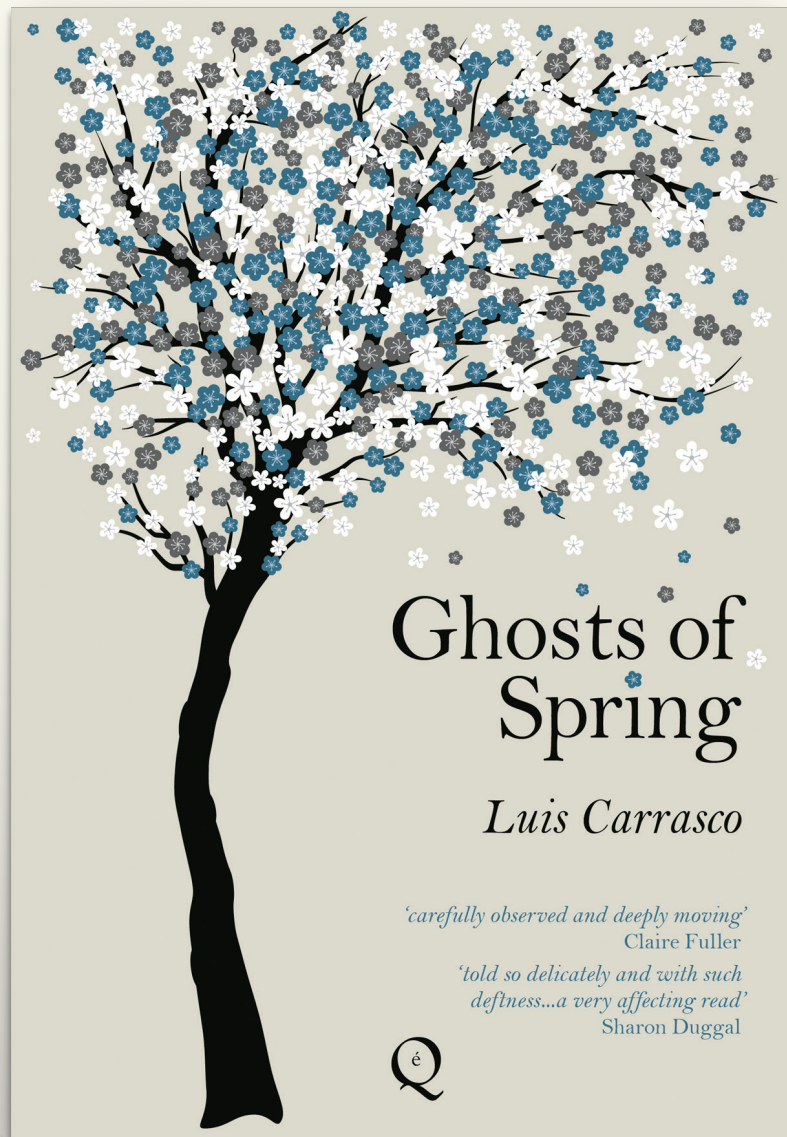


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BOOK CLUB AUTHOR Q&A GHOSTS OF SPRING BY LUIS CARRASCO



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Please see detailed below some questions and answers provided by the author in relation to their book.

1. How would you summarise the book and your motivations for writing it?

Ghosts of Spring traces the fortunes of a teenage girl living rough on the streets of Gloucester during a particularly harsh winter and her will to remake her life in a pretty Cotswold village as the spring arrives. Gloucestershire is my home county, and exhibits the spectrum of human condition, from dark urban poverty to opulent country living, set against the most beautiful rural landscapes England has to offer. This provides a rich canvas to work off. I wanted the story to be contemporary and centred on the vulnerability and determination of a young, homeless girl as she negotiates a route to salvation through these contrasting environments.

2. What is the significance of the title?

The 'Ghosts' are those who live on the streets whom we all notice but never really see. The girl's own journey is reflected in the changing of the seasons, from the hopeless depths of winter to the clean, new hope that spring always brings.

3. What are the main themes of the book? What do these themes mean to you as the author?

Homelessness, and its inherent struggle, is the primary vehicle for the story but I wanted the book to contain an uplifting message of hope. That, and kindness. The girl encounters cruelty and dejection on her path, but also the succour of friends and strangers which provide her with the opportunity to prise herself free from the difficult position she has found herself in. Dignity and deliverance are very compelling themes throughout the novel.

4. Did you decide on a specific style of writing for this book, and if so, why? What are you trying to convey through your style?

I chanced away from my usual prose method to write in the present tense, which is technically more challenging but lends an immediacy of focus for the reader. It was important that I delivered to the reader the shared sense of how the girl was coping at every given moment, rather than merely describing her

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actions. Bringing the reader into the present moment by adopting that tense is the most effective way of achieving this.

5. Was the structure and layout of the book an important consideration? If so, why?

The book has a clear dichotomy between shade and light. The shrouded, bleak obscurity of a winter spent begging on the streets and the promise of change, of growth and opportunity that we all recognise with the welcoming light of spring (a visceral, atavistic phenomenon we all experience every year).

6. What would you highlight as some of the pivotal scenes of the book, what is their importance to the narrative and to you on a personal level?

There is a moment in the book, just after the girl has escaped from the city and arrived at the pretty Cotswold village, where she finally shucks off the hard, protective shell she has built around herself and accepts the help of a kindly old man in the character of John. You can really feel her nervousness and apprehension to place her trust in another human, given the isolated life she has had to lead, but as she does, you sense the opportunity she has to change her life and you will her to grasp it. It was a very important and rewarding scene to write.

7. How important was the time period or the setting to the story? What were you looking to evoke through this?

The story is contemporary for a reason. The fact of homeless living is not going away despite society's abundant resources. In my home town of Cheltenham people are forced to beg for change to prevent their own starvation beneath the windows of shops that sell scented candles for fifty quid!

8. Which location in the book would you most like to visit and why?

The pleasure of writing a book set in your own back yard is that you get to visit all of the locations many times, but walking amongst the natural glory of the Cotswold hills is one I will never tire of.

9. What emotions are you hoping to evoke in the reader?

Pity, quickly eclipsed by hope and the possibility of change.

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10. As an author you are very close to your characters. Reflecting back on the book, which of your characters would you like to meet in real life and why?

I developed a deep, protective affinity for the main protagonist of this story to the extent that I felt I knew her as well as my own children, so I have to discount her from the question. The character of John, who offers her so much kindness and help in her discovery of a new life is one that I aspire to. Maybe if I could spend some time with John, he would help to show me how.

Other questions to consider:

- Why do you think the author chose not to give 'the girl' a name?
Did this affect your reading of the story in anyway?
- What did you make of the character of Suni and the relationship she has with 'the girl'?
- Do you hold a sense of hope for 'the girl' and what do you think will become of her?



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Luis is an exciting writer with connections to both Britain and Spain. He was inspired to write *El Hacho*, his debut novel which we published in 2018, after falling in love with the people and natural beauty of the Sierra de Grazelama whilst living in Andalucía.

His second novel, *Ghosts of Spring* which explores one girl's desire to transcend the limits of her environment and forge a new life against all the odds, was published in March 2022.