

Love and Death in saving Europe



Novel

Rita Dulci Rahman & Jose Miguel Andreu

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A novel

Rita Dulci Rahman & Jose Miguel Andreu



LM Essential Publishers

To our grandchildren: Kaj, Leonardo, Fae, and Federico.

With all our love and hope for their good future.

Colophon

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Authors Note

This novel was born out of our concern over the future of Europe. It is a fictitious and humorous love-and-life story with a perspective of solving the current European crisis.

Needless to say that none of the characters, or the circumstances or events in the book have anything to do with reality or with current politicians and governing functionaries in Europe.

Any conceived resemblance by readers is based on coincidence. The book is meant to entertain while it may contribute to fresh thinking on long-term success for the European project, creating a better future for current youngsters and generations to come.

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One

The call that changed the life of the president

“I have told you a thousand times that when someone calls and I’m in the bathroom, you have to say that I’m in a top meeting and cannot be disturbed.”

Jacques Perrier, President of France, upset for the disturbance and nervous from having to rush out of the bathroom, was hardly in control of the telephone through which he screamed at his middle-aged secretary on the other end of the line. Meanwhile his eyes caught the digital clock at his desk showing 11.06 hours.

It happened on a chilly morning in October, and none of the involved could have then imagined that this telephone call would be the beginning of the end of the career of the President, and of his, in those days, rather frequent happiness.

“But sir, the Chancellor of Germany is on the line and it is very urgent. She needs to speak to you now. Please, may I put you through?”

“Ok, go ahead, but from now on, be attentive.”

So, to put things in the right order, before the call from Berlin came in turning Jacques Perrier’s life upside down, the man had first been observing from the windows of his office, that in only minutes, everything around the Palace L’Elysee was disappearing under a white blanket while he could hear frosty drops falling softly from the roofs. What struck him most about the scenery was the deep silence of the normally bustling streets, as if Paris itself had stopped breathing. With the image of his city wrapped in silence, he had gone to the bathroom for even more mindful reflections, when suddenly the phone rang.

He sharply remembered his first encounter with Marlein Ditch, the German Chancellor. Although the persistent rumours about her moodiness and sudden, angry outbursts facing aides and colleagues alike, had reached him long before his election as President de la Republique, at their first meeting her look—lips pressed together, no lipstick, grey suit, no jewellery other than a tiny golden cross on a fine chain, and a somewhat manly handshake—had confirmed his provisional reference to her: a German spinster coming in from the cold.

“Dear friend, my dearest Jacques, sorry for disturbing you, but I had to, it is urgent. Things are really running out of control. You will not believe what I am going to tell you now. I have just been informed by my Ambassador in Rome that the PIGS¹ have initiated a move to create a political federation of four countries inside the Euro zone. It is our friend from Spain, who, unable to run his own ransacked federated country, has convinced our Italian colleague, another dud, to jointly create a new state of 120-million people, just transforming themselves and the other two neighbouring losers into the biggest country of the EU. Unbelievable! I am furious with this Mafiosi way to put pressure on us. We need to stop this immediately.”

“Holy Christ, Marlein, first the EU generously helped the Spaniards to develop their country over the past twenty years, and now, out of thanks, our foolish colleague is taking advantage by pulling failing powers to his side. It is a bitter joke that those with today’s weakest economies, those who perhaps should not have been admitted to enter in the Euro zone, want to steal us the show and put us in minority. Frankly speaking, I am fed up with this Machiavelli believing he could force us to either abandon the Euro or to fall in his presumed

¹ PIGS here stand for Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain. Note that Ireland has been left out.

leading strings. What a group of crippled countries! We should have ignored them from the very beginning. You can never trust beggars.” By now also Jacques Perrier was furious and, without in any way wishing to be diplomatic, both leaders used strong language to clear their minds bogs, but to be fair to the reader one has to know that the thinking of Perrier in the bathroom, just before the phone rang, although similarly upsetting, had little to do with the Euro crisis and attempted economic shortcuts.

No, until the call from Berlin came in, the thoughts of Perrier in the intimacy of the small room with its colourful tiles and the unmistakable scent of bitter almonds had been of a totally different nature. Lingering on a breathless, quiet Paris, Perrier moved his reflections to the death of his father four months ago and the deep sorrow and emptiness it had left inside him.

As Jacques Perrier had always been a very nervous man, these were feelings he was unable to cope with, but slowly he was learning to control them during the day, sometimes even in the bathroom.

