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FICTION NONFICTION CHILDREN'S RELIGION COMICS AUDIO WEB EXCLUSIVE PW SELECT SEARCH

★ Quesadillas

Juan Pablo Villalobos, trans. from the Spanish by Rosalind Harvey. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$13 trade paper (192p) ISBN 978-0-374-53395-3



Mexican novelist Villalobos (*Down the Rabbit Hole*) fuses personal mythologies and political margins in his new novel, a riotous tall tale set in the hills of Cerro de la Chingada and narrated by young Orestes, whose perennial concern, despite his family's crippling poverty, is wresting his daily share of his mother's quesadillas from his six brothers and sisters, "all of them highly qualified strategists in the survival tactics of big families." There's Aristotle, the eldest; Archilochus; Callimachus; Electra; and the "pretend twins" Castor and Pollux, who go missing after a violent rebellion sweeps the countryside. Convinced that they've been kidnapped by aliens, Aristotle draws his brother into a search in which the imaginary merges with the realities of destitute backwater Mexico. Calling it magical realism would be lazy, given the undertone of socially conscious indignation that underlies often-fantastical imagery: a highway procession of pilgrims, "an orgy of hysterical cows," and the pervasive sense of a Greek epic confined to squalor. With tidy, uncompromised prose, Villalobos has inaugurated a new kind of avant-garde novel, one whose grasp of certain dehumanizing political realities never erodes the power to dream something better. Agent: Andrea Montejo, Indent Literary Agency. (Feb.)

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