



The Reef: A Novel

By Juan Villoro

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The Reef: A Novel By Juan Villoro

A Caribbean resort specializing in faked cartel kidnappings is the site for Villoro's profound and satirical murder mystery.

Amidst stagings of guerilla warfare, rumors of killer bees and encroaching cartel activity, recovering ex-rocker, Tony Góngora, attempts to solve the mystery of an American scuba-diver's murder. As he tries to piece together the events of the crime, Tony uncovers his own bizarre and illuminating memories: of a fatherless childhood spent in the high-risk company of his eccentric friend and the hotel's manager; playing gigs with The Velvet Underground; joining a Japanese pop group. Against the backdrop of a deteriorating climate, a fast-eroding beachfront, official corruption, cartel violence, and delusional Western escapism, Tony and an international cast of hotel staffers make and break alliances as the personal begins to echo the political, and artifice and reality start to blur. With his signature wit, originality, and dashes of dazzling social theory, Villoro has created a biting satire of tourism and a brilliant analogy for Mexico's unique position in global politics.

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The Reef: A Novel By Juan Villoro Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"I have admired Juan Villoro ever since reading his stories in *The Guilty*. His new novel *The Reef* is even more impressive for a powerful, headlong narrative of sustained sleuthing and suspense and the inside-out of appearance and reality. This is the ultimate portrait of a sunny place with shady people, with reflections on Mexico "the land of impunity." Another Villoro triumph."

- **Paul Theroux**

"*The Reef* is whip smart, an ebulliently satirical take on contemporary Mexico, growing older and having a past, and so much else. I love the relentless surprises embedded in the movement of Villoro's sentences.

This writer's brain obviously moves very fast and his art lies in slowing his prose just enough to let us in on the spectacle."

- **Francisco Goldman**

"

Villoro mixes genres (noirish murder mystery, eco-thriller) to fashion a wickedly satirical romp of Mexico as a "country of enormous delusions." But that's not all. It's also a thoughtful tale of friendship and love.

A zesty tale that balances darkness and light with aplomb.

"

- **Kirkus Review**

"*The Reef* is an overwhelming success, firmly solidifying [Villoro's] spot as a front-runner in contemporary Mexican literature."

- **Foreword Reviews**

"A satirical look at tourism and an analogy for Mexico's place in global politics, *The Reef* is a mystery to watch out for."

- **BookRiot**

"Villoro's point, punctuated by each of the stories in this powerful book, is that modern Mexico is finished, finally, trying to conform to outside notions of its tragedies.... Villoro, a contemporary of Roberto Bolano, offers a similar style and comic tone, and much to enjoy."

- **The New York Times Book Review on "The Guilty"**

"**Favorite Books of 2015:** Magical realism is fun, but someone still has to clean up afterwards. Villoro's stories, always beleaguered but never brooding, sift soberly through the debris and extract an earthbound, workaday kind of enchantment. "

- **The Believer on "The Guilty"**

"Villoro's writing, translated into English, is almost George Saundersesque: disarming, critical, and hilarious all at the same time. His writing is fueled mainly by the absurdity of the interpersonal, which largely decenters some of the macro things that an American audience might fetishize (the war on drugs, immigration, etc.), though those things are there too. The fact that *The Guilty* has been translated to English

at all only adds to that decentering of the single story that American audiences have come to know about Mexico.”

- *Ploughshares on "The Guilty"*

“At last, an English translation brings his seriously funny take on identity to new audiences.”

- *Los Angeles Review of Books on "The Guilty"*

“The first collection of Villoro’s short stories to be translated into English depicts the complexity of contemporary Mexico in sharp, compelling prose. In tales with fascinating protagonists and tightly crafted action, Villoro eschews stereotypes and flips common perceptions of his homeland....Like his Mexican compatriots Valeria Luiselli and Enrique Vila-Matas as well as such U.S. writers as Kirstin Valdez Quade and Luis Alberto Urrea, Villoro rewards readers with refreshing, unforgettable stories.”

- *Booklist on "The Guilty"*

“Villoro made me believe in the power of postmodernism to reflect back the multiple surfaces of our own highly constructed and often fictional lives. To do so while making the reader laugh out loud is no small feat.”

- *Rain Taxi Review of Books on "The Guilty"*

“The writing is razor sharp, the satire brilliant and biting.... Villoro's English language debut presents seven expertly crafted stories that are funny and agile but also illuminating, exploring the paradox of being a Mexican in Mexico.”

- *Three Percent on "The Guilty"*

“**Top Book of 2015:** The stories are sharp and hilarious and cut right through the (mostly) macho, male Mexican psyche. As a collection it is by turns entertaining and edifying and helped me understand our other closest neighboring country just a little bit better.”

- *Publishing Perspectives on "The Guilty"*

About the Author

Juan Villoro is one of Mexico’s most prolific, prize-winning fiction writers. His books have won the Herralde Award, Antonin Artaud Award and The Reef was shortlisted for the Rezzori Prize. He lives in Mexico City and is a visiting lecturer at Yale and Princeton Universities.

Yvette Siegert is a poet and translator based in New York.

Users Review

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