



Vista Chinesa

Tatiana Salem Levy

Alison Entrekin, Translator

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A woman relives her traumatic sexual assault in Tatiana Salem Levy's epistolary novel *Vista Chinesa*.

Júlia went for her daily run to Vista Chinesa, a lookout point in Rio de Janeiro, on an ordinary afternoon. While she was surrounded by the beauty of the jungle, a man attacked her, dragged her into the underbrush, and raped her. Hours later, Júlia came to and managed to get herself home, where her family was waiting for her, worried.

With her memories distorted by the trauma, Júlia struggles to make sense of what happened to her. Living inside of a body that someone else destroyed, she begins to question the boundaries between sanity and insanity, doubting whether it is possible to know which state a person is in at any given time. In a search for healing, she engages in travel, psychoanalysis, meditation, controlled psychedelic drug use, revenge fantasies, and fantasies of assault role reversal. She settles for therapeutic writing in the form of a letter to her two children that she hopes they will never read.

Vista Chinesa is written as a testimonial: Júlia tracks her own recovery, going over the assault several times. New details are added with each retelling, ramping up the desperation she feels when there is no escape. A violent rainstorm destroys the entrance to the park where the assault took place; it's a metaphor for closure after Júlia decides to close her case, a decision that's reinforced by a police report that reflects a police department that has little patience for survivors.

Capturing confusion, desperation, anger, and introspection, *Vista Chinesa* is a detailed, visceral novel in which a woman struggles to heal after surviving a sexual assault.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (May / June 2023)

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