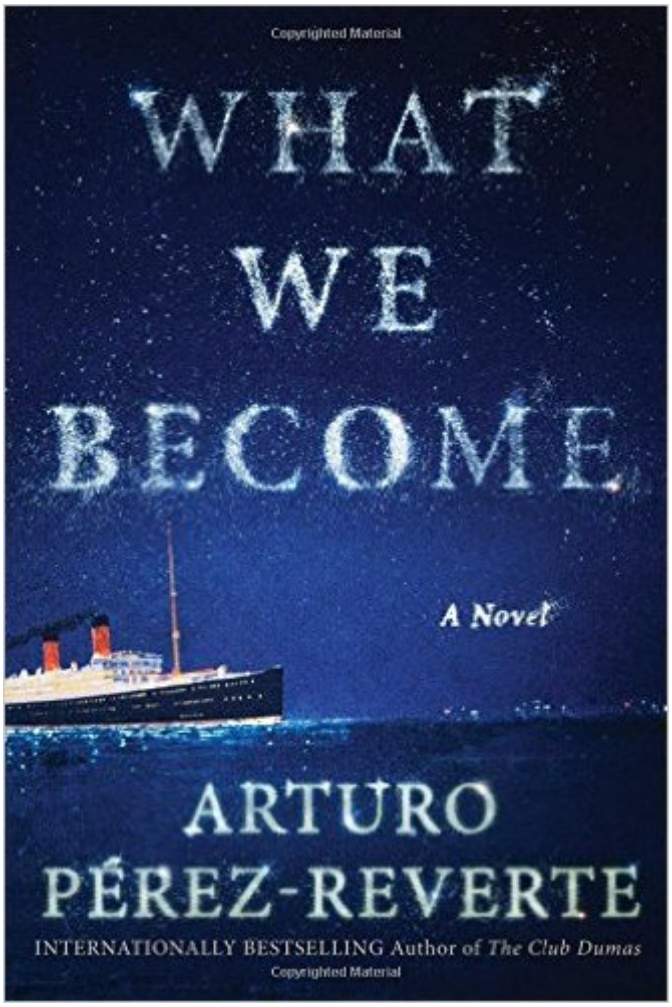
What We Become: A Novel



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Synopsis

#1 bestselling author and Dagger Award winner Arturo PÃ©rez-Reverte delivers an epic historical tale following the dangerous and passionate love affair between a beautiful high society woman and an elegant thief. A story of romance, adventure, and espionage, this novel solidifies PÃ©rez-Reverte as an international literary giant.En route from Lisbon to Buenos Aires in 1928, Max and Mecha meet aboard a luxurious transatlantic cruise ship. There Max teaches the stunning stranger and her erudite husband to dance the tango. A steamy affair ignites at sea and continues as the seedy decadence of Buenos Aires envelops the secret lovers. Nice, 1937. Still drawn to one another a decade later, Max and Mecha rekindle their dalliance. In the wake of a perilous mission gone awry, Mecha looks after her charming paramour until a deadly encounter with a Spanish spy forces him to flee. Sorrento, 1966. Max once again runs into troubleâ ”and Mecha. She offers him temporary shelter from the KGB agents on his trail, but their undeniable attraction offers only a small glimmer of hope that their paths will ever cross again. Arturo PÃ©rez-Reverte is at his finest here, offering readers a bittersweet, richly rendered portrait of a powerful, forbidden love story that burns brightly over forty years, from the fervor of youth to the dawn of old age.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gripping! Complex!In the first three pages or so I was a tad confused. I felt detached, disoriented even. As I should! I was crossing the Atlantic bound from Lisbon to Buenos Aires--ar least the characters I was about to become totally engaged with were. As I read on I became absolutely fascinated with them all. Max, I envisage as an aging Pierce Brosnan type, suave and sophisticated

harbouring the faint memory of a rougher beginning. As we go between Max's past and present, between his coming to know Mecha onboard the luxury liner where he works as a dancer, and their last meeting, the threads are electrifyingly taut. The tango discussions between Mecha's husband, Armando de Troeye (a famous composer), Mecha, and Max are robust and heady laced as they are with the undercurrent of explicit yet restrained sexuality. De Troyeye is seeking to compose a new piece, a tango, as part of a bet with another composer. This is the connection between the three that becomes a catalyst for all that follows.The interplay between Mecha and Max over the years is puzzling, yet riveting. I found it hard to put 'What We Become' down. The language is vivid. One is there in Buenos Aires, in the old tango places, reeking with an edge of danger, smoke and complex sexuality. You feel the tensions in Nice, as Italy is becoming a fascist state, and then later in Sorento where things come full circle, Max and Mecha meeting once more.The story in told in those three places across three times, constantly changing between them.1928 onboard a cruise ship bound for Buenos Aires where Max and Mecha first meet.1937 in Nice where Max is dragged into a fascist connection.1996 in Sorento.

Perez-Reverte has become a poetic writer. "What We Become" has paragraph after paragraph of astonishing beauty (kudos to his English translators,Nick Castor and Lorenza Garcia) and period detail. Set aboard a transatlantic ocean liner and Rio in the nineteen twenties, the Riviera in the 30's and Sorrento three decades later, the author alternates among the time periods with deftness to propel forward the sum of the central character's life. Each era, respectively, has the cinematic quality of "Love Affair" the triad "Black Orpheus"/"City of God"/"Favela Rising", and finally "To Catch a Thief".As with all Perez Reverte novels the theme of personal honor and individual nobility no matter what the circumstances prevails in a distinctly Spanish manner. As to plot, Alexander Dumas is never far away as convoluted violence and in this case torrid sexuality punctuate the story. Yet this novel is quite unlike his hugely popular Dumas-Inspired "Captian Alatriste" series, rather it builds upon the arc of "Queen of the South" and "The Painter of Battles". (As an aside, "Queen of the South" is now a new series on AMC TV--an English version of Telemundo's multiyear tremendous hit reviewed recently in The New York Times.)The love-making scenes are quite unique. With none of the copulatory explicitness of Victorian erotica, they nevertheless depict wild passion and underlying love, the carnality of scenes in, say, "9 and 1/2 Weeks" or the remake of "The Thomas Crown Affair" rather than the X-rated, emotionally barren "Nine Songs" or "Twenty Nine Palms". However, perhaps this novel, like many others, should carry an "R" rating.

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