

HEALING FIRE

By Cindy Molina Q.

This is a psychological thriller, the story of Richard, a middle aged man born with a noticeable mental disability. His life gravitates around a religious, abusive mother, Magda, who considers Richard's issues a direct punishment from God for her "sinful" youth. Richard's only goal in life is to avoid Magda's abuse as much as possible by being obedient and pleasing her demands, although from time to time he listens to the "devils in his soul" and has anger outbursts. Together with Magda, they attend church and a daily prayer group meeting at their neighbours' (Concha) place. Richard doesn't understand entirely his mother's motivations, but he would never dream to question her. He finds it soothing to read the Bible anyways.

Richard's father, separated and no longer living in the household, is an intermittent presence in Richard's life. He's driven by guilt. In one of his visits he informs he's about to retire and would like to move to a different town, but he can't do so before he helps Richard gain some autonomy. He offers to help Richard find a job at a local Jewish 24/7 bakery. Richard's mother isn't pleased and denies him permission. An outburst of anger and a confession to the local priest end up changing Magda's mind. Suddenly a new universe of possibilities seems to open for Richard.

At work, Richard meets Sofía (30), the cook, always surrounded by flames and always a source of fun and laughter. She appreciates Richard has a hard time socialising, meeting schedules and managing his frustration. She's always willing to go the extra mile to make the working environment a little lighter on him. Richard mistakes Sofía's attitude as an infatuation and attacks her sexually. Sofía, badly injured, is forced to report him.

Losing this fire escape of a job, pushes Richard into deep depression. Guilt and anger consume him, and Magda reinforces his self-harming attitude, suggesting new ways of punishment with a twisted loving tone. Richard's only refuge is the Bible.

One morning, Richard wakes up to the sound of hushed laughter. A man and a woman. Magda. Laughing. Richard sprints out and towards the noise, horrified to find his mother kissing goodbye Concha's husband, in the mouth, flirtatiously. His mother never laughed. Sofía laughed and she was clearly a sinful being, a betrayer, a temptress. Richard is convinced now, he's surrounded by demons.

A cold afternoon of September, Richard ties up his mother to her Bible reading chair, and soaks her and himself in petrol. He must shed off the sin, make room for God in him, push the demons away so God's will can be fulfilled. Once the prayers are said, he's ready. Richard ignites the fire that will finally heal the sickness of his soul.

*Then the fire of the Lord fell
and consumed the burnt offering
and the wood and the stones and the dust*
1 Kings 18:38

A handprint is formed by bright, intense flames against a dark background. The fingers are spread out, and the fire is most concentrated in the palm and fingers, with smaller flames trailing off to the sides. The overall effect is one of heat and energy.

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A Feature Script by
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