

The Tattooed Soldier

By Hector Tobar

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Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter **Héctor Tobar**'s debut novel is a tragic tale of destiny and consequence set in downtown Los Angeles on the eve of the 1992 riots. Antonio Bernal is a Guatemalan refugee haunted by memories of his wife and child murdered at the hands of a man marked with a yellow tattoo. Not far from Antonio's apartment, Guillermo Longoria extends his arm and reveals a tattoo--yellow pelt, black spots, red mouth. It is the mark of the death squad, the Jaguar Battalion of the Guatemalan army. A chance encounter ignites a psychological showdown between these two men who discover that the war in Central America has followed them to the quemazones, the "great burning" of the Los Angeles riots.

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The Tattooed Soldier By Hector Tobar Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
The first novel from L.A. Times reporter Tobar is a gripping tale of revenge set on the lowest rung of L.A.'s social ladder, amidst the hardscrabble lives of illegal immigrants and the homeless. The fates of Guatemalan death-squad veteran Guillermo Longoria and traumatized, homeless refugee Antonio Bernal have been entwined since the day Longoria killed Antonio's wife and son in Guatemala. Obsessed by memories of his family and also by the mental picture of the assassin with a yellow jaguar tattooed on his forearm, Antonio ends up as one of LA.'s drifting dispossessed. By chance he sees Longoria in MacArthur Park and is electrified by the possibility of avenging his loved ones. Meanwhile, in alternating chapters, we meet Longoria, a peasant who was forced to join the army but eventually grew to love the power it gave him. He absorbed the twisted logic that justified the massacre of an entire village to drive out the "infection" of communism, but he too is now haunted by memories. The novel's denouement occurs during the 1992 L.A. riots, a colossal day of reckoning when the powerless underclass of L.A. erupts in fury and when both men move toward their fates. Tobar's prose is clear and crisp, authentically colored by the liberal use of Spanish phrases. He never sentimentalizes Antonio's tragic story, and even the hateful Longoria is depicted with understanding of the social forces that molded him. The complexities of these two characters give this novel power and weight. 7500 first printing.
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From Kirkus Reviews
California journalist Tobar's disturbing debut neatly and credibly brings two Guatemalan adversaries together by chance on the streets of Los Angeles, where they play out the endgame of a deadly struggle begun in their homeland. Antonio, once a middle-class government worker in his native land, is now homeless in L.A., having seven years ago just missed the death squad that came for him but instead killed his wife and young son. His despair and shame at having fled have never left him, but when one day he glimpses a Jaguar tattoo on the arm of a chess player in MacArthur Park, recognizing one of his family's killers, Antonio knows a new feeling: vengeance. The ex-soldier Longoria, as yet unaware that he's being stalked, goes about his highly regimented routine, striving to better himself at chess while holding down a security job at a crooked Guatemalan parcel service and keeping his small apartment--where he has a collection of photos of his victims--spotless. Antonio, all but invisible as a homeless man, studies his enemy carefully, then decides to act. But his plan to attack the sergeant at the chess tables with a length of pipe, in broad daylight, is ill-conceived and goes awry. Only wounded, Longoria is now wary, but Antonio doesn't give up. He buys a gun with the help of a homeless friend, and, in the chaos of the South Central riots that erupt soon after, the hunter and his prey meet again in a confrontation that is protracted but decisiveand through it Antonio is finally able to put his shame to rest. Tobars characters are thin, but his tale not only vividly reenacts the horror of death-squad victims everywhere, but also sheds an honest and even light on the stark realities facing the homelessand many immigrantsin America. -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review
Tobar, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter who came from Guatemala as a small child, has a fine storyteller's instinct. -- *The Los Angeles Times*, Tom Hayden

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Candy Yazzie:

The book The Tattooed Soldier give you a sense of feeling enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable far more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting tension or having big problem using your subject. If you can make examining a book The Tattooed Soldier to get your habit, you can get considerably more advantages, like add your own capable, increase your knowledge about a few or all subjects. You could know everything if you like open and read a guide The Tattooed Soldier. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science publication or encyclopedia or other people. So , how do you think about this publication?

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