



The Last Summer of the Death Warriors

Books Reviewed:

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[Andrea Reece](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Life has not gone well for Pancho. He has been orphaned: his mother died when he was just five; his father more recently, in an accident at work. His sister was found dead in a motel room, in unexplained circumstances. At 17 Pancho is nearly a man, but the authorities in New Mexico, seeing him as a troubled teen, won't allow him to live on his own. Instead, he is sent to St Anthony's orphanage.

Pancho is sure his sister was murdered and is determined to find and kill the man responsible. Haunted by his thoughts and his plans, he is virtually silent.

At St Anthony's he meets D.Q. D.Q. is different from Pancho in every way. For a start, he talks non-stop. Physically too the pair are complete opposites. Pancho is tall, handsome, strong, a boxer. D.Q. is in a wheelchair, suffering from a rare and terminal form of brain cancer. Perhaps the cancer has given D.Q. some sort of mystic insight: he tells Pancho he's been waiting for him to come to help him. Together, he explains, they are going to live out his Death Warrior Manifesto.

The Manifesto, as D.Q. explains, is actually about how to live. He quotes Thoreau's **Walden** in explanation: 'I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life?' In reply, Pancho describes how he and his father would eat the *meollo* from bones, spread like butter on a hot flour tortilla. They understand one another.

As the plot unfolds it's clear that not for nothing do their names bring to mind Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Pancho helps D.Q. stand up to his mother, to stay true to himself and live his life as he wants it. D.Q. gives Pancho visions of different futures, ones that needn't involve murder and prison. Such a strange relationship is bound to have its problems, and these are exacerbated when they both fall for the beautiful Marisol.

At no time through this long meditation on death and the meaning of life does Stork descend into sentimentality: like the unflinching descriptions of D.Q.'s illness and symptoms, the book is honest and true. Full of tenderness, it is powerful, unusual, and very moving.

Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-last-summer-of-the-death-warriors>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/183>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/andrea-reece>