

Anson

World Literature

Ms. Cadoux

Of Love and Other Demons

In "Of love and other Demons" by Gabriela Garcia Marquez, people become animals. This is illustrated by the character of Sierva Maria. She is a twelve-year-old girl, and is going to the market on her birthday. She is slightly bitten on the ankle by a dog that is later found to be infected with rabies. Sierva is being raised by the women of the slave quarter in the house of her father, the Marquis.

She is wild and difficult to deal with in any case. The news slowly circulates that several of the other people who are bitten have died of rabies, which is always fatal. The Marquis, Sierva's father consults with Dr. Abrenuncio, the girl was only lightly bitten on the leg, she may never develop rabies. The girl seems to be all right and her father becomes closer to her. How does this show she or the other characters are like animals? Because their behavior will be like an animals, for example, they will like the monkey, because monkey are always crazy. And also when they get rabies, their looks will also change, they will not look like humans anymore.

Then one day Sierva develops a slight fever. The Marquis panics and sends her to all sorts of quacks and faith healers who give her treatments that are painful and torturous. The local Bishop hears of this spectacle and sends for the Marquis. The Bishop asks that the girl be brought to the convent of Santa Clara for an exorcism, since sometimes demons take over a person under the cover of a disease. The weak Marquis cannot consult with his wife Bernarda, who is on drugs, and

decides to submit to this decision. Sierva is surrendered to the convent. After singing with the convent slaves, Sierva is arrested and thrown in the convent prison. The Abbess declares that Sierva is possessed by demons. Sierva suffers various assaults and screams and fights. This is used as evidence against Sierva that she is possessed by demons.

The bones of the story are simple. Sierva Maria is the only child of Don Ygnacio de Alfaro y Duenas, the second Marquis de Casaldueiro and Lord of Darien. He is introduced as "a funereal, effeminate man, as pale as a lily because the bats drained his blood while he slept." He lies gloomily in a hammock and fears the world. Sierva Maria's mother is Bernarda Cabrera, the Marquis's second wife, who is a woman from the merchant classes, once an astute trader in slave flesh and flour, and later, having fallen in love with the beautiful slave Judas Iscariote, an addict of violent sex, cacao and fermented honey.

The Marquis's first love had been a singing madwoman, Dulce Olivia, his first wife, Dona Olalla de Mendoza, the heir of a Spanish grandee, was killed by a magic thunderbolt from Dulce Olivia when she appeared to be about to succeed, after some years of trying, in persuading her husband to part with his virginity. Bernarda Cabrera seduced the mourner in his hammock but was filled with hatred for the product of their union, Sierva Maria, who, as a result, was brought up by the black slaves in the courtyard, worshiping Yoruban gods, singing African songs, speaking African languages. The Spaniards are decadent, perverted, rootless. The slaves are full of vitality, living secretly and fully in their own ways with their own culture. They tend Sierva Maria's beautiful hair and deck her with magic necklaces. She is unobserved and happy until a dog bites her, grazing her ankle. Although the wound

heals without trace, the father, and later the religious authorities, decide that she may be mad, rabid, possessed by the demon of hydrophobia, and they embark on a series of barbarous cures.

The chief exorcist, Cayetano Delaura, an intellectual and vigorous priest with a secret passion for forbidden books of courtly romance, falls in love with the young girl and her hair, and their love ends in her fated death. Delaura's opponent for her health and soul is the Jewish doctor Abrenuncio de Sa Pereira Cao, who represents reason in a world of wild and twisted belief. Delaura begins his exorcism full of confidence, and ends enchanted and broken.

They are legion, and include love. The Bishop sees rabies as a form that the demon may take to enter an innocent body. The superstitious abbess to whom Sierva Maria is entrusted finds something supernatural and portentous in every ordinary event; the fact that she did not notice the girl's presence in her courtyard for several hours meant to her that the girl must have been rendered invisible by witchcraft. Sierva Maria asks her timid father whether it is true as the songs say that love conquers all, he answers, "It is true, but you would do well not to believe it." Love takes possession of Delaura with a truly inexorable demonic force. A charismatic nun condemned for a murder, who is interned with Sierva Maria, begs her to intercede with African demons to carry her away from the convent.

Yet it is completely clear, not for the first time in Mr. Garcia Marquez's fiction, that the real forces of destruction are the beliefs of the Spanish and the Christians. This is partly to do with the clash of cultures between them and the Africans among whom Sierva Maria has grown up. Delaura says he believes "that what seems demonic to us are the customs of the blacks, learned by the girl as a consequence of the

neglected condition in which her parents kept her." The doctor, Abrenuncio, believes the only risk Sierva runs is being killed by the cruelty of the exorcism, and the narrator states flatly and calmly from time to time that that is what killed her.