Gone was the man whom he had been meeting so discreetly when both knew that the end was near. In those days, the palliative treatment for lung cancer had made his father serene in facing his last curtain. It was of no use to challenge old Perrier with anything other than fate since he used to refer to almost all subjects as “for God to decide.” This caused Jacques to become overwhelmed by the burden of disillusion, as he could no longer demonstrate his extended knowledge of modern political life or on the economic future of Europe in the wake of emerging Asia, issues that for years had been the flavour in routine, catch-up meetings between Jacques Perrier and his father, the late Perrier Sr. from Bayonne.

After the funeral Jacques deeply suffered from sombre moods and many nights he left his tears run freely in his pillow while feeling regretful, also for the fact that not even his extraordinary electoral

victory for the presidency of France made it possible to prolong the passing away of his father.

Jacques Perrier Jr. admired his father most for having worked his entire life to maintain and upgrade his family despite his little education. So much so, that by the time Jacques Jr. was a teenager, the family no longer suffered from the stigma of refugee carried by Perrier Sr. from the moment he had fled the Franco regime in Spain at the age of twenty. Thereafter, Perrier Sr. had managed, with little more than the clothes he was wearing, to illegally cross the border and in few weeks to start a Brazilian coffee grinding and retail company in Bayonne.

No wonder, that Jacques Perrier Jr. expected far more compassion from above the skies for his simple-minded but more spiritual father instead of him ending with an incurable disease.

Even more annoying were the persistent telephone calls the President had been receiving in the past weeks, including this morning at 10:00 hours from a mysterious Martha. The woman presented herself as originating from Cahors, but for the last twelve years living in La Defence, and when speaking about her parents, both alive and well, her voice would become remarkably affectionate and clearly driven by love. When this Martha for the first time managed to get hold of the French President directly on the phone (she presented herself as his sister living in Lyon to get through) Jacques Perrier was hard hit by the intimacy of her information over the behaviour of his mother.

Mysterious Martha requested the president to keep his mother away from dating her old father, since this was hurting Martha's mother.

Picture it: his seventy-nine-year-old mother in her full, black, traditional widow's dress, travelling six or more hours from Bayonne down to Paris to meet a eighty-two-year-old married man in a luxury hotel room in the heart of the capital, simply to have a passionate night before travelling back all alone to Bayonne and probably at peace that no Sunday paper journalist had been alerted by a gossiping bellman

over the hosting of the President's mother, dressed in full mourning, for a love night with an unknown, old guy.

The image of his wrinkled and slightly overweight mother passionately making love in a hotel bed near L'Elysee with an old, rickety man—whose growling, wasted wife was crying herself to sleep that night—was outrageous. The image had blown his mind as misfortune piled on misfortune, and the echo of Martha's explanations repeated in his ears. According to Martha, the two paramours had officially been engaged in 1951, just before Martha's father left for Algiers to re-embody the French Legionary army. But when her fiancée returned six years later, Jacques' mother was already married for three years with coffee broker Perrier from Bayonne and had to present herself as the proud mother of two, half-Catalan, half-French children, a boy of two and a girl of ten months. In those days of course she could not dream of the possibility that her little son would once become the first half-immigrant President of the Republic.

Perhaps because of not being able to dream this unthinkable dream, his then twenty-seven-year-old mother had soon after, stubbornly left father Perrier and his two, small children in their factory cum house in Bayonne, and started a new life in Cahors with her uniformed hero. Certainly, it must have broken her poor little heart when few months later—based on a seldom-used article in the Civil Code—the Gendarmerie took her out of the house in Cahors, and straight back to the factory of her immigrant husband in Bayonne.

In all the following decades, Jacques Perrier Jr. never got any information, if true, about this part of the personal life history of his parents, neither from them nor from his Spanish grandmother who had always been living in the room next to his father's office in the constantly-expanding factory cum house in Bayonne.

Only when the mysterious Martha got hold of him three months after the death of his father, Jacques was forced to wonder if he had ever

observed any warm romance between his parents, or better, if he had ever caught them in any intimacy in the twenty-two years that he passed in the house in Bayonne.

However, knowing his mother, Perrier Jr. was almost sure that if it had not been for the bills, neither Martha, nor her mother would have found out that the two old-aged paramours were dating in Paris. In fact, according to Martha, the old man, suffering acute disorientation, once got lost on his way home from the hotel near Place Clichy. When questioned at the police station in the early hours of a rainy Sunday morning, he took a hotel bill from his pocket and explained that his fiancé was waiting there for him.

The detailed and frank communications of mysterious Martha hit Jacques like a bullet straight through his stomach. How long had this love affair gone on? Had his father been blind all these years? Or did his father just hide his heart-breaking secret in the man-to-man conversations the two had over the past thirty-three years? Was he really to speak now to his mother on her detached marriage, dreaming and longing for decades for her Romeo from Cahors, or should he simply decide to send her a spy to catch her in the act and thereafter confront her?

