

Queralt Rubio Peña, author of *Viaje astral*, published in the first volume of *Desde mi habitación* (p. 27)

## "Writing this story made me stronger me in many ways"

- *Do you remember how you found out about the RELATO-Hos project?*

**Queralt Rubio.** I was diagnosed with cancer just after a trip to Chile. And it all happened so fast. This week I was undergoing a lot of medical examinations, and the next one I was already having an operation. The day after the surgery, my father brought me the RELATO-Hos leaflet. I was so tired that I glanced at it and told him 'Thanks dad! Leave it here and I'll look at it later'. I started to read it the next day and thought 'I'm going to give it a try'. Then, I remember writing several drafts. But I didn't like any of them, so they all ended up in the paper bin. I thought 'What shall I write? What should I talk about?' But one night, I awakened well after midnight and began to write whatever came to my mind. Everything was related to what I just had to go through and to the new process that was opening in front of me. I wouldn't stop writing until I felt that I had managed to reflect how I was feeling. Then I went out like a light. The next day I told my father about my writing and I also gave the story to Antonia without even rereading it. I read it for the second time only when it was already printed.



- *So, what did you think when you saw it in the book?*

Q.R.- It was a very deep and emotional feeling, because I realised that I was entering a process of profound internal transformation. I could recognise myself in what I had written and at the same time I could not. While reading the story, I felt I was not the same Queralt, but I was a brand new Queralt now. I thought 'Did I write this? This must mean that I'm in the middle of a personal transformation and I should consider taking the plunge'. I decided to do so and moved on with the transformation.

- *There's probably no need to ask you if you believe that writing can have therapeutic effects ...*

Q.R.- Writing is such a therapeutic experience, as long as it is not an imposition. When you sit down and inspiration strikes, grab your pencil and start writing. But don't force yourself to sit down every morning to create, because then it's not therapeutic. Writing this story made me stronger in many ways and it even made me cry when I realised that there were many things inside me I hadn't been aware of until then.

- *¿Did you use to write before that?*

I would write only occasionally. I'm an English language teacher and sometimes I did indeed write texts, although in a more professional way. I had definitely written some creative texts too, but they were not about as deep experiences as this one. When you write you are normally aware of what you are writing, but this time I wasn't; it was like a brainstorming that I blurted out on paper. So, when I later read it in the book, I was somehow surprised. It was like a very direct connection with my innermost self. Since then I've been writing more.

- *Have you kept writing anything similar to that first story, then?*

Q.R.- Yes, I have! And it's helping me a lot, because many times I have some feelings that I don't know how to express, and then I simply start to write and just let the inspiration flow. When I find myself in an emotional state that I can't label because I don't know what it's about, I sit down and write. By doing so, I can identify that emotion; I can give it a name. In my case, it's all about this therapeutic writing, which often helps me in this process of internal transformation.

- *Do you think that your story and those of other relators can help other patients?*

Q.R.- I think it is very important for people to become aware that writing can enormously help them to look inside themselves. Only a few people do so, because it's easier to look outside and get away from that. Writing is a very useful tool, but you can't force people to do it, because it would increase their resistance. However, if a person reads the stories in the books and realises how useful they have been to other people, it will be easier for them to become conscious of that. The best thing about this project is that it makes this possibility available to everyone: if you will, write what you want, what you feel!

*-Finally we would like to ask you to recommend us a book.*

Q.R.- There is a book that left a mark on me. It's *The Solitaire Mystery* by Jostein Gaarder. It shows you the profound transformation of the hero through all the cards in the deck. It also has some connections with *Alice in Wonderland*. The background of both is that 'appearances can be deceiving'. It is a book that triggers a very deep internal reflection.