* * *

The alarming telephone call from the German Chancellor, within an hour from the last call of mysterious Martha, plus the communications on the move of the Machiavelli were the last things Jacques wanted on this chilly morning. Consequently, his anger was out of control and his answers were firm, but Chancellor Ditch was also in full power in her reaction.

“Mais mon ami, Jacques, keep calm! Do you really believe that these two Latin conspirators—forgive me to say, but I do not consider you Latino—can do more than spend the money of the others, I mean of ours? I suggest us to have an urgent meeting with the president of the European Commission to shorten the legs of these Latino PIGS-mies. Far from things being lost, I actually see great opportunities for Germany and France. This is the right moment to once and for all reintroduce rationality in the political structure of the Union. I am sure that if we play well, we may have a fluke and get rid of the deadwood of the European Union, including the mistake of the acceptance of most of the twelve new comers. I still cannot digest that we have swallowed the monstrous enlargement sold to us by the Brits and their transatlantic nephew. Let’s meet in Brussels tomorrow. I am calling the PresCom² now.”

“Marlein, I see your point. I fully agree to seek the opportunity. Let us meet tomorrow at ten.”

After hanging the phone, a now bewildered *President de la France* continued staring at the white, softened Paris landscape. He had a good face, handsome in a bony sort of way, and eyes wide and bright, often with little sparks of excitement dancing in the centers of them. But he had condemned himself to maniacal pursuits, running from one event to another from the first day of his inauguration. However, today's phone calls certainly had put his eyes in lower spirits. With his nose almost touching the glass of the window, he had to confess to himself that first his mother had gone out of her mind and now the Spanish Machiavelli. Frankly, no one seemed to care about the fact that he had far more important things to worry about!

He remembered his early days after being elected President of the Republic. With what foresight he went to work those days. What great

² The President of the European Commission is often referred to as PresCom.

expectations—expressed by so many Frenchmen—faced him. But then, his first exchanges with populist press, who in the name of the man in the street had even dared to address him as The Great Conqueror of Europe, were all courtesy and humility. He was aware of the risks and actually considered himself like an amateurish marathon runner, all knees and elbows prepared to sooner or later hit the grit, but still keeping the iodine and plasters as much as possible out of sight for a public with great prospects.

Perrier Jr., still over thinking the uncongenial communications of the past hours, left the window and moved to his gigantic, mahogany desk, flopped into his oversized chair and started reshuffling some papers piled in the left corner. He was an easily overwhelmed person and while his memory was ordering the events of the morning, before and after the call from Berlin, things became rather clear to him.

How often had he repeated to himself in the early days of his presidency: *Man, oh, man, I do not, with any army, need to conquer and sophisticate the separate countries of Europe; they have already started their own unification process! This is a circumstance, which should have made Bonaparte envy me.*

At the beginning, it seemed to him that he could easily push forward in the European Union with merely smart diplomacy and some logrolling. In his understanding in those days, his only and real challenge was to control his impatience and strategically maneuver to reach the Olympus. The more annoying was the content of the Berlin call just now. So much so, that Perrier Jr. started swinging in his oversized chair and fledging his hands while admitting to himself that within a year of his presidency, things had become far more difficult. To start with, the Euro system with its ill architecture and currency fluctuations proved less solid than proclaimed by his predecessors. Secondly, his projected strong French leadership of a Union of twenty-seven, veto-owning countries soon became a nightmare. Recently more experienced, the image playing

in his mind whenever thinking of the European Union, or of what had come out of Delors' project, was one of a slow march of a crippled, blind elephant.

At several moments he had almost bemusedly observed the majority of middle-ranged intelligent member-state leaders who behaved as self-appointed captains on the EU boat. Remarkable, since none of these pretended captains had either navigation maps or skills, while they all seemed to have different, final harbors in mind. Even more, no one wanted to pay for the trip although pretending to do so, thus preferring free riding over allegedly being misused by the others, as they systematically complained.

What caca! These were the things that irritated him most in his European Union affair. In particular, the British position of not wanting to pay; not entering in the Euro but continuing to influence the system; and finally pushing for a mega-enlargement with mainly poor, less-developed nations, promising them full financial support, once again to be paid by others and not by London.

Moving his fingers through his voluminous and still rather dark hair, Perrier tried once more to put his thoughts straight. Come to think of it, in this context of headwinds, even Bonaparte would not have made much progress. Personally disappointing was the fact that no French-German initiative suggested by France in the past years for deepening the Union had progressed. Nothing was possible with the current Chancellor of Germany. Although perhaps the absurd move of the Spanish Machiavelli could create a new opportunity to seduce the spinster to establish a selective European Federation constructed by him, Jacques Perrier.

Put at ease by the new perspective, Perrier finally could relax so he glided out of his chair and walked over to the bookshelves next to the window. Yes, there it was, the little, blue book left behind by his predecessor.

While walking closer to the bookshelves and pulling out *Overcoming the EU Crisis*, he remembered the repeated conversations he had with

his minister of European Affairs, a leftist intellectual he included in his government just to marginalize the socialist opposition. In those days, both men, although coming from different political backgrounds, considered the proposal of the blue book to establish a voluntary federation of main Euro zone countries on a French-German initiative as something worthwhile, but any attempt to speak on the matter with the German counterpart was set aside by her with the explanation that she was not ready to exorcise federation ghosts in Germany.

* * *

Minutes later, with a cold wind snapping at the old windows of L'Elysee, Jacques Perrier, returned to his desk. Decisively placing the blue book on his desk and passing his eyes over the things he liked most—his photo in silver frame with the American President together inspecting troops in Afghanistan; framed in wood, him in New Delhi at the Presidential Palace with the dark skin, Indian President discussing the nuclear arms race while offering him French mirages; and finally on the ground in front of his desk, the Persian carpet his wife Alexandra recently bought him in Istanbul. He concluded that the Spanish-Italian maneuver gave him the best pretext to demolish the current political architecture of the Union and once and for all to get rid of the abundance of traitors, free-riders, and beggar states accumulated over the last four decades in the hulk of the EU vessel.

About The Authors

Rita Dulci Rahman is Dutch born in Aruba, Dutch Antilles. In 1970, she won a literacy prize Van der Rijn—prize in the Netherlands—for her debut collection of short stories. Between 1973 and 1979, she published a number of children books and in 1983 she wrote a column for a newspaper in the Netherlands before publishing her first novel in 2001, *Love's Perfumes*. The novel has been published in Dutch (In de Knipscheer) and English (Penguin).

Besides fiction, Rita Dulci Rahman is co-author (together with Jose Miguel Andreu) of a number of non-fiction books on global, socio-economic issues (2001: *Financing Development for Human Security*; 2004: *Responsible Global Governance*; 2005: *Overcoming the EU crisis*; 2006: *China and India, towards global supremacy?* and 2009: *Global Democracy for sustaining Global Capitalism*). Rita Dulci Rahman is a career diplomat, currently posted as Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Dominican Republic and for Haiti.

Jose Miguel Andreu is a Spaniard born in Bilbao, and professor of macroeconomic at the University of Sevilla. *Love and Death in Saving Europe* is his first fiction book, but his non-fiction writing dates back to 1970. Between 1980 and 1999, he published a number of books on macroeconomic issues for University students in Spain, of which his book on banking is most famous. From 2001 onward, he has been writing on global, socio-economic issues (together with Rita Dulci Rahman) projecting possible solutions for contemporary global, socio-economic problems (2001: *Financing Development for Human Security*; 2002: *A federation with Enlargement for European Prosperity*; 2004: *Responsible Global Governance*; 2005: *Overcoming the EU crisis*; 2006: *China and India, towards global supremacy?* and 2009: *Global Democracy for sustaining Global Capitalism*).

When Marlein Ditch, German Chancellor, informs Jacques Perrier, President of France, that four southern Eurozone countries are planning to form a federation within the Union, the two leaders decide to drastically reconstruct the EU project by enabling nine Eurozone countries to escape from the no-way-out crisis of the Euro. Of course their initiative is facing strong opposition, even dangerous manipulations, while in their private life unexpected developments lead to the tragic death of a top EU civil servant and the disappearance of the lover of the wife of the President, who was captured and sent to a "Center for the Treatment of Information" in Africa. All ends well when at the fifth anniversary of the European Federation in 2018 the two main characters share happy life experiences... be it out of politics.

First Reviews

"An extremely interesting book, full of surprises and a pleasant voyage in Europe as it takes the readers to several European heritage cities. Meanwhile the main characters have to cope with the EU crisis and painful developments in their private lives. The book is full of unexpected developments up to the last page. Whoever starts reading will only stop at the very end." – Robert Vornis served as Ambassador of the Netherlands in Mozambique, Bangladesh, Mexico and Philippines.

"As the Euro problems worsen, proposals for greater political integration are becoming common. The suggested solution in the novel is exclusive and described with academic expertise in a rare mix with flabbergasting creativity. Readers will find themselves on an original ride through the lives, love and death of the main characters. One would hope that the book could influence EU politicians to once and for all solve the crisis." – Manuel Ahijado, Professor of Economics in Madrid.